

# IN HIM WAS LIFE

(John 1.1-5)

## Introduction

Scientists think that for every grain of sand there is on the Earth there are about a million stars in the universe.

And, if you have ever gazed up into the cloudless night sky, did you look and begin to wonder? The universe, you, life itself, how we all got here, where it all came from, and is there anything, or anyone, out there beyond us?

## In the Beginning...

When the Apostle John sat down to write his gospel, those are the sorts of questions he was asking himself. How did this all happen? What's it all made of? How did we get here? And he took a pen and jotted down some simple sentences; "In the beginning was the Word."

When you travel back to the point when it all began, Jesus was already there. And he is the Word, not *a* word, but *the* Word; *always clear, always true.*

The gospels report that Jesus spoke with authority. Whenever he opened his mouth was never like the usual waffle they got served up by their rambling religious leaders.

They constantly tried to trap him but unfailingly he tied them up in knots with razor-sharp wit of wisdom. He never withdrew anything he said, never had to apologise, never changed his mind, never hesitated, and never lied.

He only had to utter a word and raging storms were instantly calmed. With a simple command from his lips, fig trees withered, all manner of

sickness was cured, evil spirits were sent packing and even the dead were raised. People marvelled. No wonder John called Jesus the Word!

### **...Was With God and Was God**

In v1-2 of the first chapter of his Gospel, John then tells us two things about Jesus – he was *with* God in the beginning and he *was* God in the beginning. Christians believe that there is one God, in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is distinct from the other, and each is equally - and fully - divine. The human mind does not have the capacity to fathom this.

Saint Augustine wrote fifteen volumes on the Trinity, before he summed up with one of the most profound and exact statements which have ever been made on the subject. Yet even he never got near to plumbing the full depths of the mysteries of the God who is Three in One. You just can't put God in a box.

In v3 it says "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

The gargantuan magnitude of the heavens point to a very great God, because he arranged it all. The infinitesimal constructions of the subatomic world point to his meticulous ordering of the building blocks of matter.

Any learned professor would tell you, with eyes full of wonder, how implausible it is that life anywhere ever came to be, such are the overwhelming odds against it being possible. The improbable existence of the universe points to the existence of a wise author who conceived it.

Space exploration gives you the 'what' and the 'how', but not the 'why'. The 'what' tells you the number of stars up there (give or take a few trillion). The 'how' tells you how far away they are.

But the 'why' – what it *means* and why it all burst into existence, from nothing, belongs to God, who brought it all about by speaking a word, his Word, *the Word*.

So in v4, the spotlight on Jesus, the Word, suddenly intensifies. "In him was life, and that life was the light of all people."

It's not that Jesus is a bit like light. No, Jesus was here before light existed. It's the other way round. Light is very much like Jesus.

I can think of four different ways in which Jesus is light.

Firstly, he is light that points to the Father.

The word in John 1, is from the Greek *logos*. It's where we get our word "logo" from; Jesus is God's logo – his public face.

What you look at him you see the Father. He embodies the invisible God. He is the most vivid picture of God it is possible to see. "Anyone who has seen me," Jesus said, "has seen the Father."

Secondly, Jesus is light that exposes sin.

Martin McVeigh was an unknown Roman Catholic priest in Ireland until he led a meeting for parents and pupils at a primary school in March 2012. When he put his memory stick into a computer he didn't realise that Windows AutoPlay was enabled. The horrified parents and children were shown not a presentation on Holy Communion but a slideshow of pornographic images stored on his hard disk. He protested his innocence, but the bishop relieved him of his duties.

Jesus is a light that exposes sin. Mercifully, he usually exposes our sin to ourselves first. He brings to the light of our conscience things now hidden in darkness.

Thirdly, he is light that leads the way. A few years ago, I was on a winter break in Normandy. One night, I went outside to get some wood from

the cellar for the log fire. It was pitch black, there was no moon. But I'd been to the cellar a few times before and I reckoned I'd be OK.

There was a steep stairway going down to the cellar and, on second thoughts, I didn't want to risk it, I went back for a torch. When I got outside again, I saw that the steep drop was closer than I had remembered it. And if I hadn't gone back for some light, I probably would have fallen 7 feet down the stone stairway.

Some people have no idea where they're going in life. But we know what we mean when we say we can see light at the end of the tunnel after a difficult period in life. Because we know how Jesus leads the way through life.

And fourthly, he is the light that drives out darkness, which brings us to v5. "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."

No matter how many experiments you conduct, you never find darkness pushing back light. The one unchangeable property of darkness is that it *must* give way to light.

That's what John means here. Jesus is always decisively greater than evil and sin and doubt and fear and the darkness within.

Jonathan Aitken was a Member of Parliament, Cabinet minister and on the Privy Council. He was exposed as a serial liar in court, was convicted of perjury and perverting the course of justice and was handed an 18-month prison sentence.

He says of that time in his life, "I went through ... the depths which encompassed defeat, disgrace, divorce, bankruptcy and jail - a royal flush of crises, especially as they all took place within the public eye."

The thing is, we all have our darkness and we can all fall from grace. But that is not the focus of Christmas. It isn't that Jesus has come as a child in Bethlehem to show us how bad we are and tell us to clean up our act.

We know the truth about ourselves. We don't need anyone to rub it in. But light always overcomes darkness.

Aitken found that out. This is what he said; "God is a God of new beginnings... This dawned on me in a police cell... For the first time I read Mark's gospel from beginning to end, and I remember being overwhelmed.... I began to see dimly there my own story."

He came to faith in Jesus Christ and he now volunteers in a Christian prison-visiting ministry. Light overcame darkness.

## **Ending**

Jesus is light that points to the Father. Is it time for you to connect with the Father heart of God?

Jesus is light that exposes sin. Is there something hidden to bring out from the shame of darkness – where, undetected, it poisons your soul - into Christ's healing light?

Jesus is light that leads the way. Are you hesitating about a big decision? Are you fearful about stepping out in faith? Have you lost your way? Jesus said, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness."

And Jesus is light that casts out darkness. Are you hemmed in by assaults on your soul? Do you have panic attacks? Are you stalked by doubts and temptations? Deliver us from evil!

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever,  
Amen!