

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Christmas and The Word.

John 1:1-14

I. Introduction.

- A. Christmas is a time for Christians to pause and reflect if we are wise.
 - 1. If we were a more liturgical church we would operate via a church calendar and it would tell us what to focus on throughout an entire year.
 - 2. There are some strong points to that as well as weak points. We are not tied to a lectionary and do not plan to; however we are learning to take some helpful aspects of it to incorporate into the flow of the year for Missio.
 - a. We are recognizing Advent which has the four Sundays leading up to Christmas as a time to anticipate the coming (what advent means) of Jesus Christ as a baby into this broken, sinful age. It serves two purposes:
 - (1) First, it is a reflection on the need for the Savior to come. It is why Old Testament passages are read, because they are lamenting the terrible state Israel was in and her need for the Savior, the Christ to come.
 - (2) Second, it is a reflection of the Church as it exists between the first coming/advent and the second, in which Jesus Christ comes to establish His kingdom and then the renewing of all things.
 - b. We also are now observing Tenebrae on the Friday before Easter. It is a time of focused meditation on the week leading up to the Crucifixion of Jesus. It is designed to move us to contemplate the greatness of the sacrifice and the seriousness of our sin and finally to prepare for us the anticipation of celebrating His resurrection on Easter Sunday.
 - 3. All of this is to say that if you are wise you use this season to slow down and contemplate the need for a Savior and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ as that Savior.
 - 4. Today I want us to hear from a non-traditional passage about the coming of our Lord and what it teaches us regarding who Jesus is and what we are to do in light of that reality.

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- B. The passage I will be preaching from is John 1:1-14.
1. In this passage we have several points made regarding the person of Jesus Christ.
 2. He, the central focus of Christmas, is too often obscured or simply ignored in the rush for too many things that do not last nor change our circumstances.
 3. My goal is simple. I want to confront each one of us with what the bible says about Jesus Christ.

II. Christmas and The Word.

- A. Jesus is God—John 1:1.
1. John starts out his story of the good news of Jesus in a very unique manner. No genealogies or stories of shepherd and angels, just this abrupt statement about the “Word.”
 2. At the time of John the concept of “the Word” was quite common. There were two views or usages of this term that we can find. And both of them find their way into this passage.
 3. Two realms: Gentile and Jewish.
 - a. The first was a philosophical perspective from Greek philosophy.
 - (1) The Greek culture brought a love of reason and philosophy into everyday culture.
 - (2) The common views were that the Word was either the immanent divine Reason, or the rational Principle of the universe.
 - (3) Now, you also need to remember that the Gentiles generally saw the gods as detached from the world. They really did not care about the activities and needs of mankind. One man described them as “serenely indifferent.”
 - (4) When John introduces his gospel with the Word, he radically changes the meaning.
 - (a) He redefines it to show them that it was not merely some vague principle, but actually a person. Not just any person but God Himself.

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- (b) He then shows that them that this Word is very concerned about them and this world. Radical thinking.
- 4. The second use regarding the “Word” is a Jewish one.
 - a. Most religious Jews would also perk up when they heard the term “the Word.”
 - b. By the time John wrote the gospel there had been much study and discussion about the concepts of “the Word of God” and “Wisdom” in the Bible as being personal.
 - c. An example of this is found in Genesis 1:3, where the Bible says, “then God said.” The Jews saw that God’s word was the agent by which God created the universe.
 - (1) Another passage would be Psalm 33:6, “ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.”
 - (2) In fact, over 100 times the phrase “the word of the Lord came . . .” in reference to the prophets.
 - (3) In the Old Testament the actual word, *dabar*, is used in many important ways.
 - (a) In Genesis 15:1 it is the basis for the incredibly important covenant God made with Abraham, “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not fear, Abram. . .’” You can see here that the “word” is treated as a person. It is not “Lord said to Abram” but that the Word came to him and spoke to him.
 - (b) In Deuteronomy 5:5 it is used to speak of the giving of the Law to Israel.
 - (c) Many other examples can be traced if you ever wish to do a very interesting study.
 - (4) What we see here is that they saw indications that the Word of God almost acted as if it were a person.
- 5. Therefore, what John does when he opens his Gospel by referring to the Word is capture the interest of both the Gentile and the Jew.

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- a. Both would immediately recognize this term .
 - b. However, both also would quickly discover that John redefines this term to introduce to them the Son of God.
 - (1) The Word is the source of Life.
 - (2) The Word is not merely a personification, He is actually a person.
 - (3) He is not just a person, but God Himself!
 - (4) In vs 17 (read) we finally have the name of who the Word is.
6. Three key points here.
- a. His eternity.
 - (1) This verse points us back the before Genesis 1:1.
 - (2) The verb “was” is important to note here because it does not give any sense of origin or beginning.
 - (a) It simply means a continuous existence.
 - (b) The Word always was.
 - (c) When the beginning began, the Word already was.
 - (3) Micah 5:2 is a prophecy of the Messiah, notice how it also speaks of Christ’s eternality, “But as for you, Bethlehem . . . From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”
 - (4) Isaiah 9:6 “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”
 - (a) Notice how the Messiah was called “mighty God”, but also “eternal Father.”
 - (b) A more literal translation would be “father of eternity.”
 - b. His presence with God.
 - (1) Notice that in this verse we don’t see the word “father.” That doesn’t come out until verse 14, when John writes,

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“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

(2) This part of the verse is hard to translate and still bring out the richness of what is said.

(a) A literal translation would be, “the Word was toward God.”

(b) But that still does not convey the unique relationship between the Word and God.

(c) The idea here is an intimacy between the two, there was a genuine fellowship. But not fellowship between a great and a lesser being, but between equals.

c. His deity.

(1) Not only is He having an intimate, equal relationship with God, but He himself is God.

(2) To the Jew, who was the primary reader of this gospel, this is an earth-shattering statement.

(a) Israel believed in one God, but failed to see the great mysteriousness of who God actually was.

(b) The way John writes this leaves no room for debate. Literally rendered you could say it this way, “the Word was by very nature God.”

(c) Make no mistake about it, John is telling us right up front that when we view Jesus Christ, we must view Him as God, nothing less will do, nothing less is acceptable.

d. Vs 2 reiterates what we have just seen. But notice now it is no longer the “Word” but “He.”

B. Jesus is our Creator—vs 3.

1. Notice how universal this statement is. There is nothing left out. There is no room for other gods.

2. For any who say that they reject the God of the Bible, the hard reality is that there are no other options.

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3. There is only One who stands outside of creation, the Word of God.
 4. You could say it this way, all that was not God was created by the Word of God.
 5. This point will be developed a bit more in vs 10 (read). The very world that He created does not know Him.
- C. Jesus is life and light—vss 4-5.
1. Here we have another aspect of the essence of Jesus Christ—life.
 - a. Notice that it is not merely that He possesses life. He is life. They are inseparable. The one who has Christ has life and the one who does not, has no life.
 - b. John 5:21 says, "The Son gives life to whom he will.
 - c. This speaks of what some would call 'spiritual life.' I would rather call it true life. Not just existing, but true, eternal life.
 - d. It puts everything in its proper perspective. Think about it for a moment.
 - (1) We need God and that he does not need us.
 - (2) We see that we are utterly dependent upon Him for our existence. He is the possessor of life.
 - (3) We see that life has a purpose, but that the purpose is found not in ourselves but in our Creator. Therefore, we need to look away from us to find any worthwhile answers.
 2. But he is not only life, but light as well.
 - a. By implication then, whoever had Jesus has light and whoever does not, has no real light.
 - b. Jesus is not giving light so much as being described as being light. He is to be seen as vs 5 says.
 - c. The problem is that though He is light, this world does not see it. It is described in the very sad terms of 'darkness.'
 - d. Now you would think that men who are spiritually in this condition would be happy to see the light of Christ, but look at what John says.
 - (1) "The darkness did not comprehend it."

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- (2) This phrase is hard to give an exact translation into English.
- (3) The idea is that mankind could not grasp it. They could not lay their hands on it.
- (4) They looked at Jesus with eyes that could not see what was before them. They were ignorant.
- e. John picks this idea of ‘light’ up again just a little further into his Gospel and develops our relationship with the One who is Light.

"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light (Jesus), and does not come to the light (Jesus), lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light (Jesus), that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." (John 3:19-21)

D. God gives us those who tell us about Jesus—vss 6-10.

- 1. This speaks of John, known as John the Baptist. Explain about the 400 years of silence.
- 2. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light (7a). Note the exclusivity of the message. A very focused message.
- 3. “so that all might believe through him.”
 - a. Note the clearness of purpose in his message.
 - b. We must be like John here at MDF, we must preach Jesus, we explain Jesus, we talk about Jesus.
 - c. Everything else must flow out of the person and work of Jesus. We are tellers of that story first. As verse 8 says, “He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.”
 - d. And as we live before mankind Jesus should be the foundation of what we do, how we do it, and why we do it.
 - e. The goal is not merely the dispensing of information, but of a radical change of mind. “So that all might believe through him.”
 - (1) To believe is more than to assent, it is to delight, to cling, to love what it is that you say you believe.
 - (2) In what is it that he desired for us to believe? The Light (vs 8)
 - f. Vs 9-10.

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- (1) Here we have the first mention of Christmas, God with us.
- (2) And it becomes more specific regarding Jesus' relationship with the world.
 - (a) Note, he entered not our world but His. We live in His realm.
 - (b) And what stands out is that when the Creator enters His land, we do not acknowledge Him as such.
 - (c) Here then is the core problem defined in just a few words. Though He is Lord, Creator and God, we do not acknowledge Him as such, nor give thanks.
 - (d) Strip away anything else you have heard about sin and realize that this is the core one. It goes all the way back to the beginning.
 - (e) A decision by Adam to define by a single choice what he delighted in most. And he chose the creature and not the creator.
 - (f) All other sin is simply a expression of that core one. We seek our own way, our own desires, and in all of it we give evidence that the Lord of light and life is not our Lord.

E. The revelation of the Word as a Man (14).

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1. Notice the verb, "became."
 - a. This is important because in verse 1 the Word always "was" but now John uses the verb "became."
 - b. This shows that the incarnation of Jesus was a creation of God.
 - c. Jesus Christ came into existence at a specific point in time.
2. The term "flesh" is interesting as well.
 - a. John chose to use this word instead of "man" or "human."
 - b. This word is crude and basic. It is forceful in emphasizing that Jesus, who was the eternal God, the eternal Word, became like us.

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- c. The term “flesh” in the Bible is commonly used to emphasize the human nature. Throughout the Bible you find that “flesh” speaks of man’s weakness.
3. First He became a human, then he dwelt among us. This word literally should be translated, “pitched one’s tent” or “tabernacled.”
4. John then says that this glory was as the Only begotten of God.
 - a. Much confusion has occurred over this word.
 - b. This term was commonly used to point out something that was unique, “only.”
 - c. Some try to make it emphasize that Jesus was merely a man, or that He was not the eternal God, for he was born, or created.
 - d. Yet in Hebrews 11:17 we find this helpful passage, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;”
 - (1) Was Isaac Abraham’s only son?
 - (2) No, his first son was Ishmael, born of Hagar.
 - (3) But Isaac was the unique son, the promised one.
 - e. Jesus Christ was the unique one from God.
 - (1) He is God’s Son in a very unique and special sense.
 - (2) He is God’s Son by nature, not by the gracious act of salvation.
 - (3) God the Father has many children, sons and daughters, as a result of saving them, but there is only one “begotten Son.”
 - (a) Jesus is far above us, the adopted children.
 - (b) he has His own special glory from the Father.
5. Finally, as they gazed upon the glory of Jesus Christ they saw that he was full of “grace and truth.”
 - a. This again is a common designation in the Old Testament of God Himself.
 - b. In fact God describes Himself using these two terms in Exodus 34.
 - c. What does it mean to us?

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- (1) It means that when we look upon Jesus Christ we see the Author of perfect redemption and perfect revelation.
 - (2) There is no greater way of salvation, and nothing else that possesses greater truth.
- F. Two positions and only two that can taken regarding Jesus: Vss. 12-13.
1. Those who do not receive Him as he is.
 - a. In the end this is what it all will come down to for each of us.
 - b. The good news is Jesus Christ, the Risen one, Lord of heaven and earth. That news never changes.
 - c. There is but one Lord and on God over all. We shall all stand before Him, either as those who have received Him, believed in Him or not.
 - d. What a frightening thing to say to Jesus, I do not know you, I do not see you, and I do not receive you.
 - e. I beg you to not let this time pass you by.
 2. To receive Him as He is.
 - a. To the ones who receive Him, adoption as God's children.
 - b. And with this comes all that being a child of God entails:
 - (1) Forgiveness of sin. Redemption from enslavement to sin. Eternal life.
 - (2) It is my prayer for you today. Receive this Word who became flesh. Receive the perfect revelation of your Creator.
 - (3) All that you were created for is found in Him.

III. Benediction.

May you be sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor power, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.