

John 1:1-18

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Date: 23 December 2023

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[0 : 00] There is a conspiracy, or so it seems. It would not be difficult to assemble a very credible case that there is a worldwide high level conspiracy involving billions of pounds.

! A conspiracy that has been so effective and so powerful that millions of people have been taken in by it. A conspiracy that has been going on for many years and it shows no sign of weakening.

It's the great conspiracy to conceal the truth about Christmas. And when it cannot be concealed, it is just kept confused and mixed up so that it's not really noticed much.

And it's certainly not taken seriously. And the length to which the conspirators will go, so it seems, to keep the truth about Christmas from coming out, is extraordinary.

Hundreds, I suspect thousands, of alternative Christmas stories have been devised and promulgated. And for the weeks before Christmas, the whole community is thrown into madness.

[1 : 13] Frantic shopping. You've noticed that, haven't you? And as the community panics, and it ensures that no one has any energy left to inquire, let alone think, about the truth about Christmas.

Now, I don't know whether you're inclined towards conspiracy theories or not, but let me suggest to you that this one is as credible as any. Of course, you might rightly ask, well, why would anyone want to conceal the truth about Christmas?

For this conspiracy theory to stand up, there has to be a credible motive for such an international scheme. Could anyone have a vested interest in hiding the truth about Christmas?

Well, the answer is too right they could. Because the truth about Christmas is powerful. The truth about Christmas is that it is able to change people in ways that some people do not want to be changed.

And once you see the truth about Christmas, there is no difficulty at all in understanding a credible motive for a conspiracy. Now, my task this evening, should I choose to accept it, is to thwart this conspiracy.

[2 : 34] And I choose to do that tonight by openly displaying the peach document that you've got in your hands. It's a document which, to the best of my knowledge, is the fullest and most authoritative statement of the truth about Christianity that there is anywhere in the world.

Mind you, this document has been hidden, and it's been well hidden for many, many years because it's in the Bible. And the conspirators have been remarkably successful in our day, it would seem, because many, many, many people have been conned into never opening the Bible.

Alone reading it. And as long as that goes on, the truth will remain concealed and hidden. But my task tonight, in the brief time that I've got, is to defy the courts and forces of concealment.

And to open this document before you, in defiance of all opposition, I want you to hear the truth tonight. So you ready? Here goes. Verse 1. When I say verses, that is the little numbers that are on the sheet.

You'll see them there. So verse 1. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God.

[3 : 51] And the Word was God. It's very simple. He was with God in the beginning. The first truth about Christmas is the reality that lies behind the scenes of life.

We live, and maybe you live, very much for this world. We learn very much, shall we, about what we know about this life and this world, very largely in terms of what we see and hear and what we feel.

But do you ever stop to wonder, is there anything else? The first truth about Christmas is this, that there is more to life. That there is more to reality than what you hear and see and feel in the beginning.

Before there was anything else, there was the Word. What does that mean, the Word? It goes on, doesn't it? The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And that is very, very confusing. It's very confusing, and it's obviously confusing. And it's hardly surprising that it's confusing. Because we are talking about something that will stretch the biggest and the ablest of minds.

[5 : 12] We're talking about the reality behind the reality that we know by our senses. A reality that's always been there. A reality which is called here, the Word, which was both with God, and can you see it?

And was God. Now just in case you're drifting off for a moment, and you're thinking this is really irrelevant and abstract. Do listen to the next verse. In verse 2, it goes like this. Verse 3. All things were made through him. And without him, there wasn't anything made that was made. That verse is really simple, and yet it's deeply profound. All things were made, all things were made through the Word. The Word which was with God and was God.

And that is an ultimate statement. This is about the source of all existence and all life. And very much of our modern world has been conned, and it's been conned into a comfortable and dangerous lie.

[6 : 20] It is the lie that all of this is here by accident. The whole thing is an accident. Everything is an accident. Time plus chance accounts for it all.

That is comfortable in some ways. It means that ultimately there is no responsibility. Every teenager's dream.

But to be fair, not just teenagers. It's comfortable to think in some ways that we're here by accident. We're alive by accident. We die by accident.

It's comfortable, and for that reason alone, without a scrap of evidence, and against the plain facts of life, many people believe it. And they base their lifestyle on that belief.

And so the second truth about Christmas is that that comfortable belief is false. It is wrong. It is a lie.

[7 : 19] All things. Can you see that in verse 3? It's remarkable, isn't it? That is a very comprehensive expression. All things are utterly dependent on the word.

All things are completely indebted to the word for their very existence. The word which was with God from the very beginning, and which was God. Now, what is this going to do with Christmas? Everything.

Because the document before you and before me tells me just a few sentences on from here, what happens when Jesus Christ is born. Listen to it.

Because we're coming to the point that will shatter the conspiracy. Here's the third truth about Christmas, and the heart of it all. Listen to look at verse 14. And the word became flesh.

And dwelt a mass. And lived a mass for a while. And it's not what you will hear. It's not what you will take in, if the conspirators have their way.

[8 : 21] And it is extraordinary. Have you heard it? Just let me repeat it. The word which was in the beginning, was with God, and was God. The word which is the cause of all existence and life, became flesh, skin and bones.

And lived a mass for a while. Have you taken that in? How do you react to that? Now let's out. That might use a very important question, because the truth about Christmas is like a big beam of light that shines in the darkness.

Our document puts it like this. You can see it in verse 5. The light shines in the darkness. The true light that gives light, verse 9, to everyone was coming into the world.

You see, tonight, if God is really there, and he is. And if God is our maker and our judge, and he is. And if it is possible to know God, and it is. Then we live in a world of terrible darkness. For all the good things that there are in this world, and there are many, many good things in this world.

[9 : 38] It is a world of terrible darkness. Because it is a world in which people do not see the truth. It is a world in which people do not acknowledge, and do not recognize, God.

And into this world came the word. With the birth of Jesus. The true light was coming into the world. And what happened? Well, for a while he lived in the world which he had made.

And what happened? In verse 10. Listen. He was in the world. And the world was made through him.

Yet the world did not know him. Here is the crisis of Christmas. The word became flesh. And lived amongst us for a while.

The true light has shone into this dark world. Jesus Christ. He has come and made himself known. And since that day there have only ever been two groups of people in the world.

[10 : 45] We like to divide people, don't we? In all sorts of ways. Young people and old people. White people and black people.

And rich people and poor people. We have all sorts of ways in which we group people together. But really, when you scratch beneath the surface, there are just two groups of people. And you belong to one or the other.

And so do I. This is the one big division in humanity that really matters. Which group you belong to. It really matters more than any other grouping matters.

On one side you have the one who came into this world. And he continues to be rejected. It's put like this in verse 11. He came to his own.

But his own did not receive him. There is one great group of people. A huge group of people. Tragically huge group of people. Who continue and persist.

[11 : 43] In rejecting Jesus Christ. Why? Why? It's hard to look out why. Why? I think it's because we need his forgiveness.

And that is very humiliating. I think it's something to do with the fact that Jesus Christ calls for our allegiance. And that is demanding. And so he's rejected.

Not, mind you, because this hasn't happened. It has happened, all right. It's not because there's some mighty intellectual argument. That tap, topples it all over. There isn't.

It's not because there's some lack of evidence. Which demonstrates that it's not happened. There's more than enough evidence. He's rejected by one group of people. Because it's more comfortable. It's easier to just ignore him. I wonder if you belong to that great group of people. Receive him. You belong to that vast number of people.

[12 : 50] Who in this country will celebrate Christmas. Everyone celebrates Christmas. But who nevertheless continue to ignore him. And continue to reject the one who came. So then there's this other group of people.

Can you see him in verse 12? But to all who did receive him. Who believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God.

The crisis of Christmas is really simply how you and I respond to Jesus. Once we know the truth about Jesus.

About Christmas. How do we respond? I think there's a conspiracy going on. It's more deep. It's deeper. And it's more profound than any of us realize. There are forces at work which are blinding people to the truth.

Doing all that is possible to keep the truth of Christmas from people. To keep people from seeing the truth about Christmas. But God is greater than the conspirators.

[13 : 55] And whoever you are tonight. If you are here this evening. And you are aware that you belong to that first group of people. Who have ignored Jesus.

I do want to invite you with all the persuasion that I can muster. And I want to call on you in the name of Jesus to change this Christmas. What a Christmas this would be.

That not only would you celebrate Christmas and all the stuff around it. But this Christmas you opened your heart. You opened your life. You bowed your knee before the king.

And you received the one who came into this world to make God known. The word who was in the beginning with God and was God who became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

Into his world. And there is so much to tell about him. To learn about him. To learn about what he has done for us. To learn what he has achieved for us. To learn what he will yet do for us.

[15 : 02] To learn much about who he is. So much to learn. And you can only begin to learn. But when you receive him. And you stop rejecting him. When you accept him.

And stop ignoring him. He gives you the right to become children of God. And I invite you this evening.

In the quietness of your own heart. To consider which group of humanity do you belong to. And to receive him. Because it is only those who receive him.

Who have the right to be called the children of God. Would you like to pray with me?