

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. ⁵The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁹The real light that shines on everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, yet his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³They were born, not of blood, or of the desire of the flesh, or of a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (EHV)

Theme: Christmas from Heaven's Perspective

1. God Became Flesh
2. He Brings Life

What is Christmas all about? The question—and answer seem simple enough. And yet, you may be surprised and certainly disappointed, at the answers you'd hear. Many secular people love Christmas and often talk about the "Christmas spirit;" but for them Christmas is merely a season of giving, about showing love to others, and taking care of the less fortunate. They may talk about peace, joy, and hope—but only as vague generic concepts. As we all do, they enjoy Christmas songs, movies, cookies, and their favorite family traditions; but that is where Christmas begins and ends for them.

Then there we, Christians. We all love to join together on Christmas Eve, we are filled with joy as we watch little children recite Luke 2 from heart, just as we did at their age. But how easy it is to lose our focus on what is truly important, even when we focus on God's Word, our attention is drawn to the inconsequential, like the star, angels, to Mary's hard journey—maybe we even boil Christmas down simply to Jesus' birthday. How easy it is to lose sight of what Christmas is all about and focus on the trivial parts of the Christmas story.

I hate to burst your Christmas bubble, but take some of our most beloved Christmas carols for example. I love singing them each year; but many of them focus on the insignificant! How many of them mention animals, even though Scripture only says that Jesus was placed in a manger? We'll be singing two of them today that do! How many of them mention the quietness of Bethlehem, even though it was a small town bustling full of visitors returning home for the census, so much so that there were no open rooms in the inn, was it really all that quiet? We see how easy it is for the devil to distract us from what is truly important even while we focus on Jesus' birth.

That's why I love John 1. This is not the story of Jesus' birth; there is no mention of Mary, a manger, or the town of Bethlehem. All those minor points aren't mentioned; it shows us what the Christmas narrative is really all about. John 1, is what I call, "Christmas from Heaven's perspective." And as we've seen through our lessons today, from God's perspective there are two main aspects of Christmas: The incarnation and our salvation.

John begins his gospel talking about the Word. Who is the Word? We jump ahead to verse 14, **the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.** The Word then is clearly Jesus, who came down from heaven, took on human flesh and dwelled among us. What about the term, Word? The meaning behind this term is so complex and full of significance; we'd take us all day to

discuss everything associated with this term. It is through God's holy inspired word that we learn about God. But we can't know the one true God without knowing about Christ. It is Christ who shows us who God is. If you want to see God, look at Christ. If you want to learn who God is and his love for us, look at Christ.

So Christ is the Word. And what does John say about the Word? Notice the similarities between the beginning of John's gospel and the beginning of the Bible, which reads, **in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.** John begins, **in the beginning was the Word.**

Genesis starts out with the beginning of the world. John starts out before the beginning of the world! The history of Jesus begins before the beginning of the world because Jesus is God and God is eternal.

The next phrase, **The Word was with God.** Here John makes a distinction between the Word and God the Father. They are distinct from each other and yet they are together. John then adds, **the Word was God.** So while the Word and God the Father are separate and distinct, they are one and the same. How can this be? They are two distinct persons of the one divine being. Jesus is the eternal God, the second person of the Triune God. If you want to talk about Jesus, this is where you start!

John makes another point in verse three, **Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made.** Jesus wasn't just with God in the beginning of the world—he was present and active in creation! Through the Word the world was created. When God created the world, he said, "let there be," and it was! God spoke and it came to be. John uses this picture of God using his words to create the world to describe the world being created through Jesus.

Again, verse 14: **The Word became flesh and dwelled among us.** Jesus, true God from eternity, took on human flesh, he became a man. That is what Christmas is all about! Christmas not merely Jesus' birthday, but it's the coming God, dwelling among his creation! It's a great miracle that we call the incarnation, the taking on of a human flesh by the Son of God.

And this is where the focus should be at Christmas. And many of our Christmas hymns do just that! One good example is the hymn we sang to begin the service: *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*, we sang during the second stanza, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail th' incarnate Deity!" Although Jesus is God's only-begotten Son, he often hid his divine glory behind the veil of human flesh, giving us glimpses of his glory only from time to time. But on the last day we will see Christ in his full glory and we will bask in that divine glory forever!

From Heaven's perspective, Christmas is just as much about the incarnation as it is the reason why God became man: our salvation! Jesus was born for one reason and one reason only: to save us from our sins. We saw that again and again in our lessons this morning. I also think of the angel's message to the shepherds in Luke 2: **Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord.**

We need a Savior because we are living in darkness by nature. Unlike Christ, we were conceived and born into sin. We were born as enemies of God who cannot obey his commands; and so we are on our way to eternal damnation. We live in the darkness of sin and unbelief by nature in a world that has been completely darkened by sin.

But Christ shines in the light of the gospel into this sin-darkened world and our sin-darkened hearts. As John writes in verse four, **In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.** Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness. He illumines our hearts so that we see the light of salvation. No longer ignorant of our salvation, we see Christ as the Savior from our sins and the one who has won for us eternal life through his resurrection from the dead!

The light of the gospel has shined on all people. Just as Jesus came into the world to save the sins of all people, so the gospel is to be shared with all people. So that everyone will see Jesus as both God and Savior and through faith in him, be saved.

Sadly many reject Jesus, as the Jews did. They have not seen the light of salvation and will not be saved. But those who believe in him as God and Savior, will receive the blessings of salvation. They have received the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Through faith, worked in our hearts through baptism and the word, the Lord has adopted us as his own dear children! And through the gospel we are kept as part of his family.

And if we are his children, then we are also his heirs, who will receive an eternal inheritance. By the grace of God, we have seen the light of salvation and have received the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So what is Christmas from Heaven's perspective? It's not about giving, family, or hope. The focus is not on the angels or the shepherds; animals, quiet towns, and stars are trivial to what is truly important. Christmas from Heaven's perspective centers around two key concepts: incarnation and salvation. Christmas is far more than a touching story, more than a birthday, it's the coming of God in the flesh to save us—and that's what makes Christmas so great! Amen.