

CHRISTMAS IN THE GOSPEL  
OF JOHN  
Who Is This Jesus Of Christmas?  
John 1:1-14

INTRO: The sermon title this morning is, "Who is This Jesus of Christmas?" For the past 20 years I have preached on Christmas through the Christmas story in Matthew chapters 1-2 and then through Luke 1:26-2:38. That has taken some 20 messages. I have given a few other Christmas messages. And now I do not know how many more Christmas's I will preach, if any. But if I do, Lord willing, I will go through John 1:1-18.

For many years I have pondered the first verse of this passage. It is one that has been under the most serious attack from the Jehovah's Witnesses. As I began to study this passage, I probably enjoyed my study time more than I ever have in any passage. I thought, well, since this is the Sunday before Christmas, and Christmas is on Friday, I would do two messages. Then I thought, well since, Sunday comes right after Christmas, I'll make it three. Then I got right into this and I thought, well, since New Years day is the Friday following, and Sunday comes right after that, maybe I'll try to finish the first five verses by the Sunday after New Years.

I have heard from some that some of my messages are too hard to understand. I would be very disappointed in my preaching if some did not find some of what I preach hard to understand. But, these messages will be harder than usual. Let me encourage you to take what you can, and not to worry if you don't understand it all. But I warn you, no matter how bright you are, you won't be able to doze and still understand. You will have to be on your toes at all times. For those who study a good deal, or those who speak to such cults as the Jehovah's Witnesses, you should find a great deal of encouragement in these messages.

Today we hear the word 'awesome' so often it has lost its significance. Surprisingly I could not find the word 'awesome' in Webster's 1828 dictionary. But he did have the word awe, which seems to have the Greek word agaw in the background which means to be astonished or the Saxon ege, or oga or the Gothic agjan or ogan, and the idea is that of dread. He gives the first meaning of the English word 'awe' as fear mingled with admiration or reverence; reverential fear. Our German word is *Iaforcht*. He gives an example from the Psalms and 4:4 says to "Be angry and do not sin." The word translated 'angry' there is

elsewhere translated as to tremble 12 times, to move 7 times, rage 5 times, shake 3 times, disquieted 3 times, troubled 3 times, quake 2 times, and to be afraid 1 time.

In the true sense of the English word, this passage is 'awesome'. One man recommended that the first five verses of this chapter should be written in gold. What we have here is a passage that wants to make my little computer loop, and give up. You see, with regard to the coming of Christ, Matthew gives us the genealogy of Christ, and then some of the historical events surrounding the birth of Christ. Luke gave us the historical events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ. Mark skips the subject of Christ's birth altogether and shortens his account and begins when Jesus was about 30 years old. But when we come to John, He goes back way before Jesus was born or conceived. Remember this, in John one, we have to keep two Johns in mind; John the writer and John the Baptist.

I have never outlined the book of John for myself. But I would outline just chapter one like this. In 1:1-5 we have John the writer's, introduction to the divine Personality in eternity past, the Personality that became Jesus Christ 4,000 years after creation; the time we commemorate as Christmas. Then we have John the writer's introduction to John the Baptist in 1:6-18. And for the sake of time, we won't read that. Then in the rest of the chapter we have John the Baptist's introduction to Jesus Christ, and we could sum it up in 1:29 (read).

And maybe we could say that in 1:1-5, we have this introduction to the introduction. And let us stand in the presence of our holy and Almighty God as we read these (read). You see, John goes back to before the creation of the universe. He gives us the history of a divine Person who existed, or should I say pre-existed. He goes back to way before this Person became known as Jesus. This passage deals with the pre-incarnate Christ, and when this Christ came into this world and what He was to the world and what His own people did with Him.

This morning I want to preach on just the title of the outline of verse 1. So go with me to John 1 (read 1:1). Over the years I have taught a course I called 'Grammatical Exegesis'. In it I teach how to use grammar to do exegetical exegesis and how to outline Scripture from grammar. In this way you do not impose an outline on Scripture, but you find it in the grammar of the passage. And when I teach how to outline a compound sentence, I use John 1:1. The title of the passage needs to come from the main clauses, and in this sentence we have three clauses: 1 In

the beginning was the Word, 2 and the Word was with God, and 3 the word was God. It is not hard to learn from these three clauses that the central theme is the Word, and what a concept that is! So in grammatical exegesis, the title is 'The Word'! There is no fudging on that. There can be no other title! You see, the points now must modify the title, the Word. So listen to point one: In the Beginning was the Word! Point two: And the Word was with God! And point three: And the Word was God! There is the outline, and no one could get a different grammatical outline.

Now this is a profound way for John to begin His book. You see, Matthew gives us His human genealogy but as to His Person, Matthew begins with the conception and birth of Christ. That was 2,000 years ago. Luke begins with the conception and birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ, and that happened 2,000 years ago. Mark skips all 30 of Christ's first years and begins when Jesus began His ministry at 30 years of age. But John goes back to the beginning,; no, he goes back before the beginning to consider the pre-incarnate or pre-existent One we know as Christ. So he says, "In the beginning was the Word..."

Now let me take a moment with that. What do Christian theologians mean by the pre-incarnate Christ? What do they mean be the pre-existent Christ? Well, to incarnate is to embody with flesh or clothe with flesh (Websters 1828). So look at John 1:14. It says the Word became flesh. The incarnation of Christ is when He became flesh. That is what we commemorate at Christmas.

But what do we mean when we say He was pre-incarnate? Well, we mean that He existed as a Person before He became embodied in flesh. So we ask, how is that different from all other people who also are embodied in flesh? Well, no other person ever pre-existed. Nobody human being ever existed before he or she was conceived. That person came into being 'when' he or she was conceived. You see, there is a whole theological debate, and has been for many centuries, over when the soul enters the boy. The real question is, when does a person become a person?

There are various theories. There is the pre-existent theory that says a lot of bodiless souls exist and they need to be embodied through the process of conception and birth. This is a view held by Eastern mystical philosophers and religions such as Hinduism and even Mormonism.

Then there is another view called creationism. They say God directly creates the soul. Human parents only procreate the body. This is the view of some Christians and is held by the Catholic Church. The third and last view is called the traducian theory, and it says each soul is brought into being by the parents. It is my own position, and I believe the biblical one, that at conception the person and all his or her parts such as body, soul and spirit are procreated by the parents. This is a very large subject which we cannot take up here, but if that is correct, it makes abortion murder anywhere from conception onward.

So, how is that different from Jesus? Well, here it is: Christ existed as a Person before He was conceived. You and I and all others never existed before we were conceived. That is the difference and it is huge!

So, what does the pre-existence of Christ mean? Well, when humans become flesh, they did not exist in some prior form. But not so with the birth of Christ. He existed before He was conceived. Now I want to cause you to think about something I have pondered for a good many years. Every time I have taught through the Catechism I have asked this question: when did Jesus Christ become Jesus Christ? Or let me ask it this way; when did Jesus Christ become the Son of God? Has He always existed as the Son of God, or was there a time when He became the Son of God?

Or let me ask this question in the way our Catechism presents it. It asks, "Is Jesus Christ the Son of God from all eternity?" I wrote this in the Catechism notes some years ago: "This question can be misleading. It must be read right. It could be read, "Was Jesus the Son of God from all eternity" or, "Was Jesus, who is the Son of God, from all eternity?" The first question asks if Jesus was the Son of God before He was conceived. The second question asks if Jesus existed as a Person before He was conceived." And in my notes I said, "It is the latter which is meant as the references indicate. The Person of Jesus is eternal and existed from eternity but He became the Son of God when He came to earth in a physical form."

As I studied for this message and pondered the Catechism question I thought: What does the original Catechism say in German? And I was amazed at my own shortcomings over the years in never checking this out before. Here was my question now: Could I determine what the writers of the Catechism had in mind from the German in which it was originally written? And I was both surprised and pleased. Listen to what it says, "Ist Jesus

Christus, (comma) der Sohn Gottes, (comma) auch von Ewigkeit?" That was exactly my interpretation from the English and I do not understand how all these years I did not check the original German.

Now, here is the question simply put: Did Jesus Christ exist as the Son of God before He was born? Was Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ before He was born? And I say, "No, He became Jesus Christ when He was conceived. Now, I suppose the majority of theologians would take a different view than I do. But our Catechism expresses the view I hold. Here is what most theologians think. They believe the second Person of the Triune God was the Son of God from all eternity. Let me quote from no lesser a theologian than Augustus H. Strong. He says, "That the Sonship of Christ is eternal, is intimated in Psalm 2:7. 'This day have I begotten thee' is most naturally interpreted as the declaration of an eternal fact in the divine nature. Neither the incarnation, the baptism, the transfiguration, nor the resurrection marks the beginning of Christ's Sonship, constitutes him Son of God." In other words, Jesus Christ was the Son of God before He was born of God.

But I believe Jesus became the Son of God at the incarnation. And so, in the Catechism notes I continue like this: "So, if Jesus became the Son of God at conception or birth, Who was He before that? You see, the angel told both Joseph and Mary, "You shall call His name Jesus." And who was He before He became Jesus? And then one day I read John 1:1-3 and I said, "That is who He was before He was conceived! He was the Word. That is what we have in John 1:1!

So, if Jesus became the Son of God at the incarnation, who was He before? And John tells us so very plainly. He was the Word! And now we have a concept before us that is 'awesome' in the true sense of that word! So listen now as John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word..." Not Jesus! No! The Word! And I want to show you that this, that is referred to as 'the Word' was a Person. Look at verses 1-4 (read). Notice verse 4 says of the word, "In Him..." not "in it". The Word John is referring to is a Person.

Let me show you where we first find this Word. Go with me to Genesis 1. Look at verse 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In the third century before Christ the Jews translated the Hebrew OT into Greek because so many Jews now spoke Greek and did not know Hebrew well. Now let me read John 1:1, the words 'in the beginning' in Greek: "En archei..."

Now let me read the Greek translation of 'In the beginning...' of Genesis 1:1 in the Septuagint, "En archei..." And it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Now John 1:3 says of the Word, "All things were made by Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made." And now I ask you, were the heavens and the earth made? Yes! So, who did it? The Word!

Now look at Genesis 1:2 (read). Here we have the Holy Spirit. In verse 1 we have God and the Word and in verse 2 we have the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit. Now look at verse 3 (read). Now let me note for you what I have said so often already. The clause, "Let there be light..." is an imperative clause. And you tell me now, when you have an imperative clause, what is the subject? Yes, it is "You." So, we could read it like this, "You let there be light." And I ask you, to whom is God speaking? Well, He was speaking to the second Person of the Triune God, who was the Word, but became Jesus on the day we commemorate this week as the birth of Jesus Christ. You see, John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God." Then John says, "All things were created by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made!" This is the Word!

Now look at John 1:14. It says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." When the Word became flesh, the Word became Jesus Christ. Now go to Matthew 1 (read 18-23). In verse 21 the angel told Joseph to call the second Person of the Trinity, who had become flesh, Jesus. That means 'Jehovah saves'. And why was He to be called this? Because He would save His people from their sins.

But note now verse 23 (read). The prophet said they shall call His name, "Gimmanuel." It means, "God is with us", or "With us is God." Now, you might say, I thought He was to be called, "Jesus"? Yes, all through the Gospels that is His name. But John 1 said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!" The Word was God! And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. What is that? That is God with us!

One article I read on John 1:1 said, "These first five verses provide the frame of reference and the main components for the story to follow--sort of a prologue to the prologue. We get the story in the right perspective by beginning in eternity (vv. 1-2) and then moving to creation (v. 3). The key ingredients follow, namely, incarnation (v. 4) and conflict (v. 5)."

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/John/John-Presents-Revelation>)

Go with me now to Proverbs 8. I briefly studied this Proverb because Scholars connect Wisdom in this Proverb with the Word of John 1:1. And when I looked at it I thought, "Oh, my; I wonder why the JW's haven't made more of this," only to find that they have thoroughly exploited this passage. I don't have time to take that up in this message. But look at verse 1 (read). And you can read right through verse 21 and find wisdom addressed as a person over and over again.

But look now at verse 22-23 (read). Before creation, wisdom was there. Now look at verse 24-25. Listen to JFB who say, "Many regard the passage as a description of the Son of God by the title, Wisdom, which the older Jews used (and by which He is called in Lu 11:49), as #Joh 1:1, etc., describes Him by that of Logos, the Word." Now this commentary says that this may simply be a figure of speech as a personification of wisdom. But it seems that it is most likely that it speaks of Christ. We will deal with this more in another message.

No lesser than John Gill says of Proverbs 8, "This chapter contains the instructions of Wisdom or Christ; showing the excellency of them, and the author of them, in opposition to the harlot and her allurements, in the preceding chapter. Christ, under the name of Wisdom, is represented as an herald, publishing the Gospel in the ministry of the word, either in person or by his servants, Pr 8:1."

Now, what is most interesting, it says in verse 24, "When there were no depths, I was brought forth..." This phrase, 'brought forth', can have meaning of being born. This phrase is used of Wisdom again in verse 25. And here is the question, "Are the JW's right, that way back here before creation, the Son of God was born? Well, we will look at that in another message.

Well, you can read much more in the Proverbs of wisdom. Now listen to John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." What or who is this Word? He is the Logos! You see, He was the Word! He pre-existed. No other man has ever pre-existed! And who was He in His pre-existent state? The Word! The Wisdom of God!

Now I want to tell you something most incredible. In the beginning was the Word! Before the universe was created, there was the Word. Some say the creation of the universe was the beginning of time. No, that was not the beginning of time. That was the beginning of the universe. Some say, and we sing, "When

time shall be no more..." We get that idea from Revelation 10:6. And let me say, there never has been such a thing as no time in the past, and there will never be an end to time. You see, we have a lot of time words. We have many different names for different units of time. Because of the need to divide the second into smaller units today, we now have time units like nano seconds or pico seconds. But then we have 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in an hour and 24 hours in a day, and seven days in a week and 4 weeks in a month and 12 months in a year and 10 years in a decade and 10 decades in a centennial and 10 centennials in a millennium. Today, we have to divide the second into time units. In eternity, we will have to make new names for bigger units of time! You see, our word 'eternal' means going back forever and finding no beginning of time; and it means going forward forever, and finding no end. Eternal is a time word, only it has no limits in either direction.

Now take from where we are and go back 2,000 years, and we have the time the Word became flesh. That is what we commemorate this time of year. Then go back another 4,000 years and we have that great beginning we find in John 1:1. Now go back a million years from creation, and there was Word. And go back 10 billion years from there, and there was the Word. And you can keep going and going until your computer refuses to budge any more, and there was the Word, as fresh and bright as ever. And then you can go forward until you come to creation, and then go forward another 4,000 years and there we have the accounts recorded in Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1 and 2. That is when the Word became flesh!

You see, the angel that was sent as God's messenger, to Mary, to tell her she would bear a Son. And when Mary was puzzled how she might bear a child, not having a husband, the angel said, "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you..." That is the divine. That is God the Holy Spirit. And why is Jesus called the 'Son of God'? Because God is His Father! And why is He called the Son of Man? Because Mary is His mother! No wonder Paul said, "And without controversy, (or confessedly) great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory!" That was God! And after the birth of Christ, from there on forward, the Word had become flesh! And today, the Word that became flesh dwells in heaven in the flesh. He has become human, as well as being divine. And he will be both human and divine forever, and it will never change. In eternity past, up until He was conceived, the second Person of



the Trinity was the Word. After that, for all eternity future, He will be Jesus Christ!

Now take me, with regard to time. I was born in 1951. And in 1972 I was saved and received, not eternal life; no, for me this life had a beginning. What I received was everlasting life. That means if I remain faithful to Him until death or until He comes for me, and we go forward now for 10 trillion years, life will just have begun for me! And how is that possible? This Word, this Gimmanuel who became flesh, gave His life in my place on the most cruel piece of man's machinery ever invented, in order that I or you might have life everlasting!

And now let me speculate for a moment with you. Tell me now, before God created the material universe, what existed? Well, you say, the angels existed. Ok, we are agreed that angels are created beings and so they must have had a beginning. Now, then, let us go back before the angels existed. What was there then? Let me ask again, what was there then? Ok, God existed. And what else? Well, as far as we know, only God existed. Now here is God, a most awesome God! He is the Triune God. He eternally existed in three divine Persons. This is the only God who is or who ever existed or who will ever exist.

Now I have taught many of you about what glory is and what we do when we have done something or painted something or built something or sewn something and it just turned out the way we wanted it, and it is just real nice, and what do you do when somebody comes over? Well, you know what we do. We show it to them. And when they say, "Wow! That is beautiful! Who made it for you?" And you say, "I made it." And they admire what you have done and it is good. That is glory.

Now I want you to think of the most glorious Person there is. It is God! I did a series on God, and in my estimation it is one of the most important series I ever did. God! Everything about Him I studied my little computer looped! And I have told you that I believe all we will ever learn in this lifetime about God will be nothing compared to what there is. And for all eternity the saved will glorify Him and never will they tire of it because they will learn one new thing after another after another after another, and it will never end.

Now come back with me to when only God existed. God the Father, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit were there. That is all, as far as we know. And who was there to appreciate all He is? Why the same three that had been there for all eternity before that.

Recently, a man lived out his dream to spend 6 months, an hours flight, I believe it was, out of Norman Wells, way up north in the tundra. I understand he wanted to go with a friend or friends and they backed out. Just recently he came out of the bush a number of pounds lighter. Here is one of the main lessons He learned, "Man was not meant to be alone!" God is a Person, and it may have been like that with Him. So He resolved to fix that.

And so God, and the Word and the Holy Spirit planned to make personal beings that would be able to appreciate some of this great glory. Now God could not make beings to worship Him who worshipped Him by force, or because they were programmed that way and couldn't do otherwise. These beings would have to be personal and would have to glorify Him of their own free will, otherwise it is not glory. And to make such a creature, was horrifically dangerous and God, who knows everything knew that.

Now God had made the angels in His realm. They could see Him and appreciate Him and know Him. But because they could see Him and lived in His presence, if they ever decided to go their own way, they could never be saved. God knew all that. He knew Lucifer would fall and become Satan, and He knew that Satan would take millions upon millions of those angels with him and they would become the demonic force against God.

And then God did something entirely new. He created a material universe. And in this material universe He created all kinds of creatures. But all these impersonal creatures could not glorify Him because they could only act in the way they had been programmed. They did not possess a free will that could choose to recognize and glorify God. And so, on the sixth day of creation He created man. And I cannot begin to describe to you what an incredible being man is. It is far beyond description.

But God made man in a realm outside His own. His own realms is spiritual and invisible to the material realm. But He made man in a material and visible realm. And this man would be able to observe all He had made, and God would write a book and instruct this man, and this man that He created would have to learn to believe in Him by faith, because he could not see into the immaterial realm. And God did that.

But God also knew that that demonic force and Satan would get through to man and cause him to sin and bring glory to Satan by sin and belong to Satan by sin. But there in the eternal counsels of God, the Word agreed to a plan. He, the Word, would

become flesh. And God knew that if a perfect being came into this world, the devil had enough force with mankind that this perfect Person would be killed. And God also knew that if one of the three Persons of the divine Trinity would agree to become Man, then through that, He, God, would be able to ultimately defeat Satan through the man He had made. The cost would be one third of the angels, and by far the majority of mankind. And the Triune God agreed it would be worth it, and so God created man, and 4,000 years later, the Word became Man. And once He began to manifest complete righteousness among sinful mankind, it did not take Satan long to convince man to do away with the Word that had become flesh. And so Christ died on the cross of Calvary. But far from being defeated, Satan had just defeated himself!

Now let me take you to a passage to show you some of that. We turn to Philippians 2. We begin with verse 5 (read). Paul is saying, "Let this kind of thinking be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And what kind of thinking is He talking about? He is talking about humility. And here we have the Word. And when was this kind of thinking in the Word, the one that became Christ Jesus? Well, our passage speaks of in that time before creation. We are talking about when the plan was made that a divine being needed to become man. We note that in verse 6 (read). When He was in the form of God. When He was the Word, He did not think it robbery to be equal with God.

Now let me mention the word translated 'robbery'. It is the same word as the word in 1 Thessalonians 4 about being caught up or raptured. It is to be snatched up. You see, there in eternity past, the Word did not consider equality with God, all that glory and so on, something to be snatched and clung to. He considered, He thought in the way we are encouraged to think here, humbly. And in His pre existence, He considered He could let all that go for us. Is that not incredible!

So look at verse 7 (read). Note the word 'but'. We have a contrast. Instead of snatching up His glory and hanging on to it, He was willing to make Himself of no reputation. And how did He do that? He took on Him the form of a servant. The Word became Man, and a servant man! Oh there are so many words I ought to explain here. And how did He take on Him the form of a servant? By coming in the likeness of men. The Low German word 'Menschen' would be better here. He became a fellow human being.

But that is not all He became obedient to in eternity past, when He was the Word. Look at verse 8 (read). In appearance, He was nothing but a simple human being. Here is God! The Word! One of

our men shared in a devotional a while ago what he had noted from Isaiah 53. When the divine Word became a man, He wasn't even that much to look at! But if we had time to study this word 'appearance' we would find out He was much more than His appearance admitted.

Now, in eternity past, when He was the divine Word, He became willing to humble Himself even further than this. Verse 8 says He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross! Now you cannot humble yourself further than that. That is as low as you can go. By the way, that is where we must go to be saved.

Now let me give a brief history of the Word: In eternity past, He was the Word. At creation, He created the universe. 4,000 years after the creation of the universe, He became Man; the Christ, Jesus. 30 some years later He was crucified and died physically. Three days later He was resurrected. Forty days after that He ascended back to heaven.

Now I want to show you one more, most amazing revelation in Philippians. Let us read verses 9-11 (read). In verse 9 it says, "Therefore..." Wherefore? Because in eternity past the Word became willing to become flesh and be ultimately humbled to the death of the cross, therefore God has also highly exalted Him! And how did He do that? Well, look at the verse. He gave, or graced to Him the name that is above every name. And I ask you, what name did He give to Him? Jehovah! The name the Jews don't pronounce. The name the Scribes had a bath for before they wrote it. It is the name above every name!

Now let me ask you, how many people have been called Jesus? Thousands and thousands. Did they have the name above every name? No! How many do you know that are called Jehovah? One! God Almighty! That is the Word! That is Jesus! And maybe you say, "Well, it says that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow. Is Jesus not the name above every name?" Look at it very carefully and note what it does not say. Let me read it wrongly for you, "That at the name, Jesus, every knee should bow." Did it say that? No! It is a genitive. It is at the name 'of' Jesus! And what name did God grant to Him! The name that is above every name: Jehovah God!

You see, in the beginning was the Word; and the Word became flesh, and the Word that became flesh was called Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins. And when He had accomplished that, the Word that became Jesus became Jehovah! Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was

manifested in the flesh. Oh glorious conception! Oh glorious birth! Oh glorious resurrection! Oh glorious victory!

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God! Have a wonderful Christmas!