

## God, the Word – In the Flesh

### John 1:1-14

Throughout history there have been events that have defined and shaped and continue to shape society. Some of those events, whether occurring in the past century or even centuries ago, continue to have lasting consequences today and will impact society for decades to come.

Discovery Walks posted an article on 20 Historical Events that Radically Changed the World in which they stated **“The world we live in today entirely depends on historical events that have happened in the past...they all have greatly changed our way of life and most importantly our way of understanding the world we live in.”**

You may or may not agree with their research, but considering the nature of the events, you must agree that they have in some way changed the world. Here are some of the events that have shaped our world.

The slave trade from the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries  
 World War I and World War II  
 The invention of electricity  
 The development of the atomic bomb  
 The Black plague occurring in the 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 The bombing of Pearl Harbor  
 The reign of Adolf Hitler including the holocaust  
 The foundation of the United Nations  
 The colonization of Africa, Asia and the Americas by European powers in Africa, Asia, and the Americas which made changes in culture, language, society and economics of those nations, followed by the decolonization occurring in the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
 The formation of the USSR in 1922 and then the dissolution of the USSR in 1991  
 The fall of the Berlin Wall  
 The invention of the internet  
 The 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States  
 The COVID outbreak  
 The establishment of Maoist China

But no matter what research you do, one event of the utmost significance that you won't find on any list is the birth of Christ. The world over celebrates His birth. His birth set the stage for the development of our calendar into two segments – B.C. or before Christ and

A.D., meaning in the year of our Lord. Even when you consider other people who have greatly influenced society whether scientists, inventors, political figures, or even other religious leaders Jesus Christ is the most significant person in history and His birth is the most noteworthy event to occur with eternal application.

To understand why He is the most important historical figure in history we should perhaps begin by asking what the most significant need of mankind is.

Is it electricity which makes possible so many other advances in technology?

Is it better farming practices that can feed the growing world population?

Is it the ability to soar into outer space with plans to visit Mars in person in the near future or perhaps even beyond – to boldly go where no man has gone before?

Is the greatest need the ability to prolong life through medical breakthroughs that eradicate diseases making it possible to live longer?

What is the greatest need of mankind?

But in spite of all these advances and advantages, we still live in a world that is troubled with war, crime, and conflict. Unfortunately, the words of Job still ring true today **“Man is born to trouble as sparks fly upward.” (Job 5:7)** That's an indication that man is no closer to being in a right relationship with God today than he ever has been. There has always been a gulf, a separation spanning a distance relationally between God and man.

Our greatest need isn't technology to provide a better way of life. It isn't even the implementation of social reform through governmental policies that create a better society. Listen to how Billy Graham answers the question of man's greatest need: **“Our greatest need is to be reconciled to God. Only then can our hearts be changed, and only then can we begin to live the way God meant us to live. And that's why the birth of Jesus is so important, because He came into the world to provide the way for us to be reconciled to God. He did this by dying on the cross for our sins and overcoming death's power through His resurrection from the dead.”**

Millions of people will celebrate Christmas tomorrow and have no understanding that this is the single most

important event in history. Oh, they know that a child named Christ was born. They may even have a little manger scene on their mantle. But they choose not to believe that He is God incarnate, God in the flesh, God who became man, God who came down to make it possible for us to be brought into a right relationship with Him. **Why?** Because they choose not to believe they need a Savior, to believe they have a sin problem, to believe there is nothing after this life is over, or to believe that God wouldn't punish anyone to an eternity in hell. **If that is the case, then why did God send His Son to earth? Why did the angel state that Jesus would save from sin if all those are true?** The truth is clear in **John 1:1-14** where eternal God became earthly man to light the way in becoming a child of God.

With your Bibles turned to **John 1**, we notice that John begins with the supposition of God's existence. He doesn't attempt to define or describe God. He simply declares that God exists. It's the same way Genesis begins. Like Genesis, John does not go into an explanation of who God is. And unlike Matthew and Luke, he doesn't include any of the details around the birth of Jesus. He succinctly and deliberately says there was God the Word and that Word become flesh, encouraging his readers to go to the other gospels and to the Old Testament prophecies to verify how that happened.

John lays out the facts of both the deity and the humanity of Christ. As we consider this passage today, if we are going to correctly celebrate Christmas, we must celebrate it with the understanding that God stepped into history and became a man.

One of the early church fathers, Athanasius the Great of Alexandria wrote: **"As the mighty universal Creator, He prepared in this Virgin a body for Himself as a temple to dwell in; He took this body as His own, His vessel and vehicle, in which He made His very home."**

John begins with the character of the Word.

## I. THE CHARACTER OF THE WORD – vv. 1-2

John doesn't begin with the history of Jesus born

into this world. He goes back even further to talk about the existence of the Word before all time to explain first of all that the Word was eternally God.

### A. The Word Was Eternally God – v. 1a

A fairy tale may introduce the story with the words "once upon a time." The author invites us to journey back to a point in time where the story has a beginning. If you drew a line from where you are that extends into the past you can put a pin at the point in time when the story begins.

John writes that **"in the beginning was the Word"**. He doesn't mean that the Word had a beginning, but when the beginning began, the Word was already there. When time started, when time was nothing more than a pinpoint for the beginning of history, He was already present. Before the beginning, the Word was there. As we'll notice in a moment, He is the cause or Creator of the beginning. John wants us to see that the Word goes back into eternity past and understand that the Word was there before time.

The Amplified Bible puts it this way: **"In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ)."**

We call it His preexistence. Pre does not mean before He existed, but rather before He became a man. Or, put another way, the word 'was' refers to continuous existence in the past, the present and in the future.

John Phillips notes **"'was' here is not in the sense of time, but relates to the realm of the word in which time doesn't matter. The Word had no beginning and the Word will never have an ending."** To think of the Word in that sense, he says we must go to the dateless past before time. Paul writes of the Word's preexistence in **Colossians 1:17: "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."**

John selects the word 'word' in the tense he uses to strengthen the case for the preexistence of the Word. It is crucial to the Christmas narrative that the Word is eternally God.

John then points out a second important truth regarding the Word. The Word was equally God.

### B. The Word Was Equally God – vv. 1b, 2

Paul writes in **Philippians 2:7** that **“Christ existed in the form of God but did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.”**

In other words, even though He was completely or fully God, He didn't stop being God when He became a man. He didn't use His deity as an advantage when He became human as Tony Evans writes: **“He didn't let His deity stop Him from expressing humanity. The incarnation resulted in Jesus being fully God and fully man.”**

By becoming man, He wasn't any less God. He was still equal with God the Father. He always has been and always will be God equally as much as the Father. But it required as Charles Ryrie notes that **“His incarnation does not mean that He surrendered any attributes of deity, but that He took on the limitations of humanity. This involved a veiling of His preincarnate glory and the voluntary waving of some of His divine prerogatives during the time He was on earth.”**

The word ‘with’ refers to being in relationship and in this case it speaks of His being in relationship with the Father, which also ‘was’ in eternity past, co-existing at the same time. The Word, Christ, has always been in relationship with the Father. Neither had a beginning. The word ‘with’ is richer than our English word understands it to mean. Robert Cook says **“it gives the picture of two beings facing one another and engaging in intelligent discourse”** both in intimate fellowship.

**I John 1:1-2 “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was WITH the Father and was revealed to us.”**

What John is conveying in both his gospel and in his epistle in a literal sense is that the Word was face to face with God. The Word is not an attribute of God, He is not an illusion of God, He is a person in face-to-face fellowship with God. And we see in **John 17** that Jesus spoke of the fellowship that He

and the Father always had. **Verse 11** speaks of the unity in fellowship they had in eternity.

Tony Evans writes: **“From before the creation of the world, God the Son shared an eternal, intimate Father-Son relationship with God the Father.”**

John says the Word was eternally God.

John then says the Word was equally God.

Then John says the Word was essentially God.

### **C. The Word Was Essentially God – v. 1c**

Now, let's be clear that I'm using the word ‘essentially’ to mean that parts of the Word were God and other parts were not. By it I mean to say that in every part of His nature, He was God. The attributes that are a part of God are the same attributes that are in the Word.

**Philippians 2:7 “Christ existed in the form of God but did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.”**

The ESV study Bible notes remind us that this is the building block of the doctrine of the Trinity, that there is One true God consisting of more than one person, not two gods, but one God in two persons – Father and Son, passages like **Matthew 28:19-20** add the Holy Spirit as the third part of the Trinity. That the **“Word was God”** indicates that the Word shared the same divine attributes as God because He was God.

John Phillips writes that **“all the essential characteristics of deity are His.”** The Word was God.

The deity of Christ, the Word, is a non-negotiable tenet of the Christian faith. On that fact, our salvation stands or falls.

We must believe that the Word was eternally God.

We must believe that the Word was equally God.

We must believe that the Word was essentially God.

Moving on to **verses 3-13** we see the communication about the Word.

## **II. THE COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE WORD – vv. 3-13**

John uses the Greek word logos, which interpreted means word. The general meaning is thought,

concept, or expressions. In the Old Testament it conveyed some activity or revelation. For example, when it's personified or given human characteristics as we see in Proverbs when it speaks of God in terms of wisdom.

When the Greeks used the term in their writings, it conveyed the idea of reason or creative control.

John applied that word *logos* to Christ because his readers would understand what it meant. As the Word, Christ is the last communication of God to mankind. John says that we see communication about the Word first of all through His creation.

### A. Communication Through His Creation – vv. 3-5

John explains the same thing we see in both **Genesis 1** and in **Hebrews 11:3** which tells us that God spoke. In His spoken word, He created, and when John says that **“all things were made through Him, and that without Him nothing was made that has been made”**, he means just that. Everything was made by the spoken word of God. **Hebrews 11:3** affirms that Jesus, the living Word, spoke the word and everything in the universe came into existence. **Hebrews 1:2 “God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him.”**

**Colossians 1:16-17** says that He not only created everything, but He also continues to hold it all together. He keeps it going. And while all three persons of the Trinity were involved in creating the universe, John specifically points to the role of the Word in creation.

Passages like **Psalms 19:1-6** and **Romans 1:19-20** tell us that creation communicates God.

Creation communicates a word about God. He spoke a word and that word created the universe and that universe speaks back declaring the glory of God, and declares the existence of God. The Word spoke a word and all things were created.

Warren Wiersbe writes that the phrase **“was made” is in the perfect tense meaning it was a completed act, that it was finished.** He didn't need to add anything more and nothing more was added by

some other means after He was done. It is not evolving.

John then tells us that the communication about the Word is seen through His courier.

### B. Communication Through His Courier – vv. 5-13

John the Baptist was sent ahead of the Light before the Word began His public ministry to testify about the Light of the world. He was to testify about the Light to the prepare the way for the Light so that when He is introduced, his witness affirms what the angel told Joseph that He would save His people from their sins. John would notably state **“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”**

John writes that the witness came to testify about the light so that all might come to believe through Him. He also stresses that this courier was not the light but came to point out the true light. Unfortunately, the people in the world He created didn't recognize Him as the light and neither did His own people receive Him. They didn't care about Him and didn't want Him.

But the good news that John points out in **verse 12** is that there were some who did believe and receive the Word as the Light. To receive is not passive acceptance like receiving a raise or receiving a letter in the mailbox. John's use of the word 'receive' here means to welcome like welcoming a guest into your home. You swing open the door and say come on in.

But in addition to receiving is believing. Before you can receive the Word, you must believe in the Word. That means you believe in His person; you believe who He is and in what He has done. To believe He is God who came in the flesh to be the sacrifice for our sin.

Tony Evans says that **“when someone receives and believes in Jesus for the free gift of eternal life, he undergoes a supernatural birth, the impartation of spiritual life.”**

**Titus 3:5** refers to it as the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

**II Corinthians 5:17** says that when we believe and



receive, we are made a new creation inside.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** says it is God's gift by faith through grace because there isn't anything we can do to earn it, there is nothing we can do to get it.

A few years ago I had to give up running because of a knee problem, so I've been biking. I think for my age I'm a pretty good biker. I can usually ride on the stationary bike between 13-14 miles in 45 minutes. Now let's say we all decide to bike trip across the nation starting on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean and going all the way across to the Pacific Ocean. We all start out at the same time and along the way people begin to drop out. The rest of us keep going and over time more drop out. Eventually there's just me and Luke. Now, Luke is half my age so I'll give him the benefit of the doubt that He can keep going a bit longer than me, but even he has to stop. He can't make it on his own from coast to coast.

It's the same thing on our way to heaven. Some of us might think we can get from earth to heaven further than others, but we find out that we can't get there on our own. I was listening to Dr. Jeremiah this week on the way to the office and what he said got me thinking. Jesus was born as a helpless baby. Couldn't feed Himself. Couldn't change Himself. Couldn't clean Himself up. He needed to rely on His mother to do that for Him. I got to thinking about that regarding salvation. When it comes to getting to heaven, I'm a helpless infant. I need God to get me there and He sent His Son as the way and means to help me in my helplessness. To say that God showed His love to us in the incarnation is true but not complete. His love isn't just in sending Jesus to be born of a virgin. **Romans 5:8** says His love was shown when Christ died for us.

A courier was sent to communicate that Christ, the Word, is the Way. He points to the life and Light who is the only one who can get us all the way to heaven, but we have to do it His way. We must believe and receive His payment for our sin. And John says in **verse 12** that when we do that, we become part of the family of God. We are accepted as His children.

But not only did God communicate through creation.

Not only did God communicate through His courier. God communicated through His Christ, the Word.

### C. Communication Through His Christ

**Hebrews 1:2** "In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.

Unfortunately, many didn't recognize Him, even His own people didn't want Him.

**Isaiah 53:3** "He was despised and rejected by men."

Many people today want what Christmas symbolizes when it comes to peace and good cheer but aren't willing to accept the real reason for Christmas, that God has spoken to us through the babe of Christmas who came to offer them the opportunity to be reconciled with Him through the Word sent to us in the person of Christ, the one who came to save the lost.

**Verse 13** says it's something we can't be born into.

**Verse 13** says we can't make ourselves a Christian.

**Verse 13** says that no one else can make you a Christian.

We can only become part of the family of God by being born of God or as Jesus tells Nicodemus, we must be born again. And in order to become part of the family of God, the Word who was, the Word who was with God, the Word was God had to become flesh, to be with us, to be like us. God has communicated to us through the Word who God, which brings us to our final point: the coming of the Word.

### III. THE COMING OF THE WORD – v. 14

God came to live with men, so man could live with God. The word '**became**' does not mean He ceased to be God when He became man. When John wrote this, some couldn't believe that God would take on flesh. They taught that the flesh was evil, so it didn't make sense to them that God would take on what they considered evil.

Yet John emphatically states that God took on flesh and yet in doing so He did not take on a sin nature but retained His holy nature.

**Hebrews 4:15** tells us that as man while He was tempted in every way we are, proving His humanity, He did not sin.

**I Peter 1:19** compares Jesus to an unblemished and spotless lamb. **Verse 18** says that He came to redeem us and could only do that if He was sinless.

**I Peter 3:18** tells us that Jesus, God the Word in the flesh, was righteous.

First, the Word came to live among us.

### A. The Word Came to Live Among Us

This Word came and dwelt among us. The word **‘dwelt’** literally means He came to pitch His tent with us. In the Old Testament the word was used in regard to God and the Tabernacle. The tabernacle was the place where God lived among His people.

John literally says that the Word came to tabernacle with us. He didn’t just appear as a man, He became a man (**Philippians 2:5-9**). The angel said that in this baby, God came to be with us. **Verse 14** alludes to the gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke regarding how God was born into humanity to live with us.

Not only did the Word come to live among us, but the Word also came to live in us.

### B. The Word Came To Live In Us

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be sent to be with believers in His absence.

**II Corinthians 13:5** **“Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you?”**

#### Romans 8:9-11

Paul says in **Colossians 1:27** that Christ in you is the hope of glory.

**Galatians 2:20** says that Christ lives in me.

**I Corinthians 3:16** **“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”**

In the Old Testament the Tabernacle is where God lived. Now the Word lives in each of us who are the temple of God having believed and received Him.

The Word, God in the flesh, came to live among us so that by believing that He is the Savior and

receiving Him as our Savior has come to live in us.

In **Genesis 1:2** we read that the earth was formless and empty and that darkness covered the face of the earth. But then we read the very first words of God are recorded in **Genesis 1:3**: **“Let there be light”**. God spoke and created light and that light broke the darkness and bathed everything in light. John tells us that the Word was Light and how that Light shone eliminating darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. Darkness can never overtake light. John also tells us that this Light, the Word, came to give us life.

#### I John 5:11-13

The Word was sent by God as an infant to bring people out of the darkness of sin and point them to God. The Living Word, Jesus Christ, is the last Word sent to mankind to show the way to restore our broken relationship with God due to sin. He is the Light in the darkness. **John 8:12** says that Jesus is the light of men. Our life, our light is in Christ, who points us to the Father. **Verse 18** tells us that Jesus, the Word, has made God known.

Again from Athanasius: **“The intangible, imperishable, and immaterial Word of God came into our world... He visits us, lowering Himself to our level, to bestow His love on us! He saw the reason-gifted race of humans on the highway to perishing, with death having lordship over us all through a process of decay. He had pity on our race, and compassion on our weakness, lowering Himself down to our decay. He couldn’t tolerate death having dominion, so that His creations perished, and His Father’s handiwork came to nothing. So He took to Himself a human body, the same as ours. He didn’t choose to take a body merely for the sake of appearing. Had that been His purpose, He could have manifested His divine presence in some other way. But He took a body like ours.”**

Man of Sorrows!” what a name  
For the Son of God, who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

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His coming is the most significant event in history. The Word came to live among us so that when we believe and receive Him, He can live in us.