**In the Beginning**

The Gospel of John

**JOHN 1:1-5**

## In this verse-by-verse format, we’re teaching (and asking others to teach) by using these four questions: 1. What does it say? 2. What does it mean? 3. What does it mean to us? 4. How should we respond in faith?

## **INTRO**

Dr. Steve Schell shared these thoughts before he taught this passage:

*I think we find God’s ways mysterious, not because they are so complex we can’t understand them but because they are so good, and we are not, that they just don’t make sense to us. God is good at a level that at times shocks us, or to be honest, may even trouble us. He does things we would never have even thought of doing. I believe it’s because we don’t hate sin like He hates it, and we don’t love people like He loves them, and frankly, most of us are way too proud to humble ourselves to the extent that He did–which is why this opening passage in the gospel of John is so difficult to comprehend. There may be no portion of the Bible which has been more furiously debated, picked apart, retranslated or explained in the most bizarre ways than this. Apparently the truth it contains disturbs a lot of people; they feel compelled to “correct” John’s theology, which is ironic because John wrote these words to correct their theology. So instead of trying to reinterpret what John reveals about God, let’s listen to him with an open mind and let him show us things that will amaze us, that will drive us to ask the question: “What kind of God would do such a thing?”*

**2 Peter 1:20–21** **(ESV)** *“knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.* ***21*** *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

**John 1:1–5 (ESV)** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

## **READ VERSE 1**

Like all New Testament writers, John wrote his books in Greek, a much more broadly used language than Aramaic or Hebrew. By using Greek, the writings of the NT could travel, and be taught and understood far and wide. By the time John wrote this book, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament called, “The Septuagint,” had been around for nearly three centuries. Just as we use English translations of the Bible today, most scholars agree that Jesus and the apostles likely used the Septuagint as their primary Bible to read, study, memorize and quote. One reason for this belief is that the Septuagint is quoted—word for word—by New Testament authors over 80 times. I bring this up because John begins his Gospel with the identical words of this Greek translation of the Old Testament. This was no coincidence. John wanted every person reading to know that his testimony about Jesus does not begin with Gabriel’s announcement to the virgin Mary. Nor from his birth in Bethlehem. But, rather, at the same place the whole Bible begins in Genesis 1:1. At creation, with the words, “In the beginning.” By using those words, John was clearly saying to his readers, *“Do you remember the how the Bible begins? How it says, ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth?’ I want to help you to understand more clearly who God is, and how, exactly, He created them.”*

In John 1:1 John declares that there was another Person involved in creation, whom he calls the “Word.” Verse 14 clarifies who this is:

***John 1:14 (ESV)*** *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The word translated “with” means “beside” or “facing toward.” Think about this, in the very first verse sentence of his Gospel John establishes Jesus’ divinity, not only as the Son of God, but as God Himself. Here’s a literal translation of John 1:1 reads in the original Greek text: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (beside, facing toward) God, and God was the Word” (literal). John is saying, *“I need you to know—right up front—who I am going to tell you about. He is God… He is our Creator.”* John is not suggesting that Jesus supplants, or replaces, the Father, but rather that He was every bit as much a part of creation as Father God.

## **READ VERSES 1 & 2**

The Greek word for “beginning” that the Septuagint used to translate Genesis 1:1, and that John also used in verses 1 & 2 here describes the source, the origin, the very first cause of something. There is another Greek word which John might have used instead, but that word means “beginning” in the sense of being the first one in a series of things. But John couldn’t use that word because he was talking about the moment when all things, other than God, began. And Jesus, the Word, wasn’t part of that moment because He isn’t a created being. He is divine. He existed before creation began.

## **READ VERSE 3**

In verse 3, John makes sure that no one would mistake his point. The two Greek words that the ESV translates as “not any thing” could be translated, “not even one single thing.” This truth is also found in other parts of the NT, such as:

***Colossians 1:16 (ESV)*** *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

***1 Corinthians 8:6 (ESV)*** *yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*

This verse further clarifies John’s reason for calling Jesus “the Word.” God spoke the universe into existence by speaking through Him [Jesus]­­––every part of it.

The relationship that John describes between the Father and the Son is on a level unknown to sinful humanity.

* It is one of “unity,” perfect harmony.
* It is one of “submission,” Jesus completely and joyfully yielding to the will of the Father.

In these first three verses John is saying, *“As I explain to you what I experienced… what He said … how He lived … how He loved … how He served … and what He came to do … I just want you to remember who I’m talking about … He’s the Creator of all things.”*

## **READ VERSE 4**

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

***John 5:26 (ESV)*** *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*

When God first formed Adam out of clay, he was as lifeless as a corpse in a coffin. But then He breathed ... and Adam took his first breath, opened his eyes and saw for the first time all of God’s beautiful creation ... and possibly God Himself kneeling and leaning over him.  
  
The breath of life was so strong ... so alive ... that it’s still passing down to babies in the womb some 6000 years later.  
  
Today as you sit, or stand, or whatever you’re doing, you are alive ... able to breathe ... and move ... and speak ... and think ... because Jesus breathed physical life that found its way into you.  
  
Let’s say to Jesus, “I am alive because of Your life in me. You breathed the breath of life, so I live.”  
  
But there’s yet another level happening ... which should not be overlooked...  
  
***John 20:19–22 (ESV)*** *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”* ***20*** *When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* ***21*** *Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”* ***22*** *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.*

The word John used for, “breathed,” is the same Greek word used in the Septuagint to translate the word “breathed” in Genesis 2:7 when the Bible says, God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”

And we see Jesus still breathing on people today ... He’s breathing spiritual life into people who already have physical life.

But how?

***2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)*** *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*

As the Word of God is being taught today ... He’s doing it again ... you are being moved spiritually by His breath ... by His words. This is spiritual life.  
  
Will you receive it? Will you inhale? Do it now. Say, “Lord, I receive Your spiritual life into me.”

## **READ VERSE 5**

Up until now, John has been speaking about Jesus in the past tense, but in this verse he puts one statement into the present tense because he’s telling us about something that is still happening today. He says, “the light shines in the darkness.” We will see that John repeatedly uses the term “light” to mean God’s revealed truth, and “darkness” to mean spiritual confusion and deception. So when he says the “life” in Jesus became the “light of men,” he’s talking about those people who saw “life” coming from Jesus through the way He loved people, the signs and miracles He performed, the impactful words He spoke, and how “the light” came on for them.

But this last phrase of verse 5, *“and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

The NKJV and the NASB1995, among others, translate this, *“and the darkness did not comprehend it.”*

The new NASB2020 translate it, *“and the darkness did not grasp it.”*

So here’s the question today… “Do you grasp it?” Do you understand that your Creator came to save you … and that you must accept the life and truth that He brings?

**WAYS TO RESPOND TODAY:**  
  
For some, you need to make Jesus Lord of your life and be baptized in water ... today, **repent of your sins and receive the free gift of salvation**.  
  
For others, you’ve been baptized, but the life that Jesus is breathing into you today is giving you the spiritual strength to repent and break free from sin ... to make some hard and permanent decisions which will remove you from the devil’s grip. Take that step ... **repent and make those permanent decisions today**.  
  
And for all of us, this spiritual life is intended to be breathed out in prayer ... and with the gospel to other people. People need to know ... they need to hear about this. **Invite someone to come with you next week or watch the online service.**  
**And some of you are called to teach this in your own house church** ... and Pastor Jerry will help you to do it. You can use the resources that he used, and even his message.  
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