

John 1.1

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SPEAKERS

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Please turn in your Bibles if you would to the gospel of John chapter one. As we begin a series on this wonderful gospel that is afraid, favorite among many. I will warn you know, one of the things about trying to set up sermons for this is that you'd be amazed how often I will preach on one verse and how often I will also just preach on a chunk of text at once, such as the nature of this gospel. Well, we come and begin with the prologue, which is verses one through 18. And this will be one of these cases where we spend some time in the prologue. JOHN, chapter one, let's give careful attention to the reading of God's most holy and infallible word. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was With God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without Him was not anything made that was made. 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 enlightens everyone who 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 the few 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. And the Word became flesh and made and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father full of grace and truth. JOHN bore witness about him and cried out, this was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me. And from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace, for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the father side, he has made him know the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God stay forever. I'm sure most of you have received a somewhat formal letter or email that begins something like this. I am writing to you because sometimes you get positive news. Sometimes you get negative news. Sometimes you just get information. Well, in many respects, that's what John's Gospel is. It's a letter. Now most of the book of the Bible since I mean we understand that the epistles are specifically letters, but the Bible as a whole really is God's letter to his people. Become the John's Gospel in particular, and John's as I mentioned, he is a favorite among Christians. It has been described by various people and I have no idea who originated and there are slight variations on what is said. John's Gospel is simple enough that a mouse could wade in its pool, but deep enough that an elephant could drown. That's John's Gospel. There are

so many rich truths found within. Now we call it the gospel according to John. It is believed throughout all of church history and almost very little doubt that it was the apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who wrote this gospel. Interestingly, he's not even named in the Gospel. He's just the one disciple that Jesus loved. It seems best to look at the date in which it was written somewhere around 85 or 98 D, which of course means that's after the destruction of the temple. Some will debate that I'm not going to get into that debate. But what makes John's Gospel different? Perhaps you've heard the expression, the Synoptic Gospels, referring to Matthew, Mark and Luke because of their similarity and structures similarity and content, similarity in the way they introduced Christ from beginning to end. And yet John's Gospel seems to set itself apart in many respects. We'll see that as we unfold. There is and I hate to sound somewhat simplistic here, because this is not an absolute line that should be drawn. There's a greater emphasis in John's Gospel on Christ Himself. It's not to say the other gospels don't talk about Christ. The other gospels focus strongly on the message and his ministry. And at the same time, we can't dismiss the fact that his message of ministry is also so found in John's Gospel, it's just a question of emphasis. There are no parables in John's Gospel. But there are large discourses, lengthy ones, I mean, John chapter 15 is all the words of Christ. His high priestly prayer in John 17, long discourses that will take time to unpack. But what's the purpose? And even in this prologue, we add hints of the purpose but really, to get a true sense of the ultimate personal purpose of John's Gospel, it's best to turn to chapter 20 and go to verse 31. actually started verse 30. But 31 really gets to the heart of the purpose, and if anything as we go through John's Gospel, keep this verse in mind because John is on packing in the entirety of the gospel, what he's trying to accomplish by this simple phrase here in verse 30, and 31. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. That's the purpose. That's the focus upon what John is focused on. What he wants you to see. He wants you to see Jesus. He wants you to see who Jesus is, he wants you to then believe on him, so that you may have eternal life. Keep that thought in mind, through the length of time that we go through this gospel. Even toyed with preaching on that verse first. I decided against it. Obviously, but we come then to John one and we look at this prologue, even in the prologue, there are themes that will be unpacked throughout this Gospel accounts, light life, children of God, bearing witness testimony, believing these are things that you will see again and again scattered throughout the the Gospel accounts. Well, John begins in a certain sense where the other Gospel accounts jumped. begins with Christ Himself. If we take the purpose of the book, and the beginning of the book, and we sort of coalesce them, we can I get an idea of what John's purpose here is in the beginning of this prologue. And so what I hope to show this morning is simply this that knowledge of who Christ is, should lead to a certainty of his ability to save. knowledge of who Christ is, should lead to a certainty of his ability to save. We're going to look at this under three headings, first of all the word and the beginning. Secondly, the word and God. And finally, the word and creation. The first three verses summed up right there. So first of all the word and the beginning. Look again at verse one, In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God in the beginning, that should sound familiar. That should sound familiar for John's initial readers in the beginning, I've heard that somewhere before the beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapter one In the beginning, God, probably the most important words in Scripture. The Gospel does not begin to John 3:16. It begins in Genesis one In the beginning, God. Keep that in mind because John starts here with In the beginning was the Word. That's not a coincidence, by any stretch. JOHN is clearly intending to bring to us to the creation account, reminding us of God being there at creation already, but so was the

word. You see the Synoptic Gospels and this is one of the key differences especially in the beginning of Matthew Mark. And Luke compared to the beginning of John, you see Matthew, Mark and Luke start with the birth of Christ here on Earth, or in Mark's case with the ministry of Jesus as He entered into Galilee. JOHN starts not at a particular point in time. He goes before time, in the beginning was the Word. All of that is true. That's not to minimize what Matthew, Mark and Luke do at the beginning of their Gospel accounts. But John takes a step back and he says, you know, it's much bigger than this, in the beginning was the Word. The truth of the matter is God the Son did not arrive in creation in the world simply 2000 years ago. He's already been there according to His divine nature. The one Who is the subject has an origin story. And the one who has the origin story, interestingly enough, has no origin. Wrap your mind around that. In the beginning was the word as Genesis assumes God already existed. JOHN demonstrates that that is true of Christ the word. Well, let's look at this word. Word. In the beginning was the word the verb there was is to be is a to be verb kind of a past tense. He was it indeed, it indicates that in the beginning, at the origin of all things, the word already was. How do we understand that? Here's a simple answer. You don't. It is truly beyond our comprehension that before everything that we see around us was God already was the word Jesus Christ, the God the Son all ready was. Now linguistically speaking in terms of the Greek language, the word for word *logos*, as I'm sure many of you know, it's an ordinary Greek word. It has a wide range of uses and meanings, even in Scripture. So it's not just when you see *logos* in Greek, and you see that it's not just referring to Jesus. Sometimes it's about what people say. Word is a legitimate translation for it. There's various ideas of what the word is with respect to Greek philosophy. Some see it as like the rational principle by which all exists. It can refer to reason, thought, even science. It can refer to an outward expression, speech or a message. But we also need to take the Old Testament into account, we can't just look at Greek philosophy. We understand that John's gospel and also his epistles first, second, and third John, seem to be answering in no small part what you might call a pre Gnosticism. Full blown Gnosticism hadn't arrived yet on the scene, but there were elements that were already starting to creep in. One example of Gnosticism is the idea that when Jesus came He only appeared to be human. Because with Gnosticism there's this huge duality, spirit good matter bad. And so there's no way Jesus could be really mad or because matter is bad. JOHN says in verse 14, the word *in the flesh*. So John is doing some deliberate things here is he's bringing together Greek, messed up ideas about the word, combining it with what the Old Testament says about the word and pointing into the Lord Jesus Christ. Now in the Old Testament, the word is usually connected to God's activity in creation in Revelation is deliverance. It's connected to wisdom. For example, in Proverbs eight, where wisdom is personified, it is a word of the Lord. Remember, in the beginning God created the heavens in the earth and after we get the description earth without form, God said, Let there be light. Notice what verse four says, of John chapter one. In him was life and he was the light of the world. Heretics like to pick up on that and think that Jesus was created, but that's not John's point. Verse one actually answers that before you even get there. Really what John is doing with respect to this, and I'm going to quote Dr. Carson from his commentary God's word in the Old Testament is his powerful self expression in creation, Revelation and salvation. And the personification of that word makes it suitable for John to apply it as a title to God's ultimate self disclosure, the person of his own son. See an elephant really can drown. JOHN John's Gospel begins this way, forcing the reader to ask if either than if, if the word is there in the beginning, it forces the reader to almost immediately ask, well that means that this word was with God, or that the Word was God Himself. Guess what? John's answer is. And this brings us into our second point, the word and God. Still in verse one, In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God. He answers both questions in the infer Affirmative. It's not either or it's both and the Word was with God and the Word was God. So let's start with the first part. JOHN first tackles and asserts that the Word was with God. not technically the preposition that that john uses here is more frequently used for the our English preposition to or toward, but it is not infrequently used as with and so with is a perfectly legit intimate translation. It is used not just direction towards something. That's kind of its primary meaning but it is also used to indicate close proximity. It's sort of illustrated like this is like when a young child of three or four grabs the parents face gets in the face and says Are you with me? That's pretty close proximity. The word had close proximity with God. Before anything else was the Word was with God. Commentators note that it's used with particularly this preposition is translated as with particularly when it is one person with another person. And usually with close, some kind of close intimate connection. That's the case here. The Word was with God. person. word here then what john is saying, saying that the Word was with God and using the preposition that he's doing is that word is not just some sort of abstract concept of reason. The word is a person. The distinct personhood of the word is being brought here. So in the beginning, already we see two distinct persons. With this statement then all forms of the heresy known as modalism are gone. Because the Word was with God. modalism is a heresy and there's various forms of it, it often goes by the name of civilian ism, the idea that at one time God manifested Himself as the Father. Then later on he manifested Himself as the sun. And now He manifests himself as a spirit, instead of three in one as we understand it, this verse, that clause destroys that idea. The Word was with God, distinct persons. two distinct persons already existing together in the closest possible proximity. I don't even know how you would describe that. So there was God, and there was a word but not so fast. Because the Word was God, the Word was God. Now what enly and it's really difficult in English to bear this out. It's very short in the Greek. In this clause that we have translated the Word was God, God, that word say us comes first. Say us was the word. Now, unfortunately in English, we can't really keep our cases that straight. That's okay. One of the things about that, though, is the way that john words this pun intended. The Word was God. Is that now john has also helped us to avoid all forms of arianism. He's eliminated sibella anism. And modalism was saying that the Word was with God. Now he's saying that the Word was God eliminates arianism arius was an ancient heretic who believe that the sun was created. Oh, he was God but in a different way. And some of you may remember in our Sunday school discussions about Christ and the Trinity, homo whoo CS versus homeboy rusi is not an iota of difference. You remember that discussion? You see areas wanted to say in his followers, especially followers, especially after him was was that the Son and the father were similar in substance. What really, the Bible teaches Is that they are the same. The same insults and shit distinct persons. How do you explain that? You don't you confess it. sometime back as part of a if you would call it a Christmas sermon I use verse one and verse 14 together. And I reminded you that the doctrine of the Trinity is not something for us that we will ever comprehend. But it is something for us to believe the Word was God. Now, it is true. Jehovah's Witnesses today will come up and they will tell you that really the translation there should be the word was a god. Because, you know, God in that clause has no definite article. And they're technically right. There is no article in front Another word God in that clause, but there's no indefinite article either. Fat Greek doesn't have an indefinite article. So it's always fun to open up a Greek New Testament to a job as witnesses. Can you show me where it says a god? And then suddenly, well, I don't speak great. It is true, but really what john is doing here in this case, and I hate to be technical, but it's necessary. JOHN is using sales God here in a more qualitative sense. In other words, what he's really saying is that all that God is, the word is. It is also true that john could have picked another word to describe and it's

related to say us, but to describe divine attributes divinity. But John was so specific here that it's not just merely attributes its divinity itself. The Word was God. It is God in all of his attributes. And of course, we struggle with the limitations of our finite minds and finite language to that prevents us from fully comprehending this phenomenon. That the Word was with God and the Word was God. It is not a mystery for us to solve, but it is a mystery for us to believe. That's what John is telling us here. That's what his point at the end of the book, that you know that Jesus is the Son of God and that you may believe in Him so that you would have eternal life. The Word was God and of course being both with God and being God, the Word is able to save. Being the word, being the word who is both with God and being God means that he is to be heard and worshiped. worshiped. Even as in Sunday school this morning, we looked at that great passage in Revelation chapter five, and you see it at the end of four. Well, you see both creation and redemption in the person of Christ. He's to be worshiped, blessing and honor and glory and power and strength. belong to Him. The word? Well, this brings us into our third and final point, the word and creation. look now at verse three. All things were made through him and without Him was not anything made, that was made. All things were made by him a further description of the word as God. Now sharing, if you will, in the creative act, first, John stated positively All things were made by him the word created. It's clear that this must be the case because he was from the beginning. That's what he says in verse two he or even more accurately, this one. This one was from The beginning. He works. It's a legitimate translation, but it really could be better. This one was in the beginning with God. This one is the one through whom all things were made the word created, all things were made by him. And then again woodenly it's something like this, offering all things through him, became, again made works. It's not a bad translation. But in the Greek it's another form or a difference, not a, another form. It's a different word. That is also a to be kind of verb. But it also carries with it the connotation of becoming Jesus, the word was Oh, Other things became and they be came through him. The elephant is struggling to swim. The word was everything else became that he is a part of the creative work is seen again and the personification of wisdom in Proverbs chapter eight. He is wisdom. He is the word. All things were made by him. But you know, language is a funny thing. And we as Calvinist we know full well all does not always mean all right. had those discussions once or 30 times I'm sure. So John states that again, negatively. Notice what he says to drive home the point. Without Him was not anything made. That was made. Not a thing. All that was made, it didn't come into existence without him. To remove all doubt as to its comprehensiveness, this negatively stated just eliminates any discussion of whether or not all in this case means all it does. All things, every single thing. Nothing was made, or excuse me, nothing that was made was made. Without him what was made everything and it was through him. Nothing and really again the word here made it said seem to be kind of verb became nothing that became, actually became without him. In other words, there's not creation without the word. This reminds us again and we even discuss we touched on this this morning in Sunday school that the work of the Triune God is indivisible. Father, Son, and spirit all involved with creation the father creates through the son by the Spirit. JOHN here is exalting Christ's position in that Through him. The word was everything else became nothing that became actually became without him. There's not creation without the word without Christ, there's no creation. It's not as though the father did his part, the spirit did his part and the son did his, all three persons in every aspect of creation, working in harmony, but see the beautiful thing about all of this, the father created through the sun and by the Spirit. If we go back to Genesis one, this is so important. When God created man, as opposed to everything else that God created, God said, Let there be Be when it came to man. God said, Let us make man in our image He did not say let there be man. This wonderful divine Council

of the Triune God comes and forms the man from the dust of the ground and breathes life into him. That's a picture of salvation, my friends. There is no salvation without Christ without the word, justice. There's no creation without the word. There's no salvation without the word. In the beginning, God, in the beginning was the Word, breath of life, breath of new life. You cannot separate them In the beginning was the word. The word was with God. The Word was God. This one was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without Him was not anything made that was made a brothers and sisters, I hope this is a better Advent sermon. Much of Christendom speaks of the coming of Christ. But let's remember that Christ already was which makes his coming into the world so much more remarkable. But it also means that he is the one to be worshiped. And how sad is it when pagan magic come and worship the baby when professing Christians today won't He is to be worshiped. He is the word. And this is presented to you so that you would believe upon him, that you would trust in him that you would recognize that being the word being God that Jesus is able to save to the other most. And that in him, you would have eternal life. you struggle with assurance of salvation. All of us do. I've quoted it this quote from john MacArthur before but john MacArthur rightly notes if you could lose your salvation you would. But because the word is God, you will not be lost. He is a boy To save precisely because the Word was with God, and the Word was God Amen.