

**12/28/08**

## **John 1 – The Word Became Flesh**

### **Opening Prayer**

Today we are going to be looking at the beginning of John Chapter 1, primarily verses 1-5 and 9-11. So turn with me please to John 1 as I will read the entire prologue of verses 1-18.

**Joh 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**Joh 1:2** He was in the beginning with God.

**Joh 1:3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

**Joh 1:4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

**Joh 1:5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**Joh 1:6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

**Joh 1:7** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

**Joh 1:8** He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

**Joh 1:9** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

**Joh 1:10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

**Joh 1:11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

**Joh 1:12** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

**Joh 1:13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

**Joh 1:14** 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.

**Joh 1:15** (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

**Joh 1:16** And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

**Joh 1:17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

**Joh 1:18** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Just a few days ago we celebrated Christmas. The day on which we remember the coming of Christ Jesus in human form to dwell on this earth nearly 2,000 years ago... born in the tiny town of Bethlehem just as Isaiah had foretold. As one commentator said the infinite became the infant. When we grasp this fact it can be quite humbling and mind-blowing knowledge that the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God would come to us incarnate.

Throughout his life and for the subsequent millennia the world has been grappling with the question of just "Who is Jesus?" and the inevitable consequences to how that question is answered leading to the clash of civilizations, the division of families, and to the salvation of individual people.

### ***Intro to Text – Link to Genesis***

In the prologue of his Gospel account John packs an enormous amount of theological truth. Often times the introduction of a letter or book is somewhat superfluous. It begins to warm the reader up and prepare them for the real 'meat'. John wastes no time though in jumping to deep theological truths about Christ and our faith. John goes right to the heart of who Jesus is. It is amazing today that so many would not

accept what John tells us; however John also goes on to tell us the very reason why they do not accept truth in this passage. So let us start “in the beginning”

**Gen 1:1** In the beginning, ..... God created the heavens and the earth.

**Gen 1:2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

**Gen 1:3** And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

**Gen 1:4** And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

Genesis vs 1-4. Think about those words and what we read earlier in the prologue of John. Do you see the amazing way that John under the guidance of the Holy Spirit has woven the introduction of Christ into a parallel of the original creation account. The very first words of “In the beginning” harken the reader immediately back to creation. The Greek words used in John are in fact the exact translation of the Hebrew from Genesis. Other links include the act of creation, the description of light and darkness, and the parallel between the Word and that God spoke and the world was created.

### ***Properties of ‘The Word’ - Christ***

#### ***vs 1***

So in verse 1 John begins his account of the story of Jesus all the way back... even before there was time. Many a professing Christian might mistakenly think that Jesus simply began his existence in a little manger visualizing perhaps a nativity scene with a little baby in it, but Christ is eternal and always existed being the Creator not the created. Even in Genesis Chapter 1 the Hebrew word for God used is Elohim

(God in the plural not the singular) showing the prescience of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

John introduces Christ to us in an interesting way as “the Word”. There are certainly many titles and names that can be used to refer to Christ. Just think of Isaiah 9 or other places throughout the Bible: Prince of Peace, Wonderful, Magnificent, Counselor, the Son, the Savior, the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, and the list goes on and on. Here in verse 1 of John we have the triple use of “the Word”. Many bible commentators have spent considerable time unpacking the meaning of the Greek word ‘logos’ for “Word”. D.A. Carson and others point out how to the original audience hearing the usage of ‘logos’ had a far deeper meaning than it does to us in which we think of ‘word’ as a few letters put together to form a logical representation of an item. In Greek it encompassed a sense of meaning and purpose. In fact many English words such as logic or the suffix ‘logy’ used in Biology, Geology, etc. come from the word logos. So it is that the original hearer heard this title for Christ and thought not only of written text but also the much deeper thought that this was the person who gave meaning and purpose and logic to all things.

Let us observe in verses 1 and 2 that the text quickly tells us that the Word has three very important properties:

- 1) In the beginning was the Word. It was present since the very beginning  
As we see first Christ was not part of what was ‘Created’ he has been present eternally since the very beginning. A truth doubly stated in vs 1 and 2. Christ simply put always was, always is, always will be.

## 2) The Word Was with God

God the Father and Christ and the Holy Spirit as well are in unity. However, the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit are in fact distinct. This is often reflected in the Trinitarian statement 'Three persons in the Godhead' which is supported by this and other verses.

## 3) The Word Was God

One of the major heresies that the early church had to address and we must even deal with to this day is the denying of the full divinity of Christ. John makes crystal clear here in verse 1 and in other places throughout his writings that Christ was fully God. "and the Word was God."

For those who didn't recognize that "the Word" referred to Christ immediately John underlines this fact later in Vs 14 in which he states the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. So why did John not simply say instead "Jesus" in place of "the Word"? Likely because this verse is designed to show some of the amazing depth that is part of Christ and to provide further allusion to the creation account in Genesis where God "Spoke" and the world was created.

### ***Christ is the Creator and Sustainer***

Not only is Christ God ... he is God the Creator as vs. 3 tells us. Every single thing in this universe was created by him.

*Joh 1:3 'All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.'*

One fundamental truth that we can take from this and other verses is that we are not here by some random happenchance. There is a Creator and a purpose and an order to the universe.

In Colosians 1:16-17 we read further:

**Col 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.

**Col 1:17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

He is our creator and sustainer. We were created from nothing from the Void of Genesis 1:1. The Word - "Spoke" and matter and energy and life in all of its intricacies came into being. I will make a brief aside here to say that many today go out of their way to try to define how life came about by a combination of random chance and time. To describe their theory in a simplistic way it is: take a very, very small percentage of assumed probability and multiply by the necessarily very long amount of time (billions of years) and then somehow you randomly get the amazing complexity of life that we have today. Of course even if you believe in this approach there still is the problematic question of where did all of the matter and energy come from and why is there a universe and space. The Bible explains it much differently. God "Spoke" the "Word" Spoke and everything came to be out of nothing. God provides all order and direction and he holds all things together we are not here by random chance.

It is hard to overstate the full weight of verses 1 through 3. John is

introducing us to the all-powerful Creator of the universe in words that make the reader want to fall down prostrate in reverent awe.

### ***Christ is the Light and Life of the World***

He goes on with powerful language to build on the creation parallel and introduce life and light in versus 4 and 5 to say:

*Joh 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

*Joh 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

As creator and sustainer of the World, Christ brings physical life into the world for all. And from him also is the only source of everlasting spiritual life for those he graciously chooses. Here even we flashback once again to the creation account. In the beginning there was no death there was only life. It was only after the fall that the curse of death entered into the world. But now that Christ has entered the world to conquer death for those who believe in him that we should be able to receive the promise of eternal life and take the punishment we deserve by being a propitiation for our sin.

Light and darkness are used as metaphors throughout the Bible and especially in John of good and evil. Later in John 8:12 Jesus says **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”**

This light shines in the darkness of this world. We look around and perhaps do not realize at first the extent of the darkness that is around us. We see our friends and neighbors and co-workers each day living and working and eating and many even ‘enjoying life’. Yet the word of

God tells us their true predicament. They may walk in physical light but they are in spiritual darkness. They think they are healthy and alive yet the Bible tells us that they are spiritually dead and need to be 'born again' a concept that they of their own power cannot grasp.

The end of verse 5 in the ESV version says that the darkness has not overcome it (the light). John Piper points out that the Greek word *kat-al-am-ban'-o* which is translated as 'overcome' in ESV is translated often as 'understood' or 'comprehend' as it is in the King James Version. It is likely that John intended the full weight of both meanings of the Greek that the darkness will certainly not be able to overcome the light and also that the darkness simply cannot comprehend the light.

We can certainly see both concepts illustrated throughout John's Gospel. I think of when Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 that he must be "Born Again" and Nicodemus in bewildered response was "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Nicodemus thinking of the physical birth and not the spiritual was unable to comprehend the deeper meaning of Christ's saying and as another example of lack of comprehension perhaps in John 6 when Jesus tells the crowds he is the bread of life and that whoever eats his flesh or drinks his blood will have eternal life. It was certainly only those that God chooses to give the light of wisdom too that can understand Jesus here. Also on a more 'conquering' over darkness motif it is Christ who emerges from Tomb who claims the victory over death – the ultimate darkness – and shows the superiority of light. So perhaps the best translation might be that "the light shines in the darkness and that the darkness has not comprehended or overcome it".

Verses 6, 7 and 8 in the prologue introduce us to John the Baptist and the witness he bore about the light -- Christ. I shall not go into a description of the witness of John the Baptist but instead continue on in verse 9 with description of the light.

**Joh 1:9** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

**Joh 1:10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

So how could this be? How can the Creator of all things not be known by those things but instead be rejected by them? Remember the Pharisees the very people who on the surface were trying so hard to keep the Law and who were the most 'Jewish of the Jew'. What was their reaction to Christ? Of all people they should have been the ones who joyously welcomed Christ their Messiah into the world. Surely they welcomed him? Sadly, no instead so blind were they that they were his harshest critics and eagerly sought to have him killed. Why?

Simply put in our unregenerate, natural state our hearts are dark and eyes are blind. We don't love or want the light we are like little bugs that scurry from the light and try and hide from it. Worse we are at enmity with the light and even try to kill it if we can. It is only when Christ gives us new hearts and eyes that we can love and desire the light.

### ***Plato's Allegory – 'Christian Edition'***

I don't remember much from high school English but one thing I do remember some of is the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's Republic. A very simple description of this would be a scene in which several people are chained to the floor in a cave and always have been that way. They

are looking at the back of the cave wall in front of them and unable to turn their heads. Toward the back is an entrance of the cave and passing between it and the light are people and things whose shadows get reflected on the wall that the chained people see. To those people chained to the floor of the cave the only reality they ever knew was those shadows on the wall. They have no comprehension of the wonderful world that exists outside of the cave.

Let me restate this allegory from a Christian understanding and say that those people in the cave are everyone in the world but they do not have physical chains keeping them down but instead are sitting there because that is what they desire. If they wanted too they could get up and run to the light. The problem is that they don't want too ... it is not their desire. In fact one time when the true light even came into sit amongst them they were so enraged that they tried to put it out they took their blankets or things around them and did their best to kill it. If they stay there in that Cave they will surely die that is for certain. There is one escape and that is outside the cave in the light where the free gift of eternal life awaits. All that they need to do is get up and go to the light but they don't they just sit in the cave enjoying the shadows on the wall and reveling in the darkness. Why? Because they can't even grasp the light and to them reality is the shadows on the wall. It is only when Christ changes the hearts and desires of those he chooses that they realize the lie in which they live and those changed immediately turn to him and head toward the light and in so doing gain truth and eternal life.

So why is it that Man does not like the light? Later in the book John tells us in chapter 3 verses 19-20 one reason why no one in the natural state likes the light John says:

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

Our dark hearts love evil and out of them flow evil acts. We can even try to setup whole systems of rules that we can achieve and make us look 'good' – while still living in our natural state. When the light comes into the world it exposes the true wickedness of our ways and leaves no one without excuse. It cuts right to the bone and marrow of man and that can be painful. People especially in this day and age much prefer to live in a context of 'blissful ignorance' to do their best individually and societally to simply not ever have to be exposed to the light – the truth. Some may even try to make the outrageous claim that God is not entirely good but perhaps some Mercurial being in nature with a sifting inconsistent or bad personality. They believe that if God does not accept people for exactly as they are and behave he therefore must be wrong. Truth and light to them simply shift to their specific needs and desires. But we as believers know that this is not that case, reality and truth are defined by God. Our God is constant and true, in God and Christ there is no darkness at all it is only pure light and goodness as 1 John 1:5 tells us.

The Physical realities of light and darkness are powerful images that they help point to the spiritual truth that lies behind them. Living in the city in an age of electricity and constant light it may be hard to grasp just what true physical darkness is. There is always light around us. There is one other analogy I will use to demonstrate the darkness. I go bowfishing sometimes when I am down at Stacey's parents' house in

rural Florida. We go out at night on the flats of the gulf... in a very desolate/marshy area. When the night is overcast the only real light that you have are the lights on their little bass boat. For bowfishing you have a noisy generator on the boat powering very bright lights all around the perimeter of the boat and you troll along different oyster reefs. The lights are pointing down into the water you stand on side /of the boat looking down for large fish to shoot at. From a distance I am sure we appear as an immense light piercing through the darkness of the Gulf. As you are standing there you are waiting for the boat to slowly move forward and for the light to illuminate a new area of the water. When it does you can see down to the bottom and see everything that is there. One minute an area of water is dark and the next it is lit up and you see sand, rocks, crabs, little fish, big fish, eels, string rays, shells, grass. It is the exact same area and it looks totally different – one time it is dark and you can't see the truth of the situation the next it is light and a totally new world of reality is shown. Now some fish dart away as soon as the light hits them others just sit there and others seems to like it and swim after it. One night several dolphins even swam very nearby and seemed quite curious as what this new thing was on the water. Now every so often the generator powering the lights runs out of gas and cuts off. Immediately all the lights go dark and it gets completely quiet. When it is overcast with no moon or star light you are immersed in near total darkness which seems to almost suffocate all life, your eyes quickly scan the horizon trying to find some light some landmark to tell you where you are. You suddenly go from being the hunter to getting the feeling of being very alone and very insignificant – a tiny little speck on the ocean.

Likewise Christ illuminates this world (vs 9) but not all people want that in fact many are like the fish that flee from the lights of the boat. Many of those we know simply don't like the truth and light that we bring and they want nothing to do with it or us. Certainly one way to kill many a conversation is to simply start talking about Jesus you can immediately see a certain discomfort in most people as soon as you do that. Sometimes the darkness can be thick and we can be surrounded by dense fog just like on a boat on the ocean. You can almost feel darkness on you. However, light can burn off any fog and pierce even the thickest night. We are called to be lights on this earth. We are very much like the little fishing boat out there on the dark water and even called to be fishers of men. Fortunately, for us our success is not dependent on how good our aim is with a bow and arrow but is already guaranteed by Christ that those whom he calls will come. He has granted us the amazing privilege of being his instruments to shine forth the light of Christ onto others around us wherever we go that they might know him.

### ***Why Desire the Light?***

So as one last point let me ask the question why do we want to be in the 'light' why do we want to know Christ?

On one level the answer is simply.... That is what we desire. When we are born again we desire to know Christ. We do not want to live in the cave and watch shadows or swim in the darkness. On another level there is the question of what is the end result of being in the light.

**Verse 12 tells us that:** "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,"

So one thing that comes from living in the light is being 'Children of God'. Well that sounds nice but what does it mean to be 'children of God'?

In essence it is to be able to begin to truly live life. Be set free as in **Rom 8:32: you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.** And of course eternal life as in **John 3:16 that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** What is it that we so long for in this eternal life? The answer is that our ultimate prize is truly Christ himself. To be able to savor Christ for all Eternity to be able to worship him fully and partake of him in all his amazing glory in pure light 24x7 x infinity with no hint of night or darkness ever. To be able to bow down and sing praises with tens of thousands of others feasting together in the direct presence of God. This is our ultimate prize that we seek.

### ***Closing***

Let me close in this last thought. one of the famous Christmas songs that is often sung is "What Child is this?" What is your answer to that question? Has God worked in your heart? Have you been moved to see the light and truth of Christ? Do not waste a moment then. Repent and receive your Savior run toward the light and out of the cave of ignorance. Seek to know him more and learn of his amazing ways. Immerse yourself in the body of Christ the church. Talk with your brothers and sisters in the church family and ponder all of the truths of the faith. Worship God in fullness and truth!

For those of you who are saved... I exhort you to 'walk in the light'. Do not be numb to the power of the Word but have a passion to savor

your Savior and to let the light of God shine brightly through you to those around you. Be like the boat out on the open ocean with your lights burning brightly and illuminating the dark sea around you. Remember when your lights are on it can cause quite the reaction some will dart away and there may be pain the light causes but others might be drawn towards the light and some others might even be curious to learn more or watch from a distance. We must let our lights shine and not veil it. Far too many of us veil our lights at work, at school, to our neighbors, and even within our families and homes. Christ came as a baby to this world 2,000 years ago to start a divine rescue mission which was planned from the foundation of the world. The outcome is already 100% guaranteed a success that all those whom are his people will be completely and effectively saved. Let us then joyously take part in this unfolding story for which we have been graciously and amazingly given the opportunity to participate as Sons of God.