



Discussion Notes

Arrivals: The Eternal Word's Hope • John 1:1-5

December 21, 2025 • Luke Knight

December 7 • Introduction & Part One (Who is "the Word"?)

As first seen in the prologue, we derive from John's gospel many grand themes which undoubtedly come to the fore at Christmas: light, life, glory, arrivals, receptions, home-making, and abundance to name a few. Matthew and Luke give us their versions of a historical nativity (with angels, shepherds, magi and the like), but John's wider lens poetically sums up what's simply hard to *describe* about Jesus' arrival, character, and purpose.

John doesn't refer to Jesus as the Word throughout his biography, but he does so here. Calling Jesus the Word points to the way Jesus reveals God to the world. The Hebrew Scriptures were full of words that described the Lord God, but Jesus arrived as that living Word. *Jesus is the Word for God*, or as Jesus puts it, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father."

December 14 • Part Two (The Eternal Word's Work)

"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."
— *John 1:3*

What Words Do / Making

- In Genesis 1, we hear that God *spoke* creation into being. Repeatedly we hear the phrase, "and God said." Simple but crucial to remember in Genesis, and therefor also in John, is that *words make things*.
- When Jesus speaks the natural world is ordered or reordered, chaos is controlled, people are healed or set free. Why? Because words make things. And though we know *our* words can make things, with Jesus, word-making happens through him on a cosmic level.
- As we read his gospel, John says that Jesus walked in a special authority not because he had a super-human knack with diction, nor a magical way with words. John intends us to see Jesus as he is, the very agent of creation himself. Jesus is himself the living Word,

and when he moves things are made, unmade and change, because Jesus is and was *the* Creator God. Part of what we need to understand here in John 1 is not only that Jesus was *present* at creation, but that he was the very means of it.

- It's important at Christmas to see Jesus as he truly is, never reducing him to the size of a decorative nativity figurine. In fact, the reducing of Jesus into a cuddly cliché might be one of the dangers of Christmas. It is possible, as we read in John, not to see Jesus as he truly is, not to recognize him. So, before Christmas draws us to *adoration*, we must first begin with *recognition*.

What Words Do / Re-Making

- Christmas isn't just about making, because Jesus made it all. Christmas is also about re-making. At Christmas, because of Jesus, we remember that God loved the world so deeply that he rolled up his sleeves to do for his creation what only he could. Jesus' life, death, and life again, began creation's great re-making and renewal. From the inside out, a light and life grew from Jesus which has only expanded. So, we can both marvel at Jesus as the *means* of creation, but more so as the world's saviour who has brought about *new creation*. Jesus makes and re-makes. John wants us to see Jesus as the very one who put all life in motion, and who is pulling it through, even now, into renewal.
- Because Jesus was born, lived, died and rose, a new creation project began. Because of Jesus, a new creation life is spreading through our world today as we wait for a great and final renewal.
- If you've trusted Jesus, you're bursting with new life, a part of his new creation project. You've got the same Spirit in you which breathed life onto the earth itself. As the Apostle Paul write, the same Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead, also lives in you. What God made he loves, and what he loves he renews.
- We celebrate Christmas because of God's love, and Jesus is God's love spelled out clearly in a life so glaringly influential we're still talking about him today. This Christmas, take time to remember Jesus as he is. See him with clarity, as the Holy Spirit reveals. And as you do so, remember your place in creation. Remember who made you, who loves you and who has re-made you. "*Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*"

December 21 • Part Three (The Eternal Word's Hope)

"In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." — John 1:4–5

Hope (in context) & Scripture

- As we're hearing, John's got an incredibly high view of Jesus: on the same footing as the Lord God of Israel's Scriptures, and the agent or means of creation itself. Today, we come to another word John uses to get Jesus' character and purpose in the world across: "that *life*, was the *light* to all mankind" (or all people). John uses a good deal of literary devices in his writing, which includes dualism. Life and death, light and darkness, being the most prominent. John can find no more archetypal language to get the Lord Jesus across to his first listeners. In Jesus, all life originates and is sustained. And, Jesus is the light bringing illumination to a lost world, dispelling darkness even now.
- The origin of hope as a Christmas theme, of course, has its roots here in Scripture. So, though we might assume we know what we mean by the word *hope*, depending on trendy definitions or personal circumstances, it's always helpful to ask if our ideas about that word, hope, match up with the biblical foundations.
- In the ancient world, people with any agency or influence didn't *hope*, they ensured that what they wanted to happen would happen. On the other hand, if you were one of the masses, you might only have "hope" on which to hang — perhaps the hope that those in power over you might have mercy, or at the very least, not take advantage.
- The trouble, of course, was that this way of operating only stretched so far. Making sure, securing oneself was a privilege for a lucky few and relied heavily on human capacity, which had its limitations even for the elite. There were things you could control, and things you couldn't — and in that sense, *everyone* was still in the same boat.
- It's the same today. We might be able to ensure a few things are stable around us, but what about the bigger stakes of human life? No matter our means, clout or influence, every human faces uncertainty, suffering, and the unavoidable problem of death.

Jesus, Hope, and the First Believers

- Enter, Jesus. Because of Jesus, hope began to be seen differently — and the tone in which the word *hope* might be spoken changed. The first believer's put their *hope in a crucified, resurrected, and ascended living Lord Jesus*. Hoping became not a foolish or weak posture to take, or a miserable state in which to find oneself, a kind of gamble, but, because of Jesus, a state of assurance.
- For example, in his first letter to a small group of the very first Christians, Paul puts hope in a positive, encouraging light. Writing to a community worried about loved ones who had died, Paul says, "*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.*"

- What Paul goes on to articulate in 1 Thessalonians, and elsewhere in his other writings, is that Christian hope is not a wish, nor a silly gamble. And that is because of *who the believers* had put their hope in, on *whom* their hope rested.
- If the believers' hope sat on the shoulders of the resurrected Jesus, then they could stare even death in the face — because Jesus had bested evil and the grave itself. In other words, to hope was not so much about concerning oneself with wabby possibilities — to hope was to trust in the reliability of a person, especially when facing the biggest of life's questions and problems.
- Then, as now, the world could be a dark place. Part of what John is aiming to get across, as he will expand on through the entire gospel, is that Jesus is not only the presence of the Lord God come to his people with the gift of life in his hands, but *a light to all people*, all nations. "*I am the light of the world,*" Jesus will declare later in John's gospel.
- Those who trust Jesus will not live or walk in darkness. Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah words, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2). Then as now, you wouldn't need to convince anyone in the ancient world of the importance of light in daily life. Without light, life becomes impossible. And though there were no shortage of pretenders in the ancient world promising illumination or a way forward, no one — no idea — shone like Jesus. No one shines like him still.

Jesus, Hope, and John 1

- Part of the very simple message of Christmas, with all this in mind, is that because of Jesus, we no longer have to hope in the dark. *We* hope in the light. Not because things aren't dark around us, but we hope in *The Light*. *We have sunk our hope in Jesus alone.*
- No one questions how dark the world can get. We see the news, we feel the pangs of fear or despair in the late watches of the night, and we wish things were different. Frightening and painful as the darkness can be, we can't avoid it. But nor can we avoid the reality of Jesus' great and glorious light. It's not containable, but it spreads, to everyone, everywhere. In Jesus, God's light is sure, certain, and is spreading even now as he draws all people to himself. Even as we sit in darkness, a light shines — a present light, a resurrected light, and eternal light. Not an element, an idea or an image, but a person.
- Christmas itself is often a time where folks are overcome by a darkness for a number of reasons. The loss of a loved one, estrangement from family, the worries around a troubling friendship, the despair of an unwelcomed diagnosis, the general anxiety of an onrushing bleakness and an uncertain future. It can feel dark, and hope can feel like a thin or even naïve word to toss into such darkness. But in that world of darkness, in our world, hear John's words this Christmas clearly: "*In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*"

- At Christmas, we needn't throw the word *hope* around glibly. We're reminded, by every candle or twinkle light, that Jesus *threw himself* into the darkness, bright as he is, and the darkness didn't swallow him up. Quite the opposite. And because of Jesus' life and light, the darkness won't swallow us either if we've sunk our trust and hope in him.

Discussion Questions:

- What are you hearing in John 1 for the first time, or with a new lens this December?
- What is the difference between hope in Jesus, and hope in circumstances or possibilities? What makes this a challenge for us, or a comfort to us?
- In what ways have you had to put your hope in Jesus — which stretched, challenged, or comforted you?