

John's Cosmic Christmas - Part 2

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Date: 11 December 2016

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good morning. And a warm welcome to the service this morning, and a special welcome to those who are visiting with us this morning. I can only see one so far, but there might be more than one, but it's good to see everybody, and especially those who are visiting.

Tea and coffee at the end of the service, as you know it all, are welcome to join with us for that. In the course of the week, there's the things as usual. The Ladies Bible Study meets tomorrow at 8 in Targert, I'm not quite sure where, but the Ladies can confer amongst themselves to decide that. First troop on Tuesday, Road to Recovery on Tuesday here at 8 in the Community Centre, and there'll be a meeting on Wednesday, but I'll speak about that in a moment. On Tuesday evening, I've been asked to intimate that there'll be a WFM meeting in Scalpey Hall, and it's a craft evening with Joanne, who's over here somewhere.

And if you're needing a lift out there, speak to Mary, please, and she can help with lifts. There'll be a Deacons Court meeting tomorrow night, half past seven, in the manse, so please all take note of that to those who are concerned.

And on Wednesday evening, there will be a time of prayer, and we will read the Word of God together, obviously. But we're going to have a congregational meeting rather than a prayer meeting.

[1 : 27] And that's at half past seven here in the Community Centre, and the purpose of that meeting, rather than me speak to that, I think I'll let Gordon speak to that.

Thank you, Gordon, for that. The manse that we are staying in is your manse, and we are so thankful to God for providing it, and for using the Lord's people to provide it. We're pretty much settled now.

We've unpacked most of the boxes. We saw quite a number of you yesterday in the course of the day, and some more in the fellowship in the evening. But just can I underline again, the door is always open.

We'd like to see you any time, and so please come and see us up in the new manse. One or two other things to say. The recent soup and pudding lunch, which was here, you'll remember, raised £677.50.

I'm conscious also that there was a fellowship here a couple of Saturdays ago that was organised by Margo and friends. And we're looking at Marianne just now to see if I can remember the amount that was raised to go to Harris House in Weaverbund.

[2 : 32] It was £800. So £400 each went to different places. So again, we're thankful to those who contributed into the Lord for his provision in that.

Christianity Explored continues on Thursday at 6, I think that's the last session on Thursday in the Hotel Hebrides. And this coming Saturday, the Sunday School Party, it'll be a community Sunday School Party that will involve all the churches.

And that is in Serey Scott School from 1 o'clock to half past 3 in the evening. The Youth Fellowship Party will take place, and that will be in the community centre here.

And then the services, God willing, next Sunday, 11 and 6, and they will be conducted by myself. Community, community carol service in the community centre at 8pm on Sunday the 18th.

That's next Sunday. So please take a note of that. One final thing is on the 24th of December, Christmas Eve, will be a Christmas holiday club in the community centre here from 1 o'clock to half past 3.

[3 : 39] Following on from the summer holiday club. Similar theme, but obviously the Christmas message that will be explored in a very interactive way for the children. So pray for that, please, and take a chance to encourage those who are young in Fybert to come along to that meeting.

I'm North Harris. These, I think, are all the intimations. So let us worship God and sing to God's praise. He's saying, first of all, the words on the screen, and the words that you'll find in Mission Praise number 493.

493 mission praise. That carol, O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel.

And we sing this, I stand to sing in a moment to God's praise. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank you this new morning for a new opportunity to come into your presence and to seek to draw near to you with that confidence that those who seek to draw near to you, you have promised that you will draw near to them.

And Lord God, once more we come in the name of our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. His name is Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[5 : 03] And we thank you that everything that we have sung of in that hymn, we see fulfilled in the coming of Christ. We thank you that the one who was promised over hundreds of years as the prophet spoke, inspired by the Spirit.

We thank you that he came at just the right time in your determination, Lord, that he came.

The word became flesh and made his dwell among us. And we thank you that he is the one who was able to break Satan's tyranny.

He is the one who was able to save his people from the depths of hell and give them victory over the grave. We thank you that Jesus Jesus is the one who was able to disperse the gloomy clouds of night and put death's dark shadows to flight.

We thank you that Jesus was the one who was able to open wide our heavenly home and close the path to misery, leading all who look to him and who trust in him to that eternal safety that is on high.

[6 : 32] Lord God, this morning we confess that we are sinners, that we in our nature and through our action have shown that we are sinners.

we are not worthy to come into your presence and as you look at us Lord, there is so much that grieves you and if left on our own we would have no hope.

But we thank you that we celebrate this morning at the wonder of Emmanuel. God with us. we thank you that whilst we were still sinners Christ died for us and our faith our hope is in him and all that he has done.

So lift our eyes we pray from ourselves take away from our minds all that would distract us and enable us to fix our eyes upon Jesus and know not only the the assurance in the words that we have sung that God is with us but we pray that we may know the very real sense of the presence of God with us.

So meet with us Lord God we pray bless us as we come to you and hear our prayers not only for ourselves but for all who meet in a similar way to us.

[8 : 05] We think especially of Farrah this morning as he reads worship in Weaverborough this morning and this evening we ask Lord that you would bless him and that you would use him for your glory that you would speak through him and give him that sense of your presence as he reads and as he prays as he speaks to the children and as he preaches your word and we ask Lord that you would bless that congregation and guide them we pray as they seek a man of your choice we pray that in the vacancy that you would sustain them as you have been and we pray Father that you would guide them so that they would be led to one who will oversee the congregation and bring your word to them Lord's day by Lord's day we pray for those who would desire to be with us this morning but who are unable to be some Lord who are ill some who are tired physically some who are tied up with the responsibilities of work who care for those around this island and whatever the context

Lord we pray that you would bless and that you would enable your people to be salt and light whatever they may be this day we pray for others who have opportunity to be here but who may be drifting from you and we don't know what is going on in our heart but Lord you see each heart you search us you know us and we pray for those absent that you would draw them to yourself that they would know the salvation that is found only in Christ we pray Lord for all that is before us in the week ahead we have listed many different activities in the forthcoming days and we pray your blessing to be upon each one we acknowledge you Lord trusting not in our own understanding but asking that you would direct our paths we thank you for your provision for us in this place that we have met in over these last two years we thank you for the match that you have provided through your people and we ask

a cross to pay for our sins so that we could be taken all the way from sin and earth to go to heaven to be with God forever let's pray our heavenly father we thank you for your great love for us and we no matter how clever we might be we thank you that there's no one in this world that is so clever that they can understand fully how much you have loved us that your love is vast as the ocean and we thank you that as we look to Jesus and remember that he came to this world and remember that he came as a baby but went all the way to the cross thank you that you've spoken to us in a way that we can understand about how much you've loved us and how much we can trust you so we pray that you would help us whether we are very young or a bit older help us we pray to trust you to give our lives to you and to know the promise being our promise that we will go from earth to heaven when you call us so be with us we pray we pray for the wee ones who are at the stable we ask Lord that as they think through the whole

Christmas story that you would help them to understand to be safe to have good fun and to know also how much you love them we pray that they would remember you and trust you in their early years and that they would walk close with you all the days of their lives so hear our prayers and continue with us as we sing and we ask this in Jesus name Amen we're going to sing now that hymn that I was smoking from number 987 in mission praise hear is love vast as the ocean loving kindness as the flood if you could turn please in your Bibles to John chapter 1 and we read from verse 1 in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was with God in the beginning 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 and you'll see in the footnote in your Bible there's an alternative translation there the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not overcome it there came a man who was sent from God his name was

[22 : 04] John 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 he was in the world and though the world was made through him the world did not recognize 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 the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only who came from the father full of grace and truth John testifies concerning him he cries out saying this was he of whom

I said he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me from the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another for the law was given through Moses grace and truth came through Jesus Christ no one has ever seen God but God the one and only who is at the father's side has made him known amen and may God bless that word to us his word and give us understanding Calum will now lead us in prayer and gather peace down 15 in prayer and grâce à la Sa voix, la Campe scaffold Chan, la Campe mindfulness, adjusting to the world a créeate of à t'orçn un inference de...

il y a roboing Bitral. BIN-LAMIA 22627 let our sing.

We will kiss. For God, the Holy frightening shouter you for.

Let you dream you will promise me. Sister blessed with us through the love of God, behalf of the the neighbors in home of the close in tick Monsieur Christian this restrictions Maggiore Tr ferrari ayudusion.

[25 : 55] is Ms.

12 12 13 14 14 Lanching as a Christus, Trorik as Judith came, Na faax na treax naan a troke, Er skach yeas. Amen.

We sing again to God's praise in Psalm 121. In John's Gospel, in the first chapter in particular, we are called to lift our eyes, to be in awe of who God is.

And we sing the first two stanzas in Gaelic of the psalm. I to the hills will lift mine eyes, from whenst hath come my need, my safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made.

Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will he slumber that he keeps. Behold, he that keeps Israel, he slumbers not, nor sleeps. God justice naan, who heavenzer no evil, the dawnzer no evil, who heavenzer no evil, the Thezer no evil, the Whose a witch or a witch Thank you.

[28 : 50] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[31 : 20] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[35 : 02] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. So, Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Any case you are... Thank you.

[37 : 17] You are... And, I see you here. in my life... Ag priests of buenas hearing you are within us. ..and the text... so just two points this morning first of all then god is life in him was life verse 4.

in him was life and the truth is from him flows life now what does that mean when we consider it what form of life flows from god that's the question and the answer is every form of life flows from god physical life flows from god spiritual life flows from god eternal life flows from god so think first of all about physical life physical life finds its origin we find the life that is in us the source of that life it is is god the life that pulses through our bodies came from god in the beginning whether the world recognizes that or not that is the fact that is revealed to us by god in scripture he is the creator he is the author he is the sustainer of life you watch children when they're when they're playing um children they love these join the dot pictures it's an observation that i can think back on and you know how join the dot pictures works you get the sheet of paper and there's all these dots around the paper and there's a number that's on each dot and the children have to follow the dots and the sequential number and as they do so this bit of paper that was just dotted without any kind of sense or or real definition suddenly becomes a picture that we can see some shape some object comes into focus as they join the dots there's a revelation and we see this big picture now the bible is 66 books but they are all joined up they are all connected they are all inspired by the same author the spirit of god he uses different people with different genres of writing but there is one author god the spirit and as we look at the connection lines from book to book within scripture the canon of scripture and as we make these connection lines we see god think about john one in the beginning was the word does that bring any bells about other passages in scripture well i'm sure you're making the connection already john one connects with genesis one the book of genesis opens with the same line as john in the beginning god and what we're supposed to see here is that the physical life that was breathed into this world the physical life that was breathed into each one of us is given to us by god the physical life that keeps us breathing for the number of years that we are given in this world is given to us by god in him in him was life and jesus who is the word he made that claim very clearly as john's gospel progresses think about john 11 jesus says in the story of of lazarus when he calls lazarus to come forth

and jesus says to the sisters who are distraught with grief i am the resurrection and the life think about john chapter 14 jesus says to the disciples i am the way and the truth and the life god so god is life god is the physical life giver and the breath that you and i are breathing at present the blood that is pumping through our veins the lights that's in our eyes the tissue and the sinews and the muscle and the bones that's all within us all of it finds its source in god he is our maker he is our life giver he is our life sustainer every moment that we are given in time should be a reminder that god is life and the life we have flows from god physical life flows from god secondly spiritual life it flows from god i think we'll probably continue a bit into john's gospel and in john chapter 3 we'll be introduced to a man who we know well called nicodemus nicodemus was a man nicodemus was a man of standing a man with a considerable reputation a pillar in that community a learning academic religious man letters after his name he was a man of standing he was a man of biblical knowledge he was alive physically but he was dead spiritually and he sees jesus the word and he recognizes in jesus the word a life that he does not have and so he comes to jesus and jesus sees him and jesus shows him that the spiritual life that he needs the spiritual life that nicodemus lacked and craved only christ could give jesus looks at nicodemus and he says nicodemus you need to be born again you need to be born spiritually nicodemus you need the spiritual life that flows from god

to be given to you or you will never see the kingdom of god despite your letters despite your reputation despite your religious biblical knowledge without the life the spiritual life that is born from above nicodemus you're going nowhere spiritual life flows from god physical life flows from god eternal life flows from god i conducted a funeral on wednesday many of you were praying for me and i'm grateful for that but when everyone is conducting a funeral there is always a palpable sense of grief and sadness in that gathering but when the person who has died is one who was trusting in christ as the rebel and al macarthur was yes we grieve but we grieve as those who have hope we grieve as those who have hope of eternal life

see there is life beyond the grief the bible is good news it's good news of an opportunity that is given to us to be taken not to death but through death into life that is eternal life that is full life that is abundant life that is sin free life that is perfectly healthy where there's no pain and there's no illness and there's no disease a life where there is peace and harmony with everyone eternal life and that eternal life that our souls have been wired to thirst for it has one source we get it one place we get it from god when we come to him and we ask god is life the question i would like to ask of us in application is how alive are you this morning everybody who's sitting here is what i can see has physical life but do we have spiritual life can you say this morning i know that i have eternal life the girls uh uh sometimes play a song that i've mentioned to you before and it's a song that when i heard it it made a real impact on me because of the sadness of it the chorus in the song the the line that keeps getting repeated is i learned to live half alive i learned to live half a life it's a girl who's having a a cry about a relationship she's lost and she feels now that she's half alive that's the chorus i learned to live half a life so many people as we look around in this world are singing that sad song there are people in this hall this morning who will in their hearts be singing that sad song i learned to live i'm still learning to live half a life so many people believe the devil's lie you know he promises that in the glitz and the glamour of fame and popularity and wealth and worldly gain he says that's where life is you want to feel full life and watch your bank account rise watch your popularity ratings go through the roof that's where life is everybody looking at me the x factor our lights shining you're the star that's life says the devil and most of us don't get anywhere near that place but those who do get into that place we watch them rise to stary and the more they get the sadder they get and the closer they get to their goal the more they start to realize that their goal is not actually that worthwhile chasing and those who get there are left feeling dead inside see the devil with all his offers comes as it says in john 10 10 only to steal from us and to kill us spiritually to destroy the true life

that our souls crave jesus said john 10 10 i have come that you may have life and life to the full so if you and i want to know real life what do we need to do not chase oasis mirage type of goals that are in the distance we need to come to jesus we need to get to know jesus because spiritual life eternal life flows only from him the godland the word made flesh last week we were given a freezer for which we're very grateful put it in the garage and um we took it along to the the plug we plugged it in we switched the switch and then married her ankle so she was given a bag of frozen peas the frozen peas went on her ankle for the evening and at the end of the evening i took the frozen peas put them in the freezer that had been switched on and by the morning frozen peas were mushy peas why because there was no power getting through to the garage the cable was run the sockets were in place the switches were all there every outward sign indicated that there would be power but it's not yet connected it'll be connected soon don't feel sorry for me the point is it's not yet connected can i ask is there anybody here in church this morning who's like that all the outward signs are there there's no life here every week you sit in church in the chair the church clothes go on the bible's in the house might even read it you know the right things to say you have all the outward marks of religion but there's no life yet no spiritual life no assurance of eternal life how can that change it can change this instant by coming to christ by trusting in christ he is the word he is the god man he is the one in whom there is life come to him confess sin confess the deadness helplessness the helplessness of our own souls apart from him and all the good things we try and do to to make ourselves look better in god's sight filthy rags is what they're like says is he so we need to come to him and say i can't do it i'm dead i'm dead the lord jesus forgive me breathe your life your spiritual life your eternal life into my souls god is life secondly finally god is light look at verse um four into verse five in him was life jesus and that life was the light of men then verse five in particular the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood now when you look at this verse depending on what version you're reading you'll see a variation

[53 : 56] some of the translations of the bible translate this verse as the niv does the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it but in the niv there's an acknowledgement that there is another translation of that particular word and so we have it in the footnote we also have it as the preferred translation in the esv the esv says the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not overcome it so you've got two possible translations there the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not understood it or the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not overcome it so which one's right the answer to the question i think it's both are right the word that is used in the greek is an ambiguous word it can be translated both ways but whichever way you think about it technically it's true so what i want to do for the next few minutes as we come to a conclusion is think through both possibilities of this verse in the light of christ first possibility the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood who is the light well the light is christ the light is jesus and we see the beginnings of that in john 1 and we see that become clearer and clearer as john's gospel progresses think about john 8 and john 9 jesus says i am the light of the world one commentator montgomery voice says by this title the light the light jesus is revealed as the one who knows god the father and who makes him known before christ came into the world the world was in darkness the world did not know god christ came his light shone before men then men had light of the knowledge of the glory of god in the face of jesus christ so think about this as we light christmas candles in our homes the sky um harris is a place where there are many many candles we all know that as we see the lights going around this hall switched on the lights on the christmas tree the lights on the shop window the lights that are strewn across the whole street the whole place of tarba the lights outside the christmas tree at um the distillery and the and the harris tree shop over the course of the next few weeks everywhere we look there's light as we see it we're to remember jesus that's why all these lights are here that's who we're to remember christ we are to remember the light came but the darkness was such in the world that we did not understand him the world did not recognize him the world did not receive him the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it think about this jesus was the most misunderstood man in history shortly after his birth herod wants to kill him he thinks that jesus had come to be an earthly king to try and dethrone him and so he wants to snuff him out

herod just doesn't understand think about the religious jews week after week they read through the old testament scriptures they were academic masters in the old testament scriptures that pointed forward to the coming messiah and yet when the messiah came and when he stood in front of them and when he looked them in the eye and when he addressed them personally when he read the very scriptures that testified to himself they didn't recognize him in fact they wanted to kill him they didn't understand the light think about the crowds in jesus ministry that we see through the gospels the flocked to him they were amazed by his miracles they were enthralled by his parables they were entertained by all the amazing things that he did but largely they just didn't understand even christ's family as jesus ministry intensified on earth and he missed the odd meal or two we can read in mark 3 21 we don't have time to go there just now that his family thought that he was quote out of his mind they didn't understand him the roman soldiers as they nailed jesus beaten and bruised and bloody body to a cross jesus said father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing they didn't understand him the light shone into the darkness but the darkness did not understand do we understand who jesus is do we understand today why jesus came see if we think that he came to be a a new philosopher we're not understanding if we think that he came to be one of another religious goodness that we can file in the religious section of world religions we don't understand him if we think that jesus came to be an inspirational character a life coach type person who can make us be all we can be we don't really fully understand if we think that jesus came to be our personal assistant our crisis manager the one that we go to in times of trouble and drop when things become calm we don't understand if we think that jesus came to sprinkle our lives with his blessing like christmas fairy dust we don't understand jesus came to save you and i that's why he came you shall call his name jesus for he shall save his people from their sins jesus jesus came to rescue us the light came into the world to rescue us from outer eternal darkness he came so that those who would believe in him would not perish but would live and live as children of god verse 13 do we understand that

the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it finally let's think about the second render the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not overcome it it's an interesting word that john uses in the greek and when you go back to the root of the word the root of

the word is all mixed up in the imagery of a fight literally a wrestle and the truth is when jesus stepped into time when the light shone into the darkness all the dark forces of satan came immediately to wrestle and war and fight and rage against him we see at jesus birth that difficult section to read over the christmas story satan uses herod to try and wipe out every baby in the land and this wrestle against this king to be we see as jesus ministry commences satan immediately is on and he plies him with temptation after temptation he's trying to lure him into sin in this war against him and we see it in the most concentrated way at calvary where all the depth of darkness of your sin and mine sought together with the darkness of satan and hell and he laid down to overcome jesus on calvary we see this war where darkness is trying to snuff out the light of the world and for a moment it looked like darkness had overcome as jesus said it is finished and he laid down his life but three days later he rose and it became wondrously clear that the darkness did not overcome the light but the light overcame the darkness you know we love to go to cinema and watch these epic battles of light versus darkness of good versus evil you know the most epic battle of all time is not a fantasy tale set in some never never land it's not some battle in the saloon in the wild west it's the story of the cross of calvary and the good news is that the darkness did not overcome the light and when jesus comes back that fact that fact will be gloriously wondrously undeniably clear when the king of kings is seen coming in the skies we will all know the darkness did not overcome the light but but meantime today there is a battle going on for the souls of men and women and boys and girls still the powers of darkness fight on still the prince of darkness satan seeks to stop you and i from coming to the light of christ so what will you do do we see jesus this morning the light of the world do we understand who he is savior and why he came for us to die if you see it it's because god the spirit is showing if you see it respond receive him trust and the assurance is that you will share in that overcoming you will share in that victory over darkness over death into light and into life that is full in time and eternal who is god he is life who is god he is light let's pray lord we thank you for the privilege of the fact that you reveal yourself to us in scripture and there is only so much that we can grasp but we pray that what you have enabled us to understand you would enable us to respond at you we pray lord that we would know jesus the light of the world and know him as our savior and we pray that we would know that life that comes from the relationship we can have with you through christ beginning beginning even in this moment as we bow before you for some and go on for all eternity hear our prayers in jesus name we pray amen we sing to conclude mission phase 107-2 i don't think we can overlook this in the light of the passage that we read 107-2 in christ alone my hope is found and now may the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god the father and the fellowship of god the holy spirit be with us all both now and forever more amen