

JESUS' PORTRAIT FROM ETERNITY

John 1: 1-5 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Today, we turn from every advance ever made in artist renderings of faces or in photography, to the greatest portrait ever flashed in history, flashed by the Holy Spirit into the heart and mind of the disciple John, who leaned on Jesus' bosom. This portrait of Christ has no air brushing, photoshopping, retouching or changing a photo, removing of people, objects, erasing acne scars, warts, or altering body shapes, or any other manipulation of the original photograph. John wrote his Gospel and his first epistle with the same overriding portrait—painting in a word picture that Jesus is the Son of God. The Prologue in John 1:1-18 is the initial portrait of the Son of God. The second flash in John 1: 19-12:50 is the portrait of the public ministry of the Son of God. The third flash in John 13:1-17:26 is the portrait of the private ministry of the Son of God. The fourth flash in John 18:1-20:31 is the portrait of the Passion of the Son of God. The fifth and last flash in John 21:1-25 is the portrait of the Postscript/the final appeal of the Son of God. In the Prologue, Jesus is introduced as the Word, the Life, the Light, the Creator, and the only begotten Son of God. The Prologue describes the conflict between light and darkness, between belief and unbelief. As the Gospel unfolds, we are given seven signs, the seven "I Am's," 27 personal interviews, and the portrayal of Jesus as the God man, God come in the flesh, completely human and completely divine.

The word believe occurs 98 times as John is writing, so all his hearers will believe in Jesus. As the story unfolds, the struggle between light and darkness, belief and unbelief, climaxes with Jesus' crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection of Jesus, and Thomas' confession to Him, "My Lord and my God." John knew when we truly behold Jesus, we will repent, believe, and receive Him. There is no playing church when we see Jesus. There can be no lying lips when we truly see Jesus, no hiding from His holy presence and no lying to God's people like Ananias and Sapphira did to Peter, the apostles, and to the Holy Spirit. God took their lives early for they tried to air-brush the truth and make themselves look as godly as Barnabas. When they lied about the price of land they sold, and gave part to the apostles, saying that was all, God would not allow such an agreed upon intentional lie of this couple to go on—their lives ended that day. There's no hating of Jesus or even one of His followers when we truly behold Jesus. John wrote in I John 4: 20, "If anyone says, "I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

The Sanhedrin was the supreme court of the Jews, made up of 70 men, and the high priest—71. Jesus came to His own, the Jews, who saw Him in the flesh. Only 3 members of the 71 repented, believed and received Him—Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Saul, who persecuted the church, later becoming the apostle, Paul. (3 out of 71) Many are religious and lost. Someday, after the Rapture, the Jews as a nation will look on Him, whom they have pierced. They will weep/repent as over an only Son. If we cannot repent when we are face to face with Jesus, in front of His church, God will not airbrush our lies, our pride, our face saving, or our sinful unbelief. Let's look at Jesus in 3 periods today to learn who Jesus really is!

LOOK AT JESUS IN THE BEGINNING, EVEN IN ETERNITY PAST. (I.)

Notice verses 1-2. “In the beginning,” (Greek, “**en archei**” 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 any thing made that was made.” John’s readers had to notice the similarity between John’s Gospel and beginning of the Law of Moses in Genesis 1: 1. We read, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” The phrase, “In the beginning,” in Genesis restricted Moses’ readers to the time of creation. John’s use of “in the beginning,” points John’s readers not only to creation, but to the fact that at creation, the Word, (Greek—Logos) already was—showing the timelessness of John’s statement. Thus, the Word anti-dates time and goes back to eternity past with God. Instead of starting at creation, and looking forward, John calls us to face in the opposite direction of creation, and to look back, to gaze back into eternity past before time began. John made no argument to prove the existence of God any more than Moses did. Without God, there is no life, light, word, or existence of matter. God made all He made out of nothing—ex nihilo. He spoke, and it was done. “Let there be light, and there was light.”

Who is this Word? This Word is personally distinct from God the Father. We read, “The Word was with God,” meaning the Word is a separate person/entity from God, the Father. The Word is more than an attribute of God, or something reaching out or emanating from God. The Greek word “**pros**” means “in the presence of,” meaning the Word’s person or personality was distinct in some way from God the Father. Yet the Word is identical in essence with God. “The Word was God. There is nothing lesser about the Word from God the Father.

The Word existed before creation. We read, “He, the Word, was in the beginning with God.” When the heavens and the earth were created, the Word (Logos) already existed. The Word existed from all eternity. The Word is a title, (Logos) for Jesus/Christ that is peculiar to John’s writings. The word Logos, meaning Word means the communication or expression of the soul of man, even if no one is there to hear or read it. In other words, Christ/Jesus expressed as Word reflects the mind and will of God and the Word reveals God to man. This word, Word describing Jesus as the Word, occurs only 4 times, in John 1:1, 14, I John 1: 1, and Rev. 19:13, where we read, “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the Name by which he is called is “The Word of God.” The pre-existence of the Word of God before creation is spoken of by Solomon in Proverbs 8: 22-30. Listen as I read. The psalmist adds, in Psalm 33: 6, “By the Word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth, all their host.” The Word is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word was with God. The Greek reads “**pros ton theon.**” The most understandable translation is “The Word was face to face with God, the Father,” in the closest possible fellowship with the Father and delighting in each other’s communion. Jesus never lost consciousness of this eternal fellowship He had with the Father, and the glory of it, as He prayed in His high priestly prayer, in John 17: 5. Jesus prayed just before going to the cross, “And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.”

The Word was God. Make no mistake. The full deity of our Lord Jesus Christ has always been true. The cult, the Jehovah's Witnesses are as wrong by saying Jesus is God's first creation as if they had said Satan is God. Jesus was never created. He always was, is, and forever will be, the eternal, co-existent with the Father, great "I Am!" Verse 2 repeats this double emphasis, saying, "He was, in the beginning with God." Thus, the full deity of Christ, His eternal nature, and His distinct personal existence, are confessed once more to refute the heretics of John's day and of our day today. This portrait of the Word flashed from the Trinity through the work of God the Holy Spirit is clear. "The Word is the Son of God." Portrait # 2 is:

LOOK AT JESUS AT THE CREATION OF THE WORLD. (II.) Notice verses 3 and part of 4. We read, "All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life..." Think of it with me.

The Word created all things. John states this positively and negatively, that is, apart from the Word, not a single thing that exists came into being. This means, that all things, viewed one by one, from a Tasmanian devil to a platypus, to a tadpole, to mankind, only two genders, male and female, without exception, were created by the Word, Jesus. Once anyone thinks this through, it demolishes Darwin's theory of the evolution of species. Nothing new evolved into existence that Jesus never created in the first place. There may be different kinds of dogs by interbreeding, but Jesus created dogs. This makes the impossibility of Christ being created clear, for Christ cannot create Christ. We must keep our finger on the text: then the heretics are put to shame, the cults have no leg to stand on. Don't forget this portrait. This Word is not the discovery of the tablets of Moroni. No, we are getting this flash from creation. Jesus, the eternal Word of God created the world.

In the Word was life. Keep your finger on verse 4. Life was not just through Jesus, but in Jesus, the Word. Thus, from all eternity, life has resided in the Word, the Son of God. Thus, we read, "In Him was life," not just "is life," as the cults would buy that. What does John mean by life? Just as verse 3 refers to the creative work of Christ giving life to plants, animals, and to mankind, so verse 4 refers to the redeeming life, the saving life of the Word. This word life, **zoe** is used 54 times by John, and never once does it refer to mere creature life or mere existence, not dead but alive. No, it always refers to a character of life that is heavenly and spiritual, not merely physical. That's why Paul tells us in Ephesians 2: 1-2, "And you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." Sinners are very much alive and breathing with life in them, opposing Christ by the millions. But they are also dead men walking spiritually, men physically alive without Christ, but dead in trespasses and sins. This life John is speaking of is redemptive life, regenerated, born-again life, life in the fullest and highest sense, the eternal, blessed life of God.

I love the words of Jeremy Camp's "Dead Man Walking." He wrote, "Freedom was something I never found Trying to find six feet underground Under the weight of all of my sin Fighting the fight that I couldn't win Then You rescued me And

now I can breathe I was a dead man walking Until I was a man walking with You. I was a blind man falling Until I felt the life You're calling me to. Pulling me out of the darkness and pulling me out of the lies Putting the beat in my heart again I was a dead man walking Until you loved this dead man walking back to life. I look for the words but cannot explain A new kind of love ran into my veins You are the key to all of my chains To all that I was, now I'm not a slave Then You rescued me And now I can breathe I was a dead man walking Until I was a man walking with you I was a blind man falling Until I felt the life you're calling me to Pulling me out of the darkness and Pulling me out of the lies Putting the beat in my heart again I was a dead man walking Until you loved this dead man walking back to life I have tasted and I've seen the wonders of your heart I do not deserve a thing, but that's just who You are I was a dead man walking Until I was a man walking with you. I was a blind man falling Until I felt the life You're calling me to Pulling me out of the darkness and Pulling me out of the lies Putting the beat in my heart again I was a dead man walking Until You loved this dead man walking back to life.” Don't let theologians tell you that sinners are not alive. They are physically alive, but they have none of Jesus' redemptive life, God's **zoe**. Yes, they are dead in trespasses and sins, but they are physically alive and walking in darkness,

When John writes about sinners during the Great Tribulation, he writes about them after the fifth angel and then the sixth angel blow their trumpets saying in Revelation 9: 6, 20-21, “And in those days, people will seek death, and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, nor did they repent of their murders, or their sorceries or their sexual immoralities of their thefts.” Without the **zoe** of Jesu, His redemptive life, sinners are dead men walking, but they are physically alive. Never forget that the proof of redemptive life, Jesus' **zoe** life is that when we are confronted or admonished or corrected for sin, we receive correction and repent of sin. When any of us are above repenting, we are living apart from the redemptive life and **zoe** of Jesus; if so, we are clearly dead men spiritually. Thirdly,

LOOK AT JESUS AFTER THE FALL OF MAN IN THE GARDEN. (III.)

John 1: 4-5 reads, “And the life—the redemptive **zoe**, was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John wrote in I John 1: 5, “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” The One who said, “Let there be light, and there was light” came walking in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve fell, and the sinning couple that sinned together, “heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” When earth was created, Genesis 1: 2, we read, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” It was then that God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” God called the light Day, and the darkness night. Just as we perish in physical darkness without the sun, so without the Word, and God's redemptive **zoe**, we are bound to perish in spiritual darkness. Two thoughts on this

last period John covers in the beginning of his Prologue. I hope you are taking notes on paper or in your hearts on the Word who is life and light. Two thoughts:

The light shines in the darkness. Notice that John changes the tense of the verb shines to the present tense. Not only was the light still shining right after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, but Jesus' light is still shining. Lord, let Your light shine in, all you children of broken men, Let your light shine in. The Word has never ceased to shine. The darkness here is our fallenness as men and women, boys and girls, darkened by our rebellion, lack of repentance and our unbelief. It is not a darkness meaning the absence of light, for Jesus' light is shining. Instead, it is a darkness of the hostile forces of sin that resist the true light. This darkness hates God's true light, and substitutes the enemy's false light of pride, narcissism, lying lips, bitterness, and unforgiveness. The shining of the light of the Word is an invasion of the territory Satan claims to hold, and the light of the Word is a challenge to the power of darkness, a battle to destroy this light, and the promise of victory that robs the darkness of having us as its prey. This light was shining in the first promise of the seed of the woman, the Word, Jesus, in Genesis 3: 15, and the radiance of Jesus' light intensifies as we go through the OT, and into the NT when Jesus' light came incarnate, when He lived, died, rose, and ascended. The climax and the zenith of the Light of Jesus shining in darkness will come when the last person to repent, believe, and receive Jesus accepts the Light of the world and Jesus comes into their life.

The darkness has not overcome it, (the light.) Darkness has not yet, and it will never overcome the light. All darkness can do is resist the light and war against the light. The Greek verb, **katalambano** means to lay hold of or to possess as one's own by overcoming. Oh, the darkness has made strong attempts, prophets, apostles, and martyrs have been killed. Pastors and preachers of righteousness like Noah and your own pastors have been opposed by men and women like Diotrophes, Alexander the coppersmith, Hymanaeus, and many other names. Jesus was crucified, but what's that I hear—I still hear heaven's music. Up from the dead Jesus arose. The efforts of darkness have not, are not, and will never overcome the light of Jesus. Beloved, our church has withstood many attacks over the years. Darkness has threatened us often, but as Darlene Zschech wrote, the secret is always repentance by beholding Jesus with His outstretched hands calling us back to Himself. Her words we need today. "Break our hearts, oh God Break our hearts Break our hearts, oh God Break our hearts For the sin in our lives, break our hearts For the sin in our land, break our hearts We cry out, we need Your help Come back to our land We confess, we've lived in sin Please show Your power once again."

I call us today. Look at the Holy Spirit's portrait of Jesus, in eternity past, in creation, after the fall of man, at the cross, at His burial, at Jesus' resurrection, at His ascension, and in waiting for Jesus' soon return. John has shown us the picture. If we are saved, are we beholding Jesus, by faith or we are looking to our own wisdom, leaning on our own understanding, justifying our sin, lying with our lips to God and to each other? If you cannot remember the last time you have repented before the outstretched pierced hands of Jesus, repent today. Be revived today!