

Christmas is the Word

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own,^[b] and his own people^[c] did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son^[d] from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Christmas is the celebration of one thing: the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is God in the flesh. In all of His glory, God has visited His creation.

All of the gospels discuss the incarnation:

- 1) Matthew shows Jesus came from Abraham through David, and demonstrates that He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament
- 2) Mark shows that Jesus came from Nazareth, showing that Jesus is a servant.
- 3) Luke shows Jesus came from Adam, demonstrating that he is the Perfect Man
- 4) John shows Jesus came from heaven, demonstrating that Jesus is God

John's gospel is unique. 90% of what is in John is not in the synoptic gospels.

Matthew, Mark and Luke give more of an earthly history of Jesus Christ.

In John's account of Jesus, there is:

- Nothing about the birth of Jesus

- Nothing about His early life
- Nothing about His baptism
- Nothing about His temptation
- Nothing about His travels
- There are no parables

John gives a purely heavenly account of Jesus

Some features unique to John's gospel include:

- 1) 7 miracles of Jesus. 6 of them are not in the other gospel accounts
- 2) Jesus's I AM statements
- 3) Testimony witnesses. 4 of them are in the 1st chapter alone.

Why did John write this gospel? He tells us in John 20:31...he wrote it that we "might believe." Believe what? **That Jesus is God in the flesh.**

And that's why we should look at John's gospel account this Christmas.

Now let's look at the text more closely...

Verse 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Throughout scripture there are titles that are given to both Jesus and God:

- Both are called Shepherd
- Both are called Judge
- Both are called the Holy One
- Both are called the 1st and the last.
- Both are called Light
- Both are called the Lord of the Sabbath
- Both are called Savior
- Both are called Mighty God
- Both are called the Lord of Hosts
- Both are called Redeemer
- Both are called the Lord of Glory

- Both are called the Alpha and the Omega

With all of these options, why did John call Him the Word?

The Word is a title given to Jesus that is so rich in meaning.

The Word in Greek is “Logos”

For the Greeks, philosophers thought of the Logos as the reality that was visible in creation. It was a powerful, impersonal force throughout the universe. Logos brought order instead of chaos.

But John tells them that the Logos is a person

For the Jews, “the Word of the Lord” was a revelation from God. It could also be equated with God himself. The Jews could not have imagined God becoming a man.

There was no greater reality of God in the Jewish mind than the fact that God was greater, higher, and holier than a mere man could comprehend and certainly far more transcendent than a man could stand.

Since “The Word” was not used directly for Jesus in other locations, why did John not explain the meaning of “The Word” or “Logos”?

Well, it was a commonly understood term to both the Jews and the Gentiles. No explanation would have been necessary.

Theologian Leon Morris said:

“John was using a term which, with various shades of meaning was in common use everywhere. He could reckon all men catching his essential meaning.”

Thus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John is saying,

“For centuries you’ve been talking, thinking and writing about The Word or Logos. Now I will tell you who He is.

John says, “In the beginning was the Word...”

In other words, when the beginning began, the Word was already there.

The Word was self-existent. Nothing created the Word.

Stated another way, The Word already existed at creation. The Greek is *eimi* (i-mee). It is the *imperfect tense* in Greek, meaning that it is happening continuously. **Thus, He was always existing.**

This is also seen in John 8:58 when Jesus said, “before Abraham was born, I am.” This is the same Greek verb. He existed before Abraham was born, because he has never NOT existed. This is of course the name God gave Himself to Moses at the burning bush.

When John says that the **Word was with God**, this is a clear reference to the separate personhood of Christ from the Father. This is a reference to the Trinity. He is a separate person from God the Father although they share the same essence.

The Word was God. It doesn't get any clearer than this. The Logos, who is Christ, is God.

And if it isn't clear enough, John states it again in verse 2: **He was in the beginning with God.**

Next, we see that He is the agent of Creation:

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John gives us both negative and position statements about Jesus and creation:

The positive: All things were made through him

The negative: Nothing was made without Him

Jesus was the Creator? Really? Most people probably didn't know that.

Yes, it is clearly stated...and not just here in the gospel of John...

Colossians 1:16

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

Hebrews 1:1-2

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

There it is...3 clear statements that Jesus was the Creator of all things.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The Greek word for life in this verse is not **bios (physical life)**, but **zoe which means spiritual life.**

He is life and He is light. Without Him we are the opposite: **dead and in darkness.**

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

This is a testimony to the fact the devil cannot overpower Jesus or the work of Christ.

Verse 6-8 discuss John the Baptist.

It's important to note that although he is called the Baptist, his witness to Christ was the key. He could have been just as easily called *John the Witness*.

Bible scholar Leon Morris states:

Witness, he writes "does more. It commits a man. If I take my stand in the witness box and testify that such and such is the truth of the matter, I am no longer neutral. I have committed myself. John lets us know that there are those like John the Baptist who have committed themselves by their witness to Christ."

His proclamation that Jesus was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," and his insistence to everyone that he, John, was not the one, but Jesus **was** the one was critical to His testimony.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

This shows how deeply fallen human nature is. The Creator, comes to visit the world He creates, and to visit man, who He made in His image, yet the world does not know Him.

Even worse, as in the parable of the Tenants discusses, the wicked farmers killed the Son of the Vineyard owner ***precisely because they knew Him***, not because they ***didn't*** know him.

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Charles Spurgeon states:

This new birth is something that brings change to the life. "The man is like a watch which has a new mainspring, not a mere face and hands repaired, but new inward machinery, with freshly adjusted works, which act to a different time and tune; and whereas he went wrong before, now he goes right, because he is right within."

And now we get to the Christmas story.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

This is John's most startling statement yet.

These 4 words are all that matter: The Word became flesh.

In the Greek: *Kai ho Logos sarx*

This is why we celebrate Christmas. We don't need a stable and a manger, Shepherds, Joseph, Mary or wise men. They are part of the story, but aren't supernatural.

Immanuel. God with us. That is the story. The Word becomes flesh.

God has come close to us in Christ Jesus. We don't have to struggle to find Him. He came to us. Many think that they need to go here and there to find God, but God came to us.

This revelation would have been absolutely earth shattering to those who heard it—both Greek and Jew.

The Greek gods like Zeus were more like supermen, and they weren't equal with the Logos which was infinite and extended across the universe. They could not have imagined the Logos becoming a man.

The Greek Stoics viewed the gods as being impersonal and detached from the world, and in the Greek mind that was a good thing. The only reason a god would come to earth or engage the earthly realm would be for the purpose of judging or bringing punishment in some way, and it is for this reason that the Greeks were always concerned with "appeasing" the gods and keeping them happy.

The Jews on the other hand, could not have imagined that the holy God would condescend to take on human flesh.

Think of Mt. Sinai, where God told Moses to warn the people to not touch the mountain when he descended on it or they would die.

Think of Isaiah's vision of God in Isaiah 6 where he, a priest and a righteous man, fell on his face and said he was "undone" and a man of "unclean lips."

In I Chronicles, Uzzah touched the Ark of Covenant to save it from falling when the oxen stumbled, and was instantly killed because God had told the people not to touch the Ark.

The thought of God taking on flesh would have been preposterous.

Even the early church struggled with how to think about Christ. Was He $\frac{1}{2}$ God and $\frac{1}{2}$ man? Was he a mixture of God and man? Was he all God, but just looked like a man? Was he just a holy man given special powers from God?

The early church wrestled with the concept of the Incarnation. The council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. was convened to settle heresies. The conclusion was that Jesus was fully God and fully man and there was “no mixture, confusion, separation or division of the human and the divine.”

And Paul clearly states this in Colossians 2:9 when he proclaims: “For in Christ all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.”

The fact that He dwelt among us could be interpreted as “pitched a tent with us,” or He “tabernacled among us.” The Tabernacle was the tent that the Jew set up in the wilderness that served as the temple.

The Jewish Tabernacle was many things that Jesus is among his people:

- The center of Israel’s camp
- The place where the law of Moses was preserved
- The dwelling place of God
- The place of revelation
- The place where sacrifices were made
- The center of Israel’s worship

Jesus was ALL of these things.

The term to **tabernacle with us** is probably a reference to the Divine Shechinah in the Jewish temple.

Barclay states:

The Shechinah means, “that which dwells and it is the word used for the visible presence of God among men”

Again, for the Jews, this would have been shocking that God would pitch a tent with us:

Consider the description of the incarnation of the Logos and how the Jews might have wrestled with its implications. From the earliest of days, the words of Yahweh would have resonated in the minds of every little Jewish boy and girl, “You cannot see my face, for no man can see me and live” (Exodus 33:20).

In Exodus 25, this God who Moses described as “a consuming fire” in Exodus 24:17 gave instruction to “construct a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell among them,” and this sanctuary was to be built according to the “pattern” from Exodus 25:9, which God, himself would give.

The word dwell or “pitched His tent” does not imply for a brief time. Instead, it is a permanent dwelling. The same word is used in Revelation 21:3:

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

John Piper says it this way:

I think what pitching a tent with us implies is that God wants to be on familiar terms with us. He wants to be close. He wants a lot of interaction. If you come into a community and build a huge palace with a wall around it, it says one thing about your desires to be with the people. But if you pitch a tent in my backyard, you will probably use my bathroom and eat often at my table. This is why God became human. He came to pitch a tent in our human backyard so that we would have a lot of dealings with him.

Next the Apostle John says that “we beheld His glory.”

The word “beheld” is stronger than “saw” and it is used for things that were seen physically, not visions or dreams.

Charles Spurgeon stated:

Beloved, notice here that both these qualities in our Lord are at the full. He is “full of grace.” Who could be more so? In the person of Jesus Christ, the immeasurable grace of God is treasured up.”

Again, John Piper says

“God came to live in a tent so we can watch him more closely. God wants to be seen and known in his Son.”

In His ancient book *On the Incarnation* written in the 4th century, St. Athanasius discusses the Word becoming flesh in this way:

“What then was God to do? What else could He possibly do, being God but renew His Image in mankind, so that through it, men might once more come to know him? And how could this be done save by the coming of the very Image Himself, our Savior Jesus Christ? Men could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in his own Person, because it was He alone the image of the Father, Who could recreate man made after the Image.”

So, what should we meditate on from this portion of scripture?

- 1) The Word became flesh- Out of eternity, God becomes a baby in Bethlehem. The infinite Holy God of the universe and beyond the universe condescends to us.
- 2) The Word dwelt among us- He pitches His tent with us; he grows from a baby to a toddler; he develops as a child and lives through his teen years into adulthood; He learns to be a carpenter; He essentially lives in obscurity for 30 years in Nazareth until John proclaims the beginning of His ministry. Then, he spends 3 years showing us what God is like through words, miracles and a perfect life. He pours into His disciples, dies for His people, rises from the dead and ascends back to His throne.
- 3) He was full of grace and truth- He brought all of His deity with Him and showed us the exact imprint of God’s nature. If you see Jesus you see God.

This Christmas season, when you think of that baby born in Bethlehem, remember it was the Word of God, the Logos, from infinity past who pitched His tent on earth with us for 33 years and paid our debt for us and thus, calls us to repent, turn to Him and serve Him for the rest of lives until we see Him in glory.

