

LIGHT



OF THE
WORLD

JONATHAN GRIFFITHS

10 Publishing
a division of **10**ofthose.com

Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Copyright © 2023 by Jonathan Griffiths

First published in Great Britain in 2023

The right of Jonathan Griffiths to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher or the Copyright Licensing Agency.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-915705-00-6

Designed by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

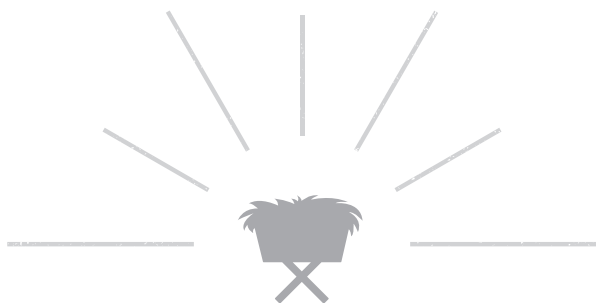
Printed in Denmark

10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com
Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

Email: info@10ofthose.com

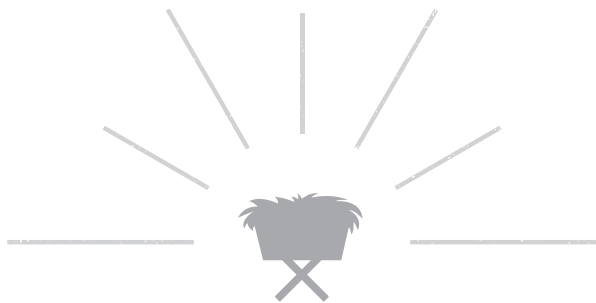
Website: www.10ofthose.com

1 3 5 7 10 8 6 4 2



CONTENTS

The Big Screen	1
1. The Light That Shatters Darkness.....	5
2. The Light That Shines On Us	17
3. The Light That Shows Glory	31



THE BIG SCREEN

I was shopping on Black Friday—which was probably a mistake.

As I jostled with the crowds in search of a bargain, my eyes were drawn to the TV section at the back of the store. And what I noticed was that nearly all of the TVs on sale were giant in size. Anything under sixty inches is hardly worth having these days, it seems.

I do not know what type of screen you most like to watch a movie on. Certainly the size of the screen impacts your experience. There is a convenience to watching something on your phone. Sometimes the new sixty-inch TV in your living room is great. Of course, thousands enjoy the big-screen experience of the cinema.

And then there is the *really* big screen—the IMAX dome—if you’re looking for the full, immersive experience.

Sometimes it’s wonderful to look at the Christmas story on the small screen and see the more intimate moments: Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem, the baby in the manger, and the shepherds in the field. But there is also value in approaching the story through a wider lens.

One of the accounts of Jesus’ life in the Bible is written by his disciple, John. He chose the largest screen imaginable to tell the story of Jesus’ birth. John gives us the cosmic perspective, as if on the ultimate IMAX screen. The scene opens before the universe even existed: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

John does not begin his Christmas story with the angel’s visit to Mary, or the star over Bethlehem, or the manger in a stable. No, he starts at the *very* beginning, further back in time than we can imagine. Before the world even existed (let alone stables and mangers), Jesus was there. John wants to show us that Jesus is more than an influential teacher or a wise guide.

He's more than a good man or an example for others. Jesus is unique in all the universe. There is no one like him.

Are you searching for something this Christmas? Perhaps, like so many, you're seeking meaning or peace or hope. Maybe you just sense there might be something in Jesus worth considering. If so, John invites you to sit back and experience the impact of the real Christmas story on the big screen; events which begin before time and connect all the way through to our lives here and now, this Christmas.



THE LIGHT THAT SHATTERS DARKNESS

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:1–5).

Words are powerful things. When I speak, I convey something of myself—my thoughts, my feelings, my identity. When you speak, you do the same.

Words have the power to make things happen. I can drive up to the window at Starbucks and speak into the microphone, asking for a grande peppermint mocha with extra whip. When I drive round the corner, I discover that my words have had a real effect as I am handed my coffee and the credit card machine.

I can speak words of encouragement and transform someone's day. I can speak words of criticism and see someone crumble. We see the power of words whenever we speak to Siri or Alexa; ask for the forecast, directions, or music, and they immediately oblige.

If, even as finite human beings, our words can be relatively powerful, imagine the impact of the words of a supremely powerful God. The Bible is clear on this:

*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
(Psalm 33:6)*

The word of God goes out from his mouth and things happen. The heavens appear. Stars are made.

As John introduces us to the Son of God at the beginning of his Gospel, he calls him “the Word.” John puts Jesus Christ into the same category as the powerful word of God.

*

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God.”

The baby born in a Bethlehem stable and placed in a manger was and is the Word of God—the powerful walking, talking Word by which God made the world and does his work. In the beginning this Word of God simply *was*, which means there has never been a time when he did not exist. Right from the start, he was “with” God.

There is a distinction here between God the Father and “the Word.” The Word of God is not simply an idea, or a principle, or a message from the ether. He is a person. But as well as being “with” God, the Word of God “was” God. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God” (my emphasis). God the Son—the Word—is united to God the Father in oneness. We aren’t talking about two gods here. No, the Bible makes it clear that there

is one true God, and people came face to face with him in Jesus as he lay in the manger.

It is very easy to domesticate Jesus at Christmastime. The image of a baby in a manger is a tender and vulnerable one. And that's right. It is meant to be. But we must not underestimate or misunderstand this child. The Word of God who came into the world is the eternal Word, the one who was with God at the beginning and the one who is God himself.

The child of Christmas is not feebly crying out for your attention from a manger of straw, longing and hoping that you might notice him. Not at all. He is the eternal God, the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the very Word of God and the embodiment of God's own message to the world.

*

I was at a friend's house recently and he took me on a tour of the workshop in his basement. Let me tell you that if you are someone who likes woodwork, this is a place of wonder and delight. He designed the workshop himself. He built the walls and the workbenches. He sealed the room and set up an air filtration system.

Now, my friend and his wife keep their home to a beautiful standard. You would be hard-pressed to find a speck of dust anywhere upstairs. But the workshop is a separate zone. The workshop is *his* room. And dust and tools and half-finished projects (and the mess that goes with them), well, they are allowed in there. He made the workshop and so he makes the rules.

The opening of John's Gospel makes a simple but profound claim about Jesus Christ: "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." God the Father and God the Son co-operated in the work of creation. God the Son carried out the work of bringing creation into being. And so we have to say that the universe rightfully belongs to Jesus because, like my friend's workshop, it is his creation.

We humans can make things. When we do, we know how to claim them as our own. We make a workshop in the basement—it is our special place. We build a house or a cottage—maybe if we are ambitious, we build something larger—and when we enter the place we have made, we feel a sense of ownership and know our rights.

Jesus entered our world not as a salesman vying for our attention, but as the designer, the owner, the creator, claiming that which belongs to him.

In the marketplace of ideas, where the philosophies and religions of this world shout for our attention, a baby lying in the straw might not seem very impressive. But the gentleness and grace of Jesus must not be mistaken for powerlessness or irrelevance. He is the mighty creator of all things—of this world, of me, of you.

*

One Saturday morning my family's phone was ringing at a very unsociable hour. I jumped out of bed imagining that it was some kind of emergency. I couldn't think why anyone would call so early on a Saturday. Of course, it turned out to be one of those scam calls, where they try and trick you into giving away personal financial information.

Millions are lost to phone scams each year. You have probably received some of these calls yourself. Someone phones up claiming to be a representative of the bank, asking for information or money from you. We have come

to learn that these calls are fraudulent and that the people at the end of the phone have no claim on us or our money. To be sure, if they were truly representatives from the bank, they would have a rightful claim on our time. But unless they can prove they are legitimate, they have no claim at all.

Jesus Christ calls for more than just a few minutes of our time. He asks us to turn from living for ourselves, and to live for God instead. If we continue reading in John's Gospel, even just the opening few chapters, we see that Jesus calls people to follow him in obedience and faith.

He issues the same call today. But many people view it as little better than a fraudulent bank call—just another scam, just another manipulation.

“What claim does Jesus have on my life?” we say. But to respond in that way means we have not understood the beginning of John's Gospel and the truth that all things were made through Jesus. The world is, if you like, his basement workshop, and you and I are part of his creation. We belong to him. We owe our very existence to him. He is perfectly within his rights to claim us. His call is a legitimate one.

His call is also a profoundly positive one for us. This Christmas, the invitation to you is not simply to be reminded of a baby in a manger, but to meet him. To meet the one who made you and this world, and to whom you owe your very life. To meet the one who brings the light we so desperately need in our lives.

*

It is tragic to say this, but I think we all know it's true: the world is a dark place.

Do not misunderstand me—there is plenty that is good and pleasant in the world. But there is a heavy darkness casting its shadow over all that we experience, even during the Christmas season.

I like to try and keep on top of the news. I have a couple of news outlets that I follow regularly. But it is rarely uplifting to go through the newsfeed in the morning. Sure, there are those occasional rays of light, but mostly it's just different shades of darkness.

Despite the beauty of the creation and the warmth of human relationships, the world is sorely damaged by sin. The Bible tells us that when God created humanity by his Word,

people lived in the light of his presence and experienced his life—a life that would never need to fade or end. But the first humans began to doubt God’s goodness and refused to live under his gracious rule. In response to that, God sent them out of his life-giving presence and into a world now broken and tainted by sin. Because humanity turned against its maker right back in the Garden of Eden, we all now experience the devastating consequences of humanity’s choice to live without reference to God.

We see the implications of this at every turn—in illness, in poverty, in injustice, and in natural disasters. We feel the darkness as we navigate an ethical landscape that has become so confused that, as a society, we can hardly agree anymore on the difference between right and wrong. We feel the darkness as we confront the tragedy of death, which is never far from our experience. All this drives home the reality that we are living in a profoundly broken world. We need God’s light.

*

In Canada, where I live, it is not unusual to find yourself stuck in a snowstorm. I remember driving home one evening when a very dramatic

snow squall came up. The snow was blowing in sideways with a powerful wind for about half an hour. For me it was one of the few occasions when I quite literally could not see the road and could barely see the car in front. It was scary and made driving really quite dangerous. Occasionally as I crawled along, a big truck with powerful headlights would approach from the opposite direction, and its lights would penetrate the blizzard for a moment or two. When I came to an intersection with good street lights shining above, then I could see for a bit, at least while I passed through that place. The only thing that helped with the driving was the intermittent appearance of powerful light, but on my route out of town such lights were few and far between.

The true light of the one and only God has been shining in his creation since the beginning of time. It shines in the natural world that he has made, despite the brokenness of creation. The Bible tells us that the eternal God has made himself known in and through his creation in a general way. But what we discover from reading John's Gospel is that the great, true light—the light of lights that gives light to all people—

has come into the world. He came that first Christmas to give us deeper, brighter knowledge. The light came among us that we might know him, understand him, respond to him, and enjoy the light he brings to our lives.

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,” writes John. When Jesus was born, a bright star marked out the place of his birth. Just as the light of the star shone in the darkness of the night sky that first Christmas, so the light of the Word shines in the darkness of the world. It is by his inextinguishable light that we can truly know our creator and confidently navigate our journey through life.



10 Publishing

10Publishing is committed to publishing quality Christian resources that are biblical, accessible and point people to Jesus.

www.10ofthose.com is our online retail partner selling thousands of quality books at discounted prices.

For information contact: **info@10ofthose.com**
or check out our website: **www.10ofthose.com**