

The Word Became Flesh

John 1:1-18

For this Christmas Season, we have read through the Gospel of John for our *Scripture Reading Plan*. The Word of God is alive and active (Hebrews 4:12). I pray that you experienced the presence and reality of God as you spent time in the Word of God this Christmas season.

John's Gospel is powerful, and his Christmas Story is amazing. It is dense and deep. The Gospel of John begins before the beginning, with God himself.

Let's read John 1:1-18 in the NIV, then in the Message Paraphrase.

John 1:1-18 (NIV): In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 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.

15 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.'" 16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known (John 1:1-18 NIV).

John 1:1-18 (MSG):

*1 The Word was first,
the Word present to God,
God present to the Word.
The Word was God,
in readiness for God from day one.*

*3–5 Everything was created through him;
nothing—not one thing!—
came into being without him.
What came into existence was Life,
and the Life was Light to live by.
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness;
the darkness couldn't put it out.*

*6–8 There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the
way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe
in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.*

*9–13 The Life-Light was the real thing:
Every person entering Life
he brings into Light.
He was in the world,
the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.
He came to his own people,
but they didn't want him.
But whoever did want him,
who believed he was who he claimed
and would do what he said,
He made to be their true selves,
their child-of-God selves.
These are the God-begotten,
not blood-begotten,
not flesh-begotten,
not sex-begotten.*

*14 The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,*

*like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.*

15 John pointed him out and called, "This is the One! The One I told you was coming after me but in fact was ahead of me. He has always been ahead of me, has always had the first word."

16–18 We all live off his generous bounty,
gift after gift after gift.
We got the basics from Moses,
and then this exuberant giving and receiving,
This endless knowing and understanding—
all this came through Jesus, the Messiah.
No one has ever seen God,
not so much as a glimpse.
This one-of-a-kind God-Expression,
who exists at the very heart of the Father,
has made him plain as day (John 1:1-18 MSG).

In the beginning (John 1:1).

1. With that phrase, every Bible reader would think at once of the start of Genesis.
2. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' Whatever else John is going to tell us, he wants us to see his book as the story of God and the world, not just the story of one character in one place and time. This book is about the creator God acting in a new way within his much-loved creation. It is about the way in which the long story which began in Genesis reached the climax the creator had always intended. And it will do this through 'the Word.' In Genesis 1, the climax is the creation of humans, made in God's image. In John 1, the climax is the arrival of a human being, the Word become 'flesh.' (NT Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10*, p. 3.)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.

1. Before creation, there was God, who has no beginning and no ending.
2. The Word (Jesus Christ is named in John 1:17) is with God the Father from before time and at the creation of the world.
3. The Word was not only with God, the Word was God.

4. The nature of a word is to communicate, to reveal. Jesus is the revelation of God so that God might make himself known and so what we might know God.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

1. John wants us to know about this Word, Jesus Christ.
2. He is the creator of all things (1:3).
3. He is the source of life; he is the Life-giver (1:4).
4. He is the light of people (1:4) and the light of the world (John 9:5); he is the Light-giver.
5. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot conquer it, overshadow it, or understand it (control) (1:5).

6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

1. John the Baptist was sent from God (1:6). In other words, he was one of God's creations, distinct from the uncreated One.
2. John's job was to testify about the light, to help people believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (1:7).
3. John was not the light; rather, he gave witness to the light (1:8).
4. Jesus is the true light who gives light to every person (1:9). No one is without excuse. Everyone has an opportunity to know God through Jesus Christ. That is a mystery and a reality.
 - a. Illustration: The Inuit people of the Arctic Circle. They didn't know Jesus' name, but they were followers of Jesus and were so grateful when missionaries came and told them the name of their God.

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born [begotten] of God.

1. Even though Jesus came to this world, and even though he made this world and everything in it, the world did not recognize him (1:10).
2. As a matter of fact, his own people, who should have recognized him, actually rejected Jesus (1:11).
3. But there is good news: to all who receive Jesus, to anyone who believes in who he is (name = who a person is, not just a handle), Jesus gives the right to become a part of God's family (1:12).
 - a. Remember, Biblical belief is not an intellectual assent, like 2+2=4.
 - b. It is a commitment to act on what one believes.
4. Being a part of God's family is a received gift from God, not by blood-line, not by human will or achievement, and not by human sexuality (1:13).
 - a. *...who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13 ESV).*
 - b. ... it seems more likely that these expressions represent three patterns by which human beings try to gain the acceptance of God. How often have non-Christians or nominal Christians made the point that some distant relative was a minister [or Christian] as though that blood connection would gain them points with God. The same could be said of those who think human comparisons will help them gain acceptance with God by showing that they are not really so bad after all, or that by human calculations, like the minute tithing of the Pharisees (Matt 23:23), God's scales should be weighted in their favor. To be begotten (egennēthēsan) of God or to have a new origin (ek) from God is the result of God's gift of life made possible to those who have received the Logos (John 1:12), and certainly it does not come as the result of (1) human relationship, (2) achievement, or (3) determination (1:13). (Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), p. 118.)

14 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.

1. One the central themes of the Biblical Story, from Genesis to Revelation, is **God abiding and dwelling with his people** (Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 24:7, 32:38; Ezekiel 37:23, 27; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 8:10; Revelation 21:3).
 - a. *I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people (Leviticus 26:11-12).*
 - b. *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3).*

2. **In the Garden**, God walked with man and woman (Genesis 3:8).
 - a. *...the Lord God was walking in the Garden in the cool of the day... (Genesis 3:8).*
3. In the wilderness, **the Tabernacle** was a place of encounter with the Living God as God dwelt with his people who left Egypt for the promised land (Exodus 25:8-9).
 - a. *Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. 9 Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you (Exodus 25:8–9).*
4. **Jesus came and tabernacled** (dwelt) with us (John 1:14 MSG).
 - a. *The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood (John 1:14 MSG).*
 - b. In the incarnation of Jesus, God took on flesh; Spirit and matter come together in Jesus.
5. **Now, God abides in every follower of Jesus as our individual bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:19).
 - a. *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).*
 - b. Now, God takes up residence in each of us. We do not become God; rather, we become individuals who are meant to *be filled up to the full measure of all the fullness of God* (Ephesians 3:19; 4:13).
6. **Now, God is building us together corporately to become his dwelling in the earth** (Ephesians 2:19-22).
 - a. *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:19–22).*
 - b. *... you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house... (1 Peter 2:5).*
 - i. God comes to make his home in us corporately.
7. The other major theme of John's Gospel is this: **if you want to know who the true God is, then, look long and hard at Jesus** (John 1:14).

15 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.' " 16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was

given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known (John 1:1-18 NIV).

1. This passage teaches us that “when God sends the Word into the world, the world pretends it doesn’t recognize him. Indeed, when he sends the Word specifically to Israel, the chosen people don’t recognize him. This is the central problem which dominates the whole gospel story. Jesus comes to God’s people, and God’s people do what the rest of the world do: they prefer darkness to light. That is why fresh grace is needed, on top of the grace already given (verse 16): the law, given by Moses, points in the right direction, but, like Moses himself, it doesn’t take us to the promised land. For that, you need the grace and truth that come through Jesus the Messiah, the son of God.” (NT Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10*), p. 5.)
2. **Jesus comes full of grace and truth** (1:17). If you have only heard the truth, you have heard only half of the story.
3. Jesus comes to make God the Father known to us (1:18).
4. The mention of the Father and the stress on the uniqueness of Jesus reminds the reader of the opening verse of the Prologue. This discussion has thus come full circle, and in doing so it presents a tightly constructed, complex introductory theological rationale for reading this Gospel. But reading is not to be merely an intellectual exercise. Instead, Jesus’ purpose in coming to the world was to empower people to become children of God (1:12). Likewise the purpose of the incarnate Logos and the purpose of the entire Gospel are one in focus because the Gospel was written to engender believing in this Jesus to the end that readers might experience the transformation of life (20:30–31). (Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), p. 125.)

Invitation:

1. God wants you to know him personally, intimately, and organically through Jesus Christ (John 15:5).
2. Jesus reveals God to us.
3. Jesus showed us how humans were supposed to live in an intimate relationship with God and in total dependence upon the Spirit of God.
4. We are not to cheer Jesus on for how he lived; rather, we are to receive Jesus as Lord of our lives and let God live in and through us in this world.
5. We now embody the Lord in this world by his Spirit who lives in us.
6. We are now a part of the new creation work of God, who has come to redeem, restore, and renew all things to God’s original design.

7. May God be at home in us individually and corporately, may each of us come to all the fullness of God in Christ Jesus, and may the Spirit reveal the life and light of Jesus through us to a world trapped in darkness, doom, and despair.
8. *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written 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).*

Ministry Time: