

# **Dr. David L. Turner, The Gospel of John, Session 3, Prologue, John 1:1-18, Podcast Audio Overview**

Sponsored by [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) by Ted Hildebrandt

All right. So are you ready to dive deep into some biblical mysteries today? Always up for that. Great.

Me too. Yeah. So today we're going to be looking at the Gospel of John.

Okay. Specifically, the first 18 verses, which are often called the prologue. And to help us on this journey, we have some lectures from Dr. David Turner, who brings some really interesting insights to the text.

He does. Yeah. So it's almost like John, who wrote the gospel, built this grand entrance to his book, filled with all these clues about what's to come.

I like that. A grand entrance. Yeah.

It draws you in. It does. Yeah.

So our mission, should we choose to accept it, is to decode some of those clues. I'm in. Okay, great.

Let's do it. So, we're going to see how this prologue really sets the stage for the whole gospel. Sounds good.

Okay. So Dr. Turner, he actually compares this prologue to a building's vestibule. Oh, that's interesting.

Yeah. And so, you know, a vestibule is that space, like just inside the entrance, that's designed to kind of draw you in and give you a taste of what's to come. It's kind of like a preview.

Yeah, exactly. Like a sneak peek. So it gets you excited to see more.

Exactly. But then it also makes you wonder, well, what is it about these opening verses, these first 18 verses, that makes them so captivating? Right. Well, Dr. Turner highlights how John very cleverly introduces some major themes right off the bat.

And these are themes that we're going to see popping up again and again. Yeah, throughout the whole book. Throughout the whole gospel.

Yeah. So it's like he's dropping all these little hints, kind of like planting seeds of intrigue that'll grow as we read. I like that.

Yeah. Okay. So, for example, he mentions how Jesus existed before time began.

Whoa. Yeah. Pretty mind-blowing, right? Yeah.

And then there's this idea of Jesus being the source of life and light and the importance of choosing to follow him or not. A big decision. Yeah.

It's a big one for sure. And we also get a glimpse of John the Baptist's role with this revelation of God's glory. It's a lot to pack into just 18 verses.

It is. It's a lot. Wow.

And so it really is like he's giving us a preview of the whole movie just in the opening scene. I like that. Yeah.

The opening credits almost. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly.

The opening credits. Okay. So we've got these really big, powerful themes, but John, he doesn't just randomly throw them at us.

Right. He uses a very deliberate structure to make sure his points really hit home. So Dr. Turner explains this ancient literary technique that was used, called chiasmus.

Oh. Have you ever heard of that? I have. Yes.

Okay. For our listeners who haven't heard of this, basically you can think about it like a sentence that goes A-D-C-B-A. Right.

So it's like this symmetrical structure where the ideas are mirroring each other. It's kind of like a palindrome, almost. Yeah.

Exactly. So it's like a palindrome of ideas. Yes.

And it's not just a fancy way of writing. It actually adds to the meaning of the text. Right.

So the structure itself is actually part of the message. Exactly. Very cool.

Yeah. So for example, look at verses one and two. Dr. Turner points out how they're arranged to emphasize this really important truth that Jesus reveals God to us.

So it's like the very form of the text is shouting this message. Wow. That's powerful.

It is. It's very powerful. Yeah.

And what's even cooler is that John doesn't just use chiasm in this one spot. Right. Dr. Turner actually suggests two whole frameworks for understanding the entire prologue.

Wow. Both are based on this idea of mirroring and symmetry. So the whole prologue is structured like this.

Yes. Yeah. It's amazing.

That's incredible. So one of these frameworks focuses on how people respond to Jesus. Okay.

And the other one highlights the word as both creator and revealer. I see. So it's mind-blowing how much thought and intentionality went into these verses.

Really is. It really is. Yeah.

It makes you want to go back and read it again and again. Yeah. For sure.

Yeah. Okay. Before we get too lost in the structure.

Okay. We need to tackle one of the biggest mysteries in this prologue. Oh, I love a good mystery.

Okay. Great. Me too.

Let's hear it. So it's this word. Word.

And John keeps referring to Jesus as the word. Right. The word.

Or logos in the Greek. Logos. Yeah.

And it sparked centuries of debate. I can imagine. It's a big one.

Yeah. So it's a term that would have resonated with people from all different backgrounds back then. So Dr. Turner actually dives into three potential interpretations that John might have had in mind when he was writing this.

Okay. I'm curious. Yeah.

I want to hear it. All right. So the first one connects this word to the philosophical idea of the logos.

Okay. As the principle of order in the universe. Okay.

So, like, the underlying logic behind everything. Yeah. Exactly.

And then the second one is this connection to Hellenistic Judaism. Okay. Where logos is often equated with this personified wisdom.

I see. So, like, we see in the book of Proverbs, chapter eight. Right.

Yes. Exactly. Yeah.

With wisdom. Uh-huh. And then finally, there's the connection to the Hebrew Bible.

Okay. Where God's creative power is often expressed through speech. Right.

Like in Genesis chapter one. Exactly. And God said, Let there be light.

Yeah. And there was light. Yeah.

So the word is this agent of creation. Powerful. Yes.

Very powerful. And it's amazing how John weaves all these threads together. It really is.

Like he's speaking to all these different audiences at the same time. Right. Each with their own understanding of logos.

Right. But he's also kind of pointing beyond those understandings to something even greater. To Jesus.

To the person of Jesus Christ. Yeah. Okay.

Yeah. That makes sense. Yeah.

So then that kind of brings us to, well, what does it mean for Jesus to be the Word? Right. How does that shape our understanding of who he is? Exactly. Yeah.

And what did he come to do? Those are the big questions. The big ones. Yes.

Yeah. And it's a question that's going to stay with us throughout this whole deep dive. Absolutely.

And probably long afterward too. But before we get too far ahead, let's look at one specific translation issue that Dr. Turner raises. Okay.

He spent some time discussing this New World Translation of John 1.1. Okay. Which is used by Jehovah's Witnesses. Right.

Right. And so in this translation, it renders John 1.1 as the word was a God. A God.

A God. Yeah. Okay.

And Dr. Turner, along with many other scholars, argues that this translation isn't quite accurate. Okay. So what's the issue there? So it all boils down to this definite article, or the lack thereof, before God in the Greek text.

I see. Okay. So it's really a grammatical debate.

Right. But it has these huge implications for understanding who Jesus is. Yeah.

That makes sense. So the traditional translation, the word was God. Okay.

That really affirms the full divinity of Jesus. But the New World Translation, by adding that "a" before God, it suggests that Jesus is a lesser God. Oh, I see.

Or like a created being. Okay. So a big difference.

And it is a really big difference. Yeah. Yeah.

So it's definitely something worth noting. For sure. Especially since it highlights how important it is to have a careful translation and interpretation.

Definitely. But for now, let's set aside the translation debate and get back to the bigger picture. So Dr. Turner emphasizes that John intentionally connects Jesus to Moses.

To Moses. Yeah. Who is a huge figure in the Jewish tradition.

Of course. Yeah. So for John's original audience, Moses was the guy.

Yeah. He was the one. He brought the law from God.

Right. He led the Israelites out of Egypt. Yeah.

He spoke to God face-to-face. Right. So when John starts to draw these parallels between Jesus and Moses, he's making a really bold statement.

He is. Yeah. Like, Jesus is even greater than Moses.

Yeah. Exactly. Like, hey, remember Moses? Right.

Well, this Jesus guy, he's even greater. Yeah. Isaiah.

So how exactly does he make that connection? Good question. Well, he does it in a few subtle but really powerful ways. Okay.

So remember in Exodus, how Moses longs to see God's glory? Right. And God tells him, you can't see my face because no one can see me and live. Yeah.

It's a powerful scene. It is. But God, he does allow Moses to see his back.

Yes. And he describes himself as abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Right.

And that's where the connection to John comes in. Okay. John describes Jesus as full of grace and truth.

Grace and truth. Yeah. And those words, grace and truth, they're basically the Greek equivalents of steadfast love and faithfulness.

Oh, wow. So it's like John is saying what Moses only glimpsed, we see fully revealed in Jesus. Oh, that's good.

Yeah. It's pretty powerful. Yeah.

And it's like, whoa, I'm starting to see these connections everywhere. I know, right? And Dr. Turner even brings in quotes from some early church fathers. Oh, okay.

Like Clement of Alexandria and St. Chrysostom to reinforce this point. And they both talked about how Jesus offers us this complete revelation of God that even surpasses Moses' experience. So it's like John is building on this foundation laid in the Old Testament, and he's

taking what we learned from Moses and pointing us towards something even more profound.

Wow. Yeah. And that's what makes this prologue so brilliant.

It's not just an introduction to Jesus. It's like an invitation to see God, ourselves, and the world in a completely new way. It's a whole new perspective.

It is. Yeah. It's pretty amazing.

It is. Yeah. So we're really starting to see how John very subtly links Jesus to Moses.

And it's like he's setting the stage for something even more spectacular. It's like, hold onto your hats, folks, because things are about to get mind-blowing. It's going to get good.

Yeah, it is. It's going to get good. Yeah.

But this whole idea of seeing God in Jesus, it keeps coming up. It does. So what do you think John means by that? Right.

Is it literal? Well, that's a great question. Yeah. And I think it's one that really challenges us to think beyond just the physical.

You know, remember in John's gospel, seeing isn't just about using your eyes. Right. It's more about truly understanding, like comprehending who Jesus is.

Okay. His divine nature, his glory, his authority. So it's not just seeing Jesus walking down the street.

Right. Exactly. It's more like, whoa, that's God in the flesh.

Yeah. Exactly. It's about recognizing him as that ultimate revelation of God.

Okay. So it's like a deeper seeing. Yes.

More than just our physical eyes. Yeah. It's a spiritual seeing.

Right. And remember that line from John 14.9? Yes. Where Jesus says, whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Powerful words. Yeah. And that really sums it up perfectly.

It does. So it's such a bold statement. But when you consider everything we've already talked about, like Jesus existing before time began.

Right. His role as creator. Yes.

The way he embodies grace and truth, it starts to make sense. It does. Yeah.

Like John is saying, don't just take my word for it. Right. Look at Jesus.

Yeah. Listen to him. Watch what he does.

And you'll see God. You'll get it. You'll get it.

Yeah. Yeah. So now that we're talking about grace and truth.

Okay. Dr. Turner, he brings up this really interesting contrast in John 1.17. Okay. He says, the law came through Moses.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Right. So what do you make of that? Well, I don't think it's about putting down the law.

Okay. As Dr. Turner explains, the law was important. It served its purpose.

Right. But it was also kind of like a shadow. Okay.

Pointing towards something more substantial. I see. Like a foreshadowing.

Exactly. Yeah. Like a hint of what was to come.

Okay. So it's like seeing the blueprint of a house versus actually walking through the finished building. Right.

The blueprint gives you the information. Yeah. But the real experience is something else entirely.

Exactly. It's a whole different level. Yeah.

Yeah. The law provides guidelines, a framework for understanding God's will. Okay.

But in Jesus, we encounter the full reality of God's grace and truth. So if Jesus is that full revelation of God, how do we access that revelation? Right. How do we see God in Jesus today? That's the question, isn't it? It is.

Yeah. Well, I think it ultimately comes down to faith. Okay.

It's not about physically seeing Jesus walking around today. It's about trusting who he is and what he did, recognizing his authority, surrendering to his lordship, and allowing his grace to transform our lives. So it's about that personal connection, that inner transformation that comes from encountering Jesus.

Exactly. And I think as we go deeper into John's gospel, we're going to see this theme of seeing played out in all different ways. Yes.

Definitely. Through his miracles, his teachings, his interactions with people. Absolutely.

And each encounter offers us this new opportunity to see God's glory shining through him. Right. Like those aha moments.

Yeah. Those moments where you suddenly understand something in a whole new way. Exactly.

Yeah. Yeah. And speaking of those aha moments, remember those quotes from Clement of Alexandria and Saint Chrysostom? Oh, yes.

They both talked about how Jesus raises us up to this unspeakable glory. Right. And they understood that encountering Jesus isn't just about acquiring knowledge.

Okay. It's about experiencing this profound shift in our very being. Wow.

That's powerful. Yeah. It's about being drawn into the very life of God.

Okay. So we can't physically see Jesus today, but John is really urging us to see him in a different way. In a new way.

Yeah. In a new way. Through faith.

Yes. Through encountering him in Scripture, through allowing his grace to transform us. Absolutely.

And that's a challenge. It is. But it's also incredibly exciting.

It is. It's an adventure. Yeah, it is.

And as we move into the rest of John's gospel, I'd really encourage you to keep this idea of seeing in mind. Okay. Look for those moments where the veil is lifted.

Right. Where you catch a glimpse of God's glory shining through Jesus. Because those are the moments that really stick with you.

Yeah. They change you. They draw you closer to God.

They do. And it's like John is giving us a new pair of glasses. Oh, I like that.

Yeah. To see the world and ourselves in a whole new light. A new perspective.

In perspective. Yeah. Beautiful.

Well, as we wrap up our deep dive into this prologue of John's gospel, it's pretty clear that these 18 verses, they're more than just an introduction. They are. I mean, they're packed with all this theological depth and layers of meaning.

Yeah. So much to unpack. Yeah.

We could spend weeks unpacking all this. It's like John gave us the cheat sheet to understanding the whole gospel. Oh, I like that.

Right? He introduces all the major themes. He gives us these motifs. Yeah.

He piques our curiosity. Nah. Leaves us wanting more.

He does. Yeah. And it's not just about information overload.

Right. John uses all this powerful imagery and these literary techniques. Yeah.

He was a good writer. He was a great writer. It's like he wanted us to experience this prologue, not just read it.

I think so. Yeah. Yeah.

It's an invitation to encounter Jesus in a way that changes everything. It is. How we see God, how we see ourselves, and how we see the world around us.

It's a big deal. It is a huge deal. Yeah.

And we've talked a lot about this whole idea of seeing God in Jesus. Right. But let's be real for a second.

Okay. This seeing, it isn't always easy. It's not.

No. There are times when doubt creeps in. For sure.

And we question things. Yeah. We ask those tough questions.

We do. And sometimes we struggle to grasp just how huge Jesus is. Yeah.

To really get it. Yeah. To really get it.

And I think that's totally normal. It is. Yeah.

And I think that's okay. Faith isn't about blind acceptance or pretending that we have all the answers. It's not.

It's about wrestling with those doubts and those tough questions and trusting that God will meet us right there in the midst of our struggles. Right in the middle of it. Right in the thick of it.

Yeah. Yeah. And that's where the beauty of John's Gospel comes in.

It does. Yeah. It doesn't shy away from that difficult stuff.

No, it doesn't. It presents us with a Jesus who is both fully human and fully divine. Yes.

And a Jesus who challenges our assumptions. Uh-huh. And invites us to see the world in this brand new way.

It's a whole new lens. Yeah, it is. It's a whole new lens.

Yeah. And John's Gospel, it speaks to both our hearts and our minds. I think so too.

Yeah. It engages our intellect. Yeah.

But also stirs up all these emotions. It does. It invites us into this relationship with Jesus that's both deeply personal and profoundly transformative.

Yeah. It can change everything. It can.

It really can. So as we move beyond this prologue and into the rest of John's Gospel, just remember it's a journey. It is.

It's a process. Uh-huh. This tapestry is woven with all these moments of insight and wonder and transformation.

That's a beautiful way to put it. So keep your eyes open. Yes.

Your heart is receptive. And blissing. Yeah.

And your mind engaged. And you never know when you might catch another glimpse of God's glory shining through. Yeah.

Shining through Jesus Christ. Those are the moments that really stay with us. You do.

Yeah. The ones that shape us and change us and draw us closer to God. They really do.

And on that note, I think we've reached the end of our deep dive into the prologue of John. I think so too. I hope this conversation sparked some new insights for our listeners.

Me too. And maybe even some new questions. I love questions.

Me too. Yeah. They keep us thinking.

They do. But the exploration, it doesn't end here. No, it doesn't.

Take these insights. Take these questions. Take this sense of wonder.

Yeah. And let them guide you as you continue to explore all the richness that John's gospel has to offer. There's so much more to discover.

There is. Happy exploring, everyone.