

# The Person of the Son

## Part 3

Speaker	Ernest Brown
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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:01] We worship at thy holy feet, thou glorious Lamb of God.

Thy blood has washed us from our sins and brought us nigh to God. We worship at thy holy feet, thou art evermore the same. The first and last, the faithful, true, all glory to thy name.

Four hundred and seven.

We worship at thy holy feet, thou glorious Lamb of God.

[00:01:05] Thy blood has washed us from our sins and brought us nigh to God.

We worship at thy holy feet, O Satan, Nazareth.

In heav'n's unsullied light thou art, God's glory in His name.

[00:02:15] We worship at thy holy feet, thou art evermore the same.

The first and last, the faithful, true, all glory to thy name.

[00:03:03] We worship at thy holy feet, all praise to thee belong.

Our life, our gift, our only hope, our never-ending song.

We worship at thy holy feet, and all who serve thee still.

[00:04:17] We bow our heads before thee, and bow them to thy name.

Would you turn please to the book of Revelation, chapter 22, and verse 12.

[00:05:01] Revelation 22, verse 12.

Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

We have been spending our time together, considering the meaning and the implication of these three double terms, and we have followed through the proposition that the Alpha and Omega presents the Lord Jesus as the sum and substance of all that God has to say. [00:06:16] The beginning and the end presents the Lord Jesus as the sum and substance of all that God will ever do. And the first and the last presents the Lord Jesus as the one who in person is the sum and substance of all that God is, in nature and in character.

Perhaps another way of saying the same thing is that as the Alpha and Omega, the Lord Jesus is the epitome of all that God has to say.

[00:07:09] As the beginning and the end, he is the epitome of all that God will ever do. And as the first and the last, he is the epitome of the being of God. The epitome, the living embodiment in person.

In amplification of that proposition, we've looked at Hebrews 1 as filling out and amplifying what we can learn from scripture about the Lord Jesus as the Alpha and Omega, God speaking in sum, Hebrews 1. We've looked at Colossians 1 as the filling out, amplification, dissertation in scripture of the Lord Jesus as the beginning and the end. [00:08:12] God, anything that he brings into being, anything that he begins on earth, or in any way in the universe, anything he terminates, he does in Christ, the creator and sustainer of the universe. And so we pass to this last double term, the first and the last. Now, we can do no better than see what scripture says about this term which is used sparingly. So, would you turn back please to the book of the prophet Isaiah and chapter 41.

[00:09:10] Isaiah 41 verse 4, Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning, I the Lord, the first and with the last, I am he. Chapter 44, verse 6, Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.

And who as I shall call and shall declare it and set it in order for me since I appointed the ancient people and the things that are coming and shall come, let them show unto them. [00:10:21] Fear ye not, neither be afraid. Have not I told thee from that time and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God. I know not any. Chapter 48.

End of verse 11. I will not give my glory to unto another. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called, I am he. I am the first, I also am the last. [00:11:15] Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens. When I call unto them, they stand up together. It is abundantly plain from those three references in Isaiah that being the first and the last and whatever the term involves is an attribute of deity.

[00:12:13] Only God, the ever existing one, can speak of himself as the one who before there was any other was in being.

And then, when all time, when all matter, when all creation has been brought to its appointed end, God is the last. I am the first and the last, a clear attribute of deity. That God speaks of himself through the lips of the Prophet Isaiah. [00:13:01] So when we turn to John 1, as we do, if we are following the original proposition that we've seen the development of the Alpha and Omega in God's spokesman in Hebrews and we've seen the development of the beginning and the end in Christ as God's instrumental agent in Colossians 1, in each case emphasising his personal glory in so being and so doing, we can expect a similar approach and a similar response when we put John's Gospel

and particular John chapter 1 to the test of the context of scripture as a whole. [00:14:07] So when we turn to John's Gospel, and I will proceed my comments by reading verses 1 and then verses 14 to 18, notice in so doing that the main theme of the chapter runs like that, verse 1, verse 14 to 18, verses 2 to 5 are in brackets, they are a parenthesis, verses 6 to 13, another pair of brackets, another second parenthesis. So the main theme goes on from the end of verse 1 to the beginning of verse 14 and that's how I read it and it makes the proper sense. [00:15:02] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. God, John, bear witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I speak, he that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me, and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

[00:16:12] The immediate presentation of the Lord Jesus in Hebrews 1 was as Son, God speaking in Son. The immediate presentation of the Lord Jesus in Colossians 1 was the Son of the Father's love. The immediate presentation of the Lord Jesus in John 1 is as the Word. While there may be several words that can be translated Word and its similes, there are two major words used in the New Testament that are translated into English as Word. [00:17:08] One is the full scope of the declared purpose and mind summed up in totality in one way.

The other is a more detailed application. It's a specific word for a specific purpose on a specific circumstance and incident.

As to the latter, when we get to the whole armour of God in Ephesians 6 and we read that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, it's there the particular word that's needed for a particular education, a specific purpose, [00:18:17] and on any particular occasion, whatever the onslaught of the enemy, there's a particular word which is appropriate which God by the Spirit will supply, a specific word for a specific occasion. But when we come to John 1, it's not a specific detail, it's telling us about the expression of the whole mind of God. And it's even more than that. When it tells us, in the beginning was the Word, it's telling us that that which is being referred to does not only express on behalf of God, [00:19:18] what needs to be said, but that the one who is the Word is the very expression of what he expresses. I'm not sure if that's clear. I better say that again. It's one thing to have a message to pass on to other people. It's another matter, a fuller matter, to be the living expression, the living embodiment, to use our word again, to be the epitome of the message. Living it out, acting it out, being the very thing that has to be conveyed. And when we get this introduction, this prologue to the Gospel of John, our minds are turned to the fact that God has expressed himself in a person, [00:20:19] and that that expression has been in a person who is the living expression of the message that he carries, the tale that he has to tell. And in the orthodox way that we've all appreciated for many years, we get a threefold expansion of the truth in verse one. In the beginning was the Word. The Word has eternal being. In the beginning was the Word.

[00:21:07] And the Word was with God. The Word has distinct personality. These are not the first, this is not the first time in history these words are used. If I tell you anything new, absolutely new, that nobody has ever said before, it's most unlikely to be true. The old adage, if it's new, it's not true. And if it's true, it's not new. Of course, on any occasion, it might be new to you, or new to me, but not new in itself. Well, the Word has eternal being. He was there in the beginning. He has distinct personality. He was with God. [00:22:01] This Gospel frequently tells us things like, he came forth from being with the Father. Again and again the emphasis, distinct personality. And the Word was God's essential

deity. If these terms are new to us, let us listen well, write them down, consider them, reflect upon them, think them through. Of the Word, attaching to the Word, there is the declaration of eternal being, distinct personality, essential deity. And just to go into the first parenthesis in verse 2, in case there's any doubt, you know if any problems arise, if any questions need to be asked, provided we know where to look, the answer is in Scripture long before the question is posed. [00:23:12] And in case we are still in any doubt, verse 2 says, the same was in the beginning with God. So, not only eternal being, not only distinct personality, not only essential deity, but this person was eternally distinct. There was never a moment when he began to be a distinct person in himself. Again, if we accept the simple force of the Scripture, it answers the error before the error was brought in. Eternal, distinct, deity, and eternally distinct. And the one who in himself is the very expression of God. When God speaks, Hebrews 1, it is the Son that speaks, the only one competent to speak for God because he is God. [00:24:19] Colossians 1, the only one fully competent to act for God because he is God. And here, the only one competent to express God fully, to declare him, because in himself he is God. Now, having looked briefly then at verse 1, we'll move straight on to verse 14. Did you notice the starkness of the statement? The word was in the beginning, he was with God, he was God, and the word was made flesh. It follows straight through. We are speaking about the same person. Now, what does verse 14 have to say? The word became flesh. Ah, yes. [00:25:18] If you're a simple soul, like me, you like a simple approach. Now, happily, for our simple minds, much of the vital teaching in John 1 is given by the use of two verbs. One is the verb to be. To have being and to continue in being. Various forms and tenses and parts of the verb to be.

[00:26:03] No consideration of being brought into being, but having being in itself. But there's another verb. And while it's translated in various ways, if the verb to be is concerned with having being, this other verb, used in the prologue of John several times, is not a question of having being so much as being brought into being. Something being brought into being that wasn't there before. Something whose being has a commencement. Sometimes a person, sometimes a thing, sometimes a condition. Now, I just want to go through these verses and draw your attention to the occasions where the verb to be, to have being, is used. [00:27:21] Verse 1. In the beginning was. We would say, past tense, past imperfect, of the verb to be. It could be put this way. In the beginning, the word had being. It doesn't say was brought into being. He had being. He was in being. And the word was in being with God. And the word was God in being.

[00:28:06] Verse 2. The same had being in the beginning with God. Now, a simple understanding of the verb to be as a continuing condition of being, without reference to a beginning of existence, just fits the bill. When we are thinking about the one spoken of as the word. Now, again, if we move on to verse 9. That was the true light. The true light was in being. No suggestion of beginning.

Then verse 18. The last one for the moment. The only begotten son, which is, who has being in the bosom of the father. No beginning, no end, no commencement, no cessation.

[00:29:27] The only begotten, who has being, whose home, whose residence, whose right it is to be there, whose being is in the bosom of the father. Again, there's nothing new about this. It's the same, it's the use of the verb to be. To have being without any indication of commencement or cessation. Now, we go back again to verse 3. We are now looking at a verb which could be translated brought into being, or given being, or as is often found in the Bible, to become. [00:30:20] To have being where being did not previously exist. Verse 3. All things were given being by him. By the way, are you used to the concept, the idea, that the translators of this excellent translation didn't always translate the same word in Greek by the same word in English? Maybe this is one reason why this translation is so

honoured, and it's so majestic, and so dignified. [00:31:08] That our language being so rich in synonyms, things that mean almost, if not quite the same thing, we find that the translators used one word here, another word there, if you'll accept the phrase, to give a bit literary variety and colour to the text. Not a mistranslation, not a misinterpretation, but equally valid into our English, which has so many words that might mean the same thing. But, just to cement this thought, that it's the same word, if we stick, instead of saying was, or is, or shall be, if we concentrate on the verb to be, and talk about having being, and then we come to this other word, to become, [00:32:09] and use it in the sense of being given being, having being where being was not there before, it helps us to distinguish between the two. So, as to creation, verse 3 says, all things were given being by him. Verse 6, there was a man given being from God, or there was given being a man who was sent from God, whose name was John. Clearly, John, a natural man, hadn't been in existence before. He was brought into being, he was given life, and he was given the name John. A commencement of something that hadn't been there before. [00:33:07] Verse 10, the world was made by him, by the word, the world was given being, the world was brought into being, the world was created, as we would say, simply. Verse 12, as many as received him, to them gave he the power to have being as the sons, the children of God. They were given the status of being children of God, which they had not been given before. Something new, which had not been there before for them. Verse 17, the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth was brought into being by Jesus Christ. [00:34:12] Follow that up at your leisure, you'll find that there's a wealth of truth in the distinction between the two verbs, one to have being inherently, and the other, which means to be given being by another. Now, with that, we come to verse 14 and 18. Verse 14 then, the word, who has eternal being, distinct personality, and essential deity, we learn something fresh about him in verse 14. The word became flesh. He was given being in flesh. He did not begin to be, he did not begin to have being, but for the first time, he was found in flesh.

[00:35:19] He didn't become the word of the incarnation. He didn't become the son. He didn't become the only begotten. He became flesh. We are used, aren't we, to the sequence that begins with him becoming flesh. We also read that he became poor, he became obedient, he became dead, he became a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and so on. And yet, in that graphic term we looked at last Saturday, he did not become sin. [00:36:04] This was abhorrent, absolutely foreign to his holy nature. It was something that he was made. He was made sin. He was made an offering for sin. Well, here we have it. The word became flesh. And who was it? How is the person identified as the one who entered into a condition in which he had not had being before? He is the only begotten. Notice, he didn't begin, he did not become the only begotten, but the only begotten, the word, the son, he became flesh. He entered into a condition where he could pass through death on account of sin. [00:37:02] Well, again, the only begotten of the father. We'll come back to only begotten in a minute or two. But we'll just look at this section as such. Verse 18, no man has seen God at any time. The only begotten son, there's this bit added now, verse 14 says, the only begotten of the father, and verse 18 adds the only begotten son, who is? Who ever was, is and ever shall be dwelling in the bosom of the father in the enjoyment of that eternally subsisting relationship of the father and the son. The plain force of the scripture. By the way, many phrases gain currency over the years. For myself, I hear a little bit there, a little bit there, I put them together, sometimes I'm brave enough to add a bit of my own. [00:38:21] How about this one? When you're studying scripture, if the literal sense makes sense, there's no sense in looking for any other sense. Got that? If the literal sense makes sense, there's no sense in looking for any other sense. There's no need to be abstruse and complicated and complex and wriggling away from the plain force of the simple statements of scripture. And even from this chapter, if I only had this chapter, when I'm told that a certain person is the very expression of all that God is, filling out the term first and last, that he has eternal being, that he is eternally distinct, [00:39:22] that he has essential deity, that he is the only begotten of the father,

what other conclusion can I ever come to?

That when it says this person, the word, the father's only begotten, the son of the father, when scripture speaks of him as being in the bosom, he is, this verb to be, this continuing sense of the verb, that he is in the bosom of the father, [00:40:05] what other conclusion can a simple believer come to than that the Lord Jesus ever has, is and ever shall be the eternal son of the eternal father. Whatever words we put to it, the simple force of scripture is abundantly plain. Perhaps we'll now look at the five times when the word only begotten is used. Whenever we think of the term only begotten, inevitably we think of the term firstborn. The only begotten used by John of the Lord Jesus five times telling us that he's absolutely unique. [00:41:03] It's what he is in person, in his relationship with the father. And as we saw in the illustration in Hebrews 11, Abraham and Isaac had that unique filial feeling between the two of them, enjoying that father-son relationship in a way that Abraham had with nobody else that was related to him. That relationship was absolutely unique to Abraham and Isaac. And when God says take Isaac, he says take your unique son, take your only Isaac. Now that's a pale picture of the truth that's conveyed in the five times that the term only begotten is used by John in referring to the Lord Jesus. We do know more than read them, they are self-explanatory. [00:42:14] Chapter 1, verse 14, we've had, we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father. Verse 18, the only begotten son who was in the bosom of the father, he hath declared him. There was no beginning to the relationship, but there was a beginning to the revelation of the relationship when the word became flesh. How it fits in with Hebrews 1. Previously, God had spoken partially, transiently, for the time being in a less than full way, using prophets and the patriarchs and so on. If God was to be fully declared, it must be in the person of his son, Hebrews 1. [00:43:18] John 1, not quite the same terminology, the revelation of God as the father, the full, final, true revelation of God as father, awaited the coming into flesh of the only begotten son of God. Perhaps this is why some get confused. There was no beginning to the relationship, there was a beginning to the revelation of the relationship that we might be instructed in it, with the coming into flesh of the word. No doubt we could say even then it was the beginning of his public ministry and gathering together those that he called his own that made the sphere available where the revelation of the father could be fully known. [00:44:17] Chapter 3, verse 16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Again, the literal sense makes sense, doesn't it? The one that we now know as the father sent the one that we now know as the son. The father didn't begin to be the father when he sent him. The son didn't begin to be the son when he was sent. The father, as such, sent the son as such. Time and again in John's Gospel we read, in John's epistle, we read words like the father sent the son. Let us remain uncomplicated and accept the clear meaning of the words expressed. [00:45:14] Verse 18 of chapter 3. He that believeth on him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. Again, not only as the revealer of the father but as the one who should bring eternal life within the reach of those who believe on him. Wonderful thing that you and I, as simple believers, have been brought within the realm where eternal life can be enjoyed because the father sent the son into the world that we might have life through him. [00:46:14] Verse 9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him.

The knowledge of God is father. The enjoyment, the reception and enjoyment of eternal life. The enjoyment of the subsisting eternal relationship father and son and all that that conveys because God sent his only begotten son into the world.

[00:47:20] Well, the revealer of the heart of God, the bringer of eternal life into the world that those who trust him might have the enjoyment of it. A word on John 17. So much in John's Gospel fills out the

detail of this eternally existing one, the son of the father, that we must be extremely disciplined to see what we can look at in one hour. John 17. Verse 5. Now, O father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

[00:48:17] Verse 22. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them that they may be one even as we are one. Verse 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. When we are reading in the Synoptic Gospels and we read the sample prayer that the Lord gave to his disciples, some speak of it in a general way as the Lord's Prayer. [00:49:12] Perhaps more accurately, we might call it the disciples prayer. Some might say, oh you don't get the Lord's Prayer in the Synoptic Gospels, you get the Lord's Prayer in John 17. Well, I wouldn't quibble with that, but I would like to say and suggest that in John 17, it's not so much the Lord's Prayer as the Son's Prayer. The Son, in the enjoyment of that subsisting relationship of Son to Father, comes into the Father's presence and breathes this communion between Son and Father. [00:50:06] Notice, again setting the stall out of the chapter, verse 1, the Lord says, well the Son says first, Father. In verse 11, he says, Holy Father. In verse 25, he says, Righteous Father. When he's speaking about personal matters, breathing that personal communion, he uses the direct term Father. When he speaks of things concerning his own in relationship with himself, he uses the term Holy Father. And when he speaks of his own in their relations with the world, he uses the term Righteous Father. It's a help to the layout of the chapter. [00:51:05] Another help is to say these references to glory. Again, how well, how often we've heard it. In verse 5, that which is entirely personal to the Son, a glory as we speak of it, that we can neither behold nor share. In verse 22, the Son prays for a glory that's been given to his own, and it's a glory that we shall both behold and share. And when we come to verse 24, we read of a glory that we can behold but never share. These are important distinctions. Notice then, in verse 1, Father, glorify thy Son. All the way through, Father, Son, Father, Son. And when we come to verse 24, with which we must end, how many times we can say this. [00:52:18] If there was no other chapter, if there was no other verse, it's sufficient to encourage us to understand that between the Father and the Son, there has been, there is, there ever shall be, the enjoyment of an eternally subsisting relationship without beginning or end. Notice what the prayer says. Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world. Who is speaking? The Son. Who is he speaking to? The Father. So, the prayer in verse, or the statement in verse 24, Thou, the Father, lovest me, the Son, before the foundation of the world. Simple but sublime statement. [00:53:19] I trust we are encouraged, not only on the immediate study, but to search out these terms that are used about the Lord Jesus and to see how much blessing there is in following them through. There is a little hymn we often sing. We're going to sing it now. Hymn number 23. I wonder if it'll mean just that little bit more to us now, when we sing it, to say, Tis Jesus, the first and the last. Whose spirit shall guide us safe home. We'll praise him for all that is past and trust him for all that's to come. Number 22. [00:54:25] His love is as great as his power, and those neither measure nor measure.

Tis Jesus, the first and the last. Whose spirit shall guide us safe home.

[00:55:06] We'll praise him for all that is past and trust him for all that's to come.