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JOHN 1:1-18

Millions of people across our land and around the world will celebrate Christmas next week. If you were to ask many of these people what Christmas is, they'd tell you... "Well, of course everybody knows Christmas is the birthday of Jesus."

But, I wonder how many of these same folks really celebrate Christmas as the birth of the King of kings and the Lord of Lords. How many celebrate Christmas as the birth of the Savior of the world.

Many folks just get caught up in the Christmas excitement. For example, Bill and I live between two extremes. On one side of us is a family of Iranians. These people put up Christmas lights in their yard...they put up a tree and I assume they exchange gifts...yet, they aren't even Christians. On the other side of us are the most precious Church of Christ folks. They don't acknowledge Christmas as the birthday of the Lord Jesus, because they don't believe it's Scriptural to regard one day above another. But, they exchange gifts as well...

See, to many people Christmas is just a reason to celebrate. They don't want to be left out and so they get caught up in Christmas to one degree or another but they never stop to reflect upon the Lord Jesus Christ and who He is and what He came to do.

Today, I want us to see what the Apostle John has to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a familiar chapter to all of us, but let's look at it today with the expectation that the Holy Spirit will awaken in all of us the excitement of Christmas and that that excitement will remain with us during this last week before Christmas.

John 1:1...

In this one passage, I want us to see three important things about the Lord Jesus Christ...1) Jesus is eternally God

- 2) Jesus is equally God
- 3) Jesus is essentially God

1) Jesus is eternally God

John was not an educated man. John wouldn't qualify as a **great theologian** today, would he? I mean...he had never been to seminary. He didn't have a couple of degrees behind his name. But, John had something better...John had spent 3 ½ extraordinary years in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John had had many years to reflect upon the time he had spent with Jesus. And his conviction had not changed...John knew beyond a doubt that Jesus was and is God... "In the beginning was the Word..."

At some point, most children ask, "When did the world begin?"

And of course, we know that there are many different views on when the world came into existence.

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Geologists tell us that the earth dates back millions and millions of years. Theologians can't agree...some say the earth is millions of years old, and some say the earth is only thousands of years old, and we're not going to attempt to address that today...

But, what I do want us to understand is that when the world began **Jesus was, has always been and will always be...** Jesus **was** in the beginning...

Jesus **is** in the present...

And Jesus **will be** in the future!

The word "was" in **verse 1** is a very significant word in the Greek. It's not nearly so meaningful in English as it is in the original.

In the original Greek, the word "was" – *used three times in verse 1* – refers to a mode of existence that transcends time.

See, time as we know it is a device God gave us finite human beings so that we can relate to our existence. We are limited by time and space, but God isn't.

I love garden ornaments. My husband had me a granite plaque made several years ago for Christmas. It reads, "Time Began in a Garden". And time for us **did** begin in a garden, didn't it? But time did not begin in a garden for God.

The verb "was" used here takes us into the sphere of the timeless! The One John calls "the Word" belongs to a realm where time as we know doesn't exist.

The Word did not have a beginning...
The Word will never have an ending...
The Word belongs to eternity...

Now, you and I can read about and think about things that happened a century or two ago, or even farther back than that...and we can sort of relate...

But to go back **beyond** the beginning to **no beginning at all**...that is more than we can comprehend, isn't it?

But, John is telling us here that that is exactly where we must begin. We must go back to a time before time. We must think not of a baby that came into existence on that first Christmas day 2,000 years ago....but we must think of Jesus as never having even begun at all...

Now, do we understand this? No! The finite cannot fully understand the infinite!

But, whether we understand it or not...Jesus is eternally God!

Not only is Jesus eternally God, but also

2) Jesus is equally God

verse 1b...

Now, does the Bible say one thing in the Old Testament and something different in the New Testament?

I mean, you and I know Deuteronomy 6:4 says,

"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is **one Lord**..."

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But, the very first sentence in the Bible expressed the idea of plurality in the Godhead...
"In the beginning God (Elohim, a **plural** noun) created (a **singular** verb) the heavens and the earth."

This usage is consistent throughout the Old Testament...
God is referred to in a **plural** form and accompanied
by a **singular** verb.

The idea of a triune God did not begin with the New Testament...It began "in the beginning."
One God...three persons...If we expressed it mathematically, it would not be $1+1+1=3$, but it
would be $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1!!$

**Now, do we understand this? Do we understand the Trinity?
No, the finite mind cannot comprehend and understand the
infinite mind of God!**

Not only is Jesus eternally God and equally God, but

2) Jesus is essentially God

1:1c-2...

According to **Genesis 1:1**, who created the heavens and the earth?

According to **1:1c-2**, who created the heavens and the earth? **JESUS!!**

They are one in essence! They are **essentially** the same! They are **eternally** the same! They
are **equally** the same!

Jesus said, "If you've seen me, you've seen God!"

**Now, do we understand this? No! Because the finite
mind cannot comprehend the infinite mind of God!**

But, we know it's true...and we know for certain that this "Word" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ
because of **verse 14**...Jesus became **flesh** on that first Christmas day, but Jesus didn't **come
into existence** on that first Christmas day!

Well, let's look at what else John tells us about Jesus...

Verses 4-5...

Jesus has the power to communicate **life** and He has the power to communicate **light!**

Before Jesus came into the world to be the Light of the
World, Jesus was communicating the life of the world.
Jesus made God known through creation...
and of all God's creation, life itself shows forth in Jesus...

How can anyone look at life and all that goes with it...every cell, every membrane, every complex
molecule, every strand of DNA and doubt there is a divine Creator behind it all?

How can anyone look at the light He has given and doubt
the Truth He proclaimed?

Well, folks do this every day! Because even though this wonderful light shines in the darkness,
the darkness doesn't comprehend it.

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Oh, there is plenty of darkness in this world we live in. This darkness isn't reserved for the parts of Africa that we often refer to as "dark."

Darkness envelops and enfolds and embraces men of every walk of life... There is the darkness of the **religious mind**, which creates its **own** way to get to God and either completely leaves out or adds to the way Jesus has set before us.

There is the darkness of the **carnal mind**, which is so at enmity against God and openly scoffs at all things sacred.

There is the darkness of the **scientific mind**, which says in one breath that life is extremely complex and in the next breath says that "life is only chemistry" and therefore, there is no reason to believe in God.

There is the darkness of the **super-intellectual** mind that says, "If I can't figure God out...if I can't understand God... if I can't put God in my little box, then I can't believe in Him."

But, God says to man, "There is absolutely no excuse for you to be in darkness."

Verses 6-8...

God sent a man to a dark world to announce that the light was coming...

Let's look first at

1) The Light Revealed

Verse 9...

"...enlightens every man"...every man without distinction...all men have some light. Those who have no written revelation have the light of **creation and conscience**.

God gave the Jews the added light of **covenant and commandment**.

Now God has given the world the light of **Jesus Christ!**

Every person has some light. The Holy Spirit sees to that. God holds people accountable for the light they have. And in our country where there is a church on almost every corner, and Christian TV and Christian bookstores and Christian radio...people are truly without excuse!!

Not only do we see the Light Revealed...but we see

2) The Light Resisted

Verses 10-11...

I believe John never got over the fact that everyone didn't accept Jesus. I believe it grieved John immensely that Jesus was resisted by the world and even by His own...

The Jewish people had been told of His coming for centuries. The prophets had foretold His coming.

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But they killed the prophets, didn't they?

And when He finally came, He wasn't the kind of Messiah the Jews wanted...they wanted a conquering Messiah...one who would deliver them from the oppression of Rome. So they resisted Jesus and ultimately they plotted His death and crucified Him.

The Light that God so lovingly revealed to them was hatefully resisted by them.

He came unto His own and His own received Him not...

But, thank God that wasn't the end of the story. Thank God not every man received Him not.

3) The Light Received

Verses 12-13...

God used a handful of men who **did** receive Jesus to turn the world upside down. See, God had a purpose in His Son being born that first Christmas Day...and God's purposes would not be thwarted. "For God so loved the world..." I wonder sometimes if it never occurs to the unbelieving world that God so loved that our entire calendar is based upon the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here John gives us what we can call the formula for the new birth...

Verse 12...

We must **believe** Him and **receive** Him and then, we'll **become** the sons and daughters of God!

Let's look at these three verbs...

1) I must **believe** in His name.

To believe on His name is to believe in what His name signifies. What does the name JESUS mean? It means "God saves". To believe on the name of Jesus is to believe that He is **my** Savior!

And, of course in order for us to believe He saves us we must first believe we need saving, don't we? I mean I must realize I'm a sinner and I need a Savior and I cannot save myself before I know I need Jesus...

But, that in itself doesn't put me into the family of God.

2) I must **receive** Him...

After I believe in Him, then I must cry out to Him in my desperate sinful condition to be **my** Savior. I must put my faith and my trust in Him!

That is what receiving Him is all about.

I can believe all day long that this chair right here will hold me up, but until I go and sit down in that chair...I haven't truly trusted that chair to do what it was built to do, have I?

And when I do my part, God performs the miracle!

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3) I become His child...

Just like that! I become a child of God! God gives me new life! The Holy Spirit comes and indwells my spirit. I am “birthed” into God’s family and in becoming His child, I receive **all** that Jesus bought for me at Calvary.

Now, that John has told us how we become God’s child, John goes on to tell us how we **didn’t** become God’s child.

13a... “not of blood” – Just because my parents were God’s children doesn’t make me one of God’s children. It’s not **my** blood that makes the difference...it’s **His** blood!

13b... “nor of the will of the flesh” – I may strive to live a very moral life and perform a long list of good deeds, but all the good I will ever do will not make me God’s child. In fact, all my “goodness” may drive me farther away from Him.

13c... “nor of the will of man” – No amount of wishful thinking will make me a child of God. I can sit around and “will” to be God’s child all day long...but I cannot become one that way.

Example: Kim’s, Mary Jane’s, and Dr. Dugarola’s discussion about Dr. Sauter’s death.

Verse 14...

John ignores all the wonderful stories of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ that we find in Matthew and Luke. He simply says,

“That Word...
That Word that was in the beginning...
That Word that was in the beginning with God...
That Word that was in the beginning with God and was God...

That same Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

When any other child is born into this world, it is the creation of a new personality. A new life is created...one that never existed before. But, when Jesus came, He came as One who had existed from all eternity.

He was all man and all God. He was not half man, nor was He half God. He was as much man as if He were not God at all and as much God as if He were not man at all.
And God dwelt among men, folks...
And God’s glory was right there for man to behold!

Can we understand this? Can we understand how God became man? No...finite minds cannot understand the infinite!

Verses 15-17...

We’ve received His fullness and we’ve received His grace... “Grace upon grace...”

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“Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that is greater than all my sin.”

God’s grace...God’s grace upon grace is like Niagara Falls. It never runs dry. It keeps pouring over us. I don’t believe we have a clue as to the magnitude of God’s grace upon grace.

Praise God we’re not under the Law...Praise God we’re under grace!

The Law was impersonal...given on Mt. Sinai by God to
Moses...engraved on cold tablets of stone!

Grace came, wrapped up in the warm, human form of a
and then that grace was poured out
Calvary.

precious little baby
for us in abundance on Mt.

Verse 18...

In the Old Testament, God granted people vision, theophanies, angelic visits.

But, all these fell short of a direct view of God as God.

John repeatedly emphasizes the deity of Christ, the fact that Jesus is God. Yet, here he says equally as emphatically that “no man has seen God at any time.”

Now, if we believe that Jesus is **eternally God** and **equally God** and **essentially God**, as we said when we began...how can we explain how John can say, “no man has seen God at any time?”

John recognized that although Jesus was God, when He came to earth, he deliberately laid aside, not His deity, but those attributes of deity that would be **incompatible** or **inconsistent** with humanity.

For example...Paul says “**God dwells in unapproachable light**”...so if Jesus had come into the world **not only to be God** but also **to have all the attributes of God**...nobody would have been able to approach Him.

In Phillipians 2, Paul said:

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of man. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

So the Lord Jesus was seen as a man even though He was and is God. And as a man “He explained to us God”. Jesus said, “**If you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father...**”

Now, Beloved, do we truly understand this?

Do we understand what we celebrate at Christmas?

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Well, if all we celebrated was a baby's birthday, it wouldn't be so hard to understand, would it?

But, there is oh so much more to be celebrated this Christmas!

Jesus loved you so much that He gave up His royal trappings for a time and became flesh and came to earth to die on a Cross so you could **believe Him** and **receive Him** and **become God's child**. And He did it willingly...He laid down His own life...no man took it from Him.

In becoming God's child, you have the promise of heaven, but you also have in this life grace upon grace

You don't deserve it...

You cannot earn it...

But it's yours anyway...

Do you understand it? I'm so glad I don't have to understand it in order to receive it! My prayer is that because of this grace, your Christmas will be filled with the joy of knowing Jesus and the peace that only He can bring!!