

John 02 – The True Light (Part One)

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Scripture 1: (Jn. 1:4-13 ESV)

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Sermon:

Who is Jesus Christ? Some might say that “He is many different things to many different people” and while that might sound true-ish, He is really only one: the God-man, the Savior, the LORD. But, how we understand Who He is can be multi-faceted and varied, with each person relating to Him personally in different ways according to different aspects revealed in Scripture. Although we must all {all creation} relate to Him as the LORD, the Sovereign over the whole universe, and the Elect relate to Him as our Lord and Savior, some of us still relate to Him better as: our Friend, our Brother, or as our Helper and Teacher. Having those kind of relationships with Him are OK and good, because no person relates to all other people in the same way. However, all of the many different ways in which we relate to Him and rightly think of Him come from the many ways that Scripture describes Him, particularly His names and titles.

Scripture attributes many different names and titles to Him, such as:

- The Son of God and God the Son;
- The Good Shepherd;
- The Word or the Logos; and
- The Light of the World.

It is interesting to note that while all of these names and titles are Biblically valid and relevant, many, if not most of them, are sourced from the Gospel of John.

Every King in the ancient world accumulated Titles and Honorifics like squirrels accumulate nuts; in over-abundant and uncountable measures. These human titles described the different relationships of authority (King, Prince, Duke, Lord, etc), or they served to remind us of a person's past glories and their achievements {or the glories of their ancestors} like (Defender of the Faith {now Defender of the 'Faiths" under King Charles III}, Defender of the Realm, Victor over XYZ, Conqueror of ABC, or the Rescuer of {so and so}), but the titles that are ascribed to Jesus are far more than that.

The titles that Scripture gives to Jesus are each descriptive and definitive in regards to Who He is and each tells us something about His character. Every Title tells us something different and something important about Jesus; describing a different facet and offering a different way for us to relate with Him. Each one tells us something

that has always been and is always true about Him. They are not merely honors or reminders of past glory but instead, they are each descriptors of the present, eternal, and immutable reality of Who He is and they are each inseparable from Him and from one another.

The first Title for Jesus that we encounter in John's Gospel is that of the *Logos* (the Word) and the second is *Theos* (the God). When we meditate upon Jesus as the *Logos* who is also the *Theos*, we are understanding and relating to Him as the Sovereign, Creator God who possesses the generative will to create and the decretal power and authority to order His creation.

- Because He made it, He therefore got to define what it is and what its purpose is; every “it” that ever was, that is, and shall ever be.

The next Name or Title that John ascribes to Jesus is light, which in the Greek is *Phos* or *Photos*: naming Him as the True Light {*to Phos to Alethinon*; the root is *alethea*, meaning truth (John 14:6)}; making Him the *Phos*, who is the *Logos*, and the *Theos*.

This Title for Jesus as “the Light” does two things for our understanding:

First, it appealed to the religious sensibilities of 1st Century pagans because every other religion has worshiped the sun as a god {i.e. Apollo, Horus, etc} while it still also appealed to the religious sensibilities of the Jews who correlated the idea of divine understanding and wisdom with light {as in mental and spiritual “illumination”}, “*Your word [Scripture] is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” (Ps. 119:105 ESV).

Second, it also condemned **both** religious perspectives for having the necessary knowledge and awareness of the only true God, the evidence of their eyes and the world around them {the doctrine of natural revelation}, and yet failing to respond appropriately to Him as the pagans chose to worship a creature (like the sun) instead of the Creator (Romans 1:19-23) and the Jews chose to follow the letter of God's Law without understanding or obeying the illuminated spirit and purposeful meaning behind it (Psalm 19), the divine wisdom .

But what is light exactly and how does it relate or apply to the *Logos*, Jesus?

The question of “What is light?” is not something the average person ever stops to think about because we take it for granted; we just accept that light is, without caring about what it is. Although this does not generally fit within our ordinary frame of reference or mode of thought, we need to understand that whatever else it may be, light is first and foremost a “thing”.

- Scripture tells us that light was the first thing that was created, “*And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*” (Gen. 1:3 ESV); where the light which was created is merely a reflection or echo of the “True Light”, God the Son.
- Our present, modern understanding tells us, as according to two of Webster's **sixteen definitions** of light as a noun (1c), light is “electromagnetic radiation of any wavelength that travels in a vacuum with a speed of 299,792,458 meters (about 186,000 miles) per second” or more limited to “such radiation that is visible to the human eye”¹.
- Physics tells us that light is comprised of photons², quantum particles of energy that travel at “the speed of light” but yet, possess no mass when at rest { $E=MC^2$; if the Energy (at rest) must be Zero, and the

1 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/light?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld

2 <https://www.britannica.com/science/photon>

Speed of Light (C) is a constant, then Mass (M) must also be Zero}, and are electromagnetically uncharged {neither positively nor negatively charged}.

Then next, John correlates the Word to both Life and the Light, by telling us, “*In him (in the Logos) was life (Zoe), and the life was the light (Photos) of men.*”

Please recall that there are two principle Greek words used in Scripture for life: *bios* (#979) and *zoe* (#2222); where *bios* relates to physical or “biological” {biological is a compound word formed of bios and logos, basically meaning “words about life”} life while *zoe* relates to “spiritual” life. Since we previously considered John's use of both terms in his letters, we can immediately connect the understanding of the *Logos* as the Creator and the giver of natural life, and the *Logos* as being the Light, the giver of spiritual life and the wisdom of understanding.

- As the Sun emanates light, so too the *Logos* emanates the {light of life}.

But what is the real relationship between life and light?

Since light was the first thing created by God, we are assured of its importance. Since light was created before life began {as explained in the Genesis sequence}, we must conclude from the text of Scripture that light is a God decreed requirement for life to exist. The necessity of light for the existence of life is a thesis which is also supported and endorsed by the physical sciences and the entirety of human knowledge.

- Light generates {or becomes} heat through interactions between photons and other forms of matter {through the transmission or transformation of energy}.
- Light inputs the energy that is necessary to perpetuate the Earth's weather cycle. It causes standing water to evaporate into vapor and then eventually condense and fall back to the earth as some form of precipitation (rain, sleet, snow, or hail), where then the cycle continues to repeat itself.
- Light energy is received and used by plants to fuel the process of photosynthesis {Greek compound word: *phos* or *photos* + *syn* + *thesis*; meaning “light put together”, describing the transformation of light energy into chemical energy (sugars)}: generating the sugars {glucose, fructose, and cellulose} which are the basic chemical compounds of all food energy. Light also facilitates vegetative respiration, helping them to absorb and transform Carbon Dioxide from the atmosphere, and then release their by product of Oxygen.
- Plants become food for animals while they also provide shelter or housing. Herbivores (plant-eaters) become food for carnivores, which in turn become {or creates} food for plants (fertilizer).

Furthermore, whenever scientists or the fantasy peddlers of Hollywood talk about different potential and sensational “extinction events” such as: “Global Warming/{Cooling}”, Nuclear War, or a massive meteor impact; the expected extinction resulting from each event is the natural consequence of either too much or too little light {where global warming traps the heat energy which comes from light, causing global temperatures to rise overall (alleging rising sea levels and melting polar ice caps); where the result of Nuclear War or a catastrophic impact would cause a thick, global cloud cover that would prevent any light passing through causing a rapid reduction in overall global temperature and inducing a lengthy, artificial season of winter}. Every human person also knows that we are very dependent upon light (especially upon natural light) because we are reminded of it every year. Every time the seasons change and the days become longer or shorter our moods, attitudes, and energy levels are caused to fluctuate with the amount of available light.

Therefore, through both John's connection and these common, natural, and reasoned understandings, we can affirm that just as “light gives and supports life”, Jesus, the *Logos*, can be and is the Giver and Sustainer of all life within God's good Creation.

Next, John shares something that is a profound and important spiritual truth for us, as well as being a physical truth, “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*”.

Back in Genesis 1 it is written, “*And God separated the light from the darkness.*” (Gen. 1:4 ESV), so once again John here echoes Moses, but this time he intensifies things; whereas when before, Moses plainly described God establishing a natural division between darkness and light, there was no obvious moral quality to the division.

“*The light shines...and the darkness has not overcome it.*”. The language used here is implicitly combative, transforming it into a moral concern. The principle {prioritized} translation choices of the underlying Greek {*katalambano*} carry the sense of: seizing by force, overpowering, taking control of, or of “making something someone's own”; while the lesser translation choices relate to: an understanding or comprehension of {as in the KJV}. Thus John describes a spiritual battle where the good light is valiantly pushing back against the efforts of an evil darkness which seeks to overwhelm and subjugate it and all things; trying to bring everything under its power and authority. When John elsewhere wrote, “*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*” (1 Jn. 1:5 ESV) this is what he meant. Light goes into the darkness. Light drives back, drives away the darkness. Darkness cannot come into the light nor can it remain within the presence of the light.

While Moses described a pre-Fall, pre-corrupted time during creation, John's description takes into consideration the spiritual conflict that the incarnated *Logos* is engaged in; framing the spiritual violence and oppression of Satan which He is constantly defending against. So thanks to John, that act of division during creation has been long understood by the Church as an act that is both actual and metaphorical: being spiritually understood as a division between Good and Evil (where Good is identified with light and Evil is identified with darkness) and allegorically, as describing the occasion of God's work of Sovereign {supralapsarian;} election: His establishment of the Elect and the Reprobate “...*before the foundation of the world.*” (Eph. 1:4 ESV).

The truth of this division of light and dark is something that we all know and can recognize from the observations of our own eyes. We can see and we implicitly understand that darkness cannot exist apart from the light, because the light does not need the darkness (1 John 1:5).

Darkness only exists, we only know darkness through its relationship to the light. There are no “shades of grey”; the different shades are themselves unique colors. There is only black and white {and it is “white light” that may be bent (or divided) through a prism to produce the whole color spectrum}, light and dark; if it is not light or white, then it must therefore be dark {or something else, something that is not white; “off white” is “not white”, adding any qualifying adjective fundamentally transforms whatever is adjectivized}.

We describe light positively {by what it is} as being something that is “bright” and “shining” but we describe darkness in a negative sense {by what it is not} as being “dim”, “shadowy”, “twilight”, or “dawning”. All of these terms used for something darkened, actually describe a “lack” of light: the absence or reduced quality or quantity of light.

Therefore we understand that darkness needs the light, but the light does not need the darkness. So, when Scripture tells us that “...*the darkness has not overcome [the light].*”, we can believe it and know it to be true because we see the evidence that even in the midst of the deepest darkness, the tiniest light will shine all the more brightly {inversely proportional to the dark}.

Thus John now describes the *Phos*, who is the *Logos* and the *Theos*, as “*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*”, as something transcendent, becoming immanent, in order to transform the Creator's relationship with His creation. Before the Incarnation, God existed entirely outside of His creation. Although He did act upon and interact with His creation (performing miracles and wonders, appearing to the Patriarchs and Moses, or sending dreams to the prophets), He was never a part of creation nor has He ever been contained within it (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 6:18). But now, by taking the human nature upon Himself and being born of the virgin Mary, the infinite chose to limit Himself to the finite, for a time.

Lastly, many times in New Testament Scripture, the Greek words which are translated as “all” {*panta* is perhaps the most frequent}, do not always mean “All”, as in everything or everyone. Here, “everyone” comes from “*panta anthropon*”, which does mean all mankind or all of humanity. John is here affirming the universal access humanity has to the natural revelation of God; the ability to know that God is; of God causing Himself to be knowable by everyone (even though He is not known by everyone). Since all people can know the necessity, existence, and presence of the LORD's divinity, this leaves everybody who denies Him without any excuse (Rom 1:20).

So what does this understanding of the *Logos* (or Word) as related to the *Phos* (or Light) teach us about who Jesus, God the Son, is? What does this mean for us?

This **does not** tell us that God the Son was created, not even as the first creation; like the 4th century heretic, Arius, taught or as the Jehovah's Witnesses continue to erroneously believe.

This **does** teach us that Jesus, that God, is the source of and the most basic necessity for all life.

- Just as the sun gives us the light which warms our planet to the ideal temperature for life;
- Just as that light and that warmth is necessary to maintain and preserve the world's climate and seasons, allowing plants to grow and to produce their fruit at the appropriate time;
- Just as light is converted by plants into the sugars that fuel all animal life on this planet, and helps to produce every form of accessible energy which enables our world and society to function;
- So God is the One who has decreed that the Earth's temperature would be “just so” and has ordered His creation in just such a way that it “is so”;
- So God is the One who has decreed that there would be certain times and seasons because such a cycle helps life to grow, to transform, and to flourish because, in His wisdom, it naturally incorporates the important necessity of rest, or sabbath {if the angle of the earth's axial tilt was changed by 1 degree, science suggests that all life on earth would cease because of the total climate change}.
- Therefore, God is the One who directly fuels and empowers us because our Creator “...*formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*” (Gen. 2:7 ESV); it is God's breath, His Spirit, that makes us truly alive: in body and in soul.

Without light, there is no life; everything would be dark and lifeless. Without life, there would be no point or purpose to creation; there would be no meaning in the entire universe. No “Matter” would *matter* in the whole of Creation.

Without God, without the *Logos*, without the *Phos*, we would not be, because there would be not reason for us to be; no purpose. But with God, with the *Logos*, with the *Phos*, we are, because God has a reason; because God has a purpose for each and every one of us.

If God is who we believe Scripture says He is, then we must believe this. We must believe this because, “God does not create junk”. Everything is by divine intention, according to divine reasoning, for divine purposes; it must be so because the alternative is chaos, irrationality, and purposelessness.

- If something is, then it must be for some reason because, if there is no reason, then it does not matter whether something (or anything at all) is or is not.

Why does understanding this matter for us?

It matters because it helps us to trust, to believe, and to remain confident that there is a reason, that there is a purpose to everything and that this purpose is truly good. Romans 8:28 tells us “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*” (Rom. 8:28 ESV).

By believing this and holding onto this hope, that is what enables us to put one foot in front of the other when it feels like the world is bearing down upon us. We must believe that something good, somehow will come out of everything; even the things which seem or are {objectively} bad. Without believing this, without that hope, all that remains is the question, “Why bother?” and a long, slow, slide into apathy and despair.

But apathy and despair belong to the realm of darkness, while we have now been brought into the light of life. We stand in the light, tall and strong. We are empowered by God with the confidence and strength to withstand all the malicious efforts of the Devil.

We are standing in the light and because the light of God, the *Phos* who is the *Logos* and *Theos*, is not and shall not be overcome, we are not and shall not be overcome.

So Hallelujah and praise God Almighty!

AMEN