

CHRISTMAS IN THE GOSPEL
OF JOHN
Or
Who Is This Jesus of Christmas?
Message 5
John 1:1-5

INTRO: We are back at John 1:1-5. Look at these verses (read). Notice in verses 1-2, we are before creation (read). In verse three we are at creation (read). In verses 4-5 we have time after creation. In these messages we have now covered verse 1. I will only cover verses 1-3 at this time. In these first three verses John deals with eternity past, and the creation of the universe. But I want you to notice what verse 1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." We have looked at each of those three clauses. But now notice what verse 2 says, "He was in the beginning with God." Literally it reads, "This One..." Or "The same One was in the beginning with God." And the phrase, *the same*, or *this one* refers to the Word who was God. And we notice that in a sense, this verse is a repetition of the first three clauses of verse 1.

I read this on a post on Maranatha Brothers the other day: "The greatest moment in history was not when man walked on the moon, but when God walked on the earth." And John says, "In the beginning was the Word..." Then in verse 14 he says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Those few years our Lord walked on this earth did things no other event has ever done.

But, we must ask now, why would John repeat the first two clauses in verse 2? Let me read what the commentator John Gill says of this verse: "This is a repetition of what is before said, and is made to show the importance of the truths before delivered; namely, the eternity of Christ, his distinct personality, and proper deity; and that the phrase, in the beginning, is to be joined to each of the above sentences; and so proves, not only his eternal existence, but his eternal existence with the Father, and also his eternal deity; and is also made to carry on the thread of the discourse, concerning the word, and not God the Father; and to express, not only his co-existence in nature, but his co-operation in the works of creation next mentioned."

It is my usual practice to review the previous message briefly if the present message is the continuation of something I have already given. And this verse seems to be a review of verse 1.

When I originally wrote this message, I wanted to review all of what we have covered. Well, I have been sick for 2 weeks, and as I pondered much of this over those two weeks, I found I had so much I wanted to share with you in verse three that my review must be brief.

In the clause, "In the beginning was the Word..." we learned what is meant by the pre-existent Christ. He existed as a Person before He was conceived. Then we learned what it means that He was the pre-incarnate One. He was the second Person of the Trinity, who, 4,000 years after He created the universe became enveloped in flesh. And His conception and birth is truly a phenomenal moment in history.

We then considered where the Word was in eternity past, from the clause, "...and the Word was with God..." We noted here that it says the Word was with 'the' God. And I gave the significance of that as meaning that the definite article is used to point out a noun of which there is only one such being. It is 'the' God. The indication is that there is only one God. There can be no other God. And Scripture agrees to that. We conclude then that when it says, "...and the Word was God" that is what it means. He was not a god.

And so with that review, we have come to verse 3. I titled verses 1-2, "The Primary History Of The Word." And to verse 3, I give this title; "The Primary Work of the Word." I am using the word *primary* to speak of the earliest in time or in the order of development. In the beginning without a beginning was the Word. And the primary work of the Word is given to us here: "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." The idea here is that without Him not even one thing was made that was made.

II. THE PRIMARY WORK OF THE WORD

A. Positively

We move now then, from verses 1-2, which deal with eternity past, to the time of creation in verse 3. Now note our verse (read verse 3). It says first that all things were made by Him. This is stated in the positive. And then second, it says that without Him nothing was made that was made. The first statement is positive, the second negative. So, let us consider first the positive, and what the primary work was of this One who was the Word. It says, "All things were made by Him."

Now I want to ask you a question: Before God created man, before He created the universe, before He created angels; when, as far as we know only the Triune God existed, do you think He drew out a plan before He began creation? Do you think everything was planned in detail? Think of all the different kinds of birds, bugs, animals, fish; rocks, plants, stars, galaxies, gases in the air; all the different kinds of DNA and liquids, and soils. Did He plan what sunlight would do? What kinds of grass and plants and trees would grow where? Did He have a plan?

Listen, as I read some verses for you. Matthew 13:35 says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." From this verse we see that God knew all of what was happening there in the life of Christ from before creation.

Listen to Matthew 25:34, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..." Does this reveal a plan from before creation? It is clear that God knew and had planned things long before creation.

Ephesians 1:4 says that He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Does that not reveal a plan?

Hebrews 4:3 says, "For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." 1 Peter 1:20, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." Revelation 13:8 speaks of, "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 17:8 mentions this again.

My question is, do you think God planned everything out before He began creating? Well, let me introduce you to a theological term we do not use that much unless we are in Calvinistic circles. It is the term 'decrees'. The decrees of God. Who has heard of these? What are the decrees of

God? Well, they are the plan that God had before He ever created anything.

Turn to Psalm 2 for a moment (read verse 7). Some feel that Christ was the always the Son of God. But I believe in eternity past it was decreed, planned, that He would become the Son of God. So Psalm 2:7 says, "I will declare the decree..." This is the plan. So this is prophetic, as I also understand Proverbs 8 to be. So God had a plan in eternity past.

Go to Ephesians 3 (read verses 8-11). Well, in Acts 2:23 we read of His "determinate counsel and foreknowledge"; In Ephesians 1:9 of the mystery of His "will."; in Romans 8:29 that He also did predestinate and so on. In these it is clear that God had a plan before creation. And, without doubt, all three Persons of the Triune God was involved in this plan in eternity past. And then angels were created, and then the physical universe and finally man.

Now let me ask you another question? How long do you suppose it took God to plan all of creation? We live in a most fascinating time. I tell our young people, "You are highly privileged. When I was young, there were no Ken Ham videos. There were no children's books on the false teachings of evolution. There was only a whole generation of preachers who had been steeped in such theories as the day age theory or the gap theory; teachings which allowed for evolution." Today we have very qualified Christian teachers who take Genesis 1 literally, and they put evolutionary ideas to shame with facts.

But beyond that, we have all kinds of visuals showing the many different kinds of fish in the ocean and animals on land and bugs and bats and what not. We see today, things that have never been seen by human eyes before. Recently I saw a CBC article that talked about new things seen in the sea that had never been seen before. Let me show you six things they had pictures of. You can watch those as I speak (PICS HERE). And I am told we have only seen a very small part of the oceans yet. And when you look at all those living things, when you look at what they have caught on camera in the sea, what you see is a God who is tremendously creative. And here is my question: How long do you think it took God to plan all those things? In eternity past, was there enough time for it to take millions of years? You see, some of us have all the time in the world, He had all the time without the world.

Well, we do not know the answer to that, nor do we need to, nor does it matter. What does matter, the Bible tells us how long it took Him to complete the plan of creation once He got started. It was six days. And what we have in our passage is that the Word was with God all that time, and there is no reason to doubt that He had part in that whole plan. And now, we find, in our text, that all things were created by Him.

So, turn now to Genesis 1:1. It says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." So, let me ask you, on what day of the week did God create the universe? On the first day of the week! Sunday. I ask you once more, and I have covered all this in the past, what time of year was the first New Year's day? Well, according to the Jewish, which supposedly goes back to creation, New Year's day is the first of Tishri. Last year that was September 13, and it began year 5776 according to that calendar.

Now I want you to notice something in verse 1 of Genesis 1. It says, "In the beginning God..." We mentioned in the previous message various names for God. Does anyone know what name is used here? It is Elohim. Now let me tell you a few things about that name. In English, when we want to make a plural out of a word, we generally add an s to the end like; planet, planets; star, stars etc... In Hebrew, to pluralize a word, they add 'im' on the end. El, is God singular. Elohim is God in a plural form.

Now, the word for God is plural here. What are we to make of this? Should it read, "The Gods created?" Well, it is my view that this speaks of the God who is more than one Person. The OT does not clearly teach the Trinity, but it does teach that God is One God but a plurality of Persons. So, what do those who do not believe in the Trinity say to the word Elohim? Well, they say, "It is the plural of respect." Well, those of us of the Low German language are well familiar with the plural of respect. When we address a singular person with a pronoun we say, "Du". When we address someone about 10 years older or so than we are, we say, "Jie." That is the plural pronoun, but we use it to address a singular person. And the argument is that this is the Hebrew plural of respect.

Our text is the Word of John 1:1-5 and 1:3 says, "All things were made by Him and without Him nothing was made

that was made. And the more I think of this name, 'Elohim', the more I think it speaks of the Triune God. So, let me add a few things on the doctrine of the Triune God and the Gospel writer John. That God is more than one Person is indicated in the OT. But that He is a God of three Persons is not clearly taught in the OT, though it could be said it is hinted at in such utterances as, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts."

But after Jesus, the Messiah came, a lot was revealed about God through Him and the NT teaches us much more clearly that God is a Triune being. And the Gospel writer John tells us more about the Person of Christ than any other Gospel writer. Now the apostle John may have written this Gospel as late as 85-95 AD, making it among the latest written books in the Bible.

John, who was a disciple of Christ when Christ lived on earth, had the opportunity to study the doctrine of Christ longer than any other writer in the Bible. It is possible that by the time he wrote this Gospel, he had had over 60 years to ponder all he had learned and observed from his knowledge of the Messiah. By the time he was an old man and wrote the Gospel of John, almost all the books of the Bible had been written. He would have had access to all of Paul's writings. He had deeply studied who Jesus was, that is clear from His writings. He had personally known and worked with Jesus. And when I think of all that, and how he started the Gospel of John, I am amazed. He begins like this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

And now, back in Genesis 1, I want to show you that all three members of the Triune God were involved in creation. It says, "In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth." Then it says in verse 2, "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." There is the Holy Spirit.

Let me just briefly mention here that the Holy Spirit was involved in creation as well. Listen to Job 26:13, "By His Spirit He adorned the heavens." Job 33:4, "The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life. Psalm 33:6, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

Now look at verse 3, "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." And I need not tell you that Elohim is speaking to the second Person of the Trinity, the Word. You see, our passage said, "All things were made by Him..." I have told you about the imperative verb and the understood subject, which is 'you'. Now you can go through this passage, and it will say over and over again, "Let there be... and there was..." Here is the primary work of the Word.

We have already considered Colossians 1:16-17, which says, "For by Him (the One who became the firstborn from the dead, which is Jesus Christ) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." So, in Elohim we have the Trinity, and in this passage we have creator God who created all things through the Word that became flesh! Incredible theology, is it not?

But look now at Genesis 1:26 (read). Elohim said, "Let us make man in our image..." Notice carefully now the plural pronouns, 'us' and 'our'. I have no doubt, as in the decrees of God, here the Triune God is in agreement to make man. And now let me mention something else that is very important. God said, "Let us make man in our image..." What does that mean? Well, without taking a long time to explain this, you can take man and God and animals and you can take all their attributes and all their parts, and in my estimation you will find only one thing different between man and animal that is not different between man and God. And what is that? It is personhood! And I cannot tell you what a huge thing personhood is. Personhood makes you a free moral agent! Animals are programmed and cannot operate outside this programming. Robins never have improved on their nests yet. But man can choose outside of his programming.

One of the most outstanding things about man is that he can and must choose how to live his life and whom he will worship, if he worships at all. Man is programmed to a degree, but he can operate outside programming. He can choose! I am often amazed to see how God allows very foolish people to father and mother children and to let them simply destroy those children. The free will of man is the most amazing and a most scary feature of mankind.

But let us come back to our clause, "All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

Now I want you to notice that the Word is referred to by the personal pronoun 'Him'. The Word is a Person. Now look at Genesis 1:27 (read). Notice that Elohim is referred to as "He", twice. Elohim is a Person. The Trinity is one God but three Persons. So He said, "Let us make man in our image..." The 'us' and 'our' are personal pronouns indicating a plurality of Persons in the godhead.

B. Negatively

Let us now look at the second part of verse 3, which says, "...and without Him, nothing was made that was made." Let us first note the problem created for Jehovah's Witness theology in that clause. According to their theology, God first created Michael the Archangel. And through this angel He created all other things. And this archangel became a human in the form of Jesus. And in John 1:1, they say, "...the word became a god." Now we are told in John 1:3, that all things were created by this Word that became flesh, which is Jesus, which was Michael the archangel, according to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Now notice the negative aspect of our verse. It says that, "...without Him nothing" and their own translation reads, 'not even one thing' was made that was made. So if Michael was created, and nothing that was made was made without him, we have a very serious problem. If nothing was made without the Word and the Word was created, then the Word had to have created Himself! That, it seems to me, is an insurmountable problem.

But let us leave that and consider our text on the negative part which says, "...without Him, nothing was made that was made." Now why would John add that? I cannot say I know the answer to that, but let me make an observation here. You will remember that when you have an imperative verb, the understood subject is 'You'. So look at Genesis 1:3, "And God said, 'Let there be...'" Now you could read that like this, "You let there be light." And we have seen that the "You" refers to the Word of John 1. Now look at 1:3, "And God said, 'Let there be light...'" Then 1:6, "And God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.'" Now 1:9, "And God said, 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear'..." 1:11, "And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth...'" 1:14-15, "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them

be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth..." 1:20, "And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.'" 1:24, "And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind...'"

Now you will notice that in all of creation after the creation of the heavens and the earth, up until the creation of man, the Word did the creating. God said, "Let there be..." And the Word did so. But go not to Genesis 1:1. It says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Did you notice He did not say, "Let the heavens and the earth be"? So, who made the heavens and the earth? Well, the answer is in the verse. Look at what it says, "In the beginning God, Elohim, created the heavens and the earth." But then, from verse 3 to verse 26, the Word did all the creating. Elohim said, "Let there be..." And the Word did so, and there was.

Go now to the last day of creation, verse 26 (read), "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." Did you notice again that it does not say, "Let there be..."? What it does say is that God, that is, Elohim, said, "Let Us make man in Our image..." He is saying, "Let Us do it together." So who created man? Well, we note the 'Us' and the 'Our'. So, again, it seems it must be Elohim.

So, the Triune God created the heavens and the earth, and man. But in between, Elohim spoke to the second Person of the Trinity and said, "Let there be...", and there was. Now consider John 1:3 again, "All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." From verse 3-25, the Word created everything. But the heavens and the earth were created by Elohim. And since the Word was part of Elohim, John could say, "Without Him nothing was made that was made"!

[[[Clark on Gen. 2:4 Lord, ultimately, originally, 'giver of bread.']]

Back to our verse in John now. It says, "All things were made by Him (that is, the Word), and without Him nothing was made that was made." With regard to the Word and creation, I want to point out a few more things. We go to Genesis 2 (read 1-4). Now in verse 4 we meet another name for God that is used some 6,000 + times in the OT. Notice that the word LORD in verse 4 is all in capital letters. The original word translated LORD is what we translate as either Jehovah or Jahwey. Of all the names for God, this is the most holy name.

Now, let me deal with one more Jehovah's Witness issue. They claim to be 'Jehovah's' witnesses, and so they make much of the name Jehovah. Let me introduce you to a term you may not have heard before. It is the name of God that is referred to as the tetragrammaton. Tetra means four. It is the name for God that is written in four Hebrew letters and in English we translate it as either 'Jehovah' or 'Jahwey'.

The JW's are very familiar with the term 'tetragrammaton'. I think it would be helpful for us to know a few things about this name *Jehovah*. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that our Bibles leave out the most important name for God thousands of times. Their translation, the New World Translation, of course, does not. Although when the original NWT was done, it was not done by Hebrew or Greek scholars and there is a lot of unhappy history here for them that they probably would not want to talk about and we will not take time for.

But, I have found a study on the translation of the KJV or NKJV of these names of God very encouraging and would like to pass some of this on. Look now at Genesis 2:4-7 and note the phrase "LORD God", which literally is Jehovah Elohim (read).

Now, you see that the name in all capital letters is the Hebrew name Jehovah, or Jahwey. And, we ask, why did the KJV translate this word as 'LORD' all in capitals? The Jews viewed this name as so holy that they never pronounced it. Only the high priest ever pronounced it and that, only one day of the year, the biblical New Year's day, Rosh Hashana, the Jewish festival of Tishri the first. This day is the highest holy day of Israel and was set out for them by God.

Why does the KJV not translate this name as Jehovah? Because it treats this name with the honor the Jews ascribed to it. The NKJV does the same. The Jews wrote this name in such a way as to make it unpronounceable and when they come to it in their reading of Scripture, since they would not utter this most holy name, they simply read it as, "Adonai". And what does 'adonai' mean? Well, it is one of the names for God, and it means 'Lord'. So instead of pronouncing this most holy name, they say Adonai, or we would say, 'Lord.'

Now this name Adonai can be used for a human lord or master or it can be used for God. When the KJV comes to a place where it refers to a human lord, it spells it with a small 'l'. When it is used to refer to God, the KJV spells it with a capital L. And since the Jews said 'Adonai' when they came to the word Jehovah, the KJV translated this name as LORD all in capitals. So when we read this word as LORD, we are doing the same thing the Jews did.

So, turn to Isaiah 19:4. In the KJV it says, "And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord..." The word 'lord' here is Adonai. But the 'l' of lord here is small, meaning it refers to a human lord or master. Then it says, "...and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord..." Now this word for Lord has a capital L. Why? Because it is the name Adonai but it is used for God. But when it goes on to say, "...and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts", the last word LORD is all in capitals. Why? Because it is a translation of the word Jehovah. This is the tetragrammaton. The Jews viewed this name as so holy that they never pronounced it. Only the high priest ever pronounced it and that, only one day of the year, the biblical New Year's day, Rosh Hashana, the Jewish festival of the first day of the month of Tishri. This day is the highest holy day of Israel and it was set out for them by God.

Now, why does the KJV not translate it as Jehovah? Because it treats this name with the honor the Jews ascribed to it and so it is written in such a way that you know what it is, but you say it in a different way. The Jews so wrote this word in Hebrew as to make it unpronounceable and when they came to it, they would not utter this most holy name, but simply said, "Adonai", which we say as Lord.

Now let me ask you a question: if Jesus was to translate this tetragrammaton, how would He translate it? If Jesus was on earth, what would He do when He came to passages that use the name Jehovah? Would He say 'Jehovah' or 'Adonai', meaning 'Lord'? Well, I can show you what He would do. Go to Deuteronomy 6 (read verse 6:16). It says, "You shall not tempt the LORD (Jehovah), your God (Elohim). Jesus quoted this verse to Satan in Matthew 4. Turn to it (read verse 7). How did He read the passage, as Jehovah or Lord? He read it as 'Lord'. The Greek is *kurios*, meaning Lord but it is the translation of the Hebrew word Jehovah. So the KJV has it as LORD all in capitals. You might jot down Matthew 21:42 where Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22-23.

Now go to Matthew 22:41-45: 22:41 "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 saying, 'What do you think about the Christ (i.e, Messiah)? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.'

43 He said to them, 'How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' (capital L meaning it is a translation of Adonai) saying:

44 'The LORD (LORD is all capitals because it is a translation of Jehovah) said to my Lord (only capital L because it translates Adonai), "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?'

45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' (Adonai) how is He his Son?"

In this passage Jesus translated the word Jehovah as *kurios*, Lord and the word Adonai as *kurios* as well. That is amazing! He did not pronounce the name Jehovah! So the KJV and NKJV translate the first *kurios* as LORD, all in capitals because it refers to Jehovah, and the second *kurios* as Lord with one capital because it refers to Adonai!

Now back to our verse in John 1, "All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." And who is Him? It is the Word. And to whom does it refer? In Genesis 1:3-25, it refers to the One who did what Elohim requested Him to 'let be'. And in Genesis 2:4? Look at it (read). It was Jehovah Elohim! Surly the Apostle Paul knew what he was talking about when he said, "Great is the mystery of godliness!"

I have not given you all that the KJV or NKJV do with these important names of God, but in my studies, my respect for those translations has risen significantly! These translators have very highly honored the Word of God in their translating!

CONCL: Well, we bring these messages to a close. I have concentrated on declaring to you the truth that the birth we commemorate at this time of year, was the pre-existent Word that became flesh in time, some 2,000 years ago. He was in existence before the world was made. As a matter of fact, He was there at the beginning that has no beginning. He was there 'olam ad olam'. He was there 'eis twn aiwniwn twn aiwniwn' before creation. And He was with God. And to be sure, He was God! But that eternal God became flesh, and dwelt among us. He was Immanuel, God with us. And in time present He lived and died for us and was raised from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And He will come again for His bride, the Church, and take us home. And then God will pour out His wrath on this earth. After this, we will dwell with Him through the millennium, and then on to the new heavens and new earth and from there on into eternity. All because the Word became flesh!

And if I speak on this passage again, I have a very huge task on my plate. This passage goes on to say, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." This past year, Queen Elizabeth, head of the Church of England, spoke on her Christmas address of what she called the light of the Christian faith. And this is what she said, referring to this passage, "It is true that the world has had to confront moments of darkness this year, but the Gospel of John contains a verse of great hope, often read at Christmas carol services: 'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.'"