

John 1

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[0 : 00] Do turn me to John chapter 1. John 1. So it's on page 886.

! What's the identity of the baby?

That's the core and the heart of the Christmas message. And John in his gospel focuses not on the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ. There are no shepherds. There are no angels. But John identifies for you why the baby was born. At the carol, who is he on yonder stall? And our worship depends at this Christmas on our being able to grasp who is this baby that lies in the manger.

And so I've got three answers that I want to give you from John 1. The first answer is this. The baby in the manger is God. Secondly, the baby in the manger is God made man.

[1 : 16] And thirdly, the baby in the manger is God made man for our salvation. And if you take those three statements, in lots of ways they encompass the whole of the message of Christmas.

The baby in the manger is God. The baby in the manger is God made man. And the baby in the manger is God made man for our salvation.

The first points are much longer than the other two. So first of all, the baby in the manger is God. John, in his gospel, gives us the larger backlog in how Christmas is to be seen and to be understood.

Matthew and Luke, they tell you the story. They give you the immediate context. They tell you of Herod and the wise men and the angels and the shepherds.

But John doesn't do that. John gives you the larger context for the coming of Jesus Christ. It's here that our minds and our understanding are enlarged so that we see the real meaning of Christmas.

[2 : 28] And we see the real sheer glory of Christmas. So, verse 1, can you hear the echo? If you know your Bible, surely you hear the echo, don't you?

In the beginning. In the beginning, God. The Bible begins, Genesis chapter 1. But in John chapter 1, it's in the beginning was the word.

In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God the creator is at work, isn't he, to form the heavens and the earth and to form human beings in his own image.

He's the creator. But in John 1, we have the same creator, God, revealing himself again in power and glory and grace.

And here he is coming to make a new beginning, a new creation. And so Genesis 1, creation. John 1, a new creation. He's saying in John 1, the only parallel for what I'm about to tell you is the creation of the universe.

[3 : 40] And that is the backlog that John wants us to see in the coming of this baby lying in a manger. Echoing the creation of the universe at the beginning of time.

Here is the creator God at work in his fallen world to recreate man. And four men and women are fresh in his image.

And that new humanity that God here in Christ is setting about creating consists in verse 13 of those who are born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God.

Now that is the point of the description of Christ as the word. We often look at verse 1, let me read to you verse 1. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. And what preachers often do is they often want to say, well, John is talking about here a means of communication. A means of self-expression. A means of revelation.

[4 : 46] So in the same way that my words this morning reveal what I'm thinking, and what I'm speaking to you reveals what's going on inside, they communicate a message to you.

And that is true. That is what John is saying in one way about the Lord Jesus. That Jesus is the word.

Jesus is the one who reveals. He manifests what God wants to say to human beings. It's the revelation of God in all his glory. But the word in John 1 is much, much more than that. Because do you remember in Genesis chapter 1, how did God create? Do you remember that? How did God create? He spoke, didn't he?

Catechism says God spoke all things into being by the word of his power in the space of six days and all very good. He speaks and says, let there be light.

[5 : 52] And there was light. And so we discover that the word of God is God acting in creation. And now here in the new creation, God is acting again, isn't he?

That is the significance of Jesus being called the word. The word is God in action. God bringing the world into being by his word.

And here in Christ, God is bringing in a new world. A new age. God is bringing a new humanity into being. As he sends his son forth from the heavens.

And so John is preparing you and I for the fact that in Christ's coming, God is beginning to do something of majestic proportions. And that is what we need to grasp.

That the baby in the manger is the living God acting in his world. There's the same dynamic in that little baby.

[7 : 02] As when God called out into the darkness. And commanded light to come forth. That when he spoke and created the universe.

That same authority. That same creation power. Is there in this tiny little baby. That's what John is saying to us.

It's a very remarkable thing. That as the only begotten son was the agent of creation. Verse 3. All things were made through him. And without him was not anything made that was made.

So the only begotten son. Is the agent of the creation. But of the new creation too.

It is he who invades this fallen world. And gives life and light and hope. And this Jesus is the baby in the manger.

[8 : 07] Now do you notice how John describes Christ as the word. There's kind of four areas that he does that. He describes him.

First of all in relation to time. And then in relation to God. And then in relation to the universe. And then in relation to humanity.

So can you see first of all. He describes the word in relation to time. In the beginning.

Was the word. He is eternal. That's the significance of this phrase. John is saying.

That he had no beginning. While other forms and other things had a beginning. The son of God was eternal. The word was eternal.

[9 : 06] When time began. Christ was there. For all eternity. And John is emphasizing. That the baby born in Bethlehem. Had existed with the father.

Through all eternity. So this beginning of days. In Bethlehem. Was not the beginning of days for him. He was.

When the beginning came. And from all eternity. He had existed. With the father. So his relationship to time.

Is he is eternal. And that's really important. Because only God is eternal. Do you remember the catechism again? What is God? God is infinite. Eternal. This baby in Bethlehem.

Has the very characteristic. Has the very attributes. Of the Godhead. Here is the eternal son. The eternal word. But secondly.

[10 : 07] He describes the word in relationship to the Godhead. So can you see verse one again? In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. God. Notice.

The two things he says there. It's not only that he was in the beginning. And the word was God. But the word was with God. And that demonstrates to us. That the word.

The son. The Christ. He has a separate entity. A separate personality. Within the Godhead. He was with God.

God. But you must understand that. He was a kind of percentage of God. Or part of God. He is a separate personality.

Within the Godhead. He is distinct from the Father. And yet he is one with the Father. So God the Son is a distinct person. A distinct being.

[11 : 05] Yet he has all the attributes. And all the essence of the Godhead. The word was God. What does that do to our worship this Christmas?

Well it means we won't patronize him. It means we won't lullabies him. That it is God in the manger. And so we will bow down before him.

And that is the significance of Christmas. Here in the manger. It is the eternal God himself.

Co-equal with the Father.

Having come down to be man. Third way he describes. The word is he talks about him in relation to the universe. Doesn't he? Look at verse 3.

All things were made through him. And without him was not anything made that was made. Again.

[12:12] You've got the language. All the way through. In verse 3, 4 and 5. The language of Genesis 1. The language of God. The language of God.

The language of God. The language of beginning. The language of made. The language of life. And light. And darkness. And so on. And so now he who was the creator of the universe.

Has come. To be creator again. In his own world. To recreate. And reform. Men and women. Into the image of God. Who have turned from him.

In. Rebellion. and so in relationship to the universe he is its creator do you grasp that? Lo within a manger lies he who built the starry skies must lead us to worship in ecstasy isn't it?

that God the creator of the ends of the earth is a babe in a manger fourthly in relation to men look he is the life giver look at verse 4 in him was life and the life was the light of men so John is telling us something here which is mind bending he's telling us that Christ is not only the creator the agent of creation at the beginning but he's the animator he's the way that life came through to us that where there was life life came through Christ and so God called didn't he inanimate creation into being God formed mountains and seas and dry land but then he brought life and where did that life come from?

[14:12] that life came from the Lord Jesus it came from Christ in him was life the simple fact is this there is no life outside of Jesus Christ that applies to physical life as well as spiritual life it may well be that John's concentration in his gospel is on spiritual life but physical life is exactly the same it is in Christ and so if you have life this morning if you are alive this morning some of you don't look like you're alive but you have life this morning because it has come through the Lord Jesus he is the animator of creation that's not a very good way of putting it the glorious truth is that John is undoubtedly using a double meaning that not only is life kind of vested in Christ in its general form but the basic meaning of life in John's gospel is spiritual life and that is found in Christ so in the deepest sense the fullest sense the life that is in him is eternal life and in giving himself to us he gives us life and that life illumines the hearts of men in him was life and the life was the light of men the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it you see what John is saying just in his opening words he's saying whichever direction you look at the baby in the manger is God the eternal creating animating Lord of life the baby in the manger is God but then he goes on to tell us that the baby in the manger is God made man the climax is in verse 14 the word became flesh the word that was in the beginning the word that was God who was with God the word who created all things became flesh and he dwelt among us full of grace and full of truth in 9 to 11 it's kind of trailed there we're told that the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world that's the world of Bethlehem in verse 10 we're told that he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him verse 11 he came to his own and his people did not receive him but the baby in the manger is God made man is taught in verse 14 most clearly and this is the mystery of the new creation that is in Christ and so in the first creation in Genesis 1

God made man to bear his image in the second creation God became man to bear our sin in the first creation God made man to bear his image in the second creation God became man to bear our sin when he says that the word became flesh he was no less God when he became flesh our Lord Jesus Christ didn't lessen his godness he was not therefore God minus something he was God together with what he had made taking on our humanity so that he who had made man now came to experience what it was like to be a man that's what the incarnation means it means that the Lord Jesus took on our flesh it means that he entered into fully what it means to be human he experienced our frailty he understood our weakness he wept with our tears he was exhausted with our tiredness he came under pressure like you and I do he experienced temptation from Satan like we do he was tested and tempted in every point as we are he was a baby boy and then an adolescent and then a full grown man and at every stage he became what he was for our sakes so that he might enter into our humanity and this is what the incarnation means it means that the Lord of glory has taken on human flesh there's not an iota of your experience which the Lord

Jesus has not entered into personally and that's what constitutes him as a saviour who understands the needs of his people the Lord Jesus has entered into every possible area of your flesh in order that he might be your saviour literally what John says there it says that he tabernacled amongst us can you see that he dwelt amongst us he was made flesh and dwelt among us verse 14 and there's no doubt a reference there isn't there to the end of Exodus where the tabernacle is set up right at the heart of the camp of Israel in the midst of God's people and in Exodus 40 when the tabernacle is established we're told that the glory of God it so filled the tabernacle that Moses couldn't enter it he couldn't get near it because the glory of God filled the tabernacle

God came down and filled his tabernacle with glory and it burned out from the tabernacle now do you see what Jesus is doing here he is coming amongst us making his flesh his tabernacle in order that out of his flesh something of the glory of God would burn and shine and that is ultimately the end of his saving ministry the Lord Jesus enters into our flesh in order that our manhood and our womanhood would be a tabernacle for his glory to shine we beheld his glory we've seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth you might remember the transfiguration where his glory bursts forth on that mountain and suddenly the veil of the Lord Jesus is torn and suddenly the glory of who he is is seen on that mountain it couldn't be contained and Peter speaking about it years later he says we beheld his glory and Jesus says this the night before he dies he says to his father the glory you have given me I have given them the glory that you have given me I have given them and that glory he came to bear in order that we might know the very glory of God shining through our human flesh it's what the purpose of his grace and salvation ultimately is it's the glory ultimately of what the angels sing the Lord Jesus through human flesh that he has redeemed and sanctified the glory of Christmas is it is possible that through your flesh the glory of Christ might shine and God became man for that that leads me to the last of the three areas the baby in the manger is God the baby in the manger is God made man and the baby in the manger is God made man for our salvation here's here's the real issue did God the son the second person of the trinity why did he become come down to be made flesh for man well it was certainly to reveal the glory of God to reveal his grace and his truth in the world but it was to deal with wasn't it two specific areas where his glory had been obscured and challenged first of all in the area of death in the world and then the area of darkness in the world so think again of Genesis 1 think of that first creation account when God spoke into the first creation do you remember what it says there was darkness over the face of the earth and that darkness there was evidence wasn't it evidence of the need for light and life and God spoke into that darkness and there was light it was waiting for God to say let there be light but here the darkness in John 1 is sinister it is an evil darkness the new element in that darkness is death and men loved darkness rather than light we're told because their deeds were evil and that is why

[24 : 28] Christ has come into the world he came to give life in him was life says John and that life is eternal life spiritual life because there was spiritual death in man and the fallen world is the shadow of death over it and Christ came in our flesh in order that he might deal with the ultimate darkness it's what John means when he says in verse 9 he says the true light which gives light to everyone who's coming to the world he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him he came to his own and his own people did not receive him so in John 1 you've got the first mystery which is the incarnation haven't you this mind bending truth that God has become man but the second mystery of John 1 is the rejection of Christ the mystery of the rejection of the son of God because he came for those who were in darkness and he came to bring light but they didn't want it they were blinded to him he came to his home he came to his own people but his own people would not receive him he was despised and rejected by those he came for what did he come to do

John tells us in verses 12 and 13 but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of God of man but of God he came to bring life to raise from spiritual death those without God and without hope but the Christ who became man who was in a tiny crib grew up to be the son of God crucified on a cross in order that by his death he might put an end to our spiritual death and raise us to spiritual life that's what's behind John's words to all who received him who believed in his name he gave power to become children of

God how does he do that well he does that by offering himself death and that's what Christmas is about really isn't it he offers us his son to all who received him and it is in Christ that there is life and

so dead sinners who sit in darkness need Christ and if Christmas for you is just some kind of nice warm fairy story you need Christ and to all who received him he gave the right to become children of God and so can I ask if you grasped that this Christmas that the eternal son of God the creator of the ends of the earth who has formed you who has made you offers himself to you he offers himself to you to come into your life and to recreate you what you need have you received him it's not enough to be religious it's not enough to align yourself with God's people it's not enough to have a reputation as a

Christian it is have you received Jesus Christ because to as many as received him he gave the right to be children of God that you might be brought to him that you might discover the mystery and glory of having the creator of the universe inhabiting your life and making it his tabernacle that was true you would go out of this church wouldn't you walking on air you would rejoice that the word became flesh and dwelt among us let's pray let's ■ of a