

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Word and Creation John 1:3-5

The overwhelming beauty of nature continually surrounds us. Even in the Antelope Valley. You might say, how could anyone see anything beautiful in the desert? It really isn't that hard! Let me read for you something I came across written by a man named Matt Long.

"I lie on a boulder in the bottom of a desert canyon. The boulder has been warmed by the intense heat of the previous day, and even this far into the night it retains a certain heat; almost like a living creature. I absorb the healing warmth, feeling profoundly relaxed. I am glad to be alive. On all sides, towering sandstone walls lean over me; protecting me. Below me is the dry river bed. Majestic cottonwoods grow along it; their tortured forms testament to their will to survive. The green leaves are turned quicksilver by the full moon. A gentle, warm breeze whispers through the trees, telling secrets. The breeze is strangely perfumed with jasmine and other exotic aromas. The clean smell of warm sandstone is omnipresent. Warm, velvet sand covers the landscape; broken here and there by fragrant sagebrush. Everything is lit with an ethereal other worldly radiance from the bright moon. High on a cliff wall cling the ruins of an Anasazi granary. The ancient ghosts of this vanished civilization seem to be keeping constant vigil over all. The arching dome of the sky above me is a deep, deep sable blue. There are millions of brightly glittering stars, shining like beacons in a sea of emptiness. The moon is so bright as to be almost blinding, and an eerie rainbow of light rings. I lie on the boulder, trying to retain the memory of the shimmering radiance of this astral pane before it is gone forever. Peace, tranquility, and a deep sense of well-being are eternal here. This perfumed desert night is eternal, surviving always, but seldom found.

You might think that Matt Long saw and experienced everything of beauty that possibly could be experienced in that particular desert landscape but he actually failed to record the most beautiful thing of all. This leads us back into the text of the fourth Gospel.

What have we learned so far in our study? We have learned that the Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, a member of Christ's inner circle, wrote the fourth Gospel. We have also learned why he wrote this Gospel. He wrote this Gospel so that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and be saved according to John 20:31.

If we reject the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, or in other words "God the Son," then we have rejected Christ, as He has been revealed in the Scriptures, and we cannot be saved. The deity of Christ is therefore a very important theological truth that John not only emphasizes in his purpose statement in **John 20:31** but throughout his Gospel including the introduction.

In the introduction, which consists of eighteen verses, John makes it very clear to us that the only way we are going to know God is through Christ. What does **John 1:18** say? "**No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.**" Because Jesus is the only person who can reveal God to us, John chose to refer to Him as "The Word." What makes Jesus qualified to reveal God to man?

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John gives us a list of different things that qualifies Him in the first eighteen verses of John 1. First, what we learn about the Word and God in John 1:1-2 makes Jesus qualified.

What did we learn about the Word and God over the last two weeks? We learned that the Word, like God, was eternal. How does **John 1:1** begin? "**In the beginning was the Word**" or in other words "**At the beginning of time was continuing the word.**" What else did we learn? We learned that the relationship between the Word and God throughout eternity was close. We see this in the very next phrase, "**In the beginning (at the beginning of time) was the Word (was continuing the Word) and the Word was with God.**" It could be paraphrased "**and the Word was face to face with God.**" Throughout eternity the Word and God have been locked in an intimate and joyous embrace.

But the Word did not simply share a close relationship with God throughout eternity. We learned that the Word was God. This is what the verse says. "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**"

As you know the Jehovah's Witnesses have tried to retranslate the last phrase of John 1:1 to read "and the Word was a god." This of course is not a translation that we feel is at all accurate and I hope that you would feel the same. But believing this and being prepared to deal with Jehovah's Witnesses about the best translation of the last phrase of John 1:1 are two totally different things. In order to be prepared we must first of all give ourselves permission to speak to them based on biblical convictions. Secondly, we must be prepared to treat them gently and with respect based on a biblical mandate. And lastly we must be familiar with the grammatical issues involved in how this last phrase is translated.

Hopefully after being here last week you are not simply better prepared to share with Jehovah's Witnesses, but hopefully you now have a better handle on why the phrase "and the Word was God" is the best translation of John 1:1. Do you now feel adequate to actually engage them in conversation about this last phrase? I don't know, but hopefully you are prepared at least to share with them your testimony of how you came to salvation and what this means to you. And if this is all you are able to share with them you have done well.

John calls Jesus "The Word" in the introduction because He alone is able to reveal God to man. Throughout the introduction John gives us a list of reasons why He is so qualified to do this. First of all, what we learn about the Word and God in John 1:1-2 makes Him qualified. What is another reason John gives?

Secondly, what we learn about the Word and creation in John 1:3-5 makes Jesus qualified.

I would hope that after we finish the study of these three verses that you would not only be more inclined to see the beauty of the desert that surrounds us but that you would also see the beauty that surrounds us perhaps in more relational terms.

Let me read these three verses for you. "**All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (4) In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**" What did John say? "**All things came into being by Him.**" Who is the "Him" that John is

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referring to? The "Him" that John is referring to in this verse is "the Word"; who was in the beginning with God and was God. John is telling us that all things came into being through the Word (John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2).

This should in no way surprise us! What did John 1:1 tell us, which was also confirmed in John 1:2? **"In the beginning (at the beginning of time when the heavens and earth were created) was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."** If the Word was in fact in the beginning with God and the Word was God and we also know from **Genesis 1:1** that God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, then certainly it should not surprise us that John would now tell us that the Word was responsible for all things coming into being.

John 1:3 is telling us that the Word, which we know to be Jesus, is responsible for everything that exists. This is not the only place in the Scriptures that we find this teaching. Look down a little bit further in the chapter and read John 1:10. **"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."** Then we read in **Colossians 1:16** these words, **"For by Him (Jesus) all things were created, both in the heavens, and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created by Him and for Him."** Then we come across the same teaching in **Hebrews 1:1-2**. **"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, (2) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."** Who brought all things into existence? The Word, the Lord Jesus Christ has brought all things into existence.

Though John 1:3 is the logical deduction from the statements made in the first two verses of John, those statements will not make sense to us unless we are able to accept the doctrine of the Trinity.

What exactly is the doctrine of the Trinity? The doctrine of the Trinity simply teaches that though God is one He exists in three persons.

Who created the heavens and the earth? If you answer God created the heavens and the earth based on Genesis 1:1, you are correct. If you answer Jesus, or in other words "the Word" created the heavens and the earth based on John 1:3, you are correct.

Does this mean that God and the Word are the same person? And the answer is no! They are two separate persons. That is why the Apostle John writes in **John 1:1 "and the word was with God."** If there are two separate persons does this mean that there are two Gods or even three Gods if we also include the Holy Spirit? And the answer is no! There is only one God. What does **Deuteronomy 6:4** tell us? **"Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!"** All of this can be confusing if we don't understand the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

But if we understand the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, we know that the Scriptures are equally correct when it says, "In the beginning God created" or when it says, "all things came into being by Him."

But even if the whole of the Godhead is involved in creation this does not mean that they are necessarily functioning in the same identical way. Though the Godhead may share the same attributes and be seen as acting in unison they differ in certain properties or functions.

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That is why God the Father can send God the Son into this world as His sacrificial lamb to take away the sins of mankind followed by God the Son; after His ascension, sending God the Spirit into this world to establish, strengthen, and complete the church.

Coming back to our passage, let us now apply what we have just learned. When God the Son acted to create the heavens and earth, the whole Godhead can be viewed as acting in unison. That is why Genesis 1:1 could say, "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth." But they should not all be seen as functioning in exactly the same way. The real workhorse in the Godhead in respect to producing all that exists was the Word. In order to drive this point home John goes on in **verse 3** and says, "**and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.**" Every created thing that exists in the heavens and the earth owes its existence to the Word without exception.

Was God the Father involved in creation? Yes! Was God the Holy Spirit involved in creation? Yes! But it was God the Son, or in other words "The Word" that was uniquely functioning to create the heavens and the earth.

This is the way it had to be. Why was Jesus called the Word? Because it's Christ's function to reveal God to man. Let me ask you this question. When you look out over all of what Christ has created, what hopefully will you see? Will you see the vast expanse of the Mojave desert stretched out before you as if it will never end enveloping you in it's sheer magnitude? Will you marvel at the sky above that sets off the hushed tones of our desert landscape during the day with its brilliant blue canopy? What will you see? I would hope you will see what Christ, or perhaps better said "The Word," is speaking to us. I would hope that you would see Christ revealing God to us. Listen to **Psalm 19:1-2. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (2) Day to day pours forth speech , And night to night reveals knowledge."** The creation of the heavens and the earth is Christ's initial attempt, as the Word, to reveal God to all of mankind. All around us are the wonders of nature. This is Christ's attempt to speak to us about the glory and majesty of God. Every day He is in a sense talking to us through His creation so that we might be pointed to God and God's greatness.

Matt Long saw a whole lot of wondrous things when he contemplated the desert landscape that he described in the paragraph that I read to you. But he failed to see or at least to write about the most wondrous thing of all. He failed to write about Christ calling out to him declaring the glory and wonder of God through the natural wonders he had experienced.

When we look out over the Antelope Valley, at all of it's natural wonders, we need to hear the voice of Christ lovingly and persistently seeking to reveal to us God in all of His majesty (Psalm 19). There are a lot of people who complain about the Antelope Valley but they need to look more closely at the true wonder of what is before us and enjoy the wonder of it in it's fullest sense.

John continues on with this theme in **verse 4**. Let us read this verse. "**In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**"

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What does John mean when he says "**In him was life, and the life was the light of men?**" If John 1:4 is read in the context of the first three verses, the terms "life" and "light" should initially be understood in respect to how those terms relate to creation.

How should we understand the phrase "In Him was life?" When John said, "In Him was life" he meant to say that Jesus, or in other words the Word, is the source of all that is alive, physically and spiritually (John 5:26-27). Listen to **John 5:26-27, "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man."** How should we understand the phrase "In Him was life?" When John said, "In Him was life" he meant to say that Jesus or the Word is the source of all that is alive, physically and spiritually.

When did Christ first manifest this life outside of Himself? It was at creation. The life that was unleashed through Christ at creation was the first light made available to men to lead them to God and therefore John says, "and the life was the light of men."

How effective was this initial light, supplied by Christ, in pointing men to God? Listen to **Romans 1:18-25. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (19) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. (20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (21) For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. "**

Obviously the light that has been made available to all of mankind to point them to God has not been particularly effective. This failure of creation is spelled out for us in **John 1:5.** Let me read this passage for you. "**And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**" We know what John means by light in this particular context. It is the life of Christ manifested in His creation. We know that this light even to this day continues to shine. But in what environment does this light that Christ provided shine? John says it shines in darkness.

What does John mean by the word "darkness"? John uses the abstract noun "darkness" to refer to a concrete meaning. "Darkness" in this verse refers to fallen mankind, darkened by sin and unbelief. This is not the only time in the New Testament in which an abstract noun acquires a concrete meaning. In **Romans 11:7, "the election"** refers to the "elect remnant." In **Romans 8:30, "the circumcision"** refers to circumcised individuals. And I believe here in **John 1:5, "darkness"** refers to individuals who have been darkened by sin and unbelief. If we understand darkness in this way, it becomes consistent with the theme of rejection that we will see in **John 1:10-11.**

Now how does the darkness, or in other words the individuals who have been darkened by sin and unbelief respond to the light? They don't! What does the verse say? "**And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**"

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Christ is speaking through the light of His creation seeking to point all of mankind to God but the world, those darkened by sin and unbelief are not listening.

CONCLUSION

What does **Psalms 19:1-2** tell us? "**The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. (2) Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.**" Who is responsible for all this? Christ, the Word of God, is responsible for all of this.

He will be pointing us to God and to His glory as long as the present heavens and earth exists. Christ through His creation will be unrelenting. Those who are unable to hear Christ's voice through His creation will at best marvel at its beauty, perhaps speaking about it, writing about it, or seeking to capture it through a myriad of different art forms. But they will have missed the most beautiful thing of all. And what is that? They will not have heard the voice of the Word of God speaking through His creation.

Why is hearing the voice of Jesus speaking through His creation more beautiful than creation itself? Hearing the voice of Jesus speaking through creation is more beautiful than even creation itself because it sets us on a path that can ultimately lead us to salvation.