

Jason Upchurch - John 1:1-18 - Nine Amazing Truths at Christmas - Christmas 2024

Every Christmas we pause and look very intentionally on the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners. I think it's especially important this time of year with all the holiday things going on around us to stop and reflect on the reality of what happened when Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world.

And I wanted to turn to **John 1** because it is one of my favorite passages on the incarnation of Jesus. And I want to do something of a high level overview of this passage. It is rich with theology and doctrine. And I want to do a high level overview of this passage and point out 9 amazing truths about Jesus's incarnation.

1st Amazing Truth - God came into the world. Read 1

There are many things about the Gospel of John that set it apart from the 3 synoptic gospels. One of the things is that it begins with theology and then presents Jesus as a man.

The other gospels slowly unfold the life of Jesus and by the end we are convinced that this man is the Christ, God in the flesh. John is the opposite. John tells us straight out of the gate that Jesus is God and then we watch his life unfold with that understanding in mind.

And we have that very clearly here. This opening verse is a reframing of **Gen. 1:1**: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The beginning is the existence just before Genesis 1 when God created everything. It's the moment of God's creative act.

Before **Gen. 1** the only one who existed was God. And John is telling us that the Word - who is Jesus according to **Vs. 14**, was there in that time. So in eternity past when there was only God before creation, the Word - the Son of God - was there.

Another way to say this is Jesus is eternal. He existed before time began and he will always exist. These are attributes only God has.

The rest of us are mortal. We will live forever and ever. We were made at a certain point and our souls endure forever. And even though our bodies die, they will one day rise again in the resurrection when Jesus returns and they will live forever forward. But only God is eternal. Only God has no beginning and no end.

So Jesus - who is here referred to as the Word - was in the beginning. and he was God. Or the technical idea here is that Jesus was divine. Whatever stuff God has that makes him God, the Word had that exact same stuff. All the properties or attributes that make God God - that substance - the Word has as well.

And that is who came into the world. God. Very God came into the world. We see that with his name of course: Emmanuel - God with us. Joshua - Yahweh saves.

But no less that God himself came into the world to save sinners.

2nd amazing truth - The Second Person of the Trinity came into the World. Read 1

One of the amazing things we see in this first verse is clear teaching on the Trinity - at least the Father and the Son. The doctrine of the Trinity is that we believe and worship one God, and that one God is 3 eternal persons. Three in One.

And because the Bible teaches a Trinity, we know that the Father didn't come into the world in the flesh. The Spirit didn't come into the world in the flesh. The Word - the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God - came into the world.

And here in this verse we see Trinitarian distinctions, don't we? The Word was **with** God and the Word **was** God. There's distinction and there's sameness. There's distinction between the Word and God - they are separate persons. But there's also sameness - the Word was God.

Now, why is he called the Word? Because he is the expression of God. Everything God wanted to say or accomplish was all accomplished in and through the Word, who is Jesus. DA Carson says “the Word in the OT is his powerful self-expression in creation, revelation and salvation.” All that God wants to tell us is through his Word. And since we know God the most fully through Jesus, it makes sense to call him the Word.

Interestingly, even in the OT when you see the phrase “The Word of God” it often takes on its own personhood.

In Samuel “the Word of God came to Samuel and talks. **1 Sam. 15:10**

In Genesis “the Word of the the Lord came to Abram” and talks. **Gen. 15:1, 4**

It comes to Nathan, to Solomon and others. And it's almost as though the Word is separate but connected to God and has the authority of God.

There's a reason the Word had a personification in the OT: because the Word was expression of the Father through the Son.

So God came into the world, specifically, the second person of the Trinity came into the world.

3rd amazing truth: The Creator Came into Creation. **Read 3**

This is an amazing verse. It's technical, but it's amazing. What it tell us is that Jesus specifically is the agent of Creation. All things were made through him. Through whom? Through Jesus. Jesus made absolutely all things.

There's a sense in which we can say that the Father was the Creator. And of course we can say that the Spirit is the Creator. But the direct agent - actor - of creation is the Word, Jesus.

When you're building a building you can have the architect who plans it, the general who constructs it, and the superintendent

who oversees operations. All 3 are in a sense building the building. But the agent who directly accomplishes the task is the general contractor.

Borrowing that analogy, that's Jesus, the Word. All things were created through his direct agency.

Col. 1:16: For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him.

It is through his direct agency that all things were made.

And this is something I like to point out to Jehovah's Witnesses who think Jesus was the first of God's creations. John explicitly says that's impossible. **Read 3**

So Jesus can't be created, because he is the only agent of creation. Without Jesus nothing was made. He's specifically the person of the Trinity who created all things.

And as the Creator, he came into the creation. It'd be like you or me building a Lego city and then becoming a Lego ourself. And not just any Lego but the chief Lego around which all other Legos revolve. And once becoming a Lego always being a Lego. Condescending to plastic and parts for all eternity.

That's Jesus. He has taken to himself a human body for all eternity going forward. He has taken on flesh eternally to redeem us from sin and hell and death.

This is the amazing truth that the Creator came into the creation.

4th amazing truth: Life came into the world. **Read 4**

Jesus is not only the Creator, but he is the sustainer of all things, and all life. The reason your heart beats, and your blood moves and you can take breath is because Jesus sustains every particle in your body. He gives you physical life.

But I think what is really on display here isn't just physical life. It's spiritual life. What is spiritual life? In John's gospel spiritual life is really a metaphor for salvation. It's a metaphor for someone who has believed in Jesus, turned from their sins and follows and worships him. What happens when someone truly believes in Christ is a spiritual resurrection.

They go from being dead in their sins, being an enemy of God. Being spiritually lifeless and irreverent to having a true knowledge of the living God.

John 3:16: Jesus calls salvation eternal life.

See, everyone is going to live forever. Those in heaven and those in hell both live forever. One is eternal torment, one eternal glory and joy. The issue isn't about time. The issue is the quality of that life.

Those in heaven, who have eternal life, are those who know God and know Jesus. They know him as their Lord. And follow him as their Lord.

Jesus says in **John 17:3:** this is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

That's what eternal life is: It's knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior. Praising him because he died for sins and obeying him because as God he is worth of all our joyful obedience.

That's what it means that life - eternal life - came into the world.

5th amazing truth is that Light came into the World. Read 5

Light is another metaphor that John uses.

Whereas life is a metaphor for salvation through knowing Jesus. Light is a metaphor for truth and righteousness.

John 3:19: This is the judgement: the light has come into the world and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Darkness is lies and rejection of the truth. Light is just the opposite: it's truth and righteousness and goodness.

I don't know about you, but I like the summer months better than the winter months because it's warmer and there's more light. As I've gotten older I like waking up early. I like the morning sunrise to shine through the window and wake me up. And this is where there are two groups: morning people who love the light and not morning people who like the darkness.

Jesus says the same thing about himself. He is truth, he is righteousness and people are either drawn to him in truth and righteousness or they're not.

And when Jesus came into the world truth came in the world in a radical way and people couldn't avoid. They had to deal with it.

Either they accepted it as truth and repented and believed. Or they rejected it and called Jesus a liar - Jesus was accused of lying many times. Or they twisted what he said. But they had to deal with truth.

Hebrews 1:1-2: Long ago, at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets but 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.

God has always and only ever spoken truth. But in these last days - with the advent of Jesus - he has spoken with finality. He has spoken in his Son. Jesus is the fullest expression of the Word of God and in that way he is the light of the world.

That's why Jesus can say he is the way, ***the truth*** and the life. He is the embodiment of truth that came into the world. And that truth, John says, is light. **Read 4-5**

By the way, the truth will win out. The truth will conquer. The darkness - sin and lies and evil and unrighteousness will not overcome the truth.

Some of the translations say it has not comprehended it. The word in Greek means to master something or seize something. So it could be that evil just hasn't understood the truth. Sometimes that's true.

But I think overcome is more accurate. Because the issue here is whether or not truth and light and righteousness wins or whether darkness and evil and lies win. And listen carefully, John is clear: light wins. Truth wins.

There's a lot of people who look around at the world and lament all the nonsense going on. And there's a lot of sinful nonsense. But the reality is that it has been going on for millennia. But when Christ - the light of truth and righteousness - came into the world there was a massive shift. The gospel and the truth of the gospel entered in.

Jesus didn't come into the world to lose. He came in to win. He came in to fill the earth with truth and with his glory. If you doubt that just think that we're this small little outpost of the Kingdom on the far side of the world in little Deer Park Washington and we're singing the praises of Jesus. And you know what, they were doing that in this very building 110 years ago. And since then there are more churches and more believers and more praise and more glory than there ever has been in the history of the world.

Are there still lies and darkness? Of course. But Jesus is building his Church through the proclaiming the light of truth. And darkness isn't overcoming the light.

Life came into the world, light came into the world.

6th Amazing Truth: Jesus wants us to testify about him. **Read 6-8**

Here, John the Apostle is talking about John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

And the Apostle makes it clear that just as Jesus was sent into the world so was John. John wasn't the light. Jesus was the light. But John had one singular purpose: to testify about Jesus.

What does it mean to testify? It just means to tell what you know. That all a witness does. They just tell what they know.

You think about a witness in a trial. They don't have to have perfect knowledge about everything. They don't need to know all the details of law or crimes or evidentiary procedures. They simply have to tell people what they know, what they saw, what they experienced. That's it. And the goal is that the truth would be made known and that people would believe the truth.

That's all John did. He just testified. Why? Why do we testify? **Read 7**

John testified and we testify so that people might believe. We don't testify for the sake of testifying. We don't speak the truth about Jesus just to hear ourselves speak and make clever arguments. We testify so people will believe and be saved.

I'll be honest, a lot of times I think we overthink telling people about Jesus. We think we need to have a counter for every possible argument that might come up or every objection. And it's good to be able to answer questions.

But all we're called to do is testify. We just tell people what we know about Jesus. Listen, if you're a believer, a Christian, you can be an effective witness for Jesus.

All you have to do is be able to tell what Jesus did for you.

I was 14, a friend invited me to church camp. It was there that I heard about Jesus for the first time. A guy simply told me I was a sinner and that I deserved hell. I knew that instantly. But he told me that God had sent his Son Jesus to die for my sins. And that if I repent from my sins, trust that Jesus paid for all of my sins on the cross and proved it by rising from the dead 3 days later that I would be saved.

He told me that God would never forgive sins based on good works or doing good things. He forgives sins based solely by believing that Jesus paid for all my sins on the cross. I believed it right there on the spot. I felt the weight of sin and guilt just fall off my shoulders. And God changed me that day. I began to love righteousness, love obedience. I began to hate my sin and get rid of it. And the rest is history.

That was 2 paragraphs of a simple gospel presentation. It's not all that could be said. But you could say basically the exact same thing. Think about the people that testified to you about Jesus. Everyone's story is a little different, but at the end of the day someone just simply told you what they knew. And you believed.

All we have to do is go be that person to someone else. That's actually amazing. We could be part of God's plan to bring people into the Kingdom and all we have to do is tell people what we already know. Jesus wants us to testify.

7th amazing truth: some won't believe in Jesus. **Read 9-11**

So Jesus - the God the Creator of all things - comes into his own creation and people are like, "Nah, you're not the Creator."

Imagine that. Here's the guy who is healing thousands of people, feeding tens of thousands of people, casting out demons, walking on water, turning water to wine, speaking truth, confounding religious leaders with that same truth, calling out hypocrisy.

And people reject him. He gives light - truth - to everyone and yet people reject him.

Romans 1 says that the wrath of God has been revealed to all people. Not the gospel, not grace, but wrath. Why? Because God made himself known to all people. He made his power known, he made his invisible attributes known. So much so that they are without excuse. They can't claim they never knew there was a God. And what do they do with that knowledge of God? They stuff it down deep because they want their sin. They're not thankful to God, but they give glory to birds and animals and creeping things and mother earth climate change and evolution and government.

God has made himself known through his word - and many people reject him. And God has made himself known in his creation, and many people reject him.

And so maybe it should be no surprise that when Jesus - God himself - came into the world people rejected him too. What's amazing is that the very people that were supposed to recognize Messiah, the Jews, rejected him the most. In Jesus's ministry you see the hardest hearts are in Israel and especially among the religious leaders. The Gentiles are often portrayed as eager to believe. The Jews are often the most antagonistic.

He came to his own and his own didn't know him. Some do. There are some elect Jews who believe in Jesus. But the vast majority of worshippers of the Jewish Messiah are Gentiles. The Jews rejected him that we might be grafted in to the New Covenant of his grace.

And John makes it clear that much of the world rejects Jesus too. Even though he created them and the world around them they reject him.

There's a reality show on CBS called *Undercover Boss*. Have you heard of this? I think I watched an episode once. And the idea is that the CEO of a major company puts on a little bit of a disguise and goes to work as an

average employee in one of the stores as a new hire. And so they get a ground level idea of what it's like. And the employees and the customers have no idea what's happening. They don't recognize the person who started the company or runs the company. And it's all the antics and craziness you might expect. How do you not even know the CEO of the company you work for?

That's exactly what happened with Jesus. Here's the Creator God and he came into his own creation and people had no idea who he was even though he made it plainly obvious to them.

There are some who just won't believe no matter how much evidence there is. If there were people who looked at the very face of God and rejected him as their creator, don't be surprised when they reject him now.

8th amazing truth: People believe in Jesus because God gives faith. Read 12-13

Why do you believe in Jesus? Why do I? Why does anyone? Is it your own intellect or wisdom or goodness?

No. If you follow John's argument, here's what he's saying: We, like John, testify about Jesus. Some don't believe. In fact, the very ones who reject Jesus should be the ones who do believe; but they don't.

But some do believe. John says they receive Jesus. They accept him and trust him follow him as Lord and therefore their sins are forgiven and they have eternal life. That's what it means to receive him. The word for receive is when you grab ahold of something. You take it, you snatch it, and it's yours and you're not letting go for anything.

Why do some people do that? Well, John tells us 3 reasons they ***don't*** do that.

1 - They weren't born again because of their blood. You're not born into the Kingdom of God. It's not a genetic thing.

2 - You're not born into the Kingdom because of the will of the flesh. You don't will yourself into the Kingdom. People want to talk about our free will or our choice. Listen, the Bible says we're slaves to sin. We love darkness and don't have the capacity to believe on our own. You weren't born again because of the will of your own flesh to believe.

3 - John says you weren't born again because other people willed you into the Kingdom. **Read 13**

The idea here is the husband's will: even your own father, no matter how much he might want you to be saved, can't make you believe. He can't convert you into the Kingdom. They can tell you the truth of the gospel, but can't change your heart for you to receive Jesus.

So you're not born again by bloodlines, you don't force your way in, other people can't force you in. What caused you to believe? Why did you receive Jesus? What caused you to believe? It's the will of God to bring you in. **Read 12-13**

If you believe in Jesus it's because the Father gave you birth. Jesus will later say it was the Spirit who gave you birth. And later he who gave you life. You know who it was? It was the Triune God who brought you into the Kingdom through the new birth.

All of your salvation, from paying the penalty of it, to applying the righteousness of Jesus to your account, to taking out the heart of stone and putting in the heart of flesh, to giving you the faith to believe is of God. His will.

You believed in Jesus because God gave you the faith to believe.

9th amazing truth - Jesus's incarnation revealed the full grace of God. Read 14-18

We could spend a lot of time on these verses, but notice the theme of grace as a result of Jesus coming into the world. He came and dwelt among us. Literally, he tabernacled among us like God tabernacled among the

people in the OT. Jesus came and dwelled here in flesh. And what did the people see? They saw glory and they saw grace in its fullest.

And that's what John testified about concerning Jesus. The magnitude of Jesus, who is the fullest expression of God's grace just blesses us over and over and over and over.

And even the Law given by Moses - which is good and righteous and gracious - was surpassed by the grace that came through Jesus Christ. **Read 17-18**

What do we celebrate at Christmas time? The overwhelming, all encompassing grace of God in Jesus that came into the world. Jesus, full of grace, Jesus full of truth, Jesus who revealed the Father to us is who we celebrate, proclaim, rejoice in bow down to.

All glory be to Jesus this Christmas.

Pray