

In the Beginning Was the Word (Part 1)

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[0:00] John chapter 1. If you don't have a Bible, there are Bibles in the pews and I encourage you to use those.

If you don't own a Bible, then I want you to take that Bible home with you today as our gift from our church to you in hopes that you'll continue to be reading the Word of God.

It's good to be back in our place of worship at our sanctuary after last week being out at Sunfest.

That was a great time. And if you were out there, you know that we sort of began an introduction to this book, where we'll be for the foreseeable future for some time, that Jesus Christ, and through Him, we know what God is like.

And so we'll continue with that study, and we're going to be going through these first five verses for some time. If you would stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together.

We're going to read verses 1 through 5, though the text that I'll be preaching on this morning will be verses 1 and 2. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[1:26] He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. 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. May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? Something I've learned about being a pastor is that you make a lot of introductions as a pastor.

You introduce yourself to visitors, to new guests who come to the church. You introduce yourself to family members of church members at funerals, at weddings.

You know, you don't know them, but you know their family, and so there's a lot of introductions that take place in those situations, on hospital visitations. There's also introducing new members to the church.

So when we have new members come forward, even though for the most part everybody already knows who they are, you have to make that official, formal introduction in asking the church to receive them as members.

[2:49] We also, as pastors, do that a lot with newborn babies as they make their first time into the sanctuary, even though, again, a lot of people know that they've been born, to actually make that official introduction through dedications and whatnot.

Also, there are times where there are guest speakers, and so you'll see the pastor come up, and he'll give a brief introduction of the speaker who is about to preach that morning. And also, case in point right now, every sermon has an introduction that says, you know, this is the sermon, this is basically what this message is going to be about, and hopefully piques the interest of those who hear it so that they'll continue to listen and not squeeze in a quick nap.

Most importantly, a pastor introduces people to Jesus Christ. That's, I think, what a pastor's job is. A pastor's job is to introduce people to the gospel, the good news concerning Jesus Christ.

A typical introduction seeks to answer three questions. Who, where, and what? Who, where, and what?

Who is this person? Where does this person come from? What does this person do? Or what has this person done? So, for an example, an extreme example of this would be a boxing match, where you have, like, Michael Buffer, who introduces in this corner, from such and such a place, weighing a certain amount of pounds, with a record of 25-0, 20 by knockout.

[4:38] Evander, the real deal Holyfield, or Iron Mike Tyson, or Sugar Ray Leonard, right? They have some kind of a nickname in there that makes them seem more imposing.

Smoking Joe Frazier. We don't make those kinds of introductions all the time, but you see, they answer that question. Who is this person? Where is this person from? What has this person done? And if you pay attention to good introductions, you'll notice that they all seek to answer those three questions. And then, once those three questions are answered, I think they naturally combine to give an answer to why.

I know who this person is. I know where they're from. I know what they've done. So, that gives me a reason why I should listen to what this person has to say. And in the context, in these first 18 verses of John, John the Apostle introduces his readers to Jesus Christ.

And in so doing, he answers these three questions about him. He tells us where Jesus came from. He tells us who Jesus is. And he tells us what Jesus does.

[5:48] What Jesus has done. This is quite an introduction. If what John says about Jesus in these verses are true, then let me tell you, that changes everything.

That changes absolutely everything about what we view and how we think about the world in which we live. It changes absolutely everything.

Where did Jesus come from? Who is he? What has he done? What does he do? Well, John gives a clear answer, and that's the main idea for this morning's message, and it will also be for next week as well.

Jesus Christ is the eternal, everlasting, life-giving Word of God. Now, as we spoke about last week, a lot of different people say a lot of different things about who Jesus is, where Jesus came from, and what Jesus has done.

As a result, there's a lot of confusion in our world about who Jesus is, about what Jesus has done, about where this man came from.

[7:08] So for Christians, we must know that because there's so much confusion, we have to know the right answers. We must know how to answer these questions, not just for ourselves, but for others.

But when we answer these questions for ourselves, let me tell you, it will affect our witness in this world. And it will affect the way that we worship Him.

I want to read Matthew 28, 16-20. This is the Great Commission. Now, before Jesus ascends into heaven, after His resurrection, when His followers are gathered, it says there, I want to start reading in verse 17, And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age. So, you see, we must know these things about Jesus because when we do, we will not doubt.

[8:19] We will worship. And in worshiping Him, we will seek to make Him known with the lives that He's given us to live.

That's what this means for you as a believer. Now, what about what does this mean for you who is an unbeliever? Well, I speak this to you in love and in care, but what it means is that you've been wrong.

It means that your understanding of the reason and purpose of your existence has been completely wrong. Your determination of what is right and what is wrong, your determination of what is valuable and what is worth pursuing has been wrong.

If Jesus is who John says that He is in this introduction, then the only appropriate response that anyone can give to Christ is to bow down before Him and worship, nothing else will do.

We will begin examining what John has to say about Jesus in this introduction in these first couple of verses and we'll cover the rest next week. But John begins here by answering this first question of where.

[9:43] And then he answers the question of who. And then he answers the question of what in verses 3 through 5. And that will be the theme of next Sunday's message.

And he does this intentionally. He starts with the where. Then he goes to who. And then he goes to what. Because once we know where Jesus comes from, then we can better understand who He is. And when we know where He comes from and who He is, then we will better understand the importance of what it is that He has done. Of what it is that He came to do.

So first, let's focus on the question of where. Where did Jesus come from? And John answers that question emphatically in verse 1 and in verse 2.

The Word of God is eternal. In the beginning, he says, was the Word. And the Word was with God. [10:43] And then in verse 2, he says it again. He was in the beginning with God. John begins his Gospel in a different way from that of Mark and Matthew and Luke.

Mark begins his Gospel with the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. Matthew and Luke go back further than Mark. Luke begins with an account of Jesus' incarnation.

Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus going back through his ancestry pointing out that he has descended from the royal line of David. John goes back even further than them.

He goes back before his birth. He goes back before his lineage. He gives a full explanation of where exactly Jesus has come from. Yes, he grew up in Nazareth.

Yes, he was born in Bethlehem. But his origins go much further back than that. A good friend of mine in college, he was a pastor's kid.

[11:48] And his father had pastored in Georgia, in Alabama, and was presently serving in Iowa at the time that he was my roommate. And he did not like Iowa.

And so people would ask him, I don't know, Iowa's fine to me, I guess. But people would ask him, where are you from? And he'd say, I'm from Alabama. And we would get in these arguments.

Me and him, I'd be like, no, you're not from Alabama. You're from Iowa. You're like, no, I'm from Alabama. I said, well, that was where you were born, but your physical address is Iowa.

Like for me, when I go out of town nowadays and people ask me where I'm from, I'm proud to say that I'm from Oklahoma. Right? I even got a Barshan shirt out at Sunfest to prove it.

But if they ask me where I originate from, then the answer is Kansas. Jesus was from Nazareth.

[12:53] He was born in Bethlehem. But his origins are unlike any other persons. As clearly stated by John in this opening verse, we see that the word has always been.

Always been. That word that John uses for beginning is arche. In the Greek, that means source. It means origin. Or it can also be used for a ruler or one who is in authority.

And let me tell you that all of those words describe Jesus. And that will become clear as we go through chapter and verse the Gospel of John each Sunday and the days to come.

But here, R.K. refers to the beginning of all things. As depicted in the very first book, in the very first chapter, in the very first verse of the Bible.

In the beginning it says, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters and God said, let there be light.

[14:08] And there was light. So here, we see that before there was anything, before even time was in existence.

There was God. And God alone. The Bible says that God is one in three persons. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And I think here in this verse, we see all three persons of the Godhead. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God speaking things into existence.

They're all here. They've always been. Jesus Christ, the Word of God, has always been in existence.

Before the heavens and the earth were created, He was in existence. He is not a created being, but preexistent.

[15:09] He is eternal, existing with God as God from forever. The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language and so there are some things that while we don't lose them completely in translation, there are some distinguishing factors between the words that we miss out sometimes in our English translations.

And so was, that word there in the Greek is emi. And it's in the imperfect tense. And so what that is saying is it's describing a continuous action in the past.

He always was. It's what John is saying here. There never was a time when Jesus was not. He always was. Never a time when He was not.

And let me tell you, there was a time for me and for each of us here when we were not. Right?

There was a time when we were not.

Before you were conceived, you was not. Genomai is another Greek word and that refers to things that come into existence.

[16:30] And John could have used that word if it was true of Jesus Christ. Christ. And what He would have done so, if He had done so, it would have implied that there was a time when Jesus was not.

But He doesn't use that word because there never was a time when Jesus was not. He uses this word *emi* to stress the fact that the Word of God has always been.

Never a time when He was not. He was not. He was not. Additionally, since your conception, you and I, all of us, have been in a state of becoming.

We change. I've noticed over the years as I've seen pictures of myself that my forehead has grown. I'm changing.

And I don't always like it. but God never changes. God never changes. Though yes, Jesus added humanity to his deity at his incarnation, and yes, he grew from a baby to a child to a man, he never for one second ever ceased being God. And after his death and resurrection, he'll never stop being the God-man.

[17:52] God, fully God, fully man. There never was a point when Jesus was not. John adds to this when he says that the Word was with God.

The Word was face to face with God. That's literally what it means there in the Greek, *prostan theon*. Literally, the Word was face to face with God, describing their close, intimate fellowship. A few years ago, my nephew came to visit Danny and I and stayed with us, and he asked, he was playing some video games, and he asked, hey, is it okay if I FaceTime a friend of mine? You guys know what FaceTime is? I'm sure most of you know. That's where you can get on the phone, and you know, it's kind of like the Jetsons, where you see the person's face, you talk to them in real time, right? And so I said, sure, I guess that's fine, right? I'm going to be in the room with you, and you know I'm a pastor, so I expect you're not going to do anything strange and make me feel awkward around you. And so he's like, okay, and so he bunched up a blanket next to him on the couch, and it was a girl that he called, and he put the phone there next to him, and they were FaceTiming. But it's the strangest thing, because they hardly ever talk to one another.

Every once in a while, she was on her computer doing something and watching a movie, and he was playing video games, and like once every five minutes, they'd say, hey, what about such and such at school? And he's like, yeah, that was dumb, and then that was it. That was the weirdest thing.

That's not the kind of face-to-face communication and fellowship that John is describing here between the Word of God and God the Father. This means that they existed, the Word existed in close, the closest possible fellowship that there is with God the Father. Not only did they exist in perfect, unbroken fellowship, but the rest of verse 1 says that they were one in essence. The Word was God, and there'll be more on that in a moment. Then in verse 2, in case there is any confusion, John makes it very clear, if there is those who are not listening who wanted to toy with his words in what he said in verse 1, in verse 2, he says precisely what he meant. That he was in the beginning. That's important. Why is that so important? If Jesus Christ is God, then what he said and did is of the utmost importance, because his words would then be God's words. His actions would then be God's actions.

[20:44] Isn't this what Jesus clearly stated about himself? John 8, 53 through 59, as he's being challenged by some of the Pharisees, and they say to him, are you greater than our father Abraham who died and the prophets died? Who do you make yourself out to be? Jesus answered, if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my father who glorifies me, of whom you say he is our God. But you have not known him.

I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it, and he was glad.

So the Jews said to him, you are not yet 50 years old, and you have seen Abraham? And Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am, using the covenant name of God. I am.

And so they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out from the temple. They clearly understood what Jesus was saying about himself in that situation. Another moment, John 14, 8 and 9. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough. And Jesus said to him, I have been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. John 17, during Jesus' high priestly prayer in 25 and 26.

O righteous Father, he prays, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I have made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. Jesus has always been, and he will always be. That answers the where question. So now, John moves on to the who question. And he answers it by saying the Word of God is God. And there at the end of verse 1, he says, and the Word was God. The concept of the Word, and another Greek word for us to consider, logos, contains a whole lot of meaning for both Jews and for Gentiles. To Greeks, to Greek philosophers, the logos was a term that they used to describe an impersonal, abstract, creative force that was the source of reason and wisdom. To the Greeks then, John presented Jesus as the personification and embodiment of that logos. Reason and wisdom, he says, find their origin in Him. He is the source of it.

[23:52] He is the source of reason. He is the source of wisdom. He is the source of all truth. That's why we'll see Jesus saying many times before He makes a statement, truly, truly, I say to you, meaning this is the truth.

What I say to you is true, because He is the source of all truth. However, logos was not just a Greek concept. The Word of the Lord was a significant aspect in the Old Testament, a significant theme as well. It was well known by the Jews. The Word of the Lord was the expression of His divine power and wisdom. And so we see through Scripture that the Word of God reveals God. Proverbs 2.6, for the Lord gives wisdom from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. So we think knowledge and understanding of what? Well, it's knowledge and understanding of God. Knowledge and understanding of creation. Knowledge and understanding of His revelation. Knowledge and understanding of salvation.

It was the Word of God that spoke everything into existence. God spoke and there was light. God spoke and the universe and all that it contains came into existence. God formed man out of the dust and He breathed life into Him. And words cannot be spoken without breath. It was the Word of God that revealed the mind of God, revealed the desires of God, and the character of God. The Word introduced the Abrahamic covenant to the Abrahamic covenant to the people of God. It was through the Word of God that Israel received the Ten Commandments. It was the Word of God that reveals His will, gives His counsel, warns, and executes His judgment.

It's hard to know a person apart from what they express of themselves through words. I mean, we can tell some things by their appearance, by their body language, but we don't really know what kind of character they have, what kind of desires they possess, what they want, unless they express those things through their words.

Words reveal thoughts. They express feelings. Jesus Christ is the Word of God who has expressed to us what God is like, revealing the mind of God to us. He can do this because He is the Word of God.

[26:44] He is God. Colossians 1, 15-20 expresses this. He, speaking of Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. And He is before all things. And in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.

For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

This passage of Scripture leads us to the most important, I think, thing that there is to know about the Word. And John tells us what that thing is in chapter 1, verse 14 of this Gospel.

And the Word became flesh. And dwelt among us. And He testifies, we have seen His glory. Glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. The Word became flesh.

[28:21] John knows what he's about to write in the following 21 chapters. He is going to tell the story of what Jesus did and of what Jesus taught. This is a book about the life and work of the man, Jesus Christ.

The man that John knew very well. The man that John saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears and touched with his own hands. He had flesh. He had blood. He was not a ghost. He was not an apparition.

He was not the figment of some imagination. He ate. He drank. He got tired. And John knew him very, very well. He was very close to Him. In fact, after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, it was

John whom Jesus entrusted His mother Mary with. The thing about John we know is that it took him three years years in order to figure out the fullness of who Jesus was. But what he wants here for us, his readers, is that we don't take any more than three verses in order to find out who Jesus is. He wants us to have in our minds fixed and clear from the beginning of his gospel of where Jesus came from and who he is that we will worship and serve him and not waste our lives pursuing treasures that perish and that cannot satisfy. I don't have enough time this morning to cover the answer of what, again, that's going to be all of next Sunday's sermon. Because there's so much to cover in those few verses. And a few moments won't suffice to unpack them and to answer that question.

But I can't end this sermon without saying something about the significance of what it means that the word became flesh. Isaiah 9-6, a passage of scripture that we read oftentimes during Christmas.

[30 : 44] But it's so important. There he prophesies, This verse teaches us that Jesus, the Messiah, the Word of God, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, would become a man at a specific point in history.

Galatians 4, 4 and 5. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who are under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

The Word became flesh. At Jesus' incarnation, He added humanity to His deity. He wasn't merely a divine man, nor was He merely a human God.

He is the God-man. Fully God. Fully human. Perfect in every way.

And because He's the God-man, that means that He is God with us. That He is God for us. That He is God in us.

[32 : 21] Being born under the law, He was able to fulfill all of the law's demands that we could not. Being born in the flesh, He was able and willing to be the propitiation for our sins.

A body was necessary and made it possible for Him to die for us.

And that wasn't by accident. That was by design. Hebrews 10, 4-7 We see that it was necessary for our salvation.

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.

In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it was written of me in the scroll of the book.

[33 : 29] In fact, the very name of Jesus looks forward to the act of His saving us.

Remember the angel when He comes to Mary says in Matthew 1-21, She will bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus.

For this God-man, this word become flesh, will save people from their sins. In college, I was on the baseball team and we had a coach who was fairly young for a college coach.

And he was a pretty strict guy. I mean, he was doing what coaches do, you know, barking at you, yelling at you from the sideline or from the dugout telling you what you need to do better, what you've done wrong.

And we practiced every day. It was grueling a lot of times. We didn't want to be there. But every once in a while, he would come out on the field and play with us.

[34 : 42] And we loved it. There was something about Him being on the field with us, right? Shoulder to shoulder alongside of us that was special.

And in Jesus Christ, we see that we don't have a God who's distant and who's aloof and who's uncaring towards us. We have a God who took on flesh and who became one of us.

living with us, alongside of us. He knows what we experience in this life fully.

we have a God who identifies with us, who understands us. And ultimately, we have a God who loves us.

That He was willing to come for the purpose that He would die on the cross for our sins.

[35 : 54] Enduring God's wrath for what we've done. that in believing in Him, in trusting in Him, in putting our faith in Him, that we receive eternal life from Him.

And that eternal life, I believe, begins now. We have a life that has meaning. We have a life that is purposeful.

We have a life that makes sense. We understand that God uses the good times and the bad times in our life as we perceive them to be to form us and to shape us, to prepare us, to make us more like Christ until that day where we go to be with Him.

Free from sin. And ultimately, when He glorifies us, we have so much to be thankful for. And so you see, as we go through this book, you know what we're going to be doing?

We're going to be learning more about who our God is. And what that means for us.

[37 : 05] And I want to close by saying this. Jesus Christ is not content with being a bit character in your life story.

He demands so much more than that because He's not just a person. He's not just some guy. He is the living, everlasting Son of God who's paid for your sins if you've trusted in Him as Lord and Savior, who will raise you from the dead, who has given you everlasting and eternal life.

Your life isn't about you. Your life is hidden in Him. Do you know that and do you understand that? And my hope and my prayer is that as we go through this book that you would realize that my reason for being here is completely and totally due to Christ.

Christ and I'm going to spend the rest of my life doing all that I can to bring Him glory and to bring Him honor. Thank you.