

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAY TO LIFE

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 17 October 2021

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Introduction

Hello, everyone. In our last session, we took some time to summarise the waypoints of salvation. In these coming weeks, we will take our time to understand these points and their implications for our daily pilgrimage as sons of God, as members of the body of Christ, and as households of faith.

As we did last week, we will start at the beginning – the obvious place to start! This is where John the apostle began his Gospel. Helpfully, he began his Gospel by saying, ‘In the beginning.’ This is the *beginning point of God’s purpose* for us; and that is where we will focus today.

The beginning point of the pathway of salvation is the Word of God

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Joh 1:1. So, the *beginning point* of the whole pathway of salvation is *the Word of God*.

‘He was in the beginning with God.’ Joh 1:2. John was making the point that ‘the Word’ is a Person, and that Person is Jesus Christ.

‘All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.’ Joh 1:3.

So the beginning point is the Word; the Word is the Son of God; and everything that is made, or created, is ‘through Him’, or, *through the Word*.

‘In Him was life and the life was the light of men.’ Joh 1:4. The beginning point, which is the Word, reveals the *life* of God, and that life is the *light* of men.

Jesus Christ is the *Word* of the Father, and He is the *Messenger* of God the Father. The question that we should ask, as we are considering ‘the beginning’, is, ‘What does the Word, which is Jesus Christ, *reveal to us*?’

If the beginning point of our salvation is the Word, Jesus Christ, what does the gospel – the Message, Jesus – reveal to us?

The gospel is first revealing who God is

For many believers, the gospel is that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin so that we might become the children of God

through faith. Many of you will be saying, ‘That’s the most obvious point of all!’

Of course, Jesus *did* suffer the judgement of God on account of our sin; and we are *born of God* through Him.

The *primary* focus of the gospel, however, is *not* that Jesus died on the cross for us because we were sinners; that He paid the penalty for our sin; and that through Him we are born of God.

This is *not* the primary focus of the gospel! If there is anything to grasp from today’s session, it is that the beginning of the gospel is not ‘us’.

Helpfully, in his first epistle, the apostle John identified *what the gospel message is*.

In his Gospel, John identified ‘the beginning’, and said that it is ‘the Word’. Then, in his first letter, he declared the word that is from the beginning: ‘This is the message [or the gospel] which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.’ 1Jn 1:1,5.

So ‘the beginning’ is the Word, and the word is ‘God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all’.

Do you see that the fundamental, or primary, expression of the gospel is not about us at all?

What is the message that the apostle John, and the presbytery of which he was a part, had heard from the beginning? It is that ‘God is Light and in Him is no darkness’.

The gospel, first, reveals *who God is*.

God is light – revealing His life and how He lives

What does it mean that ‘God is Light’?

This is the *first message of the gospel*; this is the beginning of the pathway of salvation; this is the message that connects a person with a glorious inheritance.

We have already read from the Gospel of John that ‘the life’ is ‘the light of men’.

So, when the Scripture says ‘God is Light’, it refers to what is *expressed* of His *life*.

In this regard, ‘life’ is expression; and the light reveals *the nature of God’s life*. The message that

proclaims, 'God is Light' *reveals the life of God* as an expression.

When we speak of 'life being expressed', we are referring to *who God is*. God is Light – 'light' is the expression of His life.

The message that is 'from the beginning' proclaims to us *who God is* and *how He lives* – because how He lives is an expression of *His life*, and that *life* being expressed is *light*.

This will conflict with what many of us have understood the gospel to be. Many of us have an 'evangelical' view of the gospel – that it is all about *our salvation from sin and death*. That is not it at all!

The gospel proclaims that God is Light, and it reveals to us *His life and how He lives it*.

God is Light – 'in the fire' – Moses' first encounter with the gospel

When we look at the Scriptures, we find that this is the first proclamation of the gospel to *every* person. This is no more clear than it was when the word was proclaimed to *Moses*. This is the message that *Moses* received when He was *first called* through the gospel.

We will read some excerpts from the experience of *Moses*. You will be familiar with these, but I want us to hear it in light of *the beginning of the gospel*. What is that 'word from the beginning' *revealing* to us and *calling* us to?

We will read from Exodus Chapter 3, verse 2. 'And the Angel of the Lord appeared to [*Moses*] in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.'

Do you hear that it was not *the Lord* who appeared to *Moses* here? It was not God. It was not some representation of Him. It was an *angel*.

That explains, or reveals, to us that it is the *aggelos*, a *messenger administration*, that *first* appears to a person with a *message*.

We will discuss this in our next session when we consider the ministry of *Elijah*. For the moment, I want to draw our attention to the fact that *the angel of the Lord* was in *the fire*.

The one who appeared to *Moses* was the *aggelos*. That *aggelos* was actually *in the fire*; and that fire reveals *light*.

This should provoke in our thinking the reality that the *aggelos* is a *fellowship*, which is the fellowship of *the Father and the Son*. 1Jn 1:3.

However, *our* first interface with that light is not with the Lord; it is actually with the angel, the *aggelos*.

We note the words of *John*, testifying as an *aggelos*, or part of the presbytery that was ministering to the church. He said, 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son *Jesus Christ*.' 1Jn 1:3.

He was saying, 'Our fellowship is *in the fire*' – which describes the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. An amazing point!

This, then, is the *first*, or the *initiation*, of the word towards a hearer.

Turning at the word of a messenger to see the very fellowship from which the word proceeds

Continuing with the story of *Moses*, the Scriptures record, 'So he looked'. Exo 3:2. The angel had appeared to him in the midst of a bush and now *Moses* was looking. As an outcome of this appearance, *Moses* turned to *see* something.

'So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then *Moses* said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "*Moses, Moses!*" And he said, "Here I am." Exo 3:2-4.

This is the relationship between a *messenger* going before the face of *Christ*, revealing that light, and a *person*, in response to that word, turning to it, to look and see *the very fellowship* from which the word is coming?

God Himself then calls our name – meeting the Lord

Then *God Himself* speaks to them. And, what does He do? He calls out their name!

Moses received the adoption there, as a *personal possession*. Even though he was in possession of the adoption from his birth, he then *received the word of it*, as it was proclaimed from this burning bush.

As this interaction continued, Moses met with the Lord, and the Lord gave him some instructions, or a 'work', to do, that was according to his name. Exo 3:5-12.

A changed response - the desire to know God, who is Light

We will consider Moses' response to this word. 'Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your Fathers has sent me to you', and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?'" ' Exo 3:13.

When Moses received this word, which *revealed God as light* – think about 'the light' as a fire, emanating light – he was delivered from an *old gospel* that he had held. The evidence of this was that he had a *different response to receiving the light*.

Previous to this, Moses had identified himself as being part of the covenant nation, and believed for the deliverance of the nation from Egypt. However, he took it *upon himself* to take action. He killed an Egyptian; and then, under the condemnation of that action, fled to Midian.

The point is that Moses *was* supposed to be the one who was to lead the nation out; but he was *not* to do it on the basis of his *own understanding*. He was to do it on the basis of *the word of his name* and according to the *grace* that was to come to him *in that word*.

And, as this word came from the fire, his response changed. He did not say, 'Oh, right! I know what I need to go and do'

His first response was, '*I want to know Your name.*'

As the word 'God is Light' was being revealed to him, his response was the desire to *know God who is light*. He expressed that by asking His name.

His name – I AM, Yahweh Elohim – reveals who He is and how He lives

This is what the Lord said to him: 'And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Moreover, God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The Lord God [or Yahweh Elohim] of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'" ' Exo 3:14-15.

The key point is that 'God is Light' reveals *who He is* and *how He lives*; and who He is and how He lives is revealed through His *name*.

That word was proclaimed to Moses, and the evidence of *faith* arising in Moses' heart as he received that word was that he *asked God's name*. He asked who He is and how He lives.

The name I AM, Yahweh *Elohim*, is the expansion of the expression of 'God is Light'.

We need to understand I AM, Yahweh *Elohim*, in order to understand 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness'.

God first makes Himself known to us as 'I AM' – to meet us and know us

We will see that the Word as 'the beginning' comes from this expression of the name of the Lord.

As we noted earlier, the light – in this instance manifested as a burning bush – reveals who God is and how He lives.

He first makes Himself known to us as 'I AM'. We can think of it this way: when He says, 'I AM', He is saying, 'I am here to know you and for you to know Me.'

As we receive this initiative and *draw near* to Him, and do not draw back at this point, the next expression of His name that He reveals to us is 'Yahweh'.

I AM is His initiative to *meet* us and *know* us; and as we draw near, we meet Him as 'Yahweh'.

Understanding how Yahweh Elohim lives – laying down life to reveal the other

The revelation of God as 'Yahweh' firstly reveals *His oneness* – the one life and one Spirit of God.

As Moses himself declared to the children of Israel, at the end of his life, 'Hear, O Israel' – that is, 'Get your ears open to this; this is the gospel being proclaimed to you now, Israel!' – 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord [Yahweh], our God [Elohim], the Lord is one!' Deu 6:4.

This highlights that the *first* interface with who God is, as Light, is *His oneness*. It is not His individuality; it is His oneness.

Then, as soon as we recognise the oneness of Yahweh – *one* life and *one* Spirit – *three* Persons are revealed.

This is the amazing mystery of God!

As soon as we see that there is one Spirit and life of Yahweh, it immediately reveals to us that there are three Persons. And, as soon as we begin to meet each of the unique Persons of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – we see Them as one.

The oneness and the individuality – or the ‘threeness’ – of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are indivisible. The oneness is dependent on the way in which the Three *live*. And, as the Three live that way, it reveals Them to be one.

However, our *first* interface is with the *one* Spirit of Yahweh.

The Hebrew word for ‘God’ is ‘Elohim’; and *Elohim* is a plural word which literally means ‘Gods’. This highlights the reality that *Elohim* is *more* than just one Person. *Elohim* is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Yahweh is one; *Elohim* is three.

The *oneness* of Yahweh is the outcome of how He *lives*, and reveals that *Elohim* is *three unique Persons*, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Their fellowship, each Person of the Godhead *lays down His life to reveal* the other two, and the other two lay down Their lives to reveal the one. This is *the nature of Their one life*. Each Person lays down Their life to reveal the other.

Who do we see as each Person lays down Their life to reveal another? We actually see the *three of Them as one*, because every time one lays down Their life to reveal another, that ‘other’ is laying *Their* life down, also, to reveal another.

This, then, reveals Their *perpetual laying down of life*. When we look at it, all we see is the *one expression of the life* – which is life *emanating from Them*.

We can think of ‘light’ as being the *multiplication of life* through this offering principle.

We understand that the oneness of Yahweh is seen by the way in which the Three *live*. And, as the Three live by *this action of revealing one another*, the *oneness in life and Spirit* of Yahweh is revealed.

This is *the mystery of God*.

The beginning of God’s covenant purpose established through the offering of each to the other

This offering principle, where there are two laying down Their lives to reveal one, actually engenders

the establishment of ‘the beginning’ that we read of in the Gospel of John: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Joh 1:1.

Christ became ‘the Word’ and established the *beginning of Yahweh Elohim’s covenant plan* to create and to bring to glory a multitude of sons who are born of Their life and joined to Their fellowship.

How did this happen?

We have said that ‘God is Light’ expresses who He is and how He lives; and *how He lives* established this ‘beginning’.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit in *Elohim* are completely co-equal. The Father does *not* have *more* authority or power or grace or ‘anything’ than the Son or the Holy Spirit has. To believe that He does is an earthly and a ‘spirit-of-man’ perspective of God. That is not who Yahweh *Elohim* is.

They are completely co-equal; but They perpetually *lay down Their lives* to reveal another, because They have a *shared covenant purpose*. That purpose is to ‘create space’ in Themselves for a multitude of sons who will be born of Their life – life which will be multiplied to them, so that *they* will be joined to this fellowship as well.

That is *the outcome of Their offering*.

Each Person in Elohim laying down His life to reveal the other in Their covenant purpose

For this covenant purpose to be established, the Son, who is completely co-equal with the Father, *emptied Himself* of that ‘glory’, or that capacity to be equal with the Father.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote that He ‘did not regard equality with God [the Father] a thing to be grasped [or held on to], but [instead] emptied Himself’. Php 2:6,7.

That is why He was able to become *the Son of the Father*. It was not because the Father inherently had more authority than the Son.

It was because *the Son emptied Himself* – to do what? He emptied Himself *to reveal the Father*.

The Son emptied Himself to become the Father’s Son; and, at the same time, the *Holy Spirit emptied Himself* to become the *Helper* of the Father and the Son.

This is an amazing principle, showing the *humility* of the Holy Spirit, as the One who *reveals the Father and the Son* in this covenant purpose being achieved.

So we see the Son emptying Himself, laying down His life to reveal the Father. We see the Holy Spirit emptying Himself to become the Helper of the Father and the Son.

And we see the *Father Himself* laying down His life, so that *all of His fulness, everything* that belonged to the Father, would be given to the Son, who had emptied Himself. Col 2:9. Heb 1:3. Joh 16:15.

Do you see that *each One* is emptying and laying down life? And what do we see?

We see *the one purpose of God*, right there! This is Yahweh Elohim in His most exquisite expression.

Yahweh Son became the full expression of the Father – begotten as Son of God

The next thing that happened was that Yahweh Son became *the full expression* of the Father – *born of the Father*, by the Father's word.

When we refer to 'Yahweh Son', we are speaking of Him in His co-equal expression of glory with the Father and Holy Spirit.

Yahweh Son emptied Himself of that glory; and He became the *full expression of the Father* – remember that the Father had laid down all that He had, to be given to the Son – when He was *born of the Father*, by the Father's word.

This transaction happened when the Father said, 'You are my Son, *today* I have begotten You.' Heb 1:5.

Yahweh Son became Son of God by the Holy Spirit

Why is it important that the Father said, '*Today* I have begotten You'?

It is because, later in the book of Hebrews, Paul made the point that the One who *reveals* 'the today word' is the *Holy Spirit*. He wrote, 'Therefore, as the *Holy Spirit* says: "*Today*, if you will hear His voice".' Heb 3:7.

As the Son emptied Himself and the Father laid down all of His fullness to the Son, so that the Son could be born of the Father, it was actually *the Holy Spirit* who took what belonged to the Father – because the Spirit had laid down His life to become the life of the Father – and declared it

to the Son, so that the Son was *substantially* born anew of that fullness from the Father.

At that point, Yahweh Son had now also become Son of God, or Son of the Father.

None of this could have happened unless the Holy Spirit was the Helper of the Father and the Son. He was the One who declared what the Father said - 'Today I have begotten You' - so that the Son was substantially born of that life.

Jesus Christ became the Word and Seed of the Father

When that happened, the portion of the Father's Spirit, which is the fullness of the Father, resided in the Son.

The Father, who is the *source* of all the word, of all the names of every son of God who will be born, now resided in the Son by the Holy Spirit.

That is how Jesus Christ became the Seed of the Father. Everything that belonged to the Father, in terms of names and life, now resided in the Son by the Spirit.

By this begetting action, the Son became the Word and the Seed of the Father. And, *through the Spirit*, the *Father now was in the Son* and the *Son was in the Father*.

This is important, because Jesus said that this is the *fundamental message of the gospel*. This is what it means to *understand that God is Light*.

The love of God – laying down life to reveal another

This action of *laying down life to reveal another* is what the *love* of God 'looks like'.

We are discussing 'the Word from the beginning'. We know that the word that we hear from the beginning is: 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness'.

That light reveals who God is and *how He lives*; and we have just considered how He lives. He lives by laying down His life to reveal another, so that Their life can be multiplied and given.

The Scriptures declare, and Jesus Himself said, that *that way of living is called 'love'*.

We read in the Gospel of John, 'Greater love has no one than this.' Joh 15:13. There is no greater love than the *love of Yahweh Elohim*. The word 'love' there is *agape*.

'Greater love has no-one than this [Than what?], than to lay down one's life for his friends.' Joh 15:13.

We have discussed the burning bush revealing the *name of God*.

That name reveals *how They live*.

They live by *laying down Their life to reveal one another*.

And Jesus said that *that* is the love of God. 'Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.'

God is Light – the raging fire of His love which lays life down

That love is called, in Scripture, 'a vehement flame'. It is a great, raging fire. So 'God is Light' is this great, raging fire because of the way in which They live, which is to lay down Their life for one another.

Do you see that *love is laying down one's life* for another, and that 'looks like' a *great, raging fire*?

King Solomon described it in the Song of Songs. 'Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave.' Son 8:6.

Have you registered that the love of God is a *jealous love* that will not accommodate anything that is not *of that life*?

That is why John said in his epistle, 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all.' 1Jn 1:5. The jealousy of God *will not accommodate that darkness*. That is an important point to understand.

'Its jealousy is unyielding as the grave; it burns [love burns] like a blazing fire; like a mighty flame.' Son 8:6.

That term, 'mighty flame', literally means 'the flame of Yah', or 'the flame of Yahweh'. How awesome is that!

God is Light, revealing His name; His name reveals how He lives; He lives by laying down His life for one another; laying down life is love; and love is a great blazing fire.

That is where the light comes from!

The gospel proclaims that God is this light

So, the *fellowship of offering*, expressing the love of God, is a great, raging fire, expressing *light* as the multiplication of *life* – and this is what the *gospel* proclaims – *it reveals that light*.

Do you see that, so far, the gospel has not proclaimed anything about *us*? It has proclaimed *who God is* and *how He lives*; and it proclaims that that is *love*.

The glory of God – the light emanating from the fellowship of Yahweh – is revealed in creation

The *glory* of God is *light*, isn't it? It is helpful to remember that when the Scriptures refer to 'glory', they are referring to 'expression'.

The 'glory' of God is light. It manifests light.

The glory of God, which is the light emanating from the fellowship of Yahweh, is revealed in *creation*. (We are still not with *us* yet – we are just with creation, at the moment.)

King David made this point, writing, 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' Psa 19:1.

The creation itself reveals this light.

In fact, the third verse of the Bible is, 'Then God said, "Let there be light".' Gen 1:3. This *manifests* that 'message from the beginning'.

'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork [His works]. Day unto day *utters speech*.' Psa 19:2.

Do you realise that *every* day that is made for you and me *proclaims* something to us? Day unto day, it utters speech.

'And night unto night *reveals knowledge*. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.' Psa 19:2-3.

So, the message that 'God is light and in Him is no darkness' is proclaimed to the furthest reaches of creation, so that no-one can say that they have not heard it.

'Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' Psa 19:4.

The apostle Paul also explained that creation itself reveals this fundamental message of the gospel. He said that, because of the outcome of Yahweh's offering fellowship, *everyone* is without excuse for not believing that message.

'For the wrath of God [The 'wrath of God' is part of the jealousy of God.] is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men [or, 'against all darkness'], who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.' Rom 1:18.

'Unrighteousness' means walking according to *our own way*, and *suppressing the word* which proclaims *righteous obedience*. That is darkness; and God's jealousy burns against that.

'Because what may be known of God is *manifest in them*.' Rom 1:19. God is Light. That *light is communicating* something. As King David said, 'The heavens *declare* the glory of God.'

'Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and *Godhead*.' Rom 1:19-20.

Did we not just spend quite a long time discussing the Godhead, *which the creation itself reveals*?

'So that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.' Rom 1:20-21.

The works of creation call us to search for the Word which brought creation into being

The works of God, which are revealed in creation, should cause us to *search for* and *believe* the Word through which the works of God were achieved.

It is not just a matter of looking at creation and saying, 'I believe there is a God because creation is awesome!'

Jesus said, 'Believe the works, because the works reveal the Word, and you have to receive the Word.' Joh 14:10-11.

Creation is communicating to us, or calling us, but it should also cause us to search for the Word that brought this creation into being.

Beholding Their fellowship, we receive the call to become a son of God

As we behold the light – the gospel proclaiming that 'God is Light'; the light which is the *fellowship* of Yahweh, revealing the *love* of God – we are able to receive the invitation that *proceeds from Their fellowship*.

This is the call to become a *son of God* and to *join* the very fellowship that is being proclaimed to us.

Do you see the point? The call to be a son of God *does not come first*. What comes first is the revelation of *who God is* and *how He lives*.

And proceeding from *that fellowship of love*, which *reaches out* to us as the *lovingkindness of God*, we see or hear the message, or call, to be a son of God.

So, we have to *ask* for that *name* or that *fellowship* first; and the outcome, or the response, is, 'You have a place here'. As we start to *see God* and to see *how He lives*, we will see that we have a *participation* there.

This is exactly what John said in his first epistle. 'Behold [look and see] what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.' 1Jn 3:1.

The 'manner of love' is 'greater love has no man than this, than to lay down his life'. And what love is that? That is love like a great, raging fire.

John said, 'Look and see as Moses did.' So John, an *aggelos*, is calling us to look and see the fire: 'Behold *that* love.'

When we begin to behold the manner of love that God has bestowed on us, what do we then see? We see that we should be called sons of God! 1Jn 3:1.

We have to *see the fellowship first*, and then we see what is coming *from* that fellowship – *God's own desire* for the multitude of sons which you and I are predestined to be, so that *we can join that very fellowship* from which the word from the beginning is proceeding.

The mystery of God revealed by messengers joined to His sufferings – Christ publicly portrayed as crucified

The call to become a son of God and to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh is the *Eternal Covenant purpose of God for mankind*, which He has made known through the Son.

The nature of Yahweh's fellowship, to which man is invited, is called, in Scripture, '*the mystery of God*'. That mystery of God is also called 'the secret of the Lord'. We will consider 'the secret of the Lord' in the coming weeks.

The important point to note for today is that the mystery of God is revealed by *messengers* when Christ is *publicly portrayed as crucified among their hearers*.

Remember that this is the angel in the *midst* of the *fire of the Lord's fellowship*. As they are themselves are joined to the *fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings*, then through their ministry Christ is publicly portrayed as *crucified*.

What did Jesus say about His crucifixion? He said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM.' Joh 8:28.

So, the *first proclamation of the gospel* is calling us to come and see *Christ*, who reveals Himself as *I AM*. He reveals *His name* to a hearer.

Receiving faith to ask, 'How do I join that fellowship?'

By hearing this word, the one to whom the gospel is being proclaimed receives the *faith of the Son of God*.

I love this, because it was *faith* by which Moses said, 'Tell me Your name.' All Moses had to do was to turn aside, and to hear his name being called *from the fire*, and he obtained the faith to ask the question, 'How do I join that?'

This occurs right at the *beginning* of the pathway of salvation. We receive the word that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness.

If we receive that, we receive the *faith of God* Himself for our *participation* in the *very covenant* that He is revealing to us.

The word of faith, along with the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, who works with the messenger, is *preparing the ground of our heart*, now, to *receive Christ* who is the *Seed* of the Father. We will consider this further in the coming weeks.

Illuminated to be delivered from the darkness of a gospel that begins with us

I now want to focus on how important it is that we be delivered from our 'other', or our traditional, or old, *understandings of the gospel*, so that that *light, which God is*, is growing brighter in the *reality* of our life; and so that that which is *darkness* within our perspective is being *put off*.

Unless we are truly illuminated by 'the message from the beginning' – 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness' – we will only ever interface with and understand the gospel from the basis of what we *presume* to *receive from it*. And we will remain ignorant of, and disconnected from, God's amazing purpose for us.

Do you see why it is so important that we are *delivered* from an understanding of the gospel that begins with us?

If we are not illuminated that God is Light *every time* that we receive the word and interface with the word, it will all be about 'what I get from it', and that is *darkness*.

None of that darkness, none of that *investment* in what *I am getting* from the gospel, will abide in the light; because the light is all about revealing someone else.

We have to *let go* of these other understandings, because God does not want us to dwell in darkness.

He wants us to *dwell in the light that He is*.

The example of Philip

This was most powerfully exemplified in Jesus' interaction with Philip at the last supper, just before Jesus was about to commence the very journey that would pioneer the way of salvation for each one of us.

'Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us".' Joh 14:8.

Who is the orientation? It is all about 'us'. 'Show us, and that will be *enough for us*'; as though *Philip* were the reference point for what was sufficient for him.

Do you see the dilemma here?

'Jesus said to Him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father".' Joh 14:9.

Why is that? It is because Jesus had emptied Himself to reveal the Father, and the fullness of the Father resided in Jesus.

'He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.' Joh 14:9-11.

Philip had an expectation of what *he needed* from the gospel; or what would be *sufficient for him*.

A self-centred gospel does not connect us to the pathway of salvation

Think about it this way. The reason why the gospel of 'God died for the ungodly to save us from our sins, so that we can live forever' is so appealing, is because *we know* that we are in a *condition of death*.

However, when we interface with the gospel from the perspective of *what our need is*, we are only seeking to save *our own life*.

That was Philip's problem. Because of Philip's expectation of what *he needed from the gospel*, he was *unable to see* what Christ, or the Word, had come to reveal.

That is what Jesus said to him. Philip was saying, 'This is what I need from the gospel'; and Jesus was replying, 'I have been with you all this time, and you have not seen the Word that establishes the beginning.'

Another way of saying this is, 'Philip, you are not even at the *start*!'

This should shake us to our core.

That is what happened to Philip. Jesus was saying, 'You're not even "in the ballpark", Philip!'

It is amazing that Philip had been a proclaimer of the kingdom of heaven! Yet, he was unable to see what Christ the Word had come to reveal – that He was in the Father and the Father was in Him; that is, he was unable to see the *fellowship of Yahweh*, which is that *God is Light*.

This also meant that Philip *had not received faith* through which he could be *saved*, because he had not received that *word*, and faith comes by *hearing*.

He already had a 'gospel' in place; and he believed from the basis of his *own faith* – which meant that he *could not be saved through faith*. He was not *connected* to the pathway of salvation.

We know this, because faith enables a person to *believe*. Having received the same spirit of faith, 'I believed therefore I spoke'. 2Co 4:13.

So, when Jesus said to Philip, 'Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me', He was saying to him, 'You don't believe that. You have not received faith, because you have not received Me, the Word.'

Philip had been with Jesus for three and a half years – with the word constantly being not just *proclaimed*, but *embodied*.

He had even been sent by Christ to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Philip had been with the twelve, preaching the gospel. Philip had healed the sick – but he had not received the true gospel and was at risk of *failing to enter the kingdom* himself, having proclaimed that the kingdom was at hand.

When we began to discuss this, I found it very confronting that Philip was a proclaimer, a preacher; that he had the capacity to heal people – and yet he had not entered the kingdom himself.

It seems inconceivable, doesn't it? But, we know that Jesus warned us all of this pitfall. He said, 'Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you".' Mat 7:21 -23.

We had not received the *word of our name*, because we had *never known Him* as He was being *revealed as light*.

'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!' Mat 7:23.

Continuing to receive the word from the beginning

We must all *receive* and *continue to receive* 'the message from the beginning'.

This is not simply the *theology* of the Godhead. I am not encouraging you to become 'a Godhead expert'!

However, I encourage us all to *receive the word* and to obtain the *faith* that asks the question, 'What is *Your name* and how do *You* live?' I encourage us to receive the invitation then to go and to *speak* by that same *faith*.

This is not simply 'the theology of the Godhead'. It is *recognising who God is* and *how He lives*. And it is *obtaining faith* to believe for *participation in that fellowship*.

Anything other than that is *darkness*.

The darkness needs to *pass away* as the *light continues to shine* in our hearts, even when we have been born of God or are a messenger.

John was expressed this point as he opened his epistle. He wrote, 'That which we have heard, that which we have seen, that which we have looked upon and handled concerning the Word of life [or *the Word from the beginning*].' 1Jn 1:1.

He was saying that it is an *ongoing process*, as the *light continues* to dawn within us.

Even if we have been born of God, we still have the *lawless* desire to *name ourselves*, which needs to be *put off* in the *very fellowship of offering* that we are being called to join.

As we obtain what is promised in this message, it becomes *the word in our heart* and *in our mouth* that we can *share with others*, so that they can begin *their pilgrimage* upon the pathway of salvation that Jesus has pioneered for them.