



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 1:1-5

“The Word of God: The Ages Past”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now for more important things, let's turn to the reading of the Scripture this morning, and we are going to read the first 5 verses of the Gospel of John. John chapter 1 verse 1 through verse 5. The apostle writes in the opening of the prologue which is the preface to the Book of John,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness overcame it not.

May God bless this reading of his word.

[prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Today is the first in the series of expositions of the text of the Gospel of John, and the subject is “The word of God in Ages Past.” We are looking at the Gospel of John verses 1 through 5. Job has expressed the longing of the human heart for the knowledge of God when moved by the Holy Spirit he wrote, “O that I knew where I might find him that I might come even to his seat.” John the Apostle in that paragon among the gospels, what Luther called the

one tender, real, crown gospel of them all, makes the stupendous claim that the knowledge of Jesus Christ is the knowledge of God. Later on two occasions at least the Lord Jesus will stress that the individual who has known the Lord Jesus Christ has come to know the Father. We do not of course by that intend to demote the Father. There is no Jesus cult in genuine Christianity. As Augustine said, *Par hominem Christom tendus adeam Christom*. “Through the man Christ you come to the God Christ.”

William Cannon, a Bishop in the Methodist church, once wrote in one of his books, “Jesus of Nazareth is all we know of God and yet all we need to know.” That’s not all together correct but there are some good sentiments expressed there in that Jesus of Nazareth is all that we must know of God in order to be saved. The prologue which is really the preface of the Gospel of John contains practically all the central ideas of the Gospel of John. It’s concentric in its structure; each section advances the thought of the preceding. And its movement corresponds to the general movement of the book because in the Gospel of John we have revelation, and then we have a dealing with the unbelief of the nation and the Gentiles. And finally we come to a stress on the believing element or the faith of the believers. So we move from revelation to unbelief and to faith. And looking at this prologue we notice that in the first 5 verses the apostle writes about the word in eternity and among men, and then he writes about the word in history and among the Jews in verse 6 through verse 13, and finally about the word in history and among believers, and so he has moved from breadth to the details.

Many years ago I was teaching a class in theological seminary on the exegesis of the Greek text of the Gospel of John and after I had made a statement to the effect that John has presented the prologue in this way in the form of concentric circles moving from the general to the particular, one of the young men in the class, a graduate of a university who is not also

teaching in a theological seminary, said to me, “Well I was trained in university in journalism and one of the things that we were told to do in writing our articles when we were reporting was to begin with an opening statement or so in which we covered the hole of the story, and then in the following paragraphs we would fill in the details.

Now that is exactly what John has done. He has written and written broadly, and then he fills in the details in this prologue, and I think that corresponds with the fact that he tells us in chapter 20 verse 30 and 31 in the verse we looked at last Sunday that what he is doing in the Gospel of John is writing us a propaganda document. He said the Lord Jesus preformed many signs or miracles when he was here and they are not contained in this book. As I mentioned last week he says in the last verse of this book that if he had tried to put all of the mighty works that Jesus did in a book, then the world wouldn't contain the books. But what he has done is to make a selection. So as I said last week there are elect miracles and there are non-elect miracles.

Now the non-elect miracles are miracles that our Lord preformed but John has elected certain ones in order to set out the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that in believing we might have life through his name. So here is a propaganda document, and we have in the beginning a great prologue or preface to it. No book ever began more magnificent than the Gospel of John. Mark begins his story of the Lord Jesus at the River Jordan. Matthew and Luke begin their gospels with the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem, but John goes back to the very beginning of all things, even beyond history as if to say there is only one true perspective in which to see the story of Jesus of Nazareth, and that is you must look at it in the light of eternity. “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.”

Now it is doubtful that there is any statement of the Bible that is more significant than the opening statement of the Gospel of John. “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.” Here the apostle sets forth the eternity of the Son. He sets forth the community of interest that the Son had with the Father, and he concludes on the highest peak of them all, with the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we want to take a very close look at this verse and this section, but particularly this verse because it is so important. “In the beginning was the word.” Now that is a statement of the eternity of the Son of God. Any reader of the Bible in the day of John would have noticed the illusion in the very first verse to the very first verse of the Old Testament because the Old Testament begins, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In fact in the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew text the precisely identical expression is used as is used here. *ἐν ἀρχῇ* [*en archē*], God created the heavens and the earth. And then here again, *ἐν ἀρχῇ* [*en archē*] was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. So the precisely same expression is intended to make the reader realize that there is an allusion to the creation in this opening statement. “In the beginning was the word.”

Now we're not to think that this text is saying to us that when God created the heavens and the earth the word came into existence then. The word had his beginning at that time too. Oh, no that's not what he's talking about at all. He says, “In the beginning,” that is when God created the heavens and the earth, the word was. In other words, the word was already in existence when God created the heavens and the earth. He doesn't say “In the beginning the word became,” or came into existence or came to be. In fact he uses the verb “to be” here later on in several places in this very section, he will use the verb that means “to come to be” to enter into existence but not in connection with the word. He will say in verse 3, “All things came to be through him.” Verse 6, “There came a man sent from God whose name

was John.” Then in verse 14, he will say, “And the word came to be flesh that is the word took to himself an additional nature. We will talk about that later on, a human nature, but in the beginning the word was. So what he does is not only take us back to the creation, but on the way back to the eternal sanctuary of God himself. He comments, “In the beginning the word was in existence,” and so the Apostle John takes us on a quick flight back past the creation, back into the ages of ages past and says, “The word was in existence then.” He uses a form of the verb “to be” that suggests continued existence. So “In the beginning was the word.”

One of the greatest of the controversies of the early church gathered around the significant of this opening verse. There was a man by the name of Arius, who was one of the presbyters of Alexandria in Egypt, and he had a superior by the name of Alexander, and they engaged in controversy over the nature of the Son of God. Arius taught that the Lord Jesus Christ did not possess eternity of being. Eternity was not one of the qualities of him. He taught that the Son had a beginning. He was the greatest of the creatures of God and he was responsible immediately for the creation and the other creatures, but he himself had a beginning. So he denied the eternity of the Son.

Surprisingly Arius obtained a lot of followers. But there came conflict from Alexander and others, and finally at the Council of Nicaea the Arian doctrine was denounced by the Christian church, but that did not end the teaching for Arius continued to have great influence. The result was that actually the Arian Christology came to be predominant; but there was another man who succeeded Alexander who died shortly after the Council of Nicaea whose name was Athanasius. Athanasius is one of the great heroes of the Christian church. He is one of the great heroes because he saw that if the Arian doctrine prevailed—that Jesus Christ was simply a creature and that we were to worship him as Arius said—then we were

back again in heathenism and Christianity would have become nothing more than a heathen religion and would have become one of the historic relics of the past. There would not be today people who gather in the name of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and worship the true God because if the Arian doctrine is true then Christianity is false. As a matter of fact we shouldn't study Christianity at all except in so far as we might study some of the ancient mystery religions for the sake of the study of history itself.

Well finally in the Council of Constantinople the doctrine of Nicaea was affirmed again through the polemics and through the strength of character of Athanasius and others. So Arius' doctrine—*ἦν πότε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν* [ēn pote hote ouk ēn] (there was a time when he was not)—was refuted, and the Christian church came solidly to stand behind the fact that there was not a time when he did not exist. So John is telling us he did not become. He was not made. He was and he possessed the same essential nature as the Father, and those councils affirmed the fact that *homoousia* was the nature of the Son, “a like essence” with the Father.

Now one might think that this is only something of interest to students of history or the history of religions, but it is something that is very practical and important for Christians today for there are Arian-like Christologies about us, and all of us in this room are familiar with them. For example, that group known as Jehovah's Witnesses denies the eternity of the Son and in that sense they are Arian-like in their Christologies. They deny the Trinity. They deny the deity of the Son of God as well. The Mormons also deny the deity of the Son of God. They speak of him as the Son of God but they deny his eternity. They deny the Christian doctrine of the trinity. One of their leaders, one of the early Presidents of the Mormon church has said, “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become.” And so all of us, God included were once men and we are on the way to becoming gods, and we shall

eventually become gods. This the Apostle John strikes down with “In the beginning the word was and the word was with God and the word was God.”

Now when we read “the word,” what does John mean by the term “word?” It’s possible to take this in the Greek sense, for *λόγος* [*logos*] was a very important word among the Greeks. *λόγος* [*logos*] translated here “word” was a word that had a number of different meanings. Sometimes it meant account. For example, if you wanted to pay your account, *λόγος* [*logos*] might be the word that was used for account. It’s word used in the Bible when we read, “With whom we have to do” speaking of God as the one to whom we shall render an account, a word. It also means a discourse, and so we have theology which is discourse about God, Christology which is discourse about Christ or the doctrine of Christ.

Now as a Greek word it had philosophical significance, and *λόγος* [*logos*] or the word referred to the rational principle that permeated all reality. Now John has written about the word and it is true that the word is the Lord Jesus Christ and he is ultimately the one who comprehends in himself the rational principle of all humanity. Well that is probably not primarily what John has in mind. His term is useful, but that is probably not what he has in mind. Probably he has the Hebraic sense of word, and when you go back in the Old Testament and read about word there are several things that are associated with the term word. In the first place, God’s creative power in action is associated with word. Right in the opening of the Bible, in the third verse of the first Book of Genesis, we read, “And God said,” that’s his word, “God said let there be light.” And so his word is his creative power in action. When God speaks things happen. When God says this it happens, and so the word is God’s creative power in action. The word is also God’s redemptive power in action. We read in the Psalms, he said, “He sent his word and healed them.” So when he sends his word things happen

redemptively. And we also read in passages like Hosea chapter 1 verse 1 and verse 2 of the word of God which came to Hosea with a particular purpose in mind and we learn that the word of God is God’s guiding purpose at work in history. So in the word of God, God shows himself in power. He shows himself in redemptive love. He shows himself in wisdom.

Now it is just fortunate that this term also had meaning not simply for those immersed in Hebraic thought, but also for those who were versed in the thought of the Greeks. But the primary force has to do with the Old Testament Scriptures. “In the beginning was the word, God’s creative power in action, God’s redemptive power, God’s guiding purpose at work in history. All personalized in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the word of God. So in the beginning the word existed, the eternity of the Son.

The second clause says, “And the word was with God.” Now this answers a question we would naturally have if we did not know much about the Bible and someone were to say to us, “In the beginning was the word.” We might say, “Where was the word?” In whose presence was the word? So John answers that here by saying, “And the word was with God.”

Now if you want to understand fully what that means you just have to read on a few verses because in verse 18 the apostle concludes the prologue by writing, “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father. He has declared him.” So when we read, “And the word was with God,” he refers back to that which he more fully expresses in verse 18. “He was in the bosom of the Father.” He exists in the bosom of the Father. That is the constant experience of the word of God. He has a community of interest with the Father.

This preposition translated here “with” is not the kind of “with” that we might use to express, “Well I sit at my desk in my study and over here is my typewriter on a typewriter table so that the typewriter is with me,” or “My pencils are with me,” or “My books are with

me in my study,” for that is the “with” of accompaniment merely. That is they’re in the same room but we don't have any communication. I don't walk into my study in the morning and say, “Good morning books,” and hear them say, “Good morning Lewis. Glad to see you. Hope you use us today.” And we don't have any kind of communion. I look at the same old books and they look at me and there is no communication at all. They are dumb. I'm smarter. [Laughter]

Well this “with” here is the “with” of fellowship. It’s the “with” that John uses in 1 John when he says, “We have an advocate with the Father.” That is, the Lord Jesus Christ is in fellowship with the Father at the right hand of the Father they have community of interest. They have fellowship together. They make plans. They make plans for me. They make plans for you. Those plans have been settled in ages past. So “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God.” That’s where he was, and in effect that’s where he is in his deity, in his divine personality. He is with the Father.

But furthermore, Oh incidentally I should have also said this is what is meant in Genesis chapter 1 again when we read in the contemplation of the creation we read, “And God said let us make man after our image in our likeness,” suggestive of plurality within the Godhead. This is the fellowship of one person of the triune God with another person of the triune God. So the community of interest, the communion that exists between the Father and the Son is expressed by “And the word was with God.”

And finally in the climatic clause John says, “And the word was God.” Now he does not write the word was a God as if we’ll become God’s too, as we are taught by some of these false teachers. He does not say, “And the word was a God.” Nor does he even say, “The word was the God.” But he says simply, “The word was God.” If he were to say that the word was the God, well then that would imply that there was no other divine being except the word,

but we know that while there is one God, there are three beings, three persons, Father, Son and Spirit. And so he writes, “And the word was with God and the word was,” not a God, not the God, but “The word was God.” That is he is possessed of deity. So in the first clause he expresses the eternity of the Son, in the second clause his communion with the Father and in the third clause his deity.

Now this is the whole purpose of the gospel John will tell us later on as he unfolds things. He wants us all to come to the conviction with which he begins his gospel. That is, that there is in heaven a Father, there is also a Spirit, and there is the word, the second person of the Trinity who is God, and he is worthy of worship as the Father and the Spirit are worthy of worship. In fact in the climax of the entire gospel, we will have the Lord Jesus in resurrection and Thomas, doubting Thomas, amazing thing that doubting Thomas should rise to the highest expression of faith in the whole of the New Testament because he falls down before the Lord Jesus Christ and says, “My Lord and My God.” That’s what John wants us to finally come to. He wants us to come to the worship of the Son of God as, “My Lord and My God.” And so he begins, “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.” In other words, what I’m going to tell us is an account of the deeds and the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and I want you to understand them as the deeds and words of God. If this is not true, then this book is a blasphemous book, and the false teachers are correct and Christianity ought to be nothing more than something of interest to ancient historians. But it is not that, John says. He is the word of God who is God.

Isn't it a striking thing that even the world cannot avoid the person of Jesus Christ? Who knows anything about Arius? Ask people today about Arius, I dare say, eliminating Believers Chapel of course, if I were to ask you who Arius was, would you know who Arius was? Now you would if you had been taking Mr. Storm’s studies and history of Christian

doctrine. You would if you had been attending the Believers Bible Institute, but if you go in the average evangelical church today and say Arius, tell me who Arius is. You will see some very, very beautiful blank looks on faces. And if you ask who Athanasius was you will also see some blank looks. Who knows who Ignatius is? Who knows who Athanasius is? Who knows who Arius is? But ask about Jesus Christ, we all know about Jesus Christ. Time has been unable to blot out the memory of him.

Every day in our city thousands and thousands and thousands of our citizens unconsciously bear witness to the fact that Jesus Christ has been in this world. We open our newspapers and we look and there is the date on the newspaper. That is such and such a day of such and such a month of such and such a year A.D., Anno Domini, “In the year of the Lord.” Every day we write a letter to someone we date it and we acknowledge the existence of the Lord Jesus Christ that he has come into our universe. Every time we write a check, even those that come back marked “NSF,” there is a testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ has been here. Not a very good kind of testimony, but nevertheless a testimony that he has been here. This is the year such and such in the year of our Lord.

Some have tried to explain him away as a fiction, but those statements have never been taken seriously. Christians are the only ones who are perplexed by it because they are so sure that he was here and that he exists now and when an unbeliever says, “Oh, I think Jesus Christ is just fiction,” that tends to throw some simple minded Christians into a tailspin, but don't worry, they know deep down within that Jesus Christ is real. It was a French skeptic who exploded that explanation in one sentence. “It would take a Jesus to forge a Jesus, and if it is true that what we have in the Bible is a giant forgery then, let us worship the individual who was so brilliant as to think up a picture of a person like Jesus of Nazareth and the story of the

word of God.” So, “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.”

We do not render Jesus Christ true homage and true worship until we recognize that he is very God of very God, as well as very man of very man, one divine person who possessed two natures, divine and human, and because he possessed a human nature, he is able to be one of us and act for us and because he has a divine nature, his actions for us have infinite value. And therefore when he dies for the people of God as their representative and their substitute that sacrifice is acceptable to the Father and salvation which he intends to procure for them is a salvation that has been procured for them and is sure to be the possession of the people of God. Methodists you can say, “Hallelujah” as far as I'm concerned.

Now we read in verse 2 of the same thing with just an emphasis again on those clauses. He says the same that is the word who was God was in the beginning. In the beginning was the word with God. The word was with God. So in order to stress it John repeats the same statement in slightly different clauses. In verse 3 and verse 4 he comes to the work of the Son. He says, “All things came to be through him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” He's not only divine, but he is the creator mediately. Things came to pass through the Son. God spoke and said that's the activity of God through the word. “Let there be light.” This effectively refutes the eternity of matter which many evolutionists like to propound, but he says, “All things came to be through him.” Everything else had a beginning. They had a beginning through him, but he had no beginning. He is the eternal word.

And further he says in the 4th verse, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” I would imagine that he is speaking primarily of spiritual life, but of course physical life came to pass through him too. “In him was life and the life was the light of men.” But spiritual life is primarily in his mind, and he will illustrate that in his gospel. This is the

preface to it. He will point out that life is in Christ, and he is able to raise Lazarus from the grave. He can say, “Lazarus come forth,” and Lazarus will come forth. He can speak to the blind man and because he is the light of the world, he can give light to the man who cannot see. And so he will communicate light to the blind man.

“In him was life and the life was the light of men.” But he says in verse 4, “The life was the light of men.” That’s interesting because we’re inclined to think that Jesus Christ is the life of men and the light of men. But John says, “In him was life and the life was the light of men.” Now what does he mean by that? He seems to suggest that the Lord Jesus Christ was actually engaged in enlightenment before he came to be here in the flesh. Well, that’s exactly what he was doing. “In him was life and the light was the light of men.” In what way? Well when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden it was the custom of the Lord God to come down into that garden and have fellowship with them. What member of the Godhead came to fellowship with them? Not the Holy Spirit, he’s a Spirit. Now the Father, he too is a Spirit.

Furthermore it is said with reference to the Father that no man has seen him nor can see him. What we have in the Garden of Eden when God fellowshiped with Adam and Eve is one of the theophanies of the Lord Jesus Christ, one of those appearances of our Lord before his incarnation in Bethlehem. Why did such things take place? Well they took place in order to prepare the nation for the fact of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. And so we have the Lord Jesus Christ appearing to Abraham. We have the Lord Jesus Christ appearing to Jacob when he wrestled with that divine being at Jabbok. We have the Lord appearing to Moses. We have the Lord appearing to Daniel. We have the Lord appearing to Gideon. We have the Lord appearing to Samuel’s parents. We have many theophanies in the Old Testament which were anticipations of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

He was there as the light of men at the Passover. He was there as the light of men in all of the types of the Old Testament.

Those types incidentally that are attested to by John include the tabernacle or temple, the Lamb of God, Jacob’s ladder, the brazen serpent, the manna, the smitten rock. Those are just some of the pictures of the Old Testament that John the Apostle attests as things that pointed forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But most of all in the great theophanies, “in him was life and the life was the light of men.”

Do you remember what the Prophet Micah says with reference to the coming of the Son of God, speaking very vividly addressing Bethlehem of Judea, for there were other Bethlehems? He said, “Thou Bethlehem of Judea, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth to me who is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” In other words, he says at a point in time in history there shall a ruler come forth out of Thee, be born in Bethlehem, but his goings forth, that word incidentally in the Hebrew text is built on the same root as the verb come forth, he’s had other comings forth. One coming forth in Bethlehem in history, but many goings forth from of old, from everlasting. It’s not a new comer who appears in the manger in Bethlehem, but someone who is older than any who have ever lived. He is the eternal Son of God. “In him was life and the life was the light of men.”

Now, finally he says that not only do we have here what may be called the person of the word and the work of the word, but we also have the conflict that the word was engaged in and is engaged in. “And the light shineth in darkness.” Now that is a most interesting statement, is it not? Light presupposes darkness, and the fact that he’s the light of the world means that there is darkness in this world, and this statement in, “And the light shineth in darkness,” is a statement that presupposes the fall of man. The light shineth in the darkness.

That’s John’s way of saying that God has spoken to us in his Son. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that God has spoken to us in such a person as a Son. He has given a Sonwise revelation, and that’s what John is speaking about here when he says, “And the light shines in the darkness.” The Son of God has come. The Son of God has given light. He’s given light concerning man who is fallen. He is given light concerning salvation through the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross. He’s given light concerning life itself, light concerning the plan of God, light concerning life. It’s all found right here in the testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the revelation that has come to pass through him as the final capstone of the divine speech. God has spoken. God has begun to speak with his tongue in Jesus of Nazareth. So, “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness overcame it not.”

That word translated in the version that I’m reading from “overcame” is a word that essentially means “to grasp.” Now, of course, you can grasp things with your hand, and you can grasp things with your mind. When we speak of grasping with our hands, we speak of grasping in the sense of seizing and often overcoming. This past week in the Dallas papers in anticipation of the little exercise that will take place this afternoon out to the west of us, ads were given in the paper to the effect that there was one member of the Dallas Cowboys football team that in the last meeting with the Redskins, or with last year, I’ve forgotten which, he dragged down 16 Redskins in one game.

Now that would be the word *καταλαμβάνω* [*katalambanō*] in the sense of “to grasp and bring down,” or to “overcome,” to tackle, use the language of football. Well it is possible that that is the force here, to grasp in the sense of to overcome, bring down, and thus “The light shineth in darkness and darkness did not grasp and overcome the light.” But you also grasp with the mind. And we say, “I had difficulty grasping that.” There may be some rare individual who walks out of this audience this morning and says, “Now what Dr. Johnson was

talking about this morning was,” that’s non-verbal communication in case you want to know.

One man has said that about my preaching back in 1938. He said – well, he failed to grasp it with his mind, so we say, “We cannot grasp it with our minds. We do not understand it.”

Well this word is a word that may mean that too. To grasp with the mind and thus to comprehend, or to grasp with the hand and thus overcome, it so happens both meanings fit here, fit the context. “The light shineth in darkness and darkness did not comprehend,” what the Son was here for and what he has done, did not comprehend it.

Just earlier I spoke about Arius, Athanasius, and in a moment I’ll speak about Ignatius. Who knows anything about these people? I didn't grasp what he was talking about when, my goodness, Athanasius, Ignatius, and Arius, one could even make up a little ditty about Athanasius, Ignatius, and Arius, such beautiful alliteration. You notice? Athanasius, Ignatius, and Arius, when you leave I know you won't forget the names. You may not understand anything about them today, but you’ll know about Athanasius, Ignatius and Arius. But we have not grasped that.

Well that is true here; the world or the darkness has not grasped the force of our Lord’s coming and the significance of it. There are people that come into this audience, and there are people listening over the radio who do not grasp the fact that they are lost, do not grasp the fact that they need a savior, do not grasp the fact that Jesus Christ is the savior, and do not grasp the fact that they may have the forgiveness of sins by coming to him and receiving it as a free gift. They have the idea that they must work in order to be saved, little realizing that God does not accept their efforts for what we have to do to save ourselves by our works is impossible for men to accomplish, but at the same time it means that the darkness has not overcome the light. The light is unconquerable. The Lord Jesus Christ has been here. They put him on a cross at Calvary. They crucified him. They didn't realize it

when they crucified him they made his victory certain. That’s why he came. He came to die for sinners, and it was sinners, who laid their hands upon him and hung him on a tree and put him to death, but ultimately it was the God of eternity who did by the determinant council and foreknowledge of God he used wicked men to accomplish his purpose. He is the unconquerable light as he says in this gospel later on, “I have overcome the world.”

So, the darkness is the place in which the light shines. But the darkness is conquerable by the unconquerable light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ignatius, the third of our ancient fathers, wrote a number of epistles and one of them, the Epistle to the Magnesians, in the eighth chapter in the second verse of that epistle, just a short epistle, Ignatius who was martyred shortly thereafter wrote, “Jesus Christ the word of God came forth out of silence.” The idea had originated in Judaism, and it was linked with Genesis 1:3. Before God spoke, what was there? Silence. The Rabbis used to ask the question, “What was there before God spoke?” And their answer to it, “God’s silence.” And so the term became a token of his inexpressible majesty, “The silence of God.” But now since Jesus Christ has come, God’s no longer silenced. God has found his tongue in Jesus of Nazareth, and he has spoken, and he has come in words of inexpressible grace. The law came by Moses. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No wonder the early Christians met and according to Pliny when he wrote his note to Trajan in 96 A.D. he said, “They came together and they meet and they at their daily Eucharist they sing a hymn *Christi quasi deo*, “to Christ as if he were God.” That’s the kind of hymn we sing. We sing to Christ as if he were God, knowing that’s precisely what he is, a God who has come who has saved us by his blood that was shed, and we worship him now and forever. May God help you to come to him.

If you’re here this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot escape him. There is no way that you shall not ultimately have to deal with him. May

God in his wonderful grace bring you to the acknowledgement of your sin, to the salvation found in him. Flee to the cross and receive the forgiveness of sins through the Lord Jesus Christ.

May I tell you just a little story? It's a very short one. Mr. Moody was not an educated man. He was a book clerk, but he became a great evangelist by the power of God. When he was still employed, he was holding some meetings somewhere, and the wife of a judge was attending the meetings. And she said to Mr. Moody, “My husband is a district judge, and I wish you would go speak to him. Mr. Moody said, “I'm just an uneducated book clerk. I couldn't possibly speak to your husband.” But she insisted, and so finally he went.

He walked in the office, introduced himself as the preacher who was in town for the meetings. The clerks tittered because they knew the district judge was a well known atheist. He asked to speak to the judge. He walked in, and he said, “Judge,” he said, “I've been asked to speak to you, but I want you to know that I know you're an educated man. You have a lot more intelligence than I have, and I'm an uneducated book clerk. I could not possibly speak to you.” But said, “Judge, will you do one thing for me? Would you tell me when you're converted, how you're converted?” And with that he walked out, and the judge banteringly said, “Yes, Moody I'll tell you when I'm converted how I'm converted.” As he walked out, he said it even louder. “Yes, Moody,” and all the clerks were tittering in the office, “I'll tell you how I'm converted when I'm converted.”

Well the next year or so, Mr. Moody came back and the judge had been converted, and he walked in and he said, “Judge, you told me you'd tell me how you were converted. Well tell me.” He said, “Well Moody, it was like this.” He said, “One night my wife wanted to go to the prayer meeting, and so she went and I felt very uncomfortable for some reason. In fact,” he said, “Moody, I felt really sick, and I went in my room, and I got in the bed. When

she came home she was so surprised she said, ‘Are you sick?’” And he said, “No, I’m not sick, I’m just not feeling good.” He said, “I was miserable.” And he said, “The next morning I was miserable too.” He said, “I wouldn’t even talk to my wife. I just stuck my head in the breakfast room and said, ‘I’m sorry I’ve got to go I don’t feel too good.’” Said, “I went down to my office. I told all of my help to go. Take the day off.” Said, “I went into my office.” Said, “I was so miserable I finally got down on my knees, and I said, ‘O God, forgive my sins.’” He said, “Nothing happened.” He said, “O God forgive my sins.” He said, “Nothing happened.” He said, “Moody I was a Unitarian. I didn’t believe in the deity of Christ.” But finally he said, “Moody I said, ‘O God for Christ’s sake forgive my sins, and immediately I found peace. Moody that’s how I was converted.’”

So I say to you this morning. Come to Christ. Pray such a prayer, “For Christ’s sake, the Son of God who offered the atonement for sin, forgive my sins.” You’ll find peace too.

[Prayer] Father we are so thankful to Thee for this magnificent statement by the Apostle John, a man who loved and lived with Jesus Christ for many, many decades, who wrote “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God,” who also wrote, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. O Father, speak to us to that end, to the needs that we each have. May grace and mercy and peace go with us. For Jesus’ sake, amen.