



# Christmas in John

## John 1:1-18

1. Jesus Before Time
2. Jesus Enters Time
3. Jesus in His Time
4. Jesus in Our Time

During this Christmas season, I'm trying to follow the advice of Kevin DeYoung, who wrote an article entitled, "Pastor, Don't Get Cute This Christmas." He encouraged pastors not to preach with props, not to preach with video clips, and not to preach with the cool Star Wars tie-in. Instead, he said, "Don't worry about preaching the same truths and the same themes. They don't remember last year's sermon anyway. Go ahead and tell them the old, old story one more time."

DeYoung said that we don't need to preach against the evils of shopping, or against the dangers of busyness. He said that we don't need clever cliches, nor long diatribes about niche Christmas theology. He said that those coming to our Christmas services are struggling saints, and weary souls, and wayward sinners, and stragglers who have ventured into church for the first time in a long time.

He said, "They need to hear about Jesus, about the Word made flesh, about the only begotten Son sent from the Father, about the one who fulfilled ancient prophecy, about the one who came to save his people from their sins." He said, "Don't be cute or clever. Just preach Christ. Your people will be glad you did. And looking back years later, so will you." [\[1\]](#)

So, this is our plan during this Christmas season. I just want to tell you the Old, Old Story, Of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, Of Jesus and His love. Because, I know something about the Old, Old story. I know that those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.

Last week, we looked at "Christmas in Matthew," looking at Matthew chapter 1. This morning, we will be looking at "Christmas in John," looking at John, chapter 1. So if you haven't opened your Bibles yet, I encourage you to open them to John, chapter 1. The title of my message this morning is, "Christmas in John."

We are actually going to be looking at the first 18 verses in this gospel, considering themes from this passage.

### John 1:1-18

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. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 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. (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.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

These 18 verses have a name. They are called, "John's Prologue." These 18 verses set up his entire gospel. They are masterful in the way that they weave themes together, pertaining to the entire gospel of John. They aren't quite chronological. John the Baptist enters the scene bearing witness about Jesus, long before Jesus is mentioned as coming in the flesh. Further, the rejection of Jesus is mentioned before he comes into the flesh.

As such, my outline this morning won't be a strict verse by verse outline, following the flow of the passage. Rather, my outline will follow the flow of time. So let's begin where verse 1 begins in time.

### John 1:1

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

## 1. Jesus Before Time

That's what verse 1 is referring to. It's Jesus before the world began. "In the beginning" has reference back to the very first verse in all of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). And when God created the heavens and the earth, Jesus,

"the Word" was already there. In the beginning "was" the word. That is, when the beginning began, the Word already was.

John 1:2

He was in the beginning with God.

This is two-thirds of the Trinity. Jesus was with God. To add some theology, we could add the Holy Spirit as well. The three persons of the god-head, in perfect harmony, in perfect happiness, in perfect unity, in perfect love, and in perfect glory.

Later, when Jesus was with his disciples, shortly before his death, he prayed to his heavenly Father, "Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:5). In that same prayer, Jesus speaking of his disciples prayed, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

By the way, the Jehovah Witnesses here may come to your door, and try to persuade you with some fancy Greek, that the Word here isn't God Almighty. Rather, the Word here is "a god." That is, a (small "g") "god." Furthermore, they will tell you that this "Word" was the first created being. These things are simply not the case. Jesus was "before time" with the Father and the Spirit, before anything was created. You can see this in verse 3.

John 1:3

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

The simple question is this: was Jesus, the word, a created thing? Or was Jesus, the word, the creator?

"All things were made through him." Jesus is the creator of all things. To clarify further, John writes, "and without him was not any thing made that was made. John goes to great extent to show that Jesus was not a created thing. All things were created through Jesus.

And this is where Christmas begins. Last week, when we looked at Matthew, chapter 1, and the genealogy which begins the chapter, I told you that Christmas begins with the genealogy. Christmas begins with Abraham, because Abraham was the father of the Jews, and Jesus was a Jew, who came to save his people. That's true, from an earthly sense.

But here in John, we see the heavenly sense of where Christmas begins. Christmas begins "before time," in eternity past, long before anything was created. In that time, we know that there was a discussion amongst the Godhead. The discussion was about the salvation. There was a discussion about how Jesus would come to save us. This is the discussion that Paul alludes to in Ephesians 1. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will" (Ephesians 1:3-5). There was a discussion about who and how Jesus would save us. And the salvation comes through Christmas, which we see with our second point.

## 2. Jesus Enters Time

We skip down to verse 14,

John 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.

This is why we know that the "Word" in verse 1 is talking about Jesus, because Jesus is the one who "became flesh and dwelt among us." This verse is literally packed with meaning. It pulls us from eternity past with Jesus dwelling with the father. It brings us into time, as Jesus becomes flesh as a baby in a manger. It brings us through his life of what we see in Jesus. We see this grace and his truth.

When it says "the Word became flesh," this is where we get the word, "Incarnation." "Carne" means "flesh" or "meat." We eat "Chili Con Carne," that is, chili with meat. "Incarnation" means "in-meat" "in-fleshment," and this is what Christmas is all about. When God took on human flesh. When God "dwelt among us."

The picture that John gives us is that of a tent. Jesus "pitched his tent" among us. That's the word here translated, "dwelt." Jesus took up temporary residence with us and lived with us. That's the idea of a tent. It is temporary, and you can pitch it quickly. You can take it up quickly, carry it on your back to another location, and set it up wherever you want. That's what Jesus did. He "dwelt" among us. He "pitched his tent" and lived among us.

If you are looking to understand this in some small way, you might think about my weekend. As I told you before, I spent it in the jail, ministering to the inmates there. While in the pod, there was a language used to talk about those of us who came in to minister. We were called, "Outsiders." We were called "Those from the outside." There were some activities that we did, where "outsiders" were instructed to sit in this area, while the inmates participated in an activity. That's who we were during our time in the jail. We were "outsiders." Just like Jesus who came into this world and dwelt among us. He was "from the outside."

And like Jesus, we came to dwell among them for a season. We came into the jail to dwell among them for a weekend. Our stay was temporary. But it was real. We talked with them. We listened to them. We hugged them. We prayed with them. We laughed with them. We ate with them. We experienced almost everything that they experienced, with the exception of sleeping the night since we came home every evening.

But that's a picture of Jesus, entering into a foreign place to live and dwell with us. That's exactly what Jesus did when he came at Christmas.

Jesus walked with us. He had legs. He had feet. When he walked, his feet became dirty and dusty. They needed cleaning. I trust you remember the tender scene in the 13th chapter of John, when Jesus took up the apron of a slave and cleaned the feet of his disciples. He cleaned them because they were filthy! The feet of Jesus got filthy as well! Jesus didn't float on the air. His feet were on terra-firma. To get from one place to another, he didn't fly, he didn't float. He walked.

Jesus also talked with us. This may seem obvious, but really, it's incredible that God spoke with us. He listened. He responded. He questioned. He commanded. You might say it this way, Jesus was "one of the guys."

Further, Jesus entered into the human experience in every way. He felt the joy of the wedding at Cana (John 2). He felt the fatigue of a long journey, needing to sit down by a well for refreshment (John 4). He felt the pain of betrayal and misunderstanding. He wept at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35). He knew what it was to die, suffering for us on the cross. Ultimately, that's why he came.

When considering his upcoming death, he said, "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name" (John 12:27-28).

Jesus came to be with us, to die for us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This is the whole reason why he came into the world! He came to die for our sins, that we might have eternal life, and enjoy fellowship with God. Jesus died because he was rejected in his life. This leads to my third point.

### 3. Jesus in His Time

In verse 4, we read of the reality of Jesus coming into the world.

John 1:4

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

In other words, the very creator of the world, came into the world as light, which shines in our dark world, to give us life. The light was there to see. And thus, the life was there to be had. In his time, Jesus was the light. Of any metaphors to use to describe the time when Jesus walked on the earth, I cannot think of one better than this, that Jesus was the light of men. Jesus came to shine in the darkness.

John 1:5

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

Though many tried to suppress Jesus and defeat him and overcome him, Jesus prevailed. The light of life shined bright! Jesus in his time was light! John's prologue continues to extend this metaphor of Jesus being the light.

John 1:6

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

This is talking about John the Baptist, the forerunner to Jesus. The one given to prepare the way.

John 1:7-8

He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John the Baptist was not the light. John the Baptist was a flashlight. He sought to shine his light on light! That people might see the light, and believe in the light. Because, the light was the true light! as he is identified in verse 9.

John 1:9

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

This was Jesus in his time on the earth. He was a light. Jesus shined the light on Nicodemus, who came to him at night (John 3). Jesus shined the light on the woman at the well, identifying himself as the Messiah (John 4). He shined the light on all those he healed. He shined the light on the thousands that he fed! He shined the light on the religious corruption of the day. He shined the light on the path to God!

He said in "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). In his time, Jesus shined for all the world to see!

The sad reality is that in his time, he was hated and rejected. We see this in verse 10 of the prologue:

John 1:10

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. How sad it is that the creator of the universe, the one who made the world, stepped into his creation, and the world did not know him.

This was Jesus in His Time. He was rejected. Yet, he was not rejected by all. Look at verses 12 and 13.

John 1:12-13

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

There were those who received Jesus. There were those who believed in his name. John the Baptist knew that Jesus came. He pointed him out, telling all, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The woman at the well, received Jesus and

believed. The Samaritans in the town where she lived believed (John 4:39). The disciples believed in Jesus. The man who was healed of his blindness believed in Jesus (John 9). Mary, Martha, and Lazarus believed in Jesus (John 11).

The result of believing is the right to be called one of God's children. This is the result of Christmas! That we could be one of his children! What an amazing thing! Can you grasp it?

John tried to. In his first epistle, he wrote, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1) See! Behold! Look! Fathom! We can be his child because he became a child! Now, we have drifted into our fourth point.

#### 4. Jesus in Our Time

What was true in the time of Jesus is also true in our time as well. This Christmas, we can receive Jesus. We can believe in him. We can become his child. When John wrote his gospel, he wrote it for us!

He said, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; John 20:31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). This brings us back to the prologue. We can believe! We can have life in his name! Jesus today gives life! He gives life because of the things that we see.

##### John 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.

There are three words that I want to focus upon from the prologue: Glory, Grace, and Truth. That's how we become a child of God. Through his grace and truth.

#### GLORY

Jesus showed his glory in his miracles in the book of John. Here are the miracles that he did:

1. Good Wine (2:1-11) – Changing water into wine
2. Fever Gone (4:46-54) – Healing the Official's son
3. Fresh Legs (5:1-18) – Healing the Lame man at the pool of Bethesda
4. Free Lunch (6:1-14) – Feeding 5,000
5. Wet Walk (6:16-21) – Walking on water
6. Opened Eyes (9:1-41) – Blind man given sight
7. New Life (11:1-54) – Lazarus raised from the dead
8. Raised Up (20:1-29)

These signs are for us! John wrote of these signs (miracles) to show us that Jesus is the Christ! This baby of Christmas!

Through the rest of the Prologue John speaks about grace and truth.

##### John 1:15-18

(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.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

#### GRACE

What is grace? Grace is Jesus, the baby, coming in the flesh. We didn't earn Jesus coming among us. We didn't earn that God would come as a baby to save us for our sins, it was grace.

Consider the woman at the well is a picture the grace of Jesus. After everyone left her, he said, "Neither do I condemn you" (John 8:11). That's grace.

Jesus shows his grace when he called himself "the good shepherd." The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). That's grace, that we have a good shepherd that he would give himself for us. Ultimately Jesus gives us eternal life by his grace.

Jesus speaks about being shepherd when he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). There is God's grace to us. He gives us life, puts us in his hand and we will not be snatched away.

#### TRUTH

Jesus is full of grace and truth as we see at the end of verse 14. We see grace upon grace in verse 16. The law was given through Moses which condemns, but grace comes through Jesus which saves. Grace and truth even come through Jesus Christ. We're not saved by mushy feelings, we're saved by the truth. We're saved by those things which are true, which is why we read and study and cherish the word of God, the truth.

But, truth often brings conflict. If you read the Gospel of John, he had conflict. It's in chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. In fact Jesus has conflict in almost

every chapter of the book of John. He has conflict with the Pharisees because he's bringing the truth and they're bringing the falsehood.

As Jesus was speaking these things, some people were believing what he was saying. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31). Here's the reality of life with Christ. If you abide in him, you are his disciple. If you do not abide in him, you are not his disciple.

Jesus even speaks about truth. He says "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Jesus says "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). We come through him! He is full of grace and truth.

## GRACE AND TRUTH

Some people are "truth people." They are always interested in getting things right, at the cost of showing grace. Others are "grace people." They want peace, so they are willing to sacrifice truth for sake of showing grace. However in Jesus, he perfectly combined these two things. Randy Alcorn points this out.

Jesus is full of two things: grace and truth. Not 'full of patience, wisdom, beauty, compassion, and creativity.' In the list there are no commas and only one conjunction--grace and truth. Scripture distills Christ's attributes into a two-point checklist of Christlikeness. The baby born in a Bethlehem barn was Creator of the universe. He pitched His tent on the humble camping ground of our little planet. God's glory no longer dwelt in a temple of wood and stone, but in Christ. People had only to look at Jesus to see what God is like. [2]

This is Jesus. He showed God's glory. He perfectly balanced grace and truth.

Further, when Jesus was in the flesh, he showed us what God is like.

### John 1:18

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

We haven't seen God. But, we have seen God the Son. And God the Son makes known the Father. That's what Christmas is about, is making known the Father. His love us to come and be our Emmanuel, our God with Us.

The thing that overwhelmed those in the jail was our sacrifice and our outpouring of love. We are giving them cookies and letters, which they are loving. We are spending time praying for them, and they are overwhelmed by us spending three days of our lives with them. That's what God has done with us. He has come into the flesh to dwell among us, to save us, and rescue us.

Jesus makes God known. He is the light. Read what he says, believe and trust what he says. He is the light who will give us the life.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 17, 2023 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

---

[1] <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/pastor-dont-get-cute-christmas>.

[2] Randy Alcorn, *The Grace and Truth Paradox* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 13-14.