

“The Truth about Christmas” (John 1:1–13)

This past Monday our family hosted our staff Christmas party. We had a very meaningful time of prayer and sharing. One of the reoccurring themes was how difficult it is to remember the Christ of Christmas. Even as ministry leaders, it's easy to get caught up in shopping for gifts, decorating the house, social gatherings, traveling to see family, and a host of other activities. We've become so busy and stressed with the Christmas hustle and bustle that we've forgotten why we're celebrating Christmas in the first place. If this can be true of your church leadership, I can't help but think that this is true of you as well.

This evening we need to stop for just a moment and reflect on the significance of Christmas. To do that, I'd like to have you turn to John 1. You might wonder, of course, why we're turning to John 1. It's not an account of Jesus' birth, such as we have in the familiar Luke 2. No, but John 1 takes a big picture perspective to begin to unfold the theology of Christmas. In fact, the Church of England reads it annually as the gospel for Christmas Day, and rightly so. Nowhere in the New Testament is the nature and meaning of Jesus' divine Sonship so clearly explained as here.¹ Hence, in John 1, we can learn the truth about Christmas.² In this chapter, we observe three critical perspectives of the coming of Jesus. The first is an eternal view. The second is a view of anticipation. The third is a view of record. We're not going to make a detailed study of John 1, but these brief observations will tell us the truth about Christmas.

1. Jesus has always existed (1:1–5). In the beginning³ 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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. Jesus is eternal. The concept of eternal means never ending and never beginning. The reason that Jesus is eternal is that Jesus is God. These verses declare that Jesus is the logos, the Word. He is not the Word because He spoke the word of God. To the contrary, He spoke the Word of because He Himself is the Word.

Something very significant here is that John 1:1 precedes Genesis 1:1. You have to understand that. Effectively the bible begins now with John 1: 1. This precedes the creation of the heavens and the earth. This brings us back far before the created order itself. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth but this is prior to the beginning when there was simply the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

The Word "WAS" (3 times) Imperfect tense- past action with continuation of result and reality. The WORD was and still is all that HE was and is. The Word was (and still is) IN the beginning. The Word was (and still is) WITH (Pros). The Word was (and still is) GOD

There is a well-known translation problem at the end of 1:1. It could be a definite noun ("the God"), and indefinite noun ("a God"), or a qualitative noun stressing quality, nature, or essence. The last option is to be preferred. John emphasizes that although the person of the Father is not the person of the Son, their essence is identical.

Jesus is also the creator of the universe. We tend to think that this is the Father's task; however, John 1:1 along with several other passages (e.g., Col 1:15–20) make it clear that Jesus was involved in creation as well.

Jesus is also the giver of life and life (4-5).

I can appreciate good photos only from a distance, because I know very little about taking good pictures. I do know, however, that you have to have good light. No matter how carefully design the lands, how quick the shutter, or how steady the hand, or even if you insist on Kodak paper, you cannot get the picture without light. That's the way it is with Jesus! We must have Him, for He is the light! Surely, someone that exclusive and relationship with God deserves to be celebrated!

[A second perspective of Jesus is quite different from the first. It comes primarily from the one we know as John the Baptist. What view does John give us?]

2. Jesus is coming (1:6–8). “There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the Light, but *he came to testify about the Light.*” The amazing thing about John the Baptist is that he never performed a miracle or a sign; he only preached and baptized.⁴ This might seem to contradict the statement that Jesus has always existed. But there is a difference in the Jesus who has always existed in the Jesus who is coming. They are the same person, but the Jesus whom John announces is coming is going to be Jesus in the flesh!

John function was to be a witness. A witness as one who speaks the truth about something. In this case, John spoke the truth about Jesus Christ.

On the school December nights, perhaps you have noticed the brilliance of the moon. You realize, of course, that the light of the moon is not the light of the moon at all; it is the light of the sun. The moon merely reflects the sun's light. We are to reflect the light of Jesus Christ. Like John the Baptist, we are to bear witness

[The heart of John's witness was that “Jesus is coming.” But the heart of our witness is found in our third perspective.]

3. Jesus has come (1:9–13). “There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.” When Jesus came into the world in the flesh, He was the true Light. In 1:10-11, we read some of the saddest verses in the Bible. Jesus life on earth is summarized in these two verses. His own people rejected Him. But had it not been for this truth, all we Gentiles might never have known the Light of the world.

Let's say you arrive home on Christmas Day. You look through the window of the house and there they are: your parents, your brothers and sisters, presence, a Christmas tree, cookies, and even hot chocolate. There's only one problem. No one will let you in there you are with your own family, but they despise you; they hate you; they reject you. Then, they send you away. That's what Jesus faced.

Thankfully, the rejection was not universal. There were those that received Jesus Christ. John writes, “**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,⁵ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**” The word “but” () is one of the most important words in the Bible. Believe appears to be in apposition to receive here in order to explain it.¹⁷ In 1:12 to receive is to welcome or accept as true the person or words of Jesus Christ (3:11, 32-33; 5:43). This is in contrast to those who “did not know” and “did not receive” Jesus as the Christ in 1:10-11. The verb “believe” occurs almost one hundred times.⁶ orn ... of God: This new spiritual birth is not of blood, that is, by physical generation or by parents. Nor is the new birth of the will of the flesh, that is, by personal effort. Neither is the birth of the will of man, that is, something accomplished by human effort. The new birth is the work of God alone. It is a gift to be received (4:10, 14), not a reward achieved by individual effort. The new birth is based on *relationship*

with Christ, not personal *position*. The relationship, however, proceeds from the position of Christ as the mediator. Christ is life (1:4; 14:6). Those who trust Him are born of God, meaning they are given spiritual life.

During this week we will all be opening gifts, many of which we will not need and cannot use. But becoming a child of God is a gift which all of us need and without which we will spend eternity separated from the God who loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to die for us. God forbid that we should fail to receive that gift, and to acknowledge and celebrate the fact that God visited us in the person of Jesus Christ.

1. Don't believe you must do all the things floating around in your mind. Be careful to recognize the difference between things you genuinely must do and those that can wait. The more important thing is that you enjoy the real meaning of Christmas - and the people God has placed in your life, not the surroundings. YOU will help create the very best environment, and memories, by bringing a distraction-free, peaceful self to any event or gathering you're part of. Be in the moment, and forget things that really don't matter. . .
2. Get into the LORD of Christmas. Go to bed a little earlier Thursday night. So Christmas day doesn't sneak up on you, take some time Friday to be alone, with your Bible and God. If you go to bed 15-30 minutes earlier Thursday night, you'll find it easier to arise 15-30 minutes earlier Friday. Here are a few suggested passages to reflect on: Luke 1:26-38, Isaiah 9:6-7, Matthew 1:18-2:23.
3. Slow down and walk. Take a walk during the day, or evening, Friday. I've found that sometimes it's hard to just sit and pray. If I go for a walk, by myself, it helps me focus and pray. Read one of the above passages in advance, perhaps, and pray to the LORD about it during your walk. If you are married, taking a prayer walk together can be an outstanding way to draw you both closer to the LORD and one another.
4. Read one or more of the above passages each night, before you go to sleep. When you wake up, you'll be amazed at how your mind remembers the passage. I've found this technique to be an excellent way to memorize Scripture, too. By reading a passage as the very last thing you do each evening, your subconscious mind gets to work, and you'll find you remember the Bible much better. Be careful, though, this can be habit-forming, and you'll start getting God's word into you in great ways that can change your life. . .
5. Find someone you know who needs some encouragement, and visit or call them (don't use email). God gave us everything in His Son, Jesus. By reaching out to someone in need, you'll be an instrument of God to touch someone in their time of need. Go ahead, it will make their day - and will make your Christmas even better.

Notes

¹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973), 48.

² I received immense help from the late Keith Willhite's sermon, "The Truth About Christmas" in (), 343–48.

³ In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, the phrase in Gen 1:1 is the same as the phrase in the Greek text of John 1:1.

⁴ Bob Deffinbaugh, "What Child is This?" (John 1:1–18) in *The Gospel of Belief*: www.bible.org.

⁵ The phrase "believe in His name" occurs three times in the Gospel of John (1:12; 2:23; 3:18).

⁶ The noun "faith" (*pistis*) does not occur in the book nor does the word "repent" (*metanoeo*).