

Series: Christmas	Reference: John 1:1-18	Title: The Savior Come	Date: 12.26.2021
Website Writeup: Today we celebrate Christmas...the fact that we were helpless to save ourselves, so God entered our reality in the person of Jesus Christ to save us. As a result of Christmas we live with the confidence of God's presence.			

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Today we celebrate Christmas...the fact that we were helpless to save ourselves, so God entered our reality in the person of Jesus Christ to save us. As a result of Christmas we live with the confidence of God's presence. Today we look at the prologue of John's Gospel (ch 1), markedly different from the other Gospels with its poetic retelling of God's creation to begin the story of the life & death of the Word, the Messiah, Jesus. Turn with me to p723 of your pew Bibles as we read John 1:1-18.

In the giving of Jesus at Christmas, as in the giving of life at creation which John refers to in this passage, God's at work. "The self-giving of God links creation & redemption because He's been giving Himself to humanity from the [very] beginning; in the incarnation God does what He's always done, only more clearly."¹

John 1 begins...*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 all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Matthew, Mark & Luke are the synoptic Gospels meaning 'to see together'. They're similar, but from different perspectives. John's gospel stands alone. Whereas they give the *what*, John gives us the *why*. John uses the term, Logos in this prologue translated as the Word. Words define & reveal who we are & can't be separated from us. Words are thoughts & feelings communicated. Shared thought is unity between people. Words originate from within. We are our words which is why they're so important.

John speaks with loaded language writing to Jews & Greeks. Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, translated the Hebrew OT into Greek (Septuagint, 275 b.c.) they utilized the Greek word *logos* to translate the Hebrew word *dabar*.² Hebrews saw the Word of God not as merely words, but as a powerful & effectual means of accomplishing God's purposes (Isa. 40:8; 55:11; Jer. 23:29). By His Word God spoke the world into existence (Gen. 1:3-31; Ps. 33:6; 2 Pet. 3:5). God communicated His Word directly to persons in the Law (Ex. 20:1-17; 34:28; Deut. 5:4-5) and Prophets (1 Sam. 15:10; 2 Sam. 7:4; 23:2; 2 Kings 7:1; Isa. 38:4; Jer. 1:4, 11; Ezek. 7:1; 11:14; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jon. 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Hag. 1:1; Mal. 1:1). The wise person is the one who lives in accordance with the Word of God (Gen. 15:1; Exod. 9:20-25; Num. 3:16; 1 Kings 6:11-12; Pss.

¹ B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], 88

² Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044-1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

106:24; 119).³ To follow God means obedience to his Word. To them God's Word is perfect, powerful, directive, good, with creative & healing power.

To Jews the Word of God was inseparable from God - one & the same - for them, words were extremely important. So, to equate Jesus to the *dabar* of God is to equate Jesus to God Himself - a hard pill to swallow for a Jew. If untrue, it's blasphemy. There may be no clearer testament to the Deity of Jesus than John's words in this first chapter.

In contrast, the Greek word *logos* didn't refer to a person. In early Greek thought there was no concept of a personal God who created the world in order & harmony. Logos was an abstract principle which ordered reality. An impersonal, philosophic principle, not a personal being involved in the world.⁴ Greeks were dualistic; the material world, considered imperfect couldn't interact with the spiritual. *Logos* was given great significance by Greek philosophers. The Stoics emphasized the *logos spermatikos* ("seminal word"), the rational principle pervading all reality, providing meaning and order to persons & the universe. It creates coherence, unity & provides orderly pattern for existence, holding everything together.⁵

The Stoics Paul debated at Mars Hill in Acts 19 held this notion, all things were composed of an ultimate seminal fire, the *Logos Spermatikos*. This seminal word was procreative power; the word that begets life, order & harmony. They were the first to say "Every person has a spark of divinity in them."⁶ Paul noticed their altar to an 'unknown god' which he proclaimed to be Jesus, the knowable Logos which came down to us at Christmas in the form of a child!

By the time the Gospels were written, the notion of Logos was a loaded philosophical idea. John dropped a theological bombshell by talking about Jesus, NOT as impersonal concept, but as incarnation of the eternal Logos. He didn't use the term Greek fashion. He fills it with Jewish/Christian meaning. For John, the Logos is intensely personal & radically different from Greek philosophy. Logos as person, not principle,⁷ born in a manger on Christmas Day.

So, Jesus as *Logos* wasn't merely an angel, or created being as agent of creation, nor just *another* word from God. John claims He was God Himself. In relation to humanity, Jesus the *Logos* wasn't the impersonal principle of Stoicism, but a personal Savior who took on human flesh as a child, growing & experiencing life like us all. Logos becoming

³ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁴ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁶ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁷ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

flesh & living among us was in sharp contrast to Greek ideas. By depicting Jesus as *Logos*, John portrays Him as the preexistent Creator of the universe, with & identical to God. From this perspective of Jesus' divinity & eternity, any view of Him as mere prophet or teacher is impossible (Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:13–20; 2:9–10; Heb. 1:1–4; 1 John 1:1–3; Rev. 19:13).⁸ This concept, coupled with grace, sets Christianity apart from all religions.

In other NT texts, *logos* refers to Scripture, especially in preaching the gospel (Luke 5:1; 8:11–15; Acts 4:31; 8:14; 12:24; Rom. 10:8; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:23–25; Heb. 4:12). The preaching of the gospel brings order & meaning to lives shattered by sin. Those who put faith in Jesus will be welcomed into the family of God (John 1:11–12).⁹ So, when we preach the Gospel, we don't just speak words, we preach Jesus bringing order & meaning to life. As John says, Jesus is the light which shines in the darkness & the darkness can never extinguish Him. The Word become human, born in a manger, dwelt among us - Jesus, God revealed.

John's saying, Jesus is the creator of the heavens & earth. The transcendent power behind the universe. The ultimate reality of all things.¹⁰ Alpha & Omega, the first & last letter of the greek alphabet hemming in all things - the first & final Word. Hence our Alpha Course starting Jan. 12th, a discussion & exploration of Jesus as God's Word to humanity!

It continues... *⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh & made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one & only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace & truth.

¹⁵(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace & truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one

⁸ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁹ Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1044–1045). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

¹⁰ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

has ever seen God, but the one & only Son, who is himself God & is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

The writer John states Jesus as uncreated. Something John the Baptist realized when he said, *'Someone's coming after me who's far greater than I am, for he existed long before me'*. John the Baptist was 3 months older than Jesus, but grasped the eternal uncreated nature of Christ - Christ came before himself. For John the writer & John the Baptist, in Jesus God becomes personal & knowable. In Jesus, we meet the eternal God.

John states the Logos isn't only with God, but is God. There may be some difficulty in saying the Word's both *with* & *in* God, or both distinguished from & identified with God. He's saying Christ's the same as God the Father, yet we're able to distinguish Him from the Father; one in being, two in person. Father & Son, one being, distinguished in terms of personality, work & ministry'.¹¹

In this prologue the idea of the Logos being *with* God is significant. Greek language had three different words for our English word *with*. The first was *sun*, rendered into English as the prefix *syn*. Found in words such as *synoptic*, *synchronize*, *syncretism* & *synagogue*. Synagogue being a place where people come together *with* others. To be 'with' in the sense of 'sun' is to be present in a group, to be gathered with other people. The second word is '*meta*', meaning 'to be alongside of', or 'side by side'. If I were to walk side by side with you, I'd be meta-you.

And a third word for *with* was '*pros*'. Found less frequently, but it's part of another Greek word, *prosepon*, which means *face*. This kind of 'with-ness' is the most intimate of all. John's saying, the Logos existed with God, *pros* God - face to face in relationship of eternal intimacy. As Hebrews 1:3 says...*"He is the radiance of the glory of God & the exact imprint of his nature."* It's this kind of relationship Jews yearned to have with God. The Logos enjoys this kind of intimate face-to-face relationship from all eternity with the Father. The Father & Son - one in relationship & being.

In Jesus this intimacy with God becomes available, because as John states here, writing to both Jew & Gentile, *"...to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."* In other words, this baby born in a manger, the Logos, the Word of God, God Himself, born among us is for anyone who'd receive Him! Face-to-face intimacy available with God through Jesus!

This baby offered to all peoples, something the prophet Simeon noticed as Christ was dedicated at the Temple. Simeon had been told he wouldn't die until he'd seen the Messiah/the Savior. In Luke 2:29-32 when Jesus was presented to him, he said...*"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles & for glory to your people Israel."* Simeon knew

¹¹ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

the promise of God; the promised Messiah throughout Scripture. A promise of 'light for revelation to the Gentiles,' revealing Messiah was for all people, stretching beyond the cultural borders of Israel, offered to all peoples. The promise Simeon had patiently waited for came about in Jesus born in a manger. The Messiah, the Holy One of God; the Second Adam who'd offer forgiveness of sin.

Our human response to the coming of Christ is anticipation, but the power & desire to save comes first & foremost from God. When John declares that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," the language he uses is forceful. More literally, the darkness cannot lay hold of, or take possession of the light¹², because the light possesses infinite power. This light enlightens everyone (1:9) giving believers "the right to become children of God" (v. 12). No earthly power can compare, and we can only thankfully receive this gift of the Savior, and never earn our place with Him.

A pastor recalls doing a wedding years ago. At the back of the sanctuary were two enormous wooden doors through which the bride entered at the beginning of the processional. The wedding coordinator of the chapel was a small woman who planted her feet, leaned in, grabbed the door handles, threw all her weight against them & flung the doors wide as that the bride appeared like a vision. It was breathtaking.

That's what Jesus has done. He's flung the doors of salvation open forever. We're never shut out, never excluded, never told we don't belong. Symbolized when the curtain of the Temple was rent in two as He was crucified, opening up the Most Holy Place in the Temple of God showing that all people may now enter God's presence by Christ's Blood! By faith we walk through those doors with joy, confidence & hope.

In *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, when the Whos down in Whoville wake on Christmas morning with their houses & refrigerators bare, they gather & sing anyway. Remember the Grinch thought to himself...

"What if Christmas...doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.¹³ Maybe Christmas was more about peace?" Something that old Grinch didn't have in the least! Maybe he thought about Jesus, and what he did on the tree, And for the first time thought, "Maybe He did that for me?" Then the Grinch said, "No, no, no, that couldn't be so! I am a wretched old thing, doesn't he know!" Then a still small voice told him something quite new. "It's happened to others, it can happen to you." Then he realized, "Christmas isn't about gifts at all. God loves everyone, the tall & the small" It had all sunk in, it was really quite true. He loves Grinches as well as the Whos. God had given the ultimate gift direct from above. His Son, whom He gave freely to everyone in love! Then his slay entered Who-ville really quite fast. They opened their circle & let it go past. "Praise God in the highest!" the Grinch yelled with glee. "He can even save an old sinner like me!" "This is really an awfully wonderful sensation! Thank God, in Christ I am a new creation!"

¹² Strong's Greek Lexicon, s.v. "G2638, katalambanō," <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2638/kjv/tr/0-1/>

¹³ *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, directed by Chuck Jones and Ben Washam, written by Dr. Seuss, aired December 18, 1966, on CBS

Wouldn't that have been a better ending to the Grinch? Christmas does mean a whole lot more than packages & feasts, and we can't make or manufacture the gift of grace that came in the birth of Jesus. Christmas happens, we can only receive Jesus & celebrate.

This gift changes things. One British soldier, Henry Williamson, described Christmas Day on the Western Front in 1914 when British & German soldiers climbed out of their trenches & met in the narrow strip between them called *No Man's Land*. Both armies had started to call to the other to come out & get a cigar as a Christmas gift. Neither fully trusted the other, until a brave British soldier crept out & stood between the trenches, a German came to meet him. They shook hands, laughed & then everyone joined. They exchanged gifts, sang carols, took photographs, played football & even had a funeral for Germans of the last attack. Henry later wrote, "We still hope, that the vision of peace we *lived* during those few hours may be made real & everlasting."¹⁴ Christmas stopped war.

The birth of Jesus happened to & for us, and the call to celebrate transcends national boundaries & any circumstance. We come to Jesus, the living Word to find light & life, and as He said to Nicodemus & John restates here, we must be born again by Him. We can't find God through any other means than God's Word communicated to us in Jesus. Those who reject Him, reject God. Those who find Him, find light & life. As Hebrews 1:1-4 says, "*Long ago, at many times & in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*"

The concept of the Logos comes to climax as we read...*The Word became flesh & made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one & only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace & truth.* Dwelling literally meant to 'pitch his tent among us'. In the Old Testament, God dwelt with His people by means of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, where Israel would go to meet with God. The New Testament Tabernacle is the Incarnate Word, the Logos, who embodies the truth of God Himself. The mind of God made flesh, dwelling with us in bodily form.¹⁵ In Jesus we meet the eternal God. The Tent of Meeting, the manifestation of God's glory. God come to us in the most non-threatening vulnerable way possible...a child in a manger worshipped by kings & announced by angels!

Merry Christmas! For the year ahead, I hope you all dwell in His light which cannot be extinguished by the darkness of this world, no matter how great it seems! God has spoken to you in Jesus, the eternal God as baby in a manger, I hope that you will receive & celebrate His light today! AMEN!

¹⁴ Henry Williamson, "Henry Williamson and the Christmas Truce," *The Henry Williamson Society*, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.henrywilliamson.co.uk/first-world-war/57-uncategorised/158-henry-williamson-and-the-christmas-truce>

¹⁵ Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.