

John 1:1-5 "In a Class All By Himself" [\\*\\*\\*\[1\]](#)

Main Idea: According to John 1:1-5, there are two things about Jesus that put Him in a class all by Himself.

I. Jesus' identity puts Him in a class all by Himself (1-2).

A. Jesus is the Logos, the Word (1).

1. He was in the beginning.
2. He was with God.
3. He was God (and still is).

B. Jesus is unlike any other person (2).

1. Many who say they believe in Jesus believe in a very different Jesus.
2. The only Jesus that can save you from your sins is the true Jesus.

II. Jesus' accomplishments put Him in a class all by Himself (3-5).

A. Jesus is the Life-bringer (3).

1. He created everything.
2. Not one thing exists apart from Him.

B. Jesus is the Light-bearer (4-5).

1. He revealed the way.
2. He is the way.
3. Not everyone sees the way.

Take Inventory: Since there is great confusion about the person of Jesus...

1. Do I know this Jesus?
2. Is there evidence I know Him?
3. Who can I share Him with this week?

I want to know Jesus, and I want to know Him better. I want the same for you, and for our neighbors in this community. And for this world. It's that simple.

But it's not that simple. We're so prone to get distracted, by sinful pursuits, yes, but also by good things that usurp the place of the best in our hearts.

That's what this new series is all about. This morning we are beginning a pursuit I've simply entitled,

## *Getting to Know Jesus Better: A Journey through the Gospel of John.*

It boils down to this, three things. One, knowing Jesus is why we're here. Two, knowing Jesus is the key to ultimate joy. And three, the Gospel of John can help us get to know Jesus better!

God wants us to know His Son. That's why He gave us four Gospel accounts that present His life to us, one by Matthew, another by Mark, another by Luke, and the last by John.

John's Gospel is different from the other three Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "synoptic" gospels because they look similar (from the Greek *syn* meaning "together" and *opsis* meaning "appearance"). But the Gospel of John doesn't follow the pattern of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for reasons we'll discuss a little later.

Look at John's Gospel. Scan its pages. What stands out to you? When I read John, a couple of things grab my attention. First are the stories. This Gospel is full of true stories that show us how Jesus interacted with and transformed the lives of individual people. For instance, walk through the book and you'll see Jesus interacting with the following people...

In chapter one—John the Baptist, the call of Andrew and John the son of Zebedee, as well as the call of Philip and Nathanael

In chapter two—Mary the mother of Jesus at the wedding in Cana, the money-changers in the temple

In chapter three—Nicodemus

In chapter four—an unnamed Samaritan woman and other Samaritans, then a royal officer in Capernaum

In chapter five—an invalid at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem

In chapter seven—Jesus biological half-brothers

In chapter eight—a woman caught in adultery

In chapter nine—a man born blind

In chapter eleven—Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead

In chapter twelve—Mary who anointed Jesus with costly perfume

In chapter thirteen—Washing the 24 dirty feet of the 12 apostles

In chapter fourteen—a conversation with doubting Thomas

In chapter twenty—a post-resurrection appearance to doubting Thomas

In chapter twenty-one—Jesus restores repentant Peter to Himself and to ministry

So John gives us stories that demonstrate how Jesus interacted with and transformed the lives of real people, all kinds of people—rich people, poor people, religious people, sin-wasted people, all kinds. And He does the same today.

The second thing that stands out to me as I read the Gospel of John are Jesus' teaching sessions. John includes several of Jesus' "sermons", such as...

Chapter five—His teaching about His unique identity

Chapter six—His "Bread of Life" message

Chapter seven—His controversial message given to the religious leaders at the Feast of Tabernacles

Chapter eight—His “Light of the world” message

Chapter ten—His “I am the Good Shepherd” message

Chapters 14-16—His upper room discourse

Chapter 17—His high priestly prayer

So what do we find in John? We find stories and sermons. We find what Jesus did and what Jesus said. We find a book that can help us know Jesus better!

As we open John's Gospel, we find a powerful prologue in John 1:1-18. Commentator William Barclay suggests, “The first chapter of the Fourth Gospel is one of the greatest adventures of religious thought ever achieved by the mind of man.” Our focus this morning will be the first five verses. According to John 1:1-5, there are two things about Jesus that put Him in a class all by Himself.

### I. Jesus' identity puts Him in a class all by Himself (1-2).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

At one level, John's message is both clear and easy to understand. God became a man and lived among us, says 14. That's what happened in the incarnation. But at a deeper level, John 1 raises all sorts of questions. Who is the *Word*? If it's Jesus, why doesn't John just say *Jesus*? And why all the figurative language, terms like light and darkness (4)?

Awhile back I had breakfast with a young man who was searching. I encouraged him to read the Gospel of John in order to get to know who Jesus was and what Jesus had done. The next time I saw him I asked him if he'd done so. He said he tried, but couldn't make sense of what he was reading. Perhaps you've felt the same way.

What's going on in John's Gospel? Thankfully, John himself tells us in the theme verses, John 20:30-31. Notice verse 30, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.” That is, John's book is a biography of the life of Jesus, but it's not exhaustive. In fact, as John admits in the last verse of his book, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written (21:25).”

So John is selective. He's writing with a purpose in mind. He knew God had already given the world three biographical accounts of Jesus' life—written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>[2]</sup> John wrote his account more than sixty years after Jesus went back to heaven. He has a different audience in mind. He's trying to introduce a primarily non-Jewish audience to Christ. He's talking to a generation, like ours, that didn't know Jesus. They'd never seen nor heard Jesus like he had.

And what's his aim in this gospel? He explains in 20:31, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” This is an evangelistic book, a book intended to help non-Christians get to know the truth about Jesus, not just for knowledge sake, but so they would believe in Jesus the Christ and by believing experience life through Him.

That's a pretty bold claim, isn't it? To suggest that a person, namely Jesus, is the key to life, you'd better back that up John. What makes Him so special that we should believe in Him? That's exactly what John takes twenty-one chapters to show us.

And where does John begin? At the beginning? No. If you want to know Jesus, you must go back further than the beginning! And when you do, as John did in 1:1-2, you discover two insights into Jesus' unique identity.

**A. Jesus is the Logos, the Word (1).** "In the beginning was the *Logos*." *Logos* is the Greek term translated "Word" in our English Bibles. We know from verse 14 that the *Logos* is Jesus, but why didn't John just say so, "In the beginning was Jesus"? Why does He call Him the *Logos*?

Please realize that though Christianity began amongst the Jews, it quickly spread beyond the Jews. As historian William Barclay suggests, "Within thirty years of Jesus' death it had traveled all over Asia Minor and Greece and had arrived in Rome. By A.D. 60 there must have been a hundred thousand Greeks in the church for every Jew who was a Christian."

What's more, please realize that many Jewish ideas were completely strange to the Greeks. For example, the Greeks had never heard of the Messiah. The Jews had, so in evangelizing Jews it was quite meaningful to announce, "The Messiah has come! It's Jesus!" But a Greek would hear that and respond, "So the Messiah came. Big deal."

That category meant very little to the non-Jewish world. So what's the best way to present Jesus to non-Jewish, even pagan people? How do you present Christianity in a way that makes sense to Greek-thinking people?

That was the challenge John faced around A.D. 85 or 90. He was living in a Greek city (Ephesus). How could he reach the Greeks? What could he tell them about Jesus that could open their eyes to His relevance?

Then it dawned on him. There was a term that would appeal to both Jews and Greeks, a term which summed up the unique identity of Jesus. Jesus is the *Logos*, the Word.

A word is a powerful thing. During W.W.II, when Britain was facing extinction under the constant barrage of the Nazi bombers, Winston Churchill gave hope to a nation. How? By speaking to his people over the radio. He knew the power of a word.

When John Knox preached in the days of the Reformation in Scotland, it was said that the voice of that one man put more courage into the hearts of his hearers than ten thousand trumpets braying in their ears. In Knox we see the power of a word.<sup>[3]</sup>

What's in a word? We communicate with words. We speak them and write them. Words are symbols that represent something else. For instance, when I mention the letters A-P-P-L-E, in your mind's eye you see a shiny, round, probably red object, don't you? You don't eat the word, but the word is a symbol that represents and communicates something.

Jesus is the *Word*. But the English term "word" really doesn't do justice to the Greek *Logos*. In Greek thought the term *Logos* goes back to 560 B.C. and a philosopher named Heraclitus.<sup>[4]</sup> He taught that everything was changing from day to day. His famous illustration was that it's impossible to step twice into the same river. You step into a river, then step out. If you step back in, it's a different river, for the water flows on and has changed. To Heraclitus everything was like that, in a constant state of flux.

But if that's the case, why isn't the world in complete chaos? The answer of Heraclitus was that all this change and flux was not haphazard. It was controlled and ordered and followed a pattern. What controlled the pattern was the *Logos*, the *word*, the *reason* of God. To Heraclitus, the *Logos* was the principle of order in the universe, the mind of God that controlled the world and every person in it.

As time passed, the Stoics picked up the concept, too. The Stoics asked questions like, "What keeps the stars in their courses? What makes the tides ebb and flow? What brings the seasons around at their appointed times?" And their answer was, the *Logos* of God. The *logos* is the power that puts sense into the world.

Then came another figure in the Greek world, Philo, a first century, Jewish philosopher. Philo used the term *logos* no fewer than 1,300 times in his writings. He said that the *logos* was the oldest thing in the world, the instrument through which God made the world. He said that the *logos* was the thought of God stamped on the universe, and that the *logos* was the intermediary between the world and God.

Now plug that background into John 1:1. It's as if John is saying to the readers of his day, "For centuries people have been thinking and writing about the *logos*, the power that made this world, and the power that controls this world, the power by which men come into contact with God. I'm here to tell you that the *logos* is not an abstract power. It is a person, and His name is Jesus! He's the *Logos*."<sup>[5]</sup>

Perhaps you're wondering, "What is so unique about Jesus?" In verse 1 John informs us of three truths about the *Logos*.

1. *He was in the beginning.* "In the beginning was the Word." In the beginning. Sound familiar? Those are the first words of Genesis. John equates the event of Genesis 1:1 with the *Logos*. In the beginning [Greek word, *arche* from which we get "archeology"], when God created the world, the *Logos* was. This speaks of Jesus' eternity. There's no antecedent to Him. He predates time. Dear friend, please know that the *Logos* existed before the manger. He was in the beginning. A second truth...

2. *He was with God.* John states, "And the Word was with God." Notice the preposition--not *under* God, not *after* God, not *above* God, and not *behind* God, but "with" God [lit. *pros Theon*, "towards God"]. The word suggests that there has always been the closest possible connection between the *Logos* and God. There's a unique intimacy between the Father and Jesus. Commentator William Hendriksen translates the phrase, "And the Word was face to face with God."

This same John wrote another book which we call 1 John, and began it with similar words: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the *Logos* [Word] of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was *with the Father* and has appeared to us ( 1 John 1:1-2)."

The Bible says that no one can see God and live (Ex. 33:20). But the Word did. He was *with* God. Truth #3...

3. *He was God (and still is).* "And the *Logos* was God." Nothing higher can be said. All that can be said of God can be said of the Word.

Notice that John says, "The Word was God," not that "God was the Word." And realize that in the text there's no definite article before God. That indicates that the Word does not by himself make up the entire Godhead.<sup>[6]</sup> The Bible teaches that God exists as *three* persons, three persons equal in essence, but distinct in function.

We are speaking about what is known as the pre-existence of Christ. That's hard for us to fathom, but here's a very practical implication. It means that God was always like Jesus. Sometimes people tend to think that God was stern and wrathful (especially in OT times). And then Jesus came, and changed God's anger into love. Not so. God has always been like Jesus was when He walked the earth.

In verse 2 we discover a second insight into Jesus' unique identity.

**B. Jesus is unlike any other person (2).** "He was with God in the beginning." You'll notice that verse 2 gives us no new information, but merely repeats truths #1 & #2 from verse 1. Why the repetition? For emphasis. Because it's so amazing. Because the subject of this biography is so unique, so one of a kind. It's as if John is saying, "Yes, you heard me correctly! The One I'm writing about is truly in a class all by Himself!"

May I ask you a question? If you profess to be a Christian, is this the Jesus in which you believe? If you don't believe in the *Logos*, the one who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was and still is

God, then you don't know the Jesus of the Bible.

It's sad, yet true.

1. *Many who say they believe in Jesus believe in a very different Jesus.* When the Mormon Tabernacle choir sings, "O Come, Let Us Adore Him," please realize they're not singing about this Jesus. When someone says, "O, I believe in Jesus, but I don't believe He's the only way to God," they haven't grasped who the *Logos* truly is. My friend...

2. *The only Jesus that can save you from your sins is the true Jesus.* The true Jesus is the *Logos*, the One who's in a class all by Himself, the God-man. Truly, Jesus Christ possesses a unique identity that puts Him in a class all by Himself. That's what qualifies Him to be your Savior and why He deserves your worship

## II. Jesus' accomplishments put Him in a class all by Himself (3-5).

Listen to the resume of the *Logos* in verses 3-5, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

In his prologue, John introduces us to several key themes which will run throughout his book. Here we see two themes that pertain to Jesus' unique work. What has Jesus done that's unrivaled by any other being in the universe? John highlights two accomplishments...

**A. Jesus is the Life-bringer (3).** Listen to the KJV's reading, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." What's that saying about Jesus as the Life-bringer? Two things, one positive, one negative...

1. *He created everything.* Yes, Genesis 1:1 states that God created the universe, but John 1:3 clarifies that it was done literally *through* the *Logos*. That is, as Leon Morris clarifies, "The Father created, but He did it 'through' the Word."<sup>[7]</sup> Both were at work.

Colossians 1:15-17 elaborates, "He [the Son, 14] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created...All things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Let that sink in. As the Life-bringer, Jesus created all things. You are not here by random chance of evolutionary processes. This universe is the handiwork of a Master Craftsman, a Creator, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

May I offer a sober warning? This is why the creation/evolution issue is so critical. Satan knows that if he can destroy the foundation, the house will fall. He's perfectly willing to let you believe in a wimpish, humanitarian Jesus. But if he can get you hoodwinked by the lie that this universe is here by chance and not divine design, then he's got you believing in an imitation Jesus. According to verse 3, the true Jesus created everything. But John gets even more specific at the end of the verse and tells us...

2. *Not one thing exists apart from Him.* Do you realize how great Jesus is? There's not one thing that exists that He didn't make. Even Satan was a created angel, as were the demons who rebelled and were expelled from heaven.

Dear friend, you can trust Jesus, and here's why. He's the all powerful Life-giver. Nothing exists apart from Him. Nothing surprises Him--it simply couldn't happen. Even the Cross was no surprise to Him.

Do you remember what Jesus told Pilate during His trial? In response to Pilate's barb, "Don't you realize I have the power either to free you or to crucify you?", Jesus replied in John 19:11, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

The more I learn about Jesus the more amazed I am by the Cross, aren't you? The One who died for us is the One who gave us life, the Creator, the Most powerful Being in the universe! That means to reject Jesus is to commit the greatest act of treason imaginable. He's the Life-giver. Indeed, He's *your* life-giver.

What else is true of Jesus?

**B. Jesus is the Light-bearer (4-5).** If John's giving us Jesus' resume of accomplishments, and verse 3 speaks of His work in creation, verses 4-5 seem to sum up His work in redemption: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it [or, "the darkness comprehended it not," as in the KJV]."

Jesus is the Life-giver, but those to whom He gave life lost their way in darkness. So the Life-giver became the Light-bearer. And here's what He did, three things.

1. *He revealed the way.* According to verse 4, life is in Him. In John's Gospel the word "life" occurs more than 35 times and its verbal form another 15 times. What qualifies Jesus to help a world under the sentence of death? This fact. Life is in Him. He created life the first time, and He alone can restore that which is dead back to life.

How does He do it? Verse 4 says that the life became the "light of men." In John 8:12 Jesus announced, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." And in John 9:5 He reiterates, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Are you tired of living in the dark? Does life not make sense to you? Then look to the Light-bearer. Jesus revealed the way. That's not all...

2. *He is the way.* It's not just what He *did*, but what He does. Notice John's use of the present tense in verse 5, "The light *shines* in the darkness." Yes, Jesus came to be the Light that would show people lost in the darkness the way to go to get back to God. But He does more. He not only shows us the way, He *is* the way. Remember His words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6)."

Indeed, as John says, the light *is shining* in the darkness. Present tense. It's happening right now. Do you remember the day the Light shone in your life?

Light and darkness are opposites, but they are not opposites of equal power. Light is stronger than darkness. One little candle can dispel a roomful of darkness.

But why doesn't everybody come out of the dark? Verse 5 tells us, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." The fact is...

3. *Not everyone sees the way.* The final verb in verse 5 is difficult to translate (*katalambanein*). It can be used of extinguishing a fire. That's what the world tries to do with the Light, doesn't it? Extinguish it, get rid of it, but still the Light shines. The word can also mean "to apprehend," which can be taken in two ways; one, the darkness hasn't been able to apprehend the light (like we'd say the law wasn't able to apprehend the criminal; Schofield takes it in this sense "the darkness *overcame* it not"); or, it can indicate that the darkness can't apprehend the truth in the sense of "understanding" it (as the NIV suggests).

It's true. The Light shines in the darkness, but not everyone sees the way. Jesus said in John 3:19, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." Apart from the gracious working of the Spirit of God, no man can see the Light.

Who is Jesus really? He is in a class all by Himself. How so? His identity and His accomplishments put Him there.

## Take Inventory: Since there is great confusion about the person of Jesus...

Ask yourself three questions.

1. *Do I know this Jesus?* My heart is gripped by the haunting thought that many who gathered for services a week ago on Easter, many who even profess to know Jesus, know a different Jesus than the One we've seen this morning in John 1. Perhaps it's true of you.

Is this the Jesus you know, the eternal *Logos*, the Life-bringer and Light-bearer, the Lord of the universe? Do you know *Him*?

You say, "I'm not sure. How can I tell?" One way is to look at your life. Be honest. Is there evidence that Jesus is the Lord of *your life*? The kind of evidence John mentions in 1 John 2:3, "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands." Do you delight to obey Jesus commands? Husbands, have you been loving your wives as Jesus commanded? Young people, have you been obeying your parents as Jesus commanded? If Jesus is truly your Lord, you will. In everything you do, you'll want to please Him.

So ask yourself this second question...

2. *Is there evidence I know Him?* Verse 11 says, "He came to His own but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." Have you truly believed in Jesus? Is there evidence?

Let me talk about one specific kind of evidence. As you know, back in February the country of Chile was devastated by a massive 8.8 magnitude earthquake. Thousands of homes collapsed, and while the death toll was relatively small (as compared to Haiti), millions of people were affected.

One such person was Pastor Victor Oliva. The earthquake caused major damage to the church building where the congregation he pastors once met. In fact, the situation was so bad that the facility could not be repaired.

I love Pastor Oliva's response. "In a sense, the collapse of the physical walls of the church has pushed the congregation outside the four walls to serve the community."<sup>[8]</sup>

Do you see the evidence of true faith in those words? It's easy to say you know Jesus and want others to know Him. But how you respond when you lose your church building is a revealer of how important knowing Jesus and making Him known truly is to you. Pastor Oliva knows Jesus and consequently he's seeing the devastation of a terrible earthquake as an opportunity to make Jesus known.

3. *Who can I share Him with this week?* Think about the people God has placed in your life, a neighbor in need, a classmate who's hurting, a person at work who's going through a hard time. Let's share Jesus with them this week!

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>[1]</sup> This sermon has been adapted from an earlier message preached at WBC on 12/18/2005.

<sup>[2]</sup> This explains why John doesn't give us the record of Jesus' birth like we find in Matthew and Luke. Nor does He tell us about Jesus' childhood.

<sup>[3]</sup> Observation by William Barclay.

<sup>[4]</sup> See Barclay, pp. 34ff.

<sup>[5]</sup> There's a rich Hebrew background to *Logos* too. What's more, the "word" theme runs throughout Scripture: Deut 8:3 "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Isaiah 55:11 "So is my *word* that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty." Rev. 19:13 "His name is the *Word* of God." Rev 22:13 says, "He is the alpha and omega [the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; What do you do with letter? Make a *word*]." Heb 1:1-3 "In time past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets...but in



these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful *word*."

[\[6\]](#) Observation by Tasker.

[\[7\]](#) Leon Morris, *John*

[\[8\]](#) Taken from Samaritan's Purse April 2010 letter.