

This is His Life

by Dr. J. Vernon McGee



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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:1-18)

There is a form of insanity sweeping the country today. It has not yet been isolated by the psychiatrist, neither has it been analyzed, diagnosed, or labeled by the psychologist. But the etiology, the cause, of the disease can be traced.

The symptoms are recognizable: the patient will sometimes drive hundreds of miles, in order to get to Las Vegas, and will then stand for hours and watch a little wheel spin around. The patient will pay dearly for that privilege. Some actually will spend thousands of dollars in an evening and think nothing of it. Others have lost everything they owned. And in the gambling joints of Las Vegas you can see these suckers – I mean, the sick and the suffering – as they gather there around the tables to watch those little roulette wheels spinning.

Probably this poor preacher could give it a name. It might be called “Las Vegasitis” that a great many are suffering from today. Now someone will say, “But, Preacher, the upper crust go ‘round to look at them.” Yes, I know, my friend, but do you know what the upper crust is? It’s a bunch of crumbs stuck together with their own dough.

Close by Las Vegas there are other wheels turning, and they are turning for the weal and welfare of mankind. They are turning constantly, twenty-four hours every day. And *their* going around is beneficial to the human race. The crowd does not gather to watch *them* turn, but the turning of these wheels brings life and light to Los Angeles.

Obviously, I am referring to Hoover Dam where power is generated for the happiness of the people in Southern California. Back of that dam the mighty waters of the Colorado are impounded, then released in a small stream to rush over blades which are connected to huge dynamos that are converting that great reservoir into power. That tremendous force of the water has been translated into a different yardstick of power, electric energy. And it is piped through long wires that run over deserts and mountains all the way into Los Angeles. Transformers release this power in smaller packages in order to turn the wheels of industry, in order to light

our homes and streets, cook our food, warm our bodies and be our servant in a thousand different ways.

Those wheels at Hoover Dam are life-giving wheels, and there's not a gamble in a carload. And when *they* go around it's a sure thing. But men and women will not spend all the night watching these wheels; those suffering from Las Vegasitis will not gather 'round to look at them. But may I say that people everywhere benefit because these wheels are going around.

Now John in his Gospel takes us at the very outset to the great powerhouse of this universe. And he lets us see there, not wheels – for there are no wheels going around – but he lets us see the great, throbbing and pulsating heart of Almighty God which is at the very center of this universe. And he takes us back to the beginning – which is not really a beginning. In language like this there can be no beginning:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1, 2)

There are three beginnings mentioned in God's Word. There is the beginning which John mentions in his first epistle. He says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have seen and heard, we are witnessing to you about." And the beginning that he's speaking of is the incarnation of Jesus Christ when He came into this world, when the Word became flesh, and they could see Him and handle Him. That goes back two thousand years to usher in this new era in which we live today.

And then in Genesis 1:1 God introduces a second beginning in time: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now, friends, you can't pinpoint that beginning in time, though I'm confident there is a date for it. But what that date is, no one knows. The scientists keep shifting it. It's a sliding yardstick today.

When I was in school, the scientists were estimating the beginning of the universe as being 200 thousand years ago. And now I understand that it's all supposed to have started 200 *million* years ago. That's all right – I hope they keep on going. I hope that they'll get it to 200 *billion* years. I think that's nearer it certainly than 200 million. In fact, I hope they go to 200 *squillion* years, whatever that is, because we have a God of eternity. And if you think He is being crowded by the clock or the calendar, you're dead wrong. He has plenty of time back of Him and He has plenty of time ahead of Him. And there's one thing for sure, God is in no hurry today. But *you* better be in a hurry, and that's the reason He gives us a warning when He says, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts..." (Hebrews 3:15). But God has eternity ahead of Him and He has eternity behind Him – He is not disturbed with a few millions of years.

Now this third beginning that John mentions goes way beyond the beginning that's in Genesis 1:1. He goes back to a beginning that's not a beginning at all.

In the beginning was the Word....

I wonder if you've ever noticed that it's not, "In the beginning is the Word," but, "In the beginning was the Word." Today, no matter how far back into time and into eternity past that your mind is able to go, God was there. And it doesn't make any difference how far back you can go. You may be able to go back farther than the rest of us. Some can. You may have a bulging brain and beetling eyebrows and be able to move way back into the past. But, my friend, when you do you will find at that very point the Word *was*. That is, He is already past tense, and He comes out of eternity to meet you. So wherever you, with your finite brain, can put down a

pinpoint, you will find that the infinite God of eternity is there. And you will find that the One who is the Word is the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find that He was God in the eternal ages of the past – but He had not yet been revealed to man.

Again, may I come back to my illustration of Hoover Dam. For centuries and millenniums the Colorado River ran through the Grand Canyon, sometimes like a babbling brook and sometimes like a raging torrent, unharnessed. Its energy was not translated into that which man could utilize. As a result, along the banks of the Colorado people starved to death, they shivered and froze to death, and they stood there in darkness because they couldn't lay hold of that power.

Back of the iron curtain of eternity stands God alone – our triune God, if you please – filled with the plenitude of power and wisdom and love. Then somewhere along the avenue of time, God stepped out, and when He stepped out it was none other than Jesus Christ. But when He came, this earth didn't even provide a suitable place for His birth. Yet He was the Creator! We read here:

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:3)

Somewhere along the pathway of eternity, God stepped from behind the iron curtain of mystery and created this vast universe which today seems to be infinite. I don't know, but I don't think it's infinite, although it looks like it is anywhere you touch it. You and I live today in a three-dimensional universe, a universe where time is a creation, and we know so little about it. Yesterday's gone, tomorrow's not here, but today – today is here. And there is a vast number of days in back of us and a vast number of days ahead of us. And why we don't get it all at once, I don't know.

As creatures we are confined in a universe of time and a universe of space. We are in a universe where there is another dimension, and that other dimension is Deity. It is God. John takes us back to the source, back to the powerhouse. He takes us yonder to the dizzy heights and begins there with us, my beloved.

But I must confess to you today that I am limited when I go with John. There are folks today who say that John's Gospel is simple, and they say that the synoptic Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are very difficult. May I say, in one sense that may be true, while in another it is false.

Now it is true that John uses simple language. The simplicity of John's language is amazing. I do not know whether you noticed these first eighteen verses or not, but they are made up of monosyllabic and disyllabic words – words of one syllable and two syllables, little twenty-five cent words, simple words like "life" and "light" and "man" and "darkness." And any child in the fourth grade can tell you the meaning of every word John used. But, my friend, for two thousand years some of the greatest brains in the world have come to these first eighteen verses, and they can't tell you the meaning of them. They cannot plumb the depths, they cannot probe the heights of that which is here, for it is tremendous.

On the train the other day I read this first chapter in Greek. It had been a long time since I had done that, and I still marvel at the simplicity of the language that is here. But, my friend, there is a depth here that no one can lay hold of. So John takes us back yonder, and he pulls aside the iron curtain, and for just a brief moment he lets us gasp in amazement at the tremendous thing that he is saying.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

John turns our attention back to that powerhouse which is God, that life which is God; and that life was the light of men.

But again, let's return to my parable of Hoover Dam. How could the life of the Colorado River be brought onto the streets of Los Angeles without flooding the place? How could you bring that mighty power into this city without destroying the population? How can the eternal God translate Himself into light, something I can handle? That's the problem. And now John tells us: "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."

My friend, up to this point, Greek philosophy would have agreed with John and did agree with him. But I say to you, beware of the road that's marked "Philosophy" today, because it has gone down a dead-end street, and that dead-end street is labeled "Atheism."

Nietzsche, that brilliant philosopher of pantheism, expressed it when he said, "Where is my home?" He was on his deathbed, by the way.

"For if I do ask and seek
And have sought but have not found it,
O eternal everywhere, O eternal nowhere, O eternal in vain."

My friend, if you follow the thinking of man today, you will go down a dead-end street that is atheism.

As I've indicated, up to this point men would have followed John, but now we come to this sweeping statement:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

May I say that now we confront something breathtaking. And even if we are familiar with this fact today, yet it should still take our breath away: "And the Word was made flesh, and pitched His tent down here among us."

Back yonder in the Old Testament the Shekinah Glory of God had appeared in that tabernacle with its flimsy curtain and its earthly materials. Then in Ezekiel 10:18 we read that the Shekinah Glory departed, but not forever because one day God walked into the temple which had *Ichabod* ("the glory is departed") written across it. The Lord Jesus Christ, the One who walked in there, brought the Shekinah Glory in with Him – the Word was made flesh and pitched His tent down here among us. The Shekinah Glory was no longer concealed in curtains but was revealed in this frail curtain of human flesh that walked among men.

John says, "We beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. We looked upon Him, we handled Him, and the Word was made flesh." The Word became life, the life became light down here where man could see God for the first time, my beloved, and could know Him.

This lamp here on my desk takes power from some powerhouse. There's a generator somewhere or we wouldn't have electrical power today, you can be sure of that. In the same way, out of eternity the omnipotent and infinite God became a man and took upon Himself the frail garment of our flesh. The Word was made flesh, my beloved. He was down here for thirty-three years.

John Wesley defined Him as “God contracted to a span.” And the Lord Jesus put it like this: “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father” (John 16:28). For thirty-three years men looked upon God robed in human flesh.

This is His life. Born of a virgin, born as no other man was born. I have a question to ask the skeptic. Will you tell me, my friend, how a holy God could get into this world any other way except through the virgin birth? You give me your explanation. May I say to you today that a holy God came down to this earth, and as the angel said to Mary, “... That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Do you know why this Baby is going to be called the Son of God? Because He *is* the Son of God.

This is His life. And there’s been no one else born into this world like that. No one ever lived like He did either.

His boyhood is told in the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Luke tells us that He grew in stature, physically; He grew in wisdom, mentally; He grew in favor with God, spiritually. But if you want to know about those silent years, go back to the Old Testament where it is written,

I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. (Psalm 69:3)

They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.
(Psalm 69:12)

In other words, the drunkards made up dirty little ditties and they sang them about Him. May I say, for thirty-three years a cloud hung over Him and His mother. Granted, other people have endured such gossip and slander, but none ever entered this world as the perfect Son of God and had to bear what He bore. My friend, this is His life. There has never been another life like it.

Then at the age of thirty He began His ministry. And may I say, there’s been no ministry like that. When His enemies sent officers to arrest Him, they went back and reported, “No man ever spoke like this man.” And His enemies agreed that neither had they ever seen anyone do what He had done. He performed miracles, He gave parables, He taught as no other man ever taught. This is His life.

When He walked down here, He could say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” And if you want to know God today, my friend, you’ll have to come to Jesus Christ. I don’t know how God looks, I don’t know how He feels today. But I do know this: He became a man and I see Him walking the dusty roads of this world, I see Him growing tired, I see Him getting weary, I see Him shedding tears. And I know today how God feels. I know God, today, through Jesus Christ.

And then they arrested Him and they tried Him. Other innocent people have been convicted. I remember the story of a girl who had been sent to prison and served several years, then finally it was found that she was innocent. And there have been other people who have actually been put to death for crimes they did not commit. But when Jesus was arrested, even Pilate, who was the highest tribunal of the day, said, “I find no fault in this man.” In other words, the supreme court of that government said, “There is nothing wrong with this man.” Yet Pilate delivered Him to be crucified. And no one died as He died.

The Lord Jesus Christ didn’t have to die. Other folk have to die. He said in John 10:18, “No man takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.” In other words,

“I don’t have to die.” If the Lord tarries, you have to die and I have to die, but He did not have to die – yet He died.

Now innocent folk, when they are arrested and tried, try to defend themselves. He didn’t.

Why didn’t He? Because, my friend, had He gotten off, you wouldn’t get off. If He had not died, you would have to die without hope. If He had not borne the pangs of hell, that’s where we all would go. This is His life. And He gave it for you and for me.

I walked through the cemetery the other day and read the inscriptions on the headstones: born...died, born...died. Birth and death are parentheses marked around all of us: born...died. His life was different, though. Just as He did not begin at Bethlehem, He did not end at the tomb. There wasn’t room for Him at the inn, but there was plenty of room when He died – they had a new tomb for Him. Birth had placed Him in the stable, but death could not keep Him in the tomb!

He did something that no one else has done up to the present moment. He came back from the dead.

I love the way Paul gave it to a young preacher, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (1Timothy 6:16)

And later he wrote this:

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:9, 10)

My friend, He came back from the dead, and today He is the unique Man, He’s the Man in the glory. But as someone has said, “There is a Man in glory, but the church has lost sight of Him.” He’s back from the dead. This is His life. And so today, if I am to know God, I must go to Jesus Christ. John 1:18 is still an axiom today:

No man hath seen God at any time [but something can be added to that:]; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom [the heart] of the Father, he hath declared him.

He has *revealed* Him. The Son has brought God out into the open.

And even a little, simple fellow like I am can somehow or another come in contact with God.

He said, “I am bread.” I understand that.

He said, “I am light.” I understand that.

He said, “I am water.” I understand that.

He said, “I am the true vine.” I understand that.

He walked down here and He said things that enable me to come into contact with God.

But how can I know Him?

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:5)

Moffatt translates it like this: “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness could not put it out.” May I say, with all due respect to Dr. Moffatt, that is a very good *interpretation* but a very poor *translation*. God said more than that. What He said really was that the light came into the world and the darkness could not put out the light. But there is an added meaning: the darkness and the light could exist together.

That is contrary to natural law. When you bring light into a dark room, the darkness vanishes. They do not exist together. But His coming into the world did not do that. Why? Because the light has come into the darkness and the darkness cannot take it down.

My friend, today, how can I know God? I return for the last time to my parable of Hoover Dam.

Out here in Southern California the street lights dissipate the darkness because of the light and the power they draw from Hoover Dam. These lights are plugged into a dynamo. In that same way you and I need to get plugged in if we want to be in light rather than in darkness.

I want to be very frank with you, though. Getting plugged in is dangerous business. All along that power line from Hoover Dam there are signs that read, “Danger – High Voltage.” You better not touch that line. So how can you and I get plugged in?

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. (John 1:10)

They didn’t get plugged in. And they were judged. Danger – High Voltage!

How can I get plugged in? My friend, there are transformers. I’m just a little light bulb, myself. All I can take is 110 volts. So there must be transformers, and there have been transformers.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light (John 1:6, 7)

John was one of the transformers. The apostles were transformers.

The Word of God is the transformer! That’s one of the reasons it’s so important to read the Bible – so you can get plugged in! I had a letter from a radio listener whose whole family had been saved by the reading of God’s Word. Of course – they got plugged in.

Also the Holy Spirit is here today. He is the mighty transformer, my friend. Paul said, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance...” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Although the Holy Spirit, my beloved, is the ultimate transformer, the natural man can’t receive the things of the Spirit of God, he can’t know them because they are spiritually discerned. We need to have the Spirit of God transform our hearts and lives and deposit them with Jesus Christ. For in Him is life, and that life is the light of men.

A very prominent preacher friend of mine up in the Northwest told me about a young electrical engineer who had been attending his services. This young man asked my friend for an interview and came to his study.

After this preacher had attempted to explain the plan of salvation to him as clearly and simply as he could, this brilliant electrical engineer said, “It’s just too simple. You say that all I

have to do is receive Christ as my Savior. That is too simple. It seems that I ought to *do* something. I've got some contribution I need to make."

And this preacher, oh, he hit upon a very practical way of illustrating it. They had been talking until dusk and hadn't turned on the light. Knowing this man's background in electrical engineering, he got up and went over to the light switch and asked, "What do I have to do to get light into this room?"

"There you go again. It's pretty simple, all you have to do is to turn on the switch."

"Now wait a minute. You're wrong. You can't get light that easy. You're an electrical engineer. Don't you know that somebody's got to go out yonder on the river and build a great dam and back up that water? Don't you know that dynamos have to be built and put down in cement? Don't you know that wires have to be strung and that the power has to be taken over wires from the dam here to Seattle? Don't you know that this building has to be wired? Don't you know that there must be a connection made?"

The electrical engineer said, "Yeah, but all that's been done."

And the preacher said, "Yes, that's it. It's all been done. Now let's move into the spiritual realm. Jesus Christ built the dam which held back the judgment of God. And He is the dynamo. He is the life. And He is the One who came down to this earth, to the very lowest. And now He says to you and me, 'Turn on the switch.'"

To as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God – even to those who don't do any more or less than simply believe in His name.