

## The God who created us

Can I draw you back? I hope you found that quite helpful. Hopefully you got some of your questions written down, and hopefully over the next few weeks you'll begin to get some of the answers to those questions.

I thought what we would do is focus on the big topic of the week. Every week we try and pick a big theme, and this week the one we've chosen is 'The God who created us'. I thought I'd start tonight by telling you a story which I think helps to explain why many people are confused about the God who may or may not exist. You need your imagination for this, so are you up for this? Imagination at the ready?

I want you to imagine that straight away, after tonight, we all get kidnapped. Happy thought? You're glad you came? It gets even better. So we all get kidnapped, and we all get bundled into a big van. And as we're in this big van, we get injected with something that means we lose our memory. It's a good story, isn't it?

And we wake up in a room that doesn't have any windows, and doesn't have any doors, okay? Now, for a long time, no-one says anything to anyone. We're kind of just looking around, we're thinking, 'I wonder what's outside,' but we're all a bit polite, so we don't like to speak to strangers. Well, there's one brave person who begins to speak first, and it's... let me see if I can pick a volunteer... Heather. Heather's our brave soul. Now, Heather's been thinking – she's a bit of an intellectual, she uses her brain – and Heather thinks to herself, 'I'll tell you what. Outside these four walls there are huge pink elephants.' Yeah?

HEATHER: Yes.

LEE: Yeah. Absolutely. Say it with conviction.

HEATHER: Yes.

LEE: Absolutely. Huge pink elephants. Now, who's with Heather? Any followers so far? Anyone think outside are huge pink elephants? One. Two! You've got two followers so far. Okay, let's see.

Well, at this point someone else decides to speak. And it's Andy. Now, Andy's been listening to this, and Andy's not really into the intellectual side of stuff at all, Andy's a bit of an emotional creature. Andy's the kind of guy... he's in touch with his feelings. And Andy has been feeling the vibe, and he just thinks, 'No, it's not huge pink elephants. I'll tell you, what's outside these four walls are small green monkeys.' Yeah?

ANDY: I'll go with the monkeys.

LEE: That's it. The monkeys. Conviction, Andy. Small green monkeys?

ANDY: Definitely.

LEE: Definitely. Who's with Andy? Oh, you've got more. More.

Well, at this point, someone else has been listening, and he just thinks, 'No, it's not this way at all.' It's Gary. And Gary's been listening to Heather, he's been listening to Andy, and he just says, 'Nonsense. Let me tell you the truth. There is nothing outside these four walls. The problem is, you cannot believe that, so you have just made up something in your life to make life more bearable.' Gary?

GARY: Yeah, nothing.

LEE: Absolutely nothing. Who's with Gary? One. People don't want that to be true, but there's a couple of followers of Gary.

Now, at this point, if I were to say to you, 'Who is right?' well, we wouldn't know. Because at this point we can't know. We're all in the same room. We have no access to the outside world. It might be that one of them's right, that none of them are right, but we don't know. So at this point we might as well allow them to believe what they want to believe and just get on with our lives.

But just suppose, as we're talking, the people who've got other followers, we detect there's a noise from the ceiling and we look up and part of the ceiling comes down and a ladder comes down from the top and someone walks down the ladder. And they claim to be from the outside, and they claim to now come and tell us what is there. Well, does that change anything? Of course it does. Doesn't it? Of course it does. Because if someone comes down the ladder from the outside, they can now speak from a vantage point of knowledge.

Now, it's not hard, is it? It doesn't take a genius to work out how this relates to God. Many people in our culture don't think we can know with certainty anything about God because we believe it's all about guessing games. It's all in the realm of speculation. Some people have a good think, some are more emotional, but we can't know because it's like being trapped in a room without any doors or windows. But what if... what if the God who created us made contact with our world? Because that's what we need, isn't it? We don't need to speculate what's there: what we need is for the God who created us to make contact with the world. Because if that happened, things would just radically change. We would go from speculation to revelation.

Now the great news is, on the very first page of this book, on the very first page of John's Gospel, that is the claim. What happened two thousand years ago. That our God made contact with our planet. So I want to show you this. If you want to grab your gospels, and if you want to turn with me to the very first page... If there's one reference that you find, it's this one. This is the easiest reference in the whole course to find. Page 1, verse 1, and let me read to you verse 1 and 2. This is how it begins: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

Now, at that point you might think, 'Hang on a minute!' It seems that the writer of this book has made an obvious mistake in the very first sentence. I don't know if you saw it, cause he seems to say straight away that in the beginning this person called the Word was with God and was God at the same time. And you think, 'Hang on a minute! That doesn't seem to fit. Surely that is a contradiction.'

Well, I would love to say to you, and I'm going to show you this over the next few minutes, that that is not a contradiction. In fact, what he is doing... he's making a very, very profound statement about the identity of this person called the Word. But in order to see that, what we've got to realise is that the same word can mean different things. Now, we know that ourselves from common English words. Let me throw out a few examples for you.

Take the word 'ring'. Now, what does that mean? Any suggestions? What does the word 'ring' mean?

AUDIENCE: Something on your finger.

LEE: Something on your... I always love doing this. It gets you into people's psychology, what they might say. So 'ring', it can mean something on your finger.

AUDIENCE: Front doorbell.

LEE: Doorbell, so it could be that.

AUDIENCE: A circle.

LEE: A circle, so it could be that.

AUDIENCE: Where you do boxing.

LEE: Oh, a boxing ring, it could be a boxing ring. It's great, isn't it? I love it – it just gets you into people's heads – what do people think about?

I'll give you another example. Take the word 'match'. What does that mean? What comes into your head when you hear the word 'match'?

AUDIENCE: Football.

LEE: Football! Okay.

AUDIENCE: Flame.

LEE: Lighting flame. Lighting light. Other things?

AUDIENCE: Couples.

LEE: Couples. Aww! A match. The same word, the same spelling, but it can mean different things.

One last example. Take the word 'bow'. What do you think about 'bow'? What could that mean.

AUDIENCE: Boat.

LEE: Boat! It could be a part of a boat. Yeah, what else?

AUDIENCE: Bending.

LEE: Bending, so for example if I said to you tonight, 'Bow before me!' what would you do? You'd, you say, 'Nothing at all.'

I think my point is proved, isn't it? The same word with the same spelling can mean different things depending on how it is used. The same with the word 'God'. The word 'God' can mean slightly different things depending on where it is used. And that is the secret to understanding the first two sentences of John's Gospel. So when he says that the Word was with God, what he means is that this person called the Word was with another person called God the Father. But when he says 'the Word was God', what he means is that the Word was fully and utterly divine. He uses the word 'God' slightly differently. Not referring to God the Father, but to divinity: that he was fully and utterly divine, as much divine as God the Father.

Now, to try and help you understand this, just imagine that right here there is a line. Okay? Here is the line. And if you're on this side of the line, you have always existed. Got that? You have always existed. You are eternal. But if you're on *this* side of the line, you are not eternal. You have been created. That is, there was a point when you came into existence. You got it? This side of the line you are eternal, you have always existed, *this* side of the line, you have been created.

Now what John is saying in the first two sentences of his Gospel is that on this side of the line, on the eternal side of the line, there are two persons: God the Father and another person called the Word. Now, when you read on in John's Gospel, you discover in fact that there is another person on this side of the line, someone called the Holy Spirit.

Now, I know a lot of this might be new to you, but the great thing about John's Gospel is what it does as we encounter the words of Jesus: we are encouraged to rethink who God is. We are encouraged to rethink who our Creator is. And what Jesus would have us do is think about our Creator as much more like a divine family than some sort of lonely individual in the sky or some

sort of impersonal force like Star Wars. So there are three members of this divine family. Now, this is the perfect family. This is not like so many human families, you know, that have a fight and they kind of go off in their separate directions in a huff. This is the perfect family. Three divine members, three eternal members who love each other perfectly, who are distinct but not separate. So we can speak about the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit – distinct, but they are so united in love that together they make up the one God.

Now, this is what Christians call the Trinity. And to help you understand, in your booklets you see – flick a couple of pages in – you see a helpful diagram of what I've just been talking about. Now, you see on that diagram that there is one crown. Not three crowns. There is one crown. That represents our Creator. But within the crown you will see three members: the Father, the Word – or he has another name there as well, the Son – and the Holy Spirit. Three members of this divine family.

Now we're going to come back to some of this stuff again, but just store that away, and I want to teach you a few more things about the Word. Verses 1 and 2, they teach us that this Word was a member of this divine family. But let me show you a few more things about the Word. And if you pick up your Gospels, have a look at verses 3-5. This is what we're told about the Word:

“Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” So what we've been told here is that the Word, the eternal member of this divine family, one of the members was involved in the creation of everything. That we are not here by chance, but we have been created. And not just created and left alone, we are told here that the light continues to shine in the darkness. And that is a way of explaining to us that the very Word who created everything upholds it and sustains everything. So it's not as if the Word created the universe and then thought, ‘What am I going to do now? You know, kick my feet up, watch some telly...’ Not that at all. We are told that he continues to sustain everything.

Now that is just mind-blowing stuff, isn't it? The identity of the Word, what he did at the beginning, what he continues to do now... well, one last big question, which is the focus of verses 6-14. And that is the question ‘What did the Word do two thousand years ago?’ Well, let's find out. Verse 6, have a look at this. We are told that: “There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.” Now, that is a guy called John the Baptist. Not the writer of this book, but another person called John the Baptist.

And in verse 7 we are told that: “He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” Now, what a claim is that? You remember the opening story? What did we want? We wanted God to make contact with our world. Well, we are told that the true light, who has created everything and sustains everything, was coming to the world.

So the next big question you have is, ‘Well, what happened when he came into the world?’ Well, have a look at verses 10 to 13. Here's what happened when the Word came into the world: “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” So there's a contrast, isn't there? Some people accept him, some people reject him, and if at this point you're thinking, ‘Hang on, I'm just trying to hold this stuff together,’ how do you summarise it? Well, look at verse 14. It is a brilliant, brilliant summary of all that I've been trying to say. What happened just over two thousand years ago? “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

So if you look at your diagrams, you see that line from the Word to human history? We're being told that just over two thousand years ago, one of the divine three, one of the divine members of

this eternal family, came and lived not in a galaxy far, far away, but right here. On this planet. So if we'd been alive at the right time and in the right place, we could have met Jesus. He really did exist. And we are being told that the identity of Jesus is that he was this eternal Word, come into our world.

Now, that explains why he is called the Word in John chapter 1. You think about it – why call him 'the Word'? It's an odd name. I think no-one here is called 'the Word'. If you have children, I don't think that's going to be on top of the list, is it, for a boy or a girl. 'Let's think: "The Word." Yes, that's it.'

Why is he called the Word? Well, it's all about communication. Think about when you talk to people, when you want to communicate with people. Yes, I could just wave my hands in the air, but the most effective way of communicating with you is by using words. He's called the Word because he is the divine spokesman for the divine family. So as we listen and look to Jesus, we will find out more truth about the identity of our creator.

Now, what does all this mean? Well, there are some amazing, big and wonderful implications of this. If this is true then it means the guessing games are over. It means that our God has made contact with us, and therefore as we come and look and listen to Jesus, then we can know with certainty much more about the God who made us, and I think that is absolutely wonderful. It is possible to know God. Not just to guess, but to know God. And the way to do it is to pick up this book and to read it through and to listen to Jesus. Because as we listen to Jesus, we're not simply listening to just the opinions of another man. We are listening to the truth that God himself is speaking to us. So the guessing games are over.

Now, we discover in the next few weeks that Jesus didn't simply come as a communicator. He came to rescue us. In fact, he came to rescue us from the most serious, biggest problem that we face. But more of that in the next few weeks, but tonight just try and grasp this: that our creator has come into the world and has revealed truth to us.

What else does this mean? Wonderfully, it means that we are not here by chance. Isn't that good? When you go home tonight, or tomorrow morning, and you look at yourself in the mirror, I don't know what kind of reaction you get. But as you smile at yourself, you don't have to conclude that you are just randomly here by chance. We have been created by a loving God. A God who sustains life, and a God who owns us. That's the thing, isn't it? The great news of a creator is we're not here by chance, but a Creator also means that He owns us.

Now, sometimes people say that life is a gift. Well, that's partly true, but the Bible would want to say to us that life is more of a loan. Because God has graciously given us this life, but not a life that we can just get on and live as we want to. There will be a day when God will call us before Him, and when we will have to give an account of the life that He has given to us. How have we lived in God's world? Life is more of a loan from God, and one day we will stand before Him.

Here's the great thing: our God is not a cosmic killjoy. You discover this as you read through John's gospel. God is not up in heaven looking around thinking, 'Oh, there's a bit of fun over there. Let's stop it. There on the heavenly radar there's fun and amusement: let's put a stop to that.' He is not saying that. God wants us to enjoy life as it was intended to be lived. And if we want to find out much more about why we are here, how we should live now and how we can prepare for the future, then all we've got to do is turn to the words of Jesus, and we can find them in this book.

Now, I think I've said enough tonight just to whet your appetite, maybe, to get the ideas in your head. Why not just take a few minutes around your tables, discuss some of these ideas, and then we'll come together in just a few minutes.

Identity – Who is God? Who are we?

© Lee McMunn, 2011

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Published by 10Publishing, a division of 10ofThose Limited.

All English scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible: New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com  
Unit 19 Common Bank Industrial Estate, Ackhurst Road, Chorley, PR7 1NH, England.  
Email: [info@10ofthose.com](mailto:info@10ofthose.com)  
Website: [www.10ofthose.com](http://www.10ofthose.com)