

John 1v1-4

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Location: MRC

Word Count: 3500

Jesus is the eternal creator who brings light to the world

Imagine please – with me that

you've got a friend...

& you've been – over a **number** of years

chatting to them about Jesus

- Sharing your life

- Answering questions

- Investing time & energy in them
- Praying for them
- Taking opportunities when they've come
- Loving them in good times & bad...

to show them &

to speak of Christ

Everyday – normal – nitty gritty - witnessing

& it's - it's kind of come to a bit of a crunch point.

& it's exciting

Coz they get it all --

They believe the facts

They can see who Jesus is

& yet they're still reluctant to commit to him

They doubt whether they can REALLY trust Jesus

- What does he know about exams... or my future?

- What does he know about my parents arguing?

...that *broken* relationship

- What does he know about

the hassle I'm going through @ work?

the boss that bullies me

the deadline on Tuesday

- What does he know about my illness?

the pain & the weakness

& the false starts & the frustration?

- What does he know about the uncertainty of life?

Or the fact that secretly I dread Christmas

because my family will be there

& they always end up drunk & fighting?

- You're telling me to trust in this carpenter from Nazareth

who died on a cross

who seemed to rise again

- You're telling me to... to give my life to him

to put my life into his hands

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But

What does he know?

What can he do?

He seems so far off...

what good will it be to give everything...

to Him?

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So what would you say to your friend?

Why *should* they trust Jesus?

Why give their all - to Him?

Maybe that's your question *today*?

Here this morning...?

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& yet you see

In John 1 - the passage we'll be in for the next month

John this eyewitness of Jesus

wants us to join the dots...

to see who he is

to see **why we can trust him**

why we must listen to what he says

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He wants us to join the dots

as we'll see - from **eternity** past

stretching as far **back** as we can imagine

But then

to a man walking around on the earth

breathing & talking & teaching & laughing & eating

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& these claims would sound frankly outrageous

to first century Jewish ears...

We may not think

that they were just a bit naïve & gullible...

& believed that sort of stuff then...

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So just imagine

you were a first Century Jewish lad

& you heard these verses read to you...

You'd be nodding...

Of course that's right

God's word was with him - at the start of it all

That's how he makes things

That's how he speaks to his people

That's how he makes himself known

Well John's saying at the start of it all... was this word

So we can nod along to that...

Or at least some of it...

Because it – it sounds a bit funny...

& a few doubts creep in...

It sounds in v2 -

like this word

the way God speaks & makes & relates...

is a **person**...

*which **is** a bit strange come to think of it??*

HE was with God in the beginning??

& then as our eyes scan through the passage a bit further

We're getting a bit more worried...

we're asking well v6-8... John

That had better not be John the Baptist

That loony in the papers -- who was in the desert

...in fact wasn't he mixed up with that Jesus bloke?

..what's he got to do with stuff?

& our eyes scan further & further down...

& then we get there in v17 - His name

Grace & truth came through Jesus Christ

& our hearts drop...

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT

Our heart drops - he is talking about Jesus

Jesus Christ **IS** the word...

They might sound outlandish verses & ideas in our ears

But perhaps all the more so in a monotheistic Jewish culture

back then

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& so we're going to look at 5 things from these first few verses.

5 things about the word

about Jesus

1. Jesus was there at the beginning

In the beginning was the Word

His opening gambit is to echo

the start of the bible

the beginning of Genesis

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& we *expect* him to say

in the beginning God...

but he doesn't...

rather he says

in the beginning was the word

& so... John is saying...

before you

before me

before NT times

before the exile & the division of the kingdom

before David - before Joshua

before Moses - Before Abraham

before Adam

before the world

before the universe

before anything that he made

Jesus was there

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In the beginning was the Word

You know the word that God used to create & make?

Well he has a face.

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& it's a fascinating introduction to the gospel

I take it

John is VERY skillfully talking to all kinds of people

To the Jews

who had picked up his book about Jesus

speaking their language

speaking in a way they could comprehend...

& grasp

But turning their ideas upside down

& yet it wasn't just **Jews** around when John wrote

there were **Gentiles** too

there were **Greeks – stoic thinkers**

& John is speaking to them as well

Greek – Stoic- philosophy for Dummies

would have read...

at the heart of the universe is an idea

The world as we look at it -- is not muddled

It's not chaotic

There is order

& the Greek's said that was because of the LOGOS

An **impersonal** principle or concept ... of order

- REASON at work in the world.

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& it seems to me that's not an outdated idea...

Particularly it seems among a growing group of scientists

Something - impersonal -

that keeps the world from chaos...

is key in the thinking of many

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Listen to Paul Davies –

a professor of Natural Philosophy...

a Brit now based in Australia

It's quite a long quote

but I think it's very helpful

"The difficulty for a scientist who is an out-and-out atheist is that the essence of the scientific method

is to seek reasons

for why things are

as they are in the world.

Science asserts that the world is not arbitrary or absurd.

...

Scientists expect the world to be thoroughly logical and rational at every step. But then you go down to the fundamental laws and ask,

'Why those laws?

Where did they come from?'

And the standard atheistic response is to suddenly do a back flip and say,

'Oh well, the laws exist reason-lessly.

There's no reason for why they are as they are, indeed for why they exist at all.

The physical universe is ultimately arbitrary and absurd.'

But I don't believe the universe is arbitrary and absurd.

I think it has something like

meaning or purpose underpinning it"

You see?

he says at the heart of the universe is meaning & purpose

& cooing shepherds

& magi bearing gifts

He's essentially with the Greeks on this one

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It starts at the beginning with the Word.

& John says to them -

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to the Jews - this word - God's voice - has a name

to the Greeks - this logos - at the heart of the universe

2. Jesus was with God

he's NOT impersonal

he is the word.

he is Jesus

he is there at the beginning

And the *'with God'*

words are more than just he was present there...

more than simply that he existed there

but they imply relationship

The story of Christmas does not begin

with a baby in a mucky manger

So

The scholars point out that

This wording is used a number of times through the gospels

Every day I was with you (Mk 14v49)

Aren't his sisters here with us (Mark 6v3)

You see what he's getting at?

@ the heart of who God is –

we find community.

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So at the beginning God... was in relationship with the Word.

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Now

Many have noted that in the OT

& Proverbs 8 in particular there are interesting parallels

to these verses.

There the writer

imagines - wisdom personified

which in some ways stretch us towards

an understanding

of God not being **alone**...

I – wisdom - was there when he set the heavens in place,

when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,

²⁸ when he established the clouds above

and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he gave the sea its boundary

so the waters would not overstep his command,

and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

³⁰ Then I was constantly at his side.

I was filled with delight day after day,

rejoicing always in his presence,

³¹ **rejoicing in his whole world**

and delighting in mankind.

so you see describing God's great creative work

as if it were carried out

& fulfilled through wisdom

as his creative agent agent

& **we think** - what!?

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What sort of a **person**

was in

... a loving relationship

... creating with God

from the beginning??

Filled with delight day after day

Rejoicing in his presence

Rejoicing in his world

Delighting in mankind...

Who was there from the start?

They would have to almost BE divine...

& John says

Brilliant

That's it - You've got it!

You've got it

because Jesus – IS - God

The sort of person who is in a loving relationship with God

from the beginning

Is the sort of person who is in fact

God.

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3. Jesus is God

You see

not only was the word with God.

The word WAS God.

& yet church history is littered with

a steady stream of people seeking to twist & stretch

the fact that Jesus is God.

They're happy to say he is a god

Not THE God.

It's what Dan Brown picked up & embellished

in his overly popular Davinci Code

the story goes... in his words

at AD 325 – The church Council of Nicea

They voted that Jesus was in fact God

it was a big secret –

covered up by the nasty

established overly authoritarian church

& only then did they decide

that Jesus was God

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Now the council of Nicea did clarify...

but that was **only** because

there were dangerous heretics

who were twisting the truth

& so from heretics like

Arius... in the 4th C to

the Jehovah's witnesses of today

there **have** been those who doubt...

& for lots it comes down to this bit in 1v1

In the Greek - John 1v1 - **can** potentially be translated...

The word was a God

(not THE God)...

& what do we say - what is our reply?

When the JW turns up on our doorstep

what do we say?

1) read the rest of John

- read of Jesus telling people he gives life & he will judge (ch 5)

- read of him **not** rebuking Thomas as he says -

My Lord & My God (ch 20)

John doesn't say...

& everyone got a bit overexcited

& Thomas overstepped the line...

No.

Jesus accepts his worship.

Because he is God

what John says elsewhere clarifies his meaning here.

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2) **if** John meant that Jesus was divine but not The God – big G

there was a perfectly good Greek word

which he didn't use (*theios*).

The word he did use (*theos*)

means God (big G) and

not god (little g) -

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3) **Thirdly**, slightly complicatedly

When 2 nouns are joined together in Greek

then grammar doesn't demand

a THE

a definite article

for both nouns

So it doesn't need to say

'the word was the God' in Gk

that's not how they do it.

Elsewhere you'll find one

'the'

serving two nouns

they don't repeat it twice

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4) Fourthly

John's written it this way FOR a reason

...It's deliberately done like this!

His point is to both

show us Jesus's deity

whilst **also** distinguishing him

from God the Father.

He is both God - big G

BUT

He is also WITH God

ie separate from Him...

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Which at the end of the day means

John is very much on the front foot

as he starts off his account of Jesus' life

Sometimes people like to try & say that Jesus is never

portrayed as God in the bible

that's just something that we've added in later on

But verses like this... if you look hard

mean you really struggle to take those claims seriously

& God said - let X happen - & it did

& God said - let Y happen - & it was so...

We're told his identity

But these aren't just claims...

we see it to from what he *does...*

John tells us

That powerful word has a name.

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4. Jesus made everything

So for you - what is it...???

that takes your breath away

makes you gasp?

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So when you read Genesis 1 & 2

you see God's word being so powerful

...it does exactly what he wants it to

Maybe...

- the astounding sunset... at the end of a clear summer day?

- an endless beach on holiday...

with the turquoise sea lapping on the golden sands?

- the panoramic view from the top of a mountain?

- the rich colours of Autumn?

the browns

the oranges

the yellows

the pinks even...

- a crisp winter's day – warm breath from our mouths...

tramping over snow covered fields...

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Well **Jesus** made them.

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You see there's nothing that has been made

that wasn't been made by Jesus...

THE Word

I take it

Christians...

may well differ in Genesis 1 - on the

'how God made the world'... question

that is

The *dynamics* of Genesis 1 -

literal 6 days or not?

literal 24 hours or not?

& yet - what we can't differ on...

is the fact that he made it *all*

through Jesus

through the Word

Through him all things were made

Without him nothing was made that has been made

& it seems to me that has implications for us

and our relationship with the world

In my experience

Christians can get this wrong very easily...

Somewhere along the way...

...we've gained a bit of a reputation for being anti... stuff

So people think

that we're pro spiritual - holy - type stuff

& yet we're anti - physical

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So we're anti food or fun

anti sex

anti music

anti dancing

anti sport

... & *especially* anti-them on a Sunday

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& yet... Jesus made them

they're not here by accident

not the product of an evolutionary fluke in

a hopeless - meaningless universe

Without **him** nothing was made that has been made

Of course there's a right context for them

there's the correct place to enjoy them

but that's only because...

He made everything

& knows where we enjoy them best...

how to make the most of them

& not be hurt by them

It's like fire - fire in it's place - like with Christmas candles

is useful it helps you to see

it looks pretty

But fire...

in the wrong place - like

on the carpet

OR on my hand

is not good news

Jesus made them –

He knows what they were made for...

He knows how to use them.

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& yet we say –

well what about cancer?

what about tsunamis or floods or famine?

what about death?

Did Jesus make them?

What's gone wrong?

Well of course the bible doesn't end at chapter 1 of Genesis

just 2 chapters later we see

Adam & Eve shaking their fists at God &

choosing to live without Him

to go their own way

& so the world in which we live

is out of kilter...

it's under judgment

it's not as it was meant to be

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We see the fruit of that all the time...

It's what happens when people

decide to live

outside of the relationship they were made for

If I want to be in charge

& you want to be in charge

what happens when we meet?

It's war.

Wars of words and wills

Wars between countries

The world that was created good

Has turned dark

& so it's into this world of darkness that *light* comes

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You see we may have walked out on God.

But he's not walked out on us

& so

5. Jesus has life in himself & brings light to the world

In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

Do you see he has
life in himself as God?
he has
life to make & create
& give life...?

So you see

Jesus hasn't just come to tell us about what we need

He's come to restore us

He's come to give us life again.

Life. Life in knowing & enjoying the God who made you.

& this life is light.

Some say that might be *light of revelation*

God speaking to us

& telling us what we need to do

to be rescued

Others that it's talking in an

ethical dimension

- goodness & righteousness

& yet this light of the World

...Comes down into darkness

Coz when our first parents shook their fists at God

& told him

they didn't want to live under his gracious word

so they were expelled

so the world became dark

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You know the way you get rid of darkness?

If you have a room full of dark

you can't fill up buckets of it & throw it down the drain

you can't turn on the vacuum & suck it all up

You turn on the light

And in Jesus - light comes to the world.

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that people understand

Which makes the message of Christmas profoundly **relevant**

But Jesus is relevant.

That's been a major area of discussion recently...

Do be considering & praying for opportunities

particularly amongst brothers and sisters

to chat to friends & colleagues

in the Anglican Church

to invite them to events

because they need to hear this.

In a sense we don't need to try & be relevant

They will know that the world is dark.

to ape the values of the world

because the message that we bring

is utterly relevant

They need to hear of the Light of the World.

for a dark world.

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Now sure we want to speak in such a way

Just a couple of thoughts as we finish.

As we consider these verses

As we consider God taking on a body

1) some will find this offensive

Recently I was reading an account

from an old friend who at times has

the challenge and privilege of

publicly & civilly debating muslims

And yet of the many things that they find offensive

about the Christian faith...

It's the incarnation & particularly the cross...

that makes them angry

The fact that God condescends himself.

In humility lowering

himself & taking on a body.

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One of them said

You'd have to have a different kind of Messiah

to persuade a Muslim.

And yet what they gasp and boo about.

Is what we treasure.

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The fact that God takes on flesh in Jesus.

That he lives and dies and is raised again

That he reconciles us to himself

Is the most beautiful news in this dark world.

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2) What do we say to our friend who asks - can I trust Jesus?

ORRRrrr... even what do we say to ourselves
when we think stuff like

"well I hear what you're saying...
I can see I should live like that...
... but it's so tempting just to crash on my own way'
'it'd be much easier
much more straight-forward
to go with my plan of action

rather than God's..."

What do we say?

I take it - in life we trust people -
because of who they are

So it might be that you're at the Doctors
& you're sick
& you're in the waiting room
& you're called through

& this... Doctor who looks about 14 is sat there.
You know what it's like as you get older
& everyone else looks so young...

I'm sorry - I was looking for the doctor?!

& it turns they are

& in fact they're VERY good

the best in their field - it seems

Just the voice you needed to listen to

& so you see we can listen to Jesus

He's not just come like all the other religious teachers

Come to give us his take on how stuff works

- On what the world is about
- On what God is like
- On what reality is

He's not just making it up

He comes from outside of the system

He is the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

If you want to go to the best person for telling you how to live?

Then go to the one who made it

As we come up against struggles in life

Trials - temptations -

as we're bruised by the battle of living in a dark world

as we're tempted to plug up our ears

& listen to different voices.

Remember who is speaking

He's not just a carpenter from Nazareth
who had some amazing party tricks...

This is the God who made it all

We can trust Him with everything

Let's pray