In Him Was Life

John 1:1-18

Key Verse: 1:4 “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”

John’s gospel is called “the fourth gospel” along with the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The author John, one of the Twelve, wrote this book with purpose, written in John 20:31, which says, “*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*.” John wrote this book so that people might have life by believing Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. So, the key word in the entire John’s gospel is ‘believe’. The word ‘believe’ (*pisteuo*) appears 98 times in Johns’ gospel only. By believing Jesus we have life in his name. Here the word ‘life’ (*zoe*) is not animal life (*bio*), but life that is eternal, happy, meaningful, fruitful, and abundant. The word ‘life’ appears 36 times in this book.

The book of John is known as the book of 3 L’s: Life, Light, and Love. These three words are related to God and come from Him. Their antonyms, which have negative meanings, are death, darkness, and hatred. These three negative words also repeated many times in John’s gospel, especially in Jesus’ teachings. From today we’ll study John’s gospel with a new perspective. We will approach the word of God with a new attitude and learning mind even though some of us have studied this several times before. While studying this passage, may we meet Jesus personally so that we may have **life** in his name by believing him. Amen.

Look at verses 1,2. “***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God***.” The words ‘In the beginning’ reminds us of the beginning words of the Bible. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth…*” (Ge 1:1) In both verses in Genesis and John’s gospel, the word ‘In the beginning’ shows the beginning of all things. Genesis starts with the creation of the world. John’s gospel starts with the originator and the cause of the creation of the world. Here the word ‘beginning’ (*arche*) means ‘origin’ or ‘birth.’ People in this world have questioned from generation to generation about the origin of the world and life. “How did the universe form?” “Where did life come from?”, and so on. They brought many theories, opinions, and assumptions, but they all failed to bring answers for the origin of the universe and life. But the Bible clearly answers all these questions: ‘In the beginning was the Word’, and ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’.

Here the word, ‘Word’ is *logos* in Greek. In Stoic sense *logos* is the rational principle with which everything exists. But in John’s gospel *logos* is not an impersonal or philosophical principle, but the personal and living God. The word ‘*logos*’ comes from ‘*lego*’ which means ‘speak’, ‘say’, and ‘communicate.’ So, logos is the spoken message that is able to create, to reveal, and to redeem. In Hebrew logos is the powerful word of God, who creates all things. Ps 33:6 says, “*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth*…” The word of God has the power to create, to reveal, and to save. When God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light. (Ge 1:3) When God said, “Let the land produce living creatures”, and all kinds of animals and plants filled the earth. (Ge 1:24) The word of God came to Noah (Ge 7:13, 7:1,8), to Abraham (Ge 12:1), to Moses (Ex 3), to Samuel (1 Sa 16:1), to David (2 Sa 7:4), to Isaiah (Is 6:9), to Jeremiah (Je 1:4), to Jonah (Jonah 1:1) and so on. God revealed himself with his words. In the beginning, before the creation of the world, the Word existed as the essence of creation, revelation, and redemption.

What do the words mean in verse 1, “*The Word was with God and the Word was God*”? Here the Word is described as an independent being from God, who indicates God the Father. The Word, as an independent essence of creation of the world, was with God. Here the word ‘with’ (*pros*) has two meanings in Greek, “toward’ and ‘with’. The Word existed toward God the Father. The Word was oriented toward God as lovers desired toward each other. The Word was also closest *with* God the Father. Even though the Word existed as independent being, he is God himself. “The Word was God.” The Word had co-existence, co-equality, and co-eternity with God in the beginning.

John repeated the co-existence of the Word with God in verse 2. “***He was with God in the beginning***.” Here the Word is identified as ‘He’, a person, who indicates the Son. The Son was with the Father God in the beginning. Verses 1 &2 explains the relationship of the Word with God the Father. Verse 3 tells us his relationship with the world. It tells the Son as the Lord of creation. “***Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.***” (3) Through the Son, all things were made in heaven above and on earth below. Paul proclaimed about the creation of the world through Jesus, the Son, in Colossians 1:15,16, which says, “*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him*.” In Dr. Hugh Ross’ lecture ‘Cosmic Fingerprints’, many thinkers and scientists have struggled to find the cause of the universe. No one has ever given us a clear answer for the cause of the universe. But there is an answer in verse 3: Jesus, who existed as the Word, is the first cause of the whole universe.

It is very significant for us to believe that God, Jesus, is the first cause of all creation including our lives. All things were made through him and for him. Here we have the self-evident answer about the purpose of our lives. Why do we live on this earth? What is the purpose of our lives? The answer is: **We live for the glory of God and for his name’s sake**. We were created through him and for him. Paul said, “*So* *whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* (1 Co 10:31) Those who have clear purpose of life in God and for God live meaningful and successful lives. They are like a boat with a rudder, which guides it safe to the harbor. Those who do not have a purpose of life in God are like ship without a rudder. When they are hit by storms and winds, they are shipwrecked like the Titanic. No matter how rich and big their life is on this earth, it is a matter of seconds for their lives to be sunk in the deep sea of death. There is another reason for us to live for the glory of God and for his name’s sake. Jesus is the author of our lives.

Look at verse 4. “***In him was life, and that life was the light of men***.” In him (Jesus) there is life, eternal life. This means that in Jesus we enjoy *zoe,* life eternal, spiritual, meaningful, fruitful, abundant, and fulfilling. This life is not just physical life for eating and mating, but spiritual life, life having fellowship with God and bearing fruits in Him. People want such life like *zoe*. We find *zoe* in Jesus. This life is the light of men. Here the light is wisdom to teach us the truth. The light is the substance which makes life grow. The light is illuminating so that we may see the world and to see the way which we should go. The light also gives us hope for the bright future. The life in Christ Jesus provides wisdom, energy, and hope for our eternal life.

Look at verse 5. “***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***” The light, the source of our lives, shines in the dark world. But this dark world did not understand him. Darkness is the absence of light. In the Bible darkness is not only the absence of light, but also evilness. In John 3:19-21 John says, “*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.*” Darkness never wins light. Darkness cannot overcome light. When light shines, darkness quickly disappears. This is the nature of light. Let us receive the light in our hearts so that all the elements of darkness may be dispelled. Let us accept Jesus Christ in the center of our lives so that he may rule us and guide us and lead us for our eternal life. Darkness cannot overcome the light. Let us become the children of light, not the children of darkness. Amen.

In verses 6-8 John introduces John the Baptist as a witness for the light. Look at verses 6-8. “***There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light***.” The words, “witness’ and ‘testify’ are terms commonly used in the court. The testimony of a witness has convincing power and authority for the judge more than any other resource and evidence. God sent John the Baptist ahead of Jesus so that he might testify for Jesus. But John the Baptist was not the light. Jesus is the true light.

Look at verses 9-11. “***The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.***” Here the word “true’ means ‘real’ and ‘genuine’. In human history, there have been many lights who have shone for a while in the world through their achievements and wisdom among philosophers, kings, war heroes and heroines, religious leaders, politicians, social revolutionists, philanthropists, scientists, doctors, inventors, teachers, and so on. But they were all small lights or fake lights, not the true light. John described Jesus as the true light, who is the real and genuine light that gives us light and life. Even though the true light and the Lord of creation came to his own created world, this world did not recognize him or receive him. Instead they killed him on the cross and abandoned him. But what happens to those who accept the true light and receive him?

Let us read verses 12-13. “***Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God---children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God***.” What a privilege to those who receive Jesus and believe in his name! God gives them the right to become children of God. We don’t realize the value and privilege of being children of God. Children come and go out from their father’s house freely, but not guests or visitors. Above all, children inherit all their father’s possessions and position. Paul said in Romans 8:17, “*Now if we are children, then we are heirs---heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,…*” As children of God we inherit the Father’s house, the kingdom of God, with Christ Jesus. Children are under the Father’s protection and provision. Remember how the Father loved and treated his lost son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The father absolutely loves his children and takes care of them to the end.

We become children of God by believing in Jesus. Through faith in him we become God’s children. This is the work of the Holy Spirit and the act of God, not by will of people or acts of men. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit works for our regeneration to become new creation in Him. The Holy Spirit also testifies so that we may convince that we are children of God. (Ro 8:16) In order to make us children of God what did Jesus Christ do?

Let us read verse 14. “***The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.***” The Word, who existed as logos, the Lord of creation, the first cause of the whole universe, and the true light, became a man. We call this incarnation. God took a human form and appeared and lived among us. Here the verb “made his dwelling among us” in Greek ‘*skenoo*’ means that the Word pitched his tabernacle or lived in his tent. The word “tabernacle’ ‘*skene*’ in Greek also reminds us of the tabernacle in the Old Testament where God dwells. In Exodus 25:8 the Lord God says, “*Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.*”

The Word who became a man has self-revealing glory. Moses asked God to show his glory. (Ex 33:18) But Jesus is God’s glory itself. The author John saw the glorious image of Jesus on the transfiguration mountain. He saw the glory, the glory of the One and Only Son, through and in Jesus. The Son himself is full of grace and truth. Why does the Word-in-flesh become grace to us? Imagine the logos, the Creator of the whole universe, the God Almighty, appears as a humble man. We don’t deserve God’s grace because we have sinned against God. We are rebellious, proud, and idolatrous like the Israelites who lived in the desert. The Lord called them treacherous, stiff-necked and rebellious people. But God humbled himself and initiated to reconcile his people and appeared as a man. Hebrews 2:14 says, “*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity*…” Paul said in Philippians 2:6-8, “*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage: rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness*. *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death---even death on the cross*!” Remember how God has served us and took care of us in order to bear us as his children. There seemed no reason for God to humble himself for sinners. But he has many reasons for our salvation. Remember how difficult it was for Jesus to deny his will in order to obey the will of the Father. Remember how he struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane in order to take the cup of God’s wrath over our sins. When we focus our eyes on Jesus, our hearts are filled with thanks, love, and hope. When we remember Jesus the Son of God who was born in a humble manger, we have peace of God and see the glory of heaven.

Look at verses 17-18. “***For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known***.” In the Jewish concept Moses was one of the greatest servants of God. Moses was the deliverer for his people who brought them out of Egypt. God gave the law through Moses. But Moses is not even worthy of comparing to Jesus, who is God himself. Jesus brought grace and truth. He taught us what grace and truth is. Above all, he taught us who God really is through his life and teaching. No one has ever seen God face to face, not even Moses. But when we know who Jesus is, we come to know who God really is because Jesus was with God in the beginning and he is God himself.

In today’s passage we learned that Jesus is God who existed as logos in the beginning. He is the first cause of the whole universe and the author of our lives. Because all things were made through him and for him, we have clear answer for four fundamental questions of our lives as Dr. Ravi Zechariah said, “Origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.” May God help us to receive Jesus in our hearts as our Lord and Savior, and believe in him so that we may enjoy *zoe* throughout our lifetime. Amen! Let us read verse 4 all together.