

WORD

Reviving Hope

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Wisdom and revelation are not natural graces; they are supernatural.

You may have thought that wisdom is the product of experience, but the world is full of older, well-experienced people, whose lives are broken, empty, unproductive, and unhappy. For all of their years, wisdom has not blossomed.

The Bible says that wisdom gets its start with the fear of the Lord. This is not a terror that paralyzes us, but a spiritual tension that motivates us to seek God and to please Him.

Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus (modern-day Turkey) to know the Lord better. And the keys to this were wisdom and revelation.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Wisdom and revelation are not abstract thoughts or imaginations; they are the language of the Holy Spirit. He speaks in wisdom and revelation.

Do you need wisdom? Do you need revelation? Ask God.

I pray right now that you RECEIVE the Spirit of wisdom and revelation—the Holy Spirit.

This month of December, I have been speaking to you about the person of Jesus Christ, whom we serve, and whom we worship, especially in this Christmas season. The Holy Spirit has revealed Him to us as Immanuel (God-with-us), who revives our trust in the Almighty. Jesus has also been revealed as Savior (it's the meaning of His name), who revives our wonder at the amazing grace of our God. The Christ has been revealed to us as Shepherd (the Good Shepherd), who revives our worship of God.

Today, we will see a fourth vision of Jesus, as the Everlasting Word of God, who revives our hope, for time and eternity. May the Spirit of wisdom and revelation open your eyes this morning!

The Living Word

John 1:1 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He existed in the beginning with God.

³ God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.

⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷ to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸ John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹ The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

In this opening passage of the fourth Gospel, John—the author, apostle, servant, and friend of Jesus—unfolds revelation and wisdom concerning Jesus Christ.

The revelation highlights His identity. The wisdom emphasizes His impact.

Identity Revealed

With respect to His identity, there are four words that John used to help us see Jesus better: Word – God – human – glory. Read it again:

John 1:1 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He existed in the beginning with God.

¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us (humans). He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only (human) Son.

As the Eternal Word, the creative expression of the Father, He always existed. He was not created; there was never a time when He was not.

He was *with* God, and He *was* God. Separate persons—Father and Son—yet One God. The Word proceeded from the Father as the exact image and expression of the Father. What the Father was, the Word was.

From everlasting to everlasting, He is God.

Make no mistake: this Jesus—the Word-made-flesh—existed before His birth in Bethlehem’s stable and before His conception in Nazareth. He was in the beginning with God.

Jesus is God. He did not become god-like, nor did He even become God. He was always God. That is who He is. Then, He became a man.

These words, “in the beginning,” refer to the opening passage of the First Covenant:

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Just as God was responsible for the original, material creation, He is also responsible for the new, spiritual creation (or, re-creation), working through the Son and the Spirit in the realm of humans.

Pause with me, momentarily, to consider the wonder of the first creation—the creative variety of shapes and colors, the amazing precision of functions in time and space, the ecological interdependence of elements, the simple yet awesome beauty... of a flower, of a tree, of a sunrise, of a river—the endless parade of fascinating things, and animals, and people!

Wow! Since He did all of that on the initial run, what is to come in the remake?!?

Concerning God’s plan of restoration through Jesus Christ, Paul extolled, “*What will their acceptance (of Him) mean? Nothing less than life from the dead!*” (Romans 11:15).

This new creation is happening right now “through Christ.” The Eternal Word became a man—mortal then, but immortal now.

Fully God; fully human. God was so pleased with His creation, and so confident of its recovery, that He took upon Himself a human body.

The infinite and omnipotent God, chose to share our finite, limited, and mortal humanity. He became one of us—and a lowly one of us.

Regardless of political conflicts, religious rivalries, economic shifts, and every other threat of human tension and brokenness, God who “*declares the end from the beginning*” (Isaiah 46:10), has taken up residence among us. He does not despair. HE IS HOPEFUL!

And what is He hopeful of? GLORY. His, and ours.

We have seen His glory—He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.

In the face of human need, and in the face of human greed, His glory shone. To the crippled, He said, “Get up.” To the blind, He said, “Receive your sight.” To the adulterous, He said, “I don’t condemn you.” To the dead, He said, “Arise.” To the self-righteous, He said, “Repent.” To the lost, He said, “Father, forgive them.”

We have seen His glory—the glory of God’s unique Son. And in His light we see a hint of our own glory.

Romans 5:2 *Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory.*

What will that look like?

John 14:12 *“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.”¹³ You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father.¹⁴ Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!*

But wait! That’s not in the life to come; that’s in *this* world—this broken-down, sin-blighted world.

Indeed! We will share Christ’s glory in the age to come, in new and everlasting bodies, like His resurrection body. But we begin to share it and show it, in many of the ways that He showed it, here in this world and in this lifetime.

Showing undeserved mercy to others, enduring frustration and hardship without complaint, giving over and above what is asked or required of us, remaining faithful to the call and mission God has given each of us, and walking in supernatural faith and obedience—these are demonstrations of God’s glory.

Mark 16:17 *And these signs will accompany those who believe in my name: they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;¹⁸ they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”*

Glory above breeds glory below.

Will your life be different as you follow Jesus Christ? Undoubtedly!

Will your life be better as you follow Jesus Christ? In the same way that right is better than wrong, and love is better than indifference, and life is better than death—YES!

Will your life be more difficult as you follow Jesus Christ? Very likely. But you will be guided with His wisdom, guarded by His power, and girded with His strength, so that you can do everything He asks or requires of you.

John's revelation of Jesus Christ as the eternal Word-become-human has a profound impact on those who receive Him as the Creator and Giver of the New Life. Let's see just what kind of impact we should expect.

Impact Emphasized

With respect to Jesus' mission and its impact, John presents four themes: life – light – rejection – acceptance.

John 1:3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. ⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷ to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸ John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹ The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

The first impact of Jesus' mission is LIFE! In the beginning, the Word gave life to everything that He created. He made everything alive—not dead, not dormant, but alive—vibrating with energy.

And the effect of that life was to bring light to everyone—note the shift from matter to humanity (He gave life to *everything*, and light to *everyone*). This is a light that reveals purpose and potential, a light that inspires creativity and invention.

That same light now shines into darkness—the darkness of this present world, the numbness of the human soul, the hopelessness of human imagination. God's light shines! Jesus shines!

This is not a light that may be seen by the natural eye, but more like a laser that penetrates, illuminates, and warms. The light of Jesus Christ keeps piercing the darkness of human fear and folly, burning holes in its fabric, and dismantling its supports—and the darkness cannot prevent it, nor overcome it, nor extinguish it!

His is the unbeatable light of life!

He brought life and light at the beginning, and He brings life and light in the New Beginning, too. Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

I am not the light. You are not the light. John the Baptizer was not the light. Not even John the apostle was the light. We have all come here to *tell about* the Light.

We are His witnesses. We have stories to tell—stories of the Light coming into our world. These are the stories that make the Light visible to human hearts. Believable stories make Jesus Christ believable.

Jesus said, “*You believe in God; believe also in Me*” (John 14:1). Unless we believe in Him who is the Light, we will never have light within ourselves. Believing there is a God is not enough. We must believe in the One whom God has sent: Jesus. That’s the switch that turns on the light!

However, this is not an automatic switch. Faith does not flourish just because Jesus walks into the room.

He came into the world He had created—a world marked in so many ways by His unique fingerprints—yet the world didn’t recognize Him, and, as a result, rejected Him. Here, John highlights the impact of unbelief.

We have seen the results all around us. We hear the results on the daily news. Rejecting Christ, rejecting light, rejecting life. It is painful! It is devastating!

Jesus explained it this way:

John 3:16 “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

¹⁸ *“There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son.*

¹⁹ *And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those*

who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

When the Light of God’s Word comes to you, do you react and retreat? Or, do you respond and receive?

Some of the darkness in us—and there is darkness in every one of us—is familiar darkness, comfortable darkness, even treasured darkness. We are not immediately ready to release it and receive the Light. Instead we react and try to cover it, like our first father and mother in Eden’s garden. We imagine that if we do not pay any attention to it, God won’t either, and no one will be impacted by it. In this, we are dead wrong.

God reveals our darkness for only one reason—not to embarrass us, not to humiliate us, not to berate us, not to punish us. God reveals our darkness in order to remove it! He comes to set us free. He has no condemnation for us because there is darkness in us. Condemnation is the result of rejecting His Light. Rejection leads to condemnation.

Faithful acceptance, on the other hand, leads to something quite different. If you believe and accept the Light—the Word-made-human, Jesus Christ—He will permit you to become a child of God; in fact, He will authorize your adoption!

Galatians 4:4 For when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

Ephesians 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. ⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

This adoption is not a trial program, nor mere paperwork. This is a forever-arrangement, launched with a new birth—a spiritual rebirth, a heart transformation. It is not the result of human religious desire, or creedal belief—people did not dream this up! This is God’s plan, from the beginning.

The Everliving Word, who became human, plans to take home *many* children to share the glory of God our Father!

Considering who He is—His identity, as revealed by John—and what He did—His impact, as emphasized here by John—in the first creation, should we expect anything less in the New Creation? No way!

He is still the full and exquisite expression of God—the Living and Life-giving Word. He is Jesus, our Immanuel.

What's more, He is also the eternal God-Man, who alone paid the required price for our redemption and was raised from the dead for our deliverance. He is Jesus, our Savior.

He brought life and light, to give us a place in this world, as witnesses of His glory and revealers of His grace. He is Jesus, our Shepherd.

God has not rejected us; we should not reject Him.

God has accepted us through Christ—just as we are—we should accept Him just as He is and follow Him wholeheartedly.

He is God's Word of unfailing love and faithfulness. He is Jesus, the Word. He is Jesus, our Hope—for this life and for the life to come.

Do you know Him? (Invite Him into your heart right now.)

Will you trust Him? (Tell Him so today.)