



Text: John 1:1-5¹

Series: *Introducing Jesus* – John’s Christmas Gospel

Title: Part 1 -- Jesus, The Word of God

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“Who is Jesus Christ?” It’s a question to which there are a host of answers because Jesus is just that kind of person. Some of the answers are good; some of them not. Kevin DeYoung is an evangelical blogger in the United States he identified at least sixteen different “Jesus’s” that he’s found in North American culture. Here are some of them, see if you recognize any of these...

There's Therapist Jesus—who helps us cope with life's problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves. ...

There's Hippie Jesus—who teaches everyone to give peace a chance, imagines a world without religion, and helps us remember that "all you need is love."

There's Yuppie Jesus—who encourages us to reach our full potential, reach for the stars, and buy a boat.

There's Spirituality Jesus—who hates religion, churches, pastors, priests, and doctrine, and would rather have people out in nature, finding "the god within" while listening to ambiguously spiritual music.

There's Platitude Jesus—good for Christmas specials, greeting cards, and bad sermons, inspiring people to believe in themselves....

There's Guru Jesus—a wise, inspirational teacher who believes in you and helps you find your center.

There's Good Example Jesus—who shows you how to help people, change the planet, and become a better you.

There's Boyfriend Jesus—who wraps his arms around us as we sing about his intoxicating love

There's Touchdown Jesus—who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls. [and possibly Grey Cups]²

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But then, DeYoung notes, “there’s Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.”

“Who is this man, Jesus Christ?” Each of these attempts at answering that question contain some element of truth. Jesus is a counsellor in our confusion, he’s a friend in our loneliness, he’s an example in our living, he’s a teacher and a guide, he’s the lover of our souls, he’s the source of power for our lives, he’s all that but he’s so much more!

Each of these views of Jesus brings him into our world. They are “our own person Jesus.” But John begins his Gospel by bring us into His world. The truth about Jesus he presents us with helps to balance these over-personalized views of Jesus.

I invite you to meet “Jesus, the ‘all that and so much more’” this morning as I read from John’s Gospel, chapter one, verses one to five and verse fourteen. This is God’s holy, inspired and authoritative Word; I invite you to hear it with holy reverence and respond to it with living faith. I’m reading this morning from the English Standard Version of the Bible. John wrote...

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

Let’s quickly get some things out of the way.

Who is “the Word” to whom John is referring? Verse 14 tells us that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” and that he was “full of grace and truth.” Verse 17 tells us that “grace and truth” came through Jesus Christ. The obvious answer: **Jesus Christ is the Word.**

Why does John call him “the Word”? Verse 18 partially answers the question. Jesus is the Word because he makes God known to us. He communicates God to us. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews thought along the same lines when he wrote...



**“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”
Hebrews 1:1-2**

Jesus is God’s speech to us. But there is a longer answer to the question. John calls Jesus “the Word” because he finds Him speaking every time he finds God active in the Old Testament. He found Jesus present at the beginning of all things when **“God said” (Gen 1:3)** and creation came into existence by God’s word. The psalmist declared...

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made” Psalm 33:6

At creation the Word was there! Jesus was present.

And John saw Jesus “the Word” present in the ministry of the prophets of the Old Testament. When...

“the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest” Ezekiel 1:3

Jesus was there. And Jesus was present when the “the word of the LORD” came to **Isaiah (38:4)** and **Jeremiah (1:4)** and every other prophet who spoke for God. John calls Jesus “the Word” because God has always been speaking and Jesus has always been his agent of revelation.

John never again refers to Jesus as “the Word” but as you read his Gospel there is a continual reference to the words of Jesus being the words of God. John said of Jesus’ teaching...

“For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.” John 3:34

And Jesus said of his own teaching...

“the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.” John 14:24

Why does John refer to Jesus as “the Word”? It’s simply because...

Jesus is the voice of God!

Everything that Jesus is, everything that Jesus does and everything that Jesus speaks is the voice of God to us.

So if Jesus is the voice of God then **what is God saying to us in Jesus?**



This introduction to John's Gospel could be mined for truth almost without end but this morning I only want to share five "words" that I hear God speaking in Jesus.

First of all I hear that ...

God is saying in Jesus that he has always been Jesus-like!

"In the beginning was the Word..." John 1:1

John begins his Gospel about Jesus in a noticeably different way from the other three Gospel writers. Matthew begins by establishing the human genealogy of **"Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."** (Matthew 1:1) Luke begins his Gospel by laying out his purpose to write an orderly narrative of the life of Jesus based on eye-witness accounts. (Luke 1:1-4) Mark comes the closest to John's introduction by opening his Gospel with the announcement: **"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."** (Mark 1:1) But then Mark jumps immediately into the story of John the Baptist. Each of these three writers is concerned to plant Jesus squarely in the life and times of first century Palestine surrounded by human witnesses who are able to authenticate his claim to be the Christ, the fulfillment of the prophecies about the coming Messiah. Each of these writers begins their Gospels by rooting Jesus in history.

But that is not what John does. Instead of pulling Jesus down into human history, John lifts him far above and beyond; he raises Jesus from the dust of Palestine and even beyond the stars, into the time before all time and he roots Jesus there, in eternity! Jesus' significance is not merely his ability to be a powerful worker of mighty deeds. Nor is it his wisdom as a great teacher. Jesus is significant because he is the eternal God become flesh!³

The first words of John's Gospel are a conscious reference to the first words of the Bible. In the Book of Genesis we read...

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1

Notice the parallel position of words. John places "the Word" where we would expect to read "God." John is telling us that Jesus shares an eternal existence with God. Jesus is intertwined with God from all eternity. When the beginning began, Jesus was already there with God. When you link this reality with Jesus declaration...

"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9

³ Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 62.



we end up with something truly wonderful.

The significance of this opening phrase of John is that the God who speaks in the Old Testament, who [called the universe into existence by his word], and inspired and moved the prophets, was none other than the God known in Jesus Christ. God has not changed or evolved. Jesus Christ was always at the heart of God.⁴

If you've ever felt remote from the God portrayed in the Old Testament, remember this truth: "In the beginning was the Word..." If you've ever feared that God was a warrior god just waiting to catch you and run you through with his sword of vengeance, remember "In the beginning was the Word..." And please understand, it's not that Jesus will stand between you and an angry God to protect you, it's that God the Father is a Father like Jesus! He's never been anything other than a God of compassion and love and holiness, just like Jesus!

What is God saying to us in Jesus? Well, **secondly**...

God is saying to us in Jesus that he is eternally relational

"and the Word was with God" John 1:1

The Greek word translated here as "with" is the word, *pros*, which usually means "toward." Some Bible scholars suggest that it pictures two people turned toward one another, eye to eye and face to face.⁵ One scholar suggests that the word carries the sense of being at home and he translated the phrase as "the Word was in God's home."⁶ Another Bible scholar points out that this word, *pros*, came to be used by the New Testament writers as a synonym for the word "with" but only in situations that involve people.⁷ For example, when the Apostle Paul speaks of dying and going to be with Jesus he refers to death as being...

"away from the body and at home with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

This is a word about profound relationship and what it tells us that the Word was a person in relationship with God. The Son and the Father have been in relationship since before "the beginning" of the universe. Deep personal relationship is an essential part of God's nature.

A week or so ago I got my snow tires put on my car. I walked into my local tire dealer and the smell of tires immediately reminded me of home. Let me explain.

⁴Bruce Milne, *The Message of John : Here Is Your King! :with Study Guide*, The Bible speaks today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 33.

⁵ Merrill C. Tenney, "John" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 9: John and Acts*, Zondervan, 1981, p. 28

⁶ Baskil Atkinson, *The Theology of Prepositions*, as quoted in Milne, p. 33.

⁷ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, InterVarsity Press, 1991, p. 116.



My dad sold tires. In my early years our family car was the company car my dad was given so that he could travel and sell tires to local tire shops in the Ottawa valley. The smell of tires was always present in it. It was always on his clothes. He would often have a couple of tires in the basement of our home that he was planning to drop off to some garage. Some of my fondest childhood memories are of the days when my dad would let me skip school and he would take me on his trips to some of the local garages around Ottawa. He would buy me a Pepsi in one of those old glass pop bottles out of the coolers in the service stations and it was great simply because I was “with” my dad! The smell of tires brings back all those memories of time with my dad.

Our God is a Father who invites us to experience the beauty of a relationship with him. John tells us that by believing in Jesus, the Word, we are given...

“the right to become children of God” John 1:12

Jesus tells us that...

“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” John 14:23

Let me encourage you: spend time with your heavenly Father! Get to know him. Let him in close. Go for a drive with him, buy a Pepsi and sit with him looking out over the fields. Walk out into a starlit, snowy night and just be with him. Open his Word and read it as his love letter to you.

What is God saying to us in Jesus? **Thirdly,**

God is saying that he has come to us in Jesus

“and the Word was God.” John 1:1

John is very careful in the way he phrases this. He doesn't say “God was the Word.” That would mean that there was nothing outside of the Word that was God. In other words, there would be no God the Father separate from God the Son. By saying “the Word was God” John allows for the Father and the Son to be separate person who are equal in deity. They share a common nature as God and are both to be equally worshipped and honoured.

The standard translation of this phrase is solid even though there are various groups that try to weaken it. It's declares a truth that is backed up by the number of times in John's Gospel that Jesus is referred in terms that ascribe deity to him. Jesus declared...

“My Father is working until now, and I am working.” John 5:17



John tells us that when Jesus' enemies heard this they tried all the harder to kill him because...

**“he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”
John 5:18**

On another occasion Jesus declared...

“I and the Father are one.” John 10:30

And those same opponents who knew what Jesus was saying and hated him for it, picked up stones to kill him because they knew he was claiming equality with God.

And in the very final scene of John's Gospel, the resurrected Jesus is addressed by the disciple Thomas as...

“My Lord and My God!” John 20:28

And Jesus blesses him for his insight!

John's astounding declaration is that Jesus is God come to us in the flesh. It's the truth that we celebrate at Christmas; the birth of “Emmanuel, God with us.” In Jesus, God walked among us. When Jesus spoke, God spoke. When Jesus healed, God healed. When Jesus wept, God wept. And when Jesus died on the cross to bear our punishment for sin, Paul tells us that...

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself” 2 Corinthians 5:19

The cross was God at work, saving us, redeeming us, taking upon himself the very punishment for sin that he demanded of us. Redemption is not about the world saving itself; it's about God coming to our rescue in Jesus!

We humans have a preoccupation with saving ourselves. During the recent crisis in the Gulf of Mexico brought on by the oil spill from the BP drilling rig the news was full of stories about what we had to do to save the planet from destruction. Dispersant chemicals were dumped in great quantities into the gulf; great plans were put into place for booms that could contain the oil and for ships that could collect the oil from the water.

But suddenly the attention shifted to stories about the amazing action of microbes in the water that were naturally breaking down the oil. It was noted that the numbers of these microbes were growing at an astounding rate in the Gulf and even a new deep sea microbe was discovered. And the rough seas that seemed to frustrate the attempts to collect the oil actually helped the microbes by oxygenating the water and encouraging their action. In the end, God provided a



solution to our human ineptitude in form of a microscopic organism that consumed the oil and rendered it harmless. In the cross, Jesus has absorbed our sin, and rendered it harmless. All our efforts at self-salvation fail, but God came to us in Christ and saved us from ourselves!

What is God saying in Jesus? **Fourthly,**

God is saying that the Creator has a name, and it's Jesus!

“All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:3

When I was in youth ministry back in Toronto I took the youth group on an annual eight day canoe trip into the lakes and woods of Ontario. On the Sunday of the trip we would always spend time in worship and we would talk together from the Bible about the importance of enjoying God's creation in a responsible way. Creation-keeping is important to believers in Jesus because we know the name of the Creator.

Bruce Milne, a pastor and Bible scholar, refers to these opening words of John's Gospel as “a ‘green’ statement.” He wrote...

That species are being exterminated, forests denuded, soil eroded, rivers and seas polluted and the ozone layer depleted, contradicts the creative action of our Lord Jesus Christ who called all things into being. Although affected by fallenness, they remain his personal handiwork. A lack of concern for our natural environment is a sign of a limited view of Christ, or of a spirituality which is more spiritual than Jesus and in need of balance and healing.⁸

But we need to make sure that we derive our Creation theology from God's revelation to us in Jesus and not from the creation theologies offered by the world around us.

On Remembrance Day this year I was listening to a service of remembrance in which the chaplain closed his prayer by addressing his prayer to the Creator. It's becoming an increasingly common way to refer to God in public. God is the Creator, but for Christians the Creator has a name, and it's “Jesus.” I raise this point because we are drifting toward a generic “god-ism” in our culture and I'm concerned that we who are believers in Jesus need to be careful to be faithful to him in our language about his creation and his redemption. Sadly, I distinctly remember the same chaplain at last year's Remembrance ceremony concluding his prayer by acknowledging that while others address God by many names, he

⁸ Bruce Milne, *The Message of John : Here Is Your King! :with Study Guide*, The Bible speaks today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 41.



knew God as “my Lord Jesus Christ.” That was good! You see, my Creator tells me that my prayer to him is to be shaped by his name. Jesus said...

“Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” John 14:13-14

Praying in Jesus’ name certainly means more than tacking his name on to the end of our prayers. It means praying in a way that agrees with Jesus’ will, but it also means praying in a way that honours Jesus so that as he answers our prayer the Father is glorified in the Son. Generic “Creator” prayers don’t set the stage for the glory of the Father and the Son.

What is God saying to us in Jesus? **Finally,**

God is saying that the world has a hope, and his name is Jesus

“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.” John 1:4-5

“Darkness” is a recurring theme in John’s Gospel and John uses “darkness” to picture our human condition apart from God. He uses it to describe the world’s opposition to Jesus who is the light.

For example, John tells us that Nicodemus visited Jesus “by night” (John 3:2) and then concludes the story of Jesus’ meeting with Nicodemus by declaring that...

“the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.” John 3:19

The most poignant example of John’s use of light and darkness to picture our spiritual condition is found in his story about Jesus and Judas, the one who betrayed him to the cross. As they ate together at the Last Supper, Judas resolved in his heart to betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities. Jesus knew Judas’ heart. He handed Judas a piece of bread and said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” (John 13:27). And John tells us...

“So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.” John 13:30

And then comes the cross. But the darkness could not overcome it. And then, three days later, blazing light! Jesus shines!

During the 2008 presidential race in the United States, John McCain was asked by Time magazine to share his "personal journey of faith." In his article McCain



shared a story of something that occurred while he was a prisoner of war in Vietnam. He wrote:

When I was a prisoner of war in Vietnam...my captors would tie my arms behind my back and then loop the rope around my neck and ankles so that my head was pulled down between my knees. I was often left like that throughout the night. One night a guard came into my cell. He put his finger to his lips signaling for me to be quiet and then loosened my ropes to relieve my pain. The next morning, when his shift ended, the guard returned and retightened the ropes, never saying a word to me.

A month or so later, on Christmas Day, I was standing in the dirt courtyard when I saw that same guard approach me. He walked up and stood silently next to me, not looking or smiling at me. Then he used his sandaled foot to draw a cross in the dirt. We stood wordlessly looking at the cross, remembering the true light of Christmas, even in the darkness of a Vietnamese prison camp.⁹

**“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”
John 1:5**

Darkness is not only a symbol of rebellion against God, but the Bible also uses it to describe the coldness of death. As I read John’s declaration that the light “shines” and cannot be overcome by the darkness my mind turned to a several people in this church who are facing life and death battles with disease. Their stories break my heart; their courage humbles me; their faith challenges me. As I thought about them and the battles they face John’s words virtually leapt off the page for me: ***Because of Jesus the darkness of disease and death cannot extinguish the light of life ... Jesus shines!*** I thought of those wonderful words of hope in the 23rd Psalm...

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” Psalm 23:4

My Bible has an alternative translation for “the valley of the shadow of death.” It’s...

“the valley of deep darkness”

“Even though I walk through the valley of deep darkness, I will fear to evil for you are with me, AND YOU SHINE!”

⁹ Copyright © 2010 by the author or Christianity Today International/ PreachingToday.com.
<http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2008/december/1120108.html>



In the valley of deep darkness, the Light shines, and the darkness cannot overcome it! Disease and death will not have the last word because Jesus is the light that no darkness can overcome. Sin and rebellion will not defeat the Light.

It can't! God said so, and he said it in Jesus. Amen.

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** Here I Am to Worship
- **Christmas Benediction**