

John 1:1-3,14a | “The Word Became Flesh”  
*Preached on December 12, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to John 1.

We are taking a short break from the book of 1 Samuel, so that I can do a 3 week series on the birth of Jesus from the beginning of the Gospel according to John.

We will be in just the first 3 verses of John today, and also in verse 14 for a little bit.

So a short passage, but a passage of the utmost importance for understanding who Jesus is.

LET’S READ THE TEXT (1-3). *[pause]*

Let’s say people were asked to give their life stories.

Most people would start at their birth, and say something like, “I was born in 1975 in Clearfield, Pennsylvania.”

But imagine someone started off their life story by saying, “Sure, I’ll tell you my life story. In the beginning of the world...”

That would catch you off guard, and shock you, wouldn’t it?

You would think, “There’s always that one guy who does things differently, isn’t there?”

Well we see that John’s beginning of his account of Jesus is definitely different from the other gospel writers. *[pause]*

Matthew and Luke begin their accounts of Jesus with his birth.

Mark begins his account with John the Baptist and the start of Jesus’ ministry.

But John’s account is different - he begins in eternity past. *[pauseeee]*

Through the inspiration of the Spirit, John crafts his introduction with the utmost precision, depth, and beauty.

And he doesn’t ease into big topics, but he plunges us into the very depths of Christology, so that we can fully understand who Jesus is. *[pauseeee]*

*So the first thing that we will look at this morning is....*

### **I. What the Word is.**

Since John uses the title “the Word” for Jesus, then we need to understand what that means. *[pause]*

Have you ever encountered a term that you didn’t quite understand?

“Like, what is that referring to?”

*It’s not helpful if you don’t understand what’s being said. [pauseeee]*

Whenever you look into or have to know a certain topic, there are terms that you must understand.

*So if you need to know about health insurance, you have to get to know what certain terms mean like: deductible, co-payment, co-insurance, and premium.*

And then you even have to understand what things mean like: PPO or PCP. *[pause]*

*Well what does “the Word” mean?*

In the Old Testament, the word of God was the powerful, effective activity of God, as God simply spoke and the world was created.<sup>1</sup>

*But also, it was God’s Word that revealed who God was. [pause]*

Think of our words: our words communicate our thoughts and communicate who we are to others.

*Well when God spoke, He was revealing His person, character, and work, so that people could start to know Him.*

So when John calls Jesus Christ “the Word”, what’s he saying?

*He’s saying: Jesus Christ is God’s ultimate, perfect communication of Himself. [pause]*

Jesus doesn’t just show us some things *about* God, but He is truly “the Word of God”<sup>2</sup> to us. *[pause]*

*His person and work is the embodiment of God Himself revealed to the world.*

So when we hear Christ speak and see him act, we are seeing the perfect expression and revelation of God. *[pause]*

*When you look at Jesus, God is communicating, and there is no time when looking at Jesus that God isn’t revealing Himself.*

THAT’S why Jesus is called, “the Word.” *[pauseeee]*

*So that’s what the Word is, but as John starts out his book, he expands on who this Word is...*

## **II. Who the Word is. (1-3)**

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<sup>1</sup> See Genesis 1.

<sup>2</sup> See also Revelation 19:13, which calls Jesus “the Word of God”.

As I already brought out, and as John makes clear later: the Word is Jesus Christ.

But as we all know, it's one thing to know something about someone, and it's another to truly KNOW them. *[pause]*

This happens all the time in our lives.

Without meeting someone, we hear one thing about them and we make all of these assumptions and then act like we know them now.

“Oh, that guy is a jerk.” - “Oh, that lady is just all about herself.”

But do we really *know* them?

It would actually be more accurate to say, “I don't really know them at all.” *[pauseeee]*

You know, there are many, many people in this world who think they know who Jesus is, but they don't *truly* know who He is.

They may have heard one thing or a couple things about Him, and they make all of these assumptions, yet they have never gotten to know who He is. *[pause]*

Well here in the introduction of John's Gospel, John determines to tell us who Jesus is by going all the way back to the beginning.

He says, “In the beginning was the Word.” *[pause]*

What a way to start!

This ‘in the beginning’ makes us think of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

And John wants us to make that connection in our minds. *[pause]*

We are shown in Genesis 1:1 that God simply existed - He simply was there - and then he creates the universe.

Well now what's John telling us?

John says, “There in the beginning of the universe, the Word simply *was*.” *[pause]*

The Word existed.

He didn't come into existence, He just was in existence. *[pause]*

This is amazing because it reminds us that the person who we know as Jesus Christ, before he was born as a baby, existed in eternity past. *[pause]*

Think back as far as your mind can take you, and he was there.

There is no time where the Son of God did not exist.

This boggles our mind, and passes all of our understanding. *[pause]*

John is showing us that if you truly want to know who Jesus is, you cannot neglect to think about his existence before the manger...

...And if you neglect his existence before the manger, then you are not getting the full picture of who Jesus is. *[paueeeese]*

For all of us in this room, our existence began at conception.

Our history began at a finite, definite point.

If you were born in 1960, you weren't there in 1955 - it's simply a matter of fact.

But Jesus, who most scholars believe was physically born at around 6 to 4 B.C., existed before then.

Any year before then, the Word was existing.

Truly, as Jesus told us, "Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>3</sup> *[pause]*

So now as we think about Jesus' birth, which we celebrate at Christmas...

We realize that the One who always existed in eternity past entered time and was born as a baby in Bethlehem.

The one who saw all of the history of the world happen, entered into the world. *[pause]*

That right there is enough to make you marvel, but John adds more...

He says, "and the Word was with God."

This statement indicates that the Son and the Father have always had a special relationship.

It was one of eternal fellowship.

There is no time where the Son and the Father didn't have a loving relationship. *[pause]*

If someone is with God in the beginning, that demonstrates something doesn't it?

It demonstrates that they are not a part of the Creation, but also it demonstrates a loving relationship of approval. *[pause]*

The Son didn't come into existence and begin a relationship with the Father, but the Son was always with the Father in relationship.

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<sup>3</sup> John 8:58.

And so we are starting to see the intricate details and beauty of the Trinity. *[pauseeee]*

The beauty of the Trinity is that out of the perfect, loving, Trinitarian relationship, the Son, who is the Word, became flesh.

The One who was with the Father in the beginning willingly came and was born in this sin-cursed world.

That's pure love, for He didn't have to. *[pause]*

His relationship with the Father was perfect, He was always existing in eternity past...

...Yet He chose to come to this earth in order to make a way for rebels, who were us, to be forgiven of our sins. *[pauseeee]*

So there's the beauty of a perfect relationship of communion and love that flows outwards to us in love.

That's the beauty of the Father and Son's relationship, but we also see the intricate details of their relationship.

We see that the Son is not the Father, as there is a distinction.

"The Word was *with* God." *[pause]*

There's something different about them in their eternal relations, yet on the other hand, we are told next, "The Word was God."

So the Son is not the Father, yet the Son is God.

The Father is not the Son, yet the Father is God.

And then of course there's the Spirit as well, who isn't mentioned here.

This is why we as a church believe in "one God, eternally existing in three Persons."<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

We see that though the Word was with God, He is also God Himself.

His very essence and nature is God.

This means that the Son did NOT become God at some later time, but He always was and is God.

He's not even another god, but He is *the* God of the Universe. *[pauseeee]*

I know the Trinity can be hard to grasp fully, but this is what Scripture teaches and we must hold firmly to it with everything within us. *[pause]*

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<sup>4</sup> According to our church's Statement of Faith found in our Church Constitution, Section 2.01(A).

The fact that we can't fully grasp the Trinity just points us to the fact that He *is* God, for God is limitless and infinite.

**If we could comprehend God exhaustively, what would that say about God?**

Yet we can know Him from what He reveals to us and we can know Him truly, personally, and sufficiently. *[pauseee]*

**So God is both incomprehensible and knowable at the same time.**

That's why David can say in Psalm 145 that the Lord is great, and yet he can also say right after that that "his greatness is unsearchable".<sup>5</sup> *[pauseee]*

**This is God, both unfathomably amazing, and amazingly knowable to us.**

And so we learn here that "the Word" is God, and so that means everything it means to be God, Jesus Christ is.

**And that means when we think of Christ, there's always more to know of Him!** *[pauseee]*

It's so easy to think of Christmas and think only of a cute little baby and forget the magnitude of who that baby really was!

**The baby born was not just another human born, but it was the infinite and unsearchable God who became flesh and dwelt among us.**

And for all of eternity, we will be searching the depths of who He is. *[pauseee]*

Not only was the Word in the beginning with God, and the Word was God, but verse 3 says, "all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."  
*[pause]*

The Word is also the Creator. *[pause]*

**If you think about it, the Creation of the universe is one of the bedrock truths of our faith.**

It's where the Bible itself starts. *[pause]*

**The Creation of the universe explains the existence of everything we see, and it explains our own existence.**

How much more important can you get?

Well John is pointing us all the way back to the beginning, and he's saying, "Remember in the beginning how God created? Well the Word actually created the world."

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<sup>5</sup> See Psalm 145:3.

In Genesis, God spoke and things were created by His word, and now John is telling us that that creative word was the Son of God.

**Christ was the agent of Creation.**

The person of the Son is NOT an act of Creation, but the means of Creation.

Everything that exists exists because of Him, there are absolutely NO exceptions. [pause]

He didn't create out some matter that already existed, but all matter exists because He created it.

There weren't some tiny, hot particles or some atoms already existing that he worked with, but he created every tiny particle and atom. [pauseeee]

As children, we think that only God the Father created the world, but the Bible makes it clear that the whole Trinity was involved.

Paul says, "for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."<sup>6</sup>

Creation is from the Father through the Son. [pauseeee]

It's crazy that secular scientists and philosophers search and search for how all things exist, and John tells us the facts plainly and confidently - it was through the Word, who is Jesus Christ.

The one who created the universe was lying in a manger.

As Edward Caswall says in his Christmas carol, "Lo, within a manger lies; He who built the starry skies."<sup>7</sup> [pauseeee]

Scientists are always learning more and more about the complexity and vastness of our universe.

In fact, scientists used to believe that all of the stars in our universe were found only in the Milky Way up until the early 1920's!<sup>8</sup>

They then realized that our immense galaxy is only one of hundreds of billions of galaxies in our observable universe.

And did you hear that? That's only in our *observable* universe! [pause]

If that is but a snippet of the immensity of our universe, how much more great is the Creator!

And that Creator became flesh and dwelt among us! [pause]

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:6.

<sup>7</sup> From his Christmas Carol, "See in Yonder Manger Low."

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.livescience.com/milky-way.html>.

When Mary and Joseph looked down at baby Jesus, they were looking down at the One who made all things.

When the shepherds and the wise men looked at baby Jesus, they were looking at the One who without Him nothing was made that was made.

That's who we celebrate, rejoice, and remember at Christmastime. *[pauseeeee]*

Who was the Word?

The Word is Jesus Christ, who existed in the beginning with God, who was God, and who created all things. *[pauseeee]*

Any small view of Christ is a wrong view of Christ.

And John will not let it stand, as He goes all the way back to eternity past to explain who Christ is. *[pauseeeee]*

*That's who the Word is, but we also find...*

### **III. What the Word did. (14a)**

Something that I noticed with Christmastime is that it can easily become something sentimental and shallow for people.

It can become trivial and superficial.

There are lights and trees, decorations and silly Christmas songs.

There are toys and trinkets, hot cocoa, cookies, and the perfect family picture. *[pause]*

I'm not saying there's anything inherently wrong with these things, for I enjoy many of these things around Christmas.

But if that's all Christmas is to us, then that's extremely superficial and shallow.

If all Christmas is about is the feeling of a warm hot chocolate, a warm fireplace, a nice, picture-perfect scene next to the Christmas tree and some family traditions...

...Then we have succumbed to the world's shallow view of Christmas, and we should be alarmed by our own mindsets as Christians. *[pause]*

For if you really think about it, the truth behind Christmas is the complete opposite of shallow and superficial.

Instead, the truth of what we celebrate at Christmas is a deep, significant, and ground-shaking reality.



“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” *[pause]*

Just think of it: how much more deep, weighty, consequential, and important can you get than that? *[pause]*

That’s what we celebrate at Christmas.

**We don’t celebrate a season, we celebrate a Person.**

We celebrate, worship, rejoice, and remember how “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” *[pauseeee]*

In verses 1-3, John talked all about the Word, and then if you look down at verse 14, he picks up on this title once again when he says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” *[pause]*

The Word, who we learned all about, became flesh.

Now I already brought this up earlier, but let’s think about it deeper. *[pause]*

“The Word became flesh.”

**So that Word that we learned all about...**

The Word, who perfectly communicates and reveals God to us.

**The Word, who was in the beginning with God.**

The Word, who was God, and created everything that exists.

That very Word became flesh. *[pause]*

Just thinking about that astonishes the mind, and stirs the emotions.

**God became man.**

And this is important - He did not change or stop being God, but added humanity onto His divinity.

**This is what we call the “Incarnation”.**

The Son added human nature onto His person, so now he is one person with two natures.

He is both God and man, for the Word became flesh. *[pause]*

So we see that John’s introduction upholds both the full divinity and the full humanity of Jesus. *[pause]*

**This means that Jesus did not merely “appear” as a man, but he actually *became* flesh and blood.**

He didn't simply become a physical body, but flesh, which means all of what it means to be human, except sin.

He took on all the frailty and weaknesses of being a human, and not only the frailty and weakness of a human, but even so far as the frailty and weakness of being born as a baby in this world. *[pauseeee]*

The One through whom all Creation exists became a part of the creation.

We are so familiar with this that we aren't astonished by it: the Creator became a creature.

And through this Incarnation, "he dwelt among us". *[pause]*

The Greek word used here actually means that he "pitched his tent" or "tabernacled" among us. *[pause]*

In the Old Testament time, God's presence was in the tent of meeting or tabernacle, whereby God dwelled with His people.

Well now John is saying that God tabernacled with his people through Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

God directly, personally, and intimately entered into this world.

And in an even more personal way than in the Old Testament tent of meeting, God dwelled with His people by becoming a man. *[pauseeeee]*

There's something special about the presence of someone that makes all the difference.

I remember when my daughter was about to be born, we were sick with COVID and both Kate and I were worried that I wouldn't be able to be there for the birth.

Now I could have been there via Facetime or video, but that wouldn't have been as special to Kate as if I was there in person. *[pause]*

Likewise, if you are away from your spouse for a long period, you can video them, call them, or text them, but there's something about being present with them in person. *[pause]*

Or let's say that your child is having a big sports game, what makes them the most happy?

Is it when someone puts you on the phone to hear and see the game, or is it when you actually show up to the game, and they excitedly think, "They came! They came!"? *[pause]*

You see, with all of our technology bringing us together, there's still something missing that only our physical presence can bring.

So in a similar way, through the birth of Christ, God directly and personally dwelled on earth among mankind.

And we realize that there's something about that that resonates in our hearts, and we excitedly think, "He came! He came!" *[pauseeee]*

God has revealed Himself to us as a human, for "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

This is what we celebrate at Christmastime.

We celebrate and think on the fact that God literally got on our level and showed us, "This is who I am, if only you would 'come and see.'" *[pauseeee]*

But why did the Word become flesh and dwell among us?

Was it simply ONLY to reveal Himself more fully?

Was it just to say, "Hi."?

Was it just to show off His power and say, "Well, that was neat and fun to do."?

No, it was ultimately for the purpose of redemption.

A couple chapters later from this, we hear that famous verse, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."<sup>10</sup>

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, so that we could be saved through Him. *[pauseeee]*

You see, because of our sin (and we all have sinned) we stand condemned since we sinned against a holy God and deserve eternal death.

But out of love, God sent His Son to take on flesh and die for our sins on the Cross. *[pause]*

We needed a substitute to take our place and pay the penalty for our sin debt, and the substitute had to be perfect.

He had to be God in order to be sinless, and He had to be human in order to represent us on the Cross.

So Jesus died and rose again, and then ascended back to the Father.

And now all we have to do is trust in what He has done for us and we are forgiven and given eternal life. *[pause]*

This was his mission and he accomplished the mission to perfection, and it all started with the truth behind Christmas - the Word became flesh. *[pause]*

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior?

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<sup>9</sup> An allusion to John 1:46.

<sup>10</sup> John 3:16.

If you trust Him today, the Bible promises that you will be forgiven of all your sin and given eternal life. *[pauseeee]*

What an amazing couple of verses that we looked at this morning.

*They are jam-packed with importance and depth, and they show us that...*

**The wonder of Christmas is that God Himself (the Son) became flesh and dwelled among us! *[pause]***

You know, when you have children, one of the most exciting things to witness is their wonder at Christmas.

*They stand in amazement at all the Christmas lights they see as you drive around.*

They are fascinated by the Christmas tree with all of its ornaments.

*And the look on their faces as they see the pile of Christmas presents brings a smile to your face.*

But the true, deep, and lasting wonder of Christmas is that God Himself (the Son) became flesh and dwelled among us.

*How else can we respond but with wonder and amazement, worship and adoration? *[pause]**

Is that *your* response?

*Don't let this Christmas season be just another Christmas filled with only the shallow things that come with this time of year...*

But let this season point you back to the truth of what we celebrate at Christmas, which is the deep, significant, and ground-shaking reality that...

*“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”*

And when you truly believe that, what else can you do but worship in wonder?