

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 1.1-13



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 1.1-13
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Introduction to *John 1.1-13*

The prologue to the Gospel of John (John 1.1-18) is in two parts. The first part, verses 1-13, sets the stage for the second, and for the rest of John's gospel. Beginning in eternity past, John introduces his subject, the Word of God and the great work of redemption He came to earth to accomplish.

The Christian life is lived amid various tensions – time/eternity; temporal/spiritual; darkness/light; seen/unseen. All these tensions are bridged and resolved by the Word of God, the Creator of all things and Light of every person. John will tell a story which, as we shall see, demands a whole-life response from all who read it. He wants us to understand, from the outset, that the Word, Who is the subject of his story, is worthy of our committing ourselves entirely to Him.

Our approach to the Gospel of John will be contemplative, taking only a few verses a day and going as deep as we can into their rich meaning and significance. Our study is interspersed with prayers and singing. Take your time, work through all the questions and prayers, and seek the Lord for His application of John's teaching to your life each day. In our study, we draw on the insights of Church Fathers from the early years of the Christian movement to encourage, instruct, and guide us in our meditations. The questions for reflection or discussion at the end of the study will be especially useful if you are working through this material with a group.

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

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1 Before All Things

Read and meditate on John 1.1 and Genesis 1.

In the prologue to his gospel (Jn. 1.1-18), John introduces the major themes that will feature throughout his story. The first part of the prologue ends at verse 13, with John declaring that the true Light has come to bring life to all who believe. The second part of the prologue (vv. 14-18) identifies the true Light *by Name*, a historical Person Who lived at a particular time. John 1.1-13 moves from eternity past to the contemporary present, and from the unseen spiritual realm to everyday events, from temporal creation to spiritual creation. John wants us to hold these tensions in mind – past/present, seen/unseen, temporal/spiritual – because we live in them at all times. The true Light bridges the gaps between these, and leads us to fullness of life in God. John’s gospel *begins* where he intends for it ultimately to take us, into the presence and pleasure of the eternal God through His Word.

*¹Before the world and everything began –
all space and time, the galaxies that span
the heavens, all creatures, particles, and powers,
all things on earth, all lands and seas, all flowers
and beasts, and even man – before these came
to be, He was, Whom we know by the Name,
The Word.*

- John 1.1

Reflect

1. John will make a conscious attempt to root the story of Jesus in the eternal being and counsel of God, and His infallible Word. What *alone* existed before “the beginning”? What would it have been like to be there “in the beginning” with God our only companion? God existed *before* the beginning. Does He exist *in* time, or apart and over it? Does He require *time* to be God? Before “the beginning,” what was *existence* like in the eternal Godhead? Complete this brief prayer: *Lord, in the beginning You were all there was, and You...*

2. Did God *need* for there to be a beginning? How would Paul answer that (cf. Acts 17.24, 25)? Why doesn’t God *need* anything? Since He does not *need* anything, what does it tell us about God that He created a beginning of time and all things? Complete this prayer: *You don’t need me or anything, Lord – yet here I am, and You...*

3. Meditate on Genesis 1. Before the beginning, God the Father, God the Word, and God the Holy Spirit existed as one God in three divine Persons. Together, they decided to create a beginning of all things. In Genesis 1, how many times does the word *good* appear? What does *God* mean by *good*? What does John intend by linking his gospel to the good beginning of all things? How does he want us to read this story? Should we expect his story to be *Good News*? Complete this prayer: *Lord, You are good, and You do only good work! The Good News for me today is...*

4. Meditate on Genesis 1. How many times does “God said” appear? God’s speaking – God’s Word

– had a very active part in the beginning of all things. How would you explain that part? What does this suggest about the *ability* of this Word, and the *scope of His interests*? *Lord, Your Word is...*

5. God existed eternally in the past, complete in Himself, without need of anything outside Himself to add to the joy, pleasure, and fullness He experiences *in* Himself alone. He did not *need* to make a beginning of anything, and yet He did. Why? What does this tell us about this God, Who makes *good things* by the power of His *Word*, without needing any of the things He made? Pray together the prayers you constructed from questions 1-4.

Summary

“The word *beginning* fixes the moment of creation; you can assign its date to an event that is definitely stated to have happened ‘in the beginning.’ But this fisherman of mine, unlettered and unread, is untrammelled by time, undaunted by its immensity; he pierces beyond the beginning. For his ‘was’ has no limit of time and no commencement; the uncreated Word ‘was in the beginning.’”
Hilary of Poitiers (315-367 AD).

John’s gospel is about the Word of God. That Word, Who became flesh and dwelled among us, was eternally present with God before the universe began. He is the Word by Whom God created all things out of *nothing!* How wise, how strong, how amazing, and how completely unfathomable must this Word be, Who can bring things into being out of nothing (cf. Heb. 11.3)? Who is this Person we are about to journey with in the gospel of John?

Closing Prayer

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deep in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalm 33.6-9

Psalm 33.6-9 ([*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*](#))

You spoke and heaven came to be, and all its hosts Your Spirit wrought.
You heaps the waters of the sea; the deeps their dwelling place are taught.

Let all below now fear You, Lord; let all in awe of You abide!
The worlds exist by Jesus’ Word; let all on earth in You confide!

2 The Explanation

Read and meditate on John 1.1.

One of the characteristics of both the Hebrew and Greek languages is the dispensability of forms of the verb, *to be*. You will notice in your English Bible that such words as *am, are, is, were, and was* are often put in italics. This is to indicate that these words are not found in the Hebrew or Greek, but are supplied by the translators to accommodate our English speech. The Greeks and Hebrews did not *need* to use these forms. But when they did, you can believe that they meant to communicate something important.

*'Before the world and everything began –
all space and time, the galaxies that span
the heavens, all creatures, particles, and powers,
all things on earth, all lands and seas, all flowers
and beasts, and even man – before these came
to be, He was, Whom we know by the Name,
The Word.*

- John 1.1

Reflect

1. The verb *was* occurs *three times* in John 1! Three times! Let's play language games, shall we? The form of the verb here is the Greek imperfect, a tense which indicates *continuing action* – in this case, *being* – in the past. To make the point John is trying to make, we need to add an adverb to *was*. How about something like *already*? Or *always*? What does this tell us about this *Word* and what John means by *was*? Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, God's eternal Word, God's Word to me...*

2. The Word always and already was *with* God. This suggests *separateness* or, at least, a distinction. If God is God, and the Word is the Word, and both of them *already* or *always were*, what does this suggest about the relationship between the two of them? What is distinctive about each? How do they complement one another? Why is John making this emphatic point, here in the first verse of His Gospel? *God my Father, Lord Jesus the Word, as You love one another and cling to one another, so let me...*

3. The eternal Word was *with* God, *and the Word was God!* So the Word of God, Who is distinct from God, nevertheless *is* God? Not *a* God, but *God*. How would you explain this? How can the Word be *with* God and *be* God at the same time? Does it matter if you can't explain this *completely*? But should you be able to explain it *truly*? Why? *Lord, there are mysteries I can believe, even if I cannot fully understand them. Help me...*

4. One God, two distinct identities, or shall we say, Persons. But in Genesis 1, to which John refers in his opening words, another *expression* of God is mentioned (v. 2). Who is the *Spirit* or *Breath* of God, and (keeping in mind Psalm 33.6-9 and Ps. 104.29, 30) how does the Spirit relate to God and the Word? Why is John deliberately directing our minds to all three of the Persons of God in this first verse of his gospel? *O great One God in Three Persons! How I...*

5. *Word* (in the Greek, *logos*) means something like *word, meaning, reason, rationale, or even explanation*. How do our words function in these ways for us? What should we expect of the Word of God, when it comes to our understanding of everything about God, and everything about the world He spoke into being? Can we expect to know God apart from His Word? To know His world apart from the Word? Why or why not? Bring together into one the four prayers you prayed in questions 1-4.

Summary

“The same verb, ‘was,’ is predicated of the Word when he was ‘in the beginning’ and when he ‘was with God.’ He is neither separated from the beginning, nor does he depart from the Father. And again, he does not ‘come to be’ ‘in the beginning’ from not being ‘in the beginning,’ nor does he pass from not being ‘with God’ to coming to be ‘with God,’ for before all time and eternity ‘the Word was in the beginning,’ and ‘the Word was with God.’” *Origen (ca. 185-254 AD)*

The Word of God is *the* Explanation for everything – for God, for the world God made, the will of God, you, me, the future, life, death, culture, and everything else. Meditate on Ephesians 4.8-10. Why does it make sense that Jesus would be working to fill all things in all things? How is He doing that?

Closing Prayer

Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, You are very great:
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment,
Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.
He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,
Who makes the clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,
Who makes His angels spirits,
His ministers a flame of fire.
You who laid the foundations of the earth,
So that it should not be moved forever,
You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters stood above the mountains.
At Your rebuke they fled;
At the voice of Your thunder they hastened away.
They went up over the mountains;
They went down into the valleys,
To the place which You founded for them.
You have set a boundary that they may not pass over,
That they may not return to cover the earth.
He sends the springs into the valleys;
They flow among the hills.
They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.
By them the birds of the heavens have their home;
They sing among the branches.

He waters the hills from His upper chambers;
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.

Psalm 104.1-13 (*Creation: Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim*)

Bless God, My soul! How great are You, Lord,
With majesty and splendor adorned.
The heav'ns You stretch out like a tent,
And lay Your chambers in the firmament.
You ride the wings of winds on high
And make Your messengers flaming fly.
The earth on its foundation stands,
Established forever by Your hands.

3 Creator Word

Read and meditate on John 1.2, 3.

What has been merely suggested in verse 1, John now clearly declares: The Word with God, Who was God, is the Creator of everything that is. And to make sure his readers understand that nothing which exists is exempted from this claim, he declares it twice.

²The Word was with God when the world began, and as all space and time unfurled at His command. ³And through The Word were all things made; apart from Him, no creature small or great, in earth or heaven, in sky or sea, no seen or unseen thing, has come to be.

- John 1.2, 3

Reflect

1. We might be tempted to say that all things *in the beginning* were made by the Word of God – as though *only* in the beginning of all things was God Creator. But that's not what John *says*. In what sense can we say that *all things* – everything that has ever come to be, everything that now *is* – exists by the power and pleasure of the Word of God (cf. Heb. 1.3; Col. 1.16, 17)? Complete this prayer: *Lord, You are the reason I exist, so...*

2. John keeps emphasizing that the Word was *with* God (and, of course, *was* God). He seems keen to associate the *creating power* of the Word with His *association with God*. What would this suggest about His *intentions* in creating all things, everything that has ever been made? How does this lead you to think about the *purpose* of everything, how things should be understood, received, and used? Is everything fulfilling that purpose now? Should we be content with that? *What is your purpose for me today, O Lord?*

3. John uses two prepositions to further describe the creating work of the Word: *through* (Geek: *dia*) and *without* (Greek: *choris*). How would you describe the perspective on the Word's creating work suggested by each of these prepositions? How do these two prepositions further reinforce John's claim that the Word of God is responsible for having brought into being everything that exists? Is John simply restating what the psalmist claims in Psalm 24.1? *The earth is Yours. I am Yours. My day is Yours. So today...*

4. Since the Word has *created* everything, does it make sense that He would have a continuing, vested *interest* in all things? To what ends? Do you suppose the gospel John is writing might have anything to do with creation? *All* creation? Those aspects of creation which are in your control? *Lord, what would You have me to do with the things You have entrusted to my care?*

5. In just these first two verses, John has established various important connections: eternity and time, created things and the uncreated God, the beginning of all things and the beginning of John's gospel, everything that exists and He Who makes everything. Just these two verses suggest a

worldview that is dramatically at odds with the dominant worldview of our day. Explain. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into a single prayer.

Summary

“This Word is not a human word. For how was there a human word in the beginning, when the man received his being last of all?...There was not then any word of humankind in the beginning, nor yet of angels; for every creature is within the limits of time, having its beginning of existence from the Creator...But what does the Gospel say? It calls the Only Begotten himself the Word. *Basil the Great (ca. 330-379 AD)*

The Word of God has *power* to create all things. He must have done so with good *reasons*, being Himself the very *Reason* of God. And because He has made all things, they can only *be explained* in the light of His being and intentions. The Word, the *logos* of God, is thus the Bridge between heaven and earth, time and eternity, the temporal world and the spiritual world, everything that *can be known* and everything that *we can know*, meaning and *meaningless*. Should anything *other* than this Word be the center and end of our worldview? Explain.

Closing Prayer

Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, *saying*,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”
He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”
“I will declare the decree:
The Lord has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.”

Psalm 2.1-8

Psalm 2.1-8 ([*Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*](#))

Why do the nations vainly rage,
Conspiring together from age to age?
Earth’s kings and all of their counselors stand
Against You, Lord, and Your Right Hand:

“Now let us cast His yoke below,

His Kingdom authority overthrow!
Throw off His Law, reject His Word;
No more be governed by this Lord!”

O Lord in heav’n You laugh in wrath
At all who embark on this cursèd path.
Your angry Word to them is plain:
“Yet shall My King in Zion reign!”

4 Life and Light

Read and meditate on John 1.4, 5.

John offers two more contrasts, one overt, one implied. The Word is associated with light, while the world is associated with darkness. The darkness struggles vainly to *overcome* the light, yet cannot. The Word also has *life* in Him. What does this imply about the world to which the light comes?

⁴In Him was Light, to expose the darkness and illuminate the truth for every man and woman. ⁵And His Light in sin's dark night began to shine, and though with all its might the darkness strives to overcome and kill the Light, it cannot, and the Light shines still.

- John 1.4, 5

Reflect

1. If *life* is in the Word, in the world must be *non-life*, or, *death*. Based on just what we have learned about the Word thus far, what can you say about the *nature* of the life which is *in* the Word? What kind of *life* is in the Word? Complete this prayer: *Lord, today I will encounter people who do not know the Light. Help me...*
2. Life is a *defining* characteristic of the Word. Life will *always* be *in* Him. If we want the life which is *in* the Word, therefore, where must we be? What does this mean? How is this possible? How can we know when we are there? *Let my life be hidden in You, O Christ, so that...*
3. John says the life which is in the Word “was the light of men.” He makes *light* an attribute, or at least a consequence, of the *life* which is in the Word. Based on what you have concluded about the *life* of the Word, and considering the *darkness* which is in the world, what kind of *light* is John thinking about here? *Lord Jesus, today let Your light shine on me, in me, and through me so that...*
4. What happens when light shines into darkness? Given the nature of *this* light, what would you conclude about the nature of the *darkness* into which it shines? Can darkness resist light? Can the darkness of this world overcome the light of the Word? What should we expect regarding darkness, now that light has come into the world? Explain. *Illuminate any darkness remaining in me, O Lord, and...*
5. Whatever does not possess this life and light is therefore *not* alive and *in the dark*. To whom does this *darkness* pertain? What is it like to live in such darkness? What was it like in *your* existence, when you were without the *life and light* of the Word? Would you agree that the Apostle John was not content for people to live this way? Are you? Pray together your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“The ‘life’ mentioned there is not that life that makes both rational and irrational beings [alive]. It is instead the life that is added to the Word, which is completed in us when a share from the first Word is received. And so, when we turn away from what seems to be life but really is not and we

yearn to truly possess life – that is when we first share in it.” *Origen (ca. 185-254 AD)*

The Word of God is not only the Bridge between the various contrasts we have observed (time/eternity, temporal/spiritual, created/Uncreated). He is also a kind of *weld* in which these contrasts are resolved. He brings light and heat and power to *transform* death and darkness into life and light, and to keep things that way forever. What does John suggest by saying that the darkness cannot *comprehend* – literally, *overcome* – this Word of life and light? How should this encourage us in our walk with and work for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

For God *is* my King from of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
You divided the sea by Your strength;
You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters.
You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces,
And gave him *as* food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
You broke open the fountain and the flood;
You dried up mighty rivers.
The day *is* Yours, the night also *is* Yours;
You have prepared the light and the sun.

Psalm 74.12-16

Psalm 74.12-17 (*Rockingham: O Lord Most High, with all My Heart*)

O God, You are King from long ago; You work deliv’rance in the land;
You split the sea, You crush Your foes; against You none can ever stand.

You opened the springs, fresh water flowed; to You belong both day and night.
You bound the seasons and the earth, and gave the sun its glorious light.

5 Sent as a Witness

Read and meditate on John 1.6-8.

Can you see here a synopsis of John's purpose for his gospel? The Light has come! God sends people to bear witness to the Light. They are not the Light, and so need not pretend to be; they are *witnesses* to the Light, to urge others to *believe* in the Light.

⁶A man named John was sent by God ⁷to be a witness to the Light, that all might see the Light and put their faith in Him. ⁸This John was not the Light; but he was sent as one from God to witness to the Light.

- John 1.1-8

Reflect

1. Implied in the first part of our passage is that God is somehow able to communicate with people. He *sent* a particular man for a specific task. Should we be thinking that the *Word* of God has something to do with both the *medium* and the *message* of God's communications with people? With you? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, send me today as a witness, so that...*

2. Summarize John's calling. *How* was he sent? For what *purpose*? To accomplish *what end*? Is it possible that this John is mentioned here to embody John the writer's purpose for his gospel? Our purpose in *reading* this gospel? Explain. *Thank You, Lord, for those whom You sent in order that I might believe and have life.*

3. The Greek word for "bear witness" is a form of the verb *martyreo*. Does anything about that verb strike you as interesting? Why do you suppose the word *witness* is connected to this idea? How did this prove out in the case of John the Baptist? What does it imply for those who are called to be witnesses today (Acts 1.8)? *Am I ready for this, Lord? Am I ready to be a witness today?*

4. John had an objective for his witness-bearing. What was it? What are those who live in darkness supposed to *believe*? John is leading up to a more thorough introduction to this idea in verse 12. What does it mean *to believe*? What happens when someone truly believes (cf. Col. 1.13, 14)? *To whom are You sending me today, Lord, that they might believe in Your Word?*

5. From what we've seen thus far, what seems to be the relationship between God, *believing* in God, the life and light of the Word, and those who are sent as witnesses? Why is John introducing this idea right here "in the beginning" of his gospel? Pray together your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"John does not enlighten every person; Christ does. And John recognized himself as a lamp, in order not to be blown out by the wind of pride. A lamp can both be lit and be put out. The word of God cannot be put out; a lamp always can." *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

In his gospel, John bears witness to the Word of life and light, as John the Baptist did before him, and as all are appointed to do who *believe* the witness of those sent by God for that purpose (Acts 1.8). John is using the *prologue* (Jn. 1.1-18) to introduce ideas that he will return to over and over again. So far, what would you say are the most important ideas John wants us to fix in our minds?

Closing Prayer

O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!
Let them be confounded *and* consumed
Who are adversaries of my life;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor
Who seek my hurt.
But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.
O God, You have taught me from my youth;
And to this *day* I declare Your wondrous works.

Psalm 71.12-17

Psalm 71.12-16 ([*Solid Rock: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

O God, be not too far from me; my ever-present Helper be!
Consume and shame my enemies; let them reproached and humbled be.
A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
My Rock and Fortress ever be!

But as for me, my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.
A Rock of habitation be; command Your Word to rescue me;
My Rock and Fortress ever be!

6 The True Light

Read and meditate on John 1.9-13.

The first part of John's prologue concludes. The eternal Word has come into the world as the true Light from God. None can escape His bright shining. None can conceal the darkness within them or hide in the darkness from His presence. And why would they want to do so? He brings a surprising and amazing gift from God.

⁹The true Light, by His coming to the world, brought to the world the Light of Truth, and sheds His Light in every place and person where the night of sin prevails. ¹⁰The Light was in the world, the world which He created, which He hurled into the void by His command, and yet it knew Him not at all, nor did it set its heart on Him. ¹¹He came unto His own, to those above all men who should have known Him, but they did not. ¹²Yet to everyone receiving Him, the right to be a son or daughter of the living God is given, to those believing that the Word from heaven has come, and take His Name upon them. ¹³All who will receive Him, who believe and call upon His Name, are born again of God, and not alone of flesh, or man, or blood.

- John 1.9-13

Reflect

1. What does John mean in verse 9? What does this suggest about the *intentions* of the true Light, wherever it begins to shine? What are the implications of this for you? For your church? Complete this prayer: *Lord, You are my Light! Be Light through me to...*
2. The Maker of the world has come into the world He made. Yet "the world did not know Him" (v. 10). In what sense is John using the word *world* here? What does he mean by *know Him*? How would you explain what it means to know Him to someone who doesn't? *Lord, make me a ready witness...*
3. To what is John referring by the phrase *His own* (v. 11)? What does it say about *His own* that they *did not receive Him* as the true Light? Compare this with verse 10. *His own* were simply part of *the world* that *did not know Him*. Why did the world not know Him, and His own fail to receive Him? Does this still happen today? Is God still sending witnesses to the Light to this world? *Send me, today, O Lord, that...*

4. Review the following words in verses 7-13: *believe*, *know*, *receive*, and *were born*. How do these relate to *bear witness* and *become children of God*? Write a sentence putting all these terms together as John intends them. Pray that sentence to the Lord for the day ahead.

5. Our attention is piqued in verse 12 when we learn that this Word and true Light has a *Name*. What does this suggest about His coming to the world, coming among His own? Note also the phrase *believe in His Name*, which is literally, *believe into His Name*. What do you make of that *into*? Pray together your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“Listen to the lampstand; be lamps, and you shall have a lampstand. The cross of Christ is a great lampstand. Whoever wishes to shine must not be ashamed of this wooden lampstand.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

The true Light, the Word of God, in Whom is life, has come to earth, shining the brilliance of His presence into every dark corner and every darkened heart of every human being. He comes with a right to bestow – “the right to become children of God.” John has moved the focus from eternity past and the uncreated God to the historical present and the incarnated Word. Do you see that John has told the entire story of his gospel in these first 13 verses? In the rest of the prologue (vv. 14-18), he will tell us the story again, but with a different layer of significance.

Closing Prayer

I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all Your works;
I muse on the work of Your hands.
I spread out my hands to You;
My soul *longs* for You like a thirsty land.
Selah
Answer me speedily, O Lord;
My spirit fails!
Do not hide Your face from me,
Lest I be like those who go down into the pit.
Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For in You do I trust;
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.
Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies;
In You I take shelter.
Teach me to do Your will,
For You *are* my God;
Your Spirit is good.
Lead me in the land of uprightness.

Psalm 143.5-10

Psalm 143.5-8 ([*Divinum Mysterium: Of the Father's Love Begotten*](#))

I recall the days of old; on Your works I meditate –

The Gospel of John: John 1.1-13

All the wonders of Your mighty hand, works both small, O Lord, and great
Lord, my thirsty soul cries out to You! To You, Lord, I reach my hand
In a dry and weary land.

Answer quickly, O my Lord! Do not hide from me Your face!
For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace.
In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; Lord, I trust You, show my way!
I lift up my soul and pray!

7 Prologue: Part 1

Read and meditate on John 1.1-13.

We are focusing on the first part of John's two-part prologue. John has set his gospel firmly in the eternal counsels and will of God, and introduced its relevance and importance for our lives here and now, but only in the most abstract of terms (light, life, children of God). Today we want to review the primary themes John has introduced in this section.

¹Before the world and everything began – all space and time, the galaxies that span the heavens, all creatures, particles, and powers, all things on earth, all lands and seas, all flowers and beasts, and even man – before these came to be, He was, Whom we know by the Name, The Word. ²The Word was with God when the world began, and as all space and time unfurled at His command. ³And through The Word were all things made; apart from Him, no creature small or great, in earth or heaven, in sky or sea, no seen or unseen thing, has come to be.

⁴In Him was Light, to expose the darkness and illuminate the truth for every man and woman. ⁵And His Light in sin's dark night began to shine, and though with all its might the darkness strives to overcome and kill the Light, it cannot, and the Light shines still.

⁶A man named John was sent by God ⁷to be a witness to the Light, that all might see the Light and put their faith in Him. ⁸This John was not the Light; but he was sent as one from God to witness to the Light. ⁹The true Light, by His coming to the world, brought to the world the Light of Truth, and sheds His Light in every place and person where the night of sin prevails. ¹⁰The Light was in the world, the world which He created, which He hurled into the void by His command, and yet it knew Him not at all, nor did it set its heart on Him. ¹¹He came unto His own, to those above all men who should have known Him, but they did not. ¹²Yet to everyone receiving Him, the right to be a son or daughter of the living God is given, to those believing that the Word from heaven

has come, and take His Name upon them. ¹³All who will receive Him, who believe and call upon His Name, are born again of God, and not alone of flesh, or man, or blood.

- John 1.1-13

Reflect

1. How does John want us to think about time and God's relationship to time? God is not *in* time, but He *made* time by His Word. Does time matter? Why? What should be our attitude toward time? What are we supposed to be doing with it (cf. Eph. 5.15-17)? Complete this prayer: *Thank You, Lord, for the time I have today. Help me...*

2. John establishes several contrasts in these few verses: life/death, light/darkness, receive/not know, then and there/here and now. These contrasts suggest that the story John will tell us is fraught with *tension*. What is tension, and how does it affect us? How are these various contrasts meant to affect you as you think ahead to the rest of John's gospel? To the rest of your life? *Lord, You have called us to live in the tensions of the now and not yet. Help me today to...*

3. John treats as *real* the ideas of God, God creating all things by speaking, an uncreated and timeless realm, and God being able to communicate with human beings. These ideas would not have been strange or objectionable to most of John's original readers. But what about today? How do people these days look upon such ideas? Does the fact that some people do not acknowledge such ideas make them no longer true or valid? Are they true and valid for you? Explain. *Lord, help me make these unfamiliar ideas real and clear to...*

4. John 1.1-13 introduces the idea that God sends people to bear witness to the life which is to be found in His Word. Do you suppose John intends his gospel to help those who have been sent for this work? In what ways? *Lord, today send me to...*

5. Verses 1-3 and 12 and 13 form what is called in literature an *inclusio*, a device used for structuring a passage and giving emphasis to certain ideas. Verses 1-3 start with God and His *work of creating*. Verses 12 and 13 deal with the same ideas, but with more specific focus, though both are clearly the work of God. So the passage circles back to its beginning, but with greater depth. What does this suggest about what matters most to God? What should matter most to us? Pray together your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"The eternal Son of God who was in the world and through whom the world was made has come for a time into the world and for no other reason than our salvation, that is, that he give us the understanding to perceive the true God. For no one was able to come to life without perception of the divinity; no one was able to perceive God unless he himself taught us." *The Venerable Bede (672-735 AD)*

It is impossible to appreciate the beauty, gravity, immensity, and profound spirituality of John 1.1-13 apart from the kind of slow, contemplative reading we are giving this passage, and we will give the entire gospel of John. Take a moment and jot down the main ideas, feelings, and conclusions you

draw from reading and meditating on John 1.1-13. Talk with a Christian friend about your reading. Download a copy of the PDF for this week's study, and invite your friend to join you for this contemplative passage through the gospel of John.

Closing Prayer

My lips shall utter praise,
For You teach me Your statutes.
My tongue shall speak of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness.
Let Your hand become my help,
For I have chosen Your precepts.
I long for Your salvation, O LORD,
And Your law *is* my delight.
Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;
And let Your judgments help me.
I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
Seek Your servant,
For I do not forget Your commandments.

Psalm 119.171-176

Psalm 119.171-176 ([*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*](#))

With our lips we praise You, Jesus,
For You teach us, full and free.
Now Your Word will ever please us;
Your commandments true shall be.
Let Your hand come forth to ease us;
We Your Word choose gratefully.

For Your saving grace we plead, Lord,
And Your Law is our delight.
We to live and praise You need, Lord,
All Your help by day and night.
Straying sheep, we do not heed, Lord;
Come and seek us by Your might!

The Gospel of John: John 1.1-13

For reflection or discussion

1. In what ways is the beginning of John's gospel different from the beginning of the other gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)?
2. What words in John 1.1-13 do you think would *appeal* to people, or make them want to read on in John's story? Is there anything to learn for us, who have been sent to bear witness to the Word?
3. Has your understanding of the Word of God been impacted at all by your reading of John 1.1-13? Is your sense of the Word – His nature, power, reach, and so forth – in any way changed? Explain.
4. In what ways is our world today much like the world in which John wrote his gospel? Did that deter John? Should it deter us? Explain.
5. What are the most important lessons you have gleaned from this study of John 1.1-13? How are you beginning to implement these lessons into your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.