

SERMON NOTES
John 1:1-5
“Before Bethlehem”

Intro:

- Matthew begins his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, followed by the birth narrative beginning with Mary’s supernatural pregnancy during her betrothal to Joseph
- *Mark begins his Gospel with the ministry of John the Baptist in the wilderness – and Jesus’ baptism by John – not mentioning anything about the first 30 years of Jesus’ life*
- Luke begins his Gospel with the birth narrative – but begins before Matthew does – Luke begins with the angel’s announcement to Zechariah that his wife – though barren and advanced in years – would bear a son – namely, John the Baptist – and then tells the story of the birth of Jesus to the virgin Mary
- *John begins his Gospel way before Matthew or Mark or Luke – John begins:*

1. In the beginning was the Word

- *“In the beginning...”*
- Yeah – THAT beginning – John begins the story of Jesus Christ where Genesis begins: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

- *Why does John begin at THAT beginning?*
- He wants to make sure that we understand who is the baby that was born in Bethlehem
- John is clearly declaring that the existence of Jesus Christ did not begin in Bethlehem or in Mary’s womb 2000 years ago
- *In fact, the existence of Jesus Christ did not begin – ever – having neither beginning of days nor end of life*
- Jesus Christ existed before the heavens and the earth existed

- *Jesus Christ existed before the beginning of creation*
- Thus John could write:
- *“In the beginning was the Word (Logos)...”*
- Greek readers will immediately think of the Logos as the Reason and Intelligence behind the design and order of the universe (*we get our word “logic” from the Greek word “logos”*)
- Jewish readers will immediately think of the God who spoke the universe into existence by his powerful word – (*and God said “Let there be light” – and there was light*)
- *Thus John begins his Gospel by identifying the historical Jesus of Nazareth with the fully divine, eternal Word who was in the beginning with God*
- Isn't it interesting that our culture celebrates Christmas more than Good Friday or Easter
- *Partly because Easter is all about a supernatural resurrection miracle proving the uniqueness of Jesus Christ – whereas Christmas is just the birth of a baby*
- Unusual circumstances surrounding the birth maybe – but just a common, ordinary birth nonetheless
- *The birth of a baby is something everyone can relate to*
- But John's Gospel begins by highlighting who that baby was – and the rather extraordinary fact that this baby has existed from eternity
- And this was not some idea invented by John long after Jesus was gone from the earth
- *Jesus himself taught that he existed long before he was born in Bethlehem – indeed from before the creation of the world*

John 17:3-5 “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”

- *Jesus' existence did not begin with his birth in Bethlehem*
--Mohammed's life had a beginning – in Mecca // Siddhartha Gautama the Buddha had a beginning – in Nepal // Moses had a beginning – in Goshen in Egypt
- *But Jesus had no beginning – as the Son of God – the Logos / the Word – He has always existed – He was in the beginning with God*

- The Word never BECAME – He always was
- *The only time the Word ever became was when He became flesh – human*
- *Always God – He became man 2000 years ago*

2. And the Word was with God

- John goes on to say, *And the Word was with God – literally, toward or face to face with God* – indicating the closest possible fellowship with God and yet also drawing a distinction between God the Father and God the Son
- *There is another Greek word for “with” that is used in translating Emmanuel, for example: God WITH us*
- But John is using a different word here
- *The word is often translated “to” – as in Jesus’ invitation: Come TO me, all who labor and are heavy laden*
- But here the word has the sense of “with” – the same sense as in II Cor. 5 “to be away from the body is to be at home WITH the Lord”
- *To say that the Word was WITH God makes it clear that the Word has a conscious personal existence distinct from God yet inseparable from Him and associated with Him*
- John makes clear that the Word is a distinct Person from God the Father
- *Jesus Christ – The Logos – the Word – has always been the Son in relation to the Father*
- The love relationship between God the Father and God the Son is an eternal relationship
- *Two distinct Persons but only One God as John next makes clear*

3. And the Word was God

- *And the Word was God – not just a god -- contrary to Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons –*
- *The Greek language and word order are absolutely precise here: John could not have affirmed the deity of Christ any more clearly than he does here*
- Theos was the Logos =
- Predicate nominative (not adjective)
- *Not merely the Word was godlike*
- The Word “equals” God

- *In substance and essence the Word was God -- always*
- One God – yet two distinct Persons
- Logos (Word) has the article “the” and thus is the subject
- *Yet Theos (God) comes first showing the emphasis on the Deity of the Word*
- The clear meaning is that the Word shared the nature and being of God as an extension of the personality of God and yet is a distinct Person
- All that God was and is – the Word was and is
- Thus throughout the Gospel, the deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God
- *Not just God working in and through Jesus – but Jesus Himself speaking and acting as God in human form*
- The Father and the Son are equal in their Deity – and yet are distinct Persons within the Trinity – NOT two Gods -- One God – One God in Two – actually Three -- Persons
- *Yes – it boggles the mind*
- *But why would finite humans think they could fully comprehend an infinite and eternal God?*

4. He was in the beginning with God

- A summary statement summarizing what has been said thus far
- *Again the emphasis on the Eternal nature of the Word*
- There was never a time when the Word was not
- *He always was – before time – before anything else existed*
- The Word is self-existent / uncreated / eternal – having no beginning or end of days
- And again the emphasis on the Word being WITH God
- *What function do words perform?*
- Words reveal what’s in a person’s mind and heart
- *You can’t know my innermost thoughts and desires and intentions unless I express them to you with words*
- Similarly, there is a sense in which Jesus – the Incarnate Word of God – reveals to us the mind of God
- *The Logos is – so to speak -- God’s Thoughts uttered so that we can understand them*

- BUT... my words are not separate from my person
 - *I don't have face to face fellowship with my words*
 - My words express what I'm thinking but they are not a separate living being
 - John wants to make clear that the Logos is not simply an expression of the will of God or mind of God – similar to the Law of God in the OT -- but a distinct Person equal with God and one with God -- yet His own Person in intimate fellowship with God as two distinct Persons of One Godhead
 - Therefore: *He was in the beginning with God*
5. All things were made through him

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

- *Literally: all things came into being through him*
- God the Father created – but He did it through the Word
- *and without him was not any thing made that was made.*
- The Word never came into being – the Word always was – and it was through the Word that all created things came into being
- *It is NOT the case that Jesus Christ was the first being created by God and then created all other things*
- Jesus Christ is uncreated / self-existent
- *He always was – He was never made or created*
- The eternal Word was God's agent of creation
- *How do we turn something in our mind into a real object?*
- In most cases we use our hands – or a machine
- God is Spirit – Mind without body
- *So how does God turn what is in His mind into a real object?*
- He speaks – He says the word – *And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.*

Psalm 33: 6, 9 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made,
 their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
 For he spoke, and it came to be;
 he commanded, and it stood firm.

- *Jesus Christ is the Word through Whom God made all things*
- This Word – known in history as Jesus Christ – *is the creative power and wisdom of God by which God designed and spoke the universe into being*
- *Jesus Christ – the Logos -- is the Brains behind the intelligent design of the universe*
- *The Greeks would say that the Logos was the Source of the design and order in the universe*
- Logos is the Greek work John chose to describe the pre-incarnate Son of God –
 - The best human minds using the best computer programs are just starting to understand and decode the information in DNA molecules
 - *Jesus Christ is the Divine Mind who wrote the code in the first place*
- The human brain was designed and made by the Logos – the Word – Jesus
- Indeed, the entire universe – and all the laws and forces that hold the universe together – were designed and created by the Logos – the Word

Colossians 1:15-17 He 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.

- One of the most astonishing discoveries astrophysicists have made in recent decades is that if gravity were just one-trillionth of one percent stronger, our universe would have reversed course long ago. *It would have collapsed catastrophically, ending in a big crunch, the opposite of the big bang.*
- Likewise, if gravity were just one-trillionth of one percent weaker, our universe would have flown apart so rapidly that planets, stars, galaxies—all the basic constituents of the universe—would never have had a chance to coalesce.
- *Is it an accident that everything turned out so well? That gravity is not too strong, not too weak, but just right?*
- The Logos is responsible for that Intelligent Design
- Spike Psarris: *Our Sun is special indeed. Our Sun is very well suited to support life on Earth. Most other stars are not.*

- For example, the most common stars (about 75 percent of all stars) are red dwarfs. These stars commonly emit flares: eruptions of superheated material, radiation, and charged particles blasted out into space. Large-enough flares can sterilize any planets orbiting these stars. *Although our Sun occasionally releases small flares, they're gentle compared to what we see elsewhere. We've seen other stars produce "superflares" up to 10 million times more energetic than those from our Sun.*
- Even among Sun-like stars, our Sun is unique. In a study of 83,000 solar-type stars, 148 erupted in just 120 days of observing. Extend this rate out, and each solar-type star would have more than a 50% chance of erupting every 100 years. *Yet there is no evidence that our Sun has ever emitted a superflare. As the study's summary noted, "The flares on our Sun are thousands of times punier than those on similar stars." But why?*
- Secular astronomers are scratching their heads over this. But since our Sun was designed by a masterful Creator to support life, we shouldn't be surprised that it supports life very well. *Our Earth, Sun, and Solar System are fearfully and wonderfully made to be our home--and to proclaim the glory of their Creator.*
- Our Sun was made through the Logos who was in the beginning with God
- Mark Batterson: On September 5, 1977, the Voyager I space probe was launched from Cape Canaveral aboard a Titan-Centaur rocket. It has been speeding through space at an average speed of thirty-eight thousand miles per hour ever since, almost a million miles per day. Voyager I is the first spacecraft to travel beyond the heliopause into interstellar space, and NASA continuously calculates its distance from Earth. As of this writing (2019), Voyager I is 13,490,006,617 (billion) miles from Earth and counting.
- *That is pretty amazing, isn't it? But not as amazing as you.*
- The Voyager 1 will run out of gas, so to speak, around the year 2025. At that point, it will have traveled more than fifteen billion miles! But guess what? That is less than half the length of the DNA strand(s) in your body if (they) were stretched end to end. The cumulative length of DNA in all the cells in your body is about twice the diameter of the solar system (over 32 billion miles)! In the words of the psalmist, you are "fearfully and wonderfully made."
- Our DNA was made through the Logos who was in beginning with God
- In her book Birdology, naturalist Sy Montgomery describes the beauty and intricacy of an ordinary hummingbird.
- *Hummingbirds are the lightest birds in the sky. Of their roughly 240 species ... the largest, an Andean "giant," is only eight inches long; the smallest, the*

bee hummingbird of Cuba, is just over two inches long and weighs a single gram.

- Delicacy is the trade-off that hummingbirds have made for their unrivaled powers of flight. Alone among birds, they can hover, fly backward, even fly upside down. For such small birds, their speed is astonishing: *in his courtship display to impress a female, a male Allen's hummingbird, for instance, can dive out of the sky at sixty-one miles per hour ... (Diving at 385 body-lengths per second, this bests the descending space shuttle at 207 body lengths per second.)*
- Hummingbirds' wings beat at a rate that makes them a blur to human eyes, more than sixty times a second *A person as active as a hummingbird would need 155,000 calories a day Each [hummingbird] is an infinite mystery."*
- Hummingbirds were made through the Logos who was in the beginning with God.
- The visible universe contains around 100 billion galaxies. Each galaxy contains around 100 billion stars. That means the visible universe contains something like 10,000 million million million stars.
- These stars and galaxies were made through the Logos who was in the beginning with God
 - *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*
- 6. In him was life

John 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

- In his book, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God*, John Lennox quotes a number of scientists who admit their ignorance about the origin of life:
- Klaus Dose, a prominent scientist working on origin-of-life issues, stated, *"At present all discussions on principal theories and experiments in the field either end in stalemate or in a confession of ignorance."*
- Francis Crick, not known to be sympathetic to the miraculous, nevertheless wrote, *"The origin of life seems almost to be a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going."*

- Finally, Francis Collins, former director of the Human Genome Project, said, *"How did self-replicating organisms arise in the first place? It is fair to say that at the present time we simply do not know."*
- Science keeps searching for an explanation of the origin of life – *but what science actually knows to be true by observation is this: every living thing came from a pre-existing living thing*
- What science knows to be true is this: *Living organisms do not spontaneously come into existence from non-living things*
- *Every living thing came from a pre-existing living thing*
- So where did the first living thing come from? What kind of pre-existing living Being caused the first living thing on earth or in the universe to come into being?
- *That Pre-existing living Being would have to be an eternal, uncaused, self-existing Living Being – otherwise known as God*
- In him was life
- *All creaturely life has its source in the creative Word of God*
- After a decade of research involving nearly 3,000 researchers, scientists have presented the first Census of Marine Life. The researchers discovered 6,000 new species, bringing the total number of known marine species to 250,000. *The highlights ranged from the bizarre to the beautiful – 600-year-old tube worms, herring that swim in formations as large as Manhattan, a jellyfish with a Darth Vader like helmet, and another jellyfish that uses "lights" to "scream" for help.*
- The scientists who worked closely with the project were constantly surprised—and even stunned—by the diversity, abundance and beauty of what Christians would call God's creation.
- One of the vice-chairs for the project said, *"Life astonished us everywhere we looked The discoveries of new species and habitats both advanced science and inspired artists with their extraordinary beauty."* Another amazed scientist said, *"The most surprising thing was the beauty Our eyes pumped out of our heads in front of this beauty."*
- *All marine life was made through the Word who was in the beginning with God*
- In him was life

- *The Son shares self-existent life with the Father and thus is able to impart life to other living things*
- But there is even more to the life that is in the Word

I John 1:1-2 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—

- Who is this who was from the beginning – this life that was made manifest as a man – this eternal life which was with God the Father in the beginning and was made manifest in the flesh 2000 years ago?
- The Word – here the Word of life – the eternal life – Jesus Christ
- *The thought here is not merely that Jesus is the giver of life and eternal life – but that He is life itself – eternal life*
- Other religious teachers have pointed to eternal life – but because Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh – He IS eternal life
- *Therefore – to receive Christ into our lives by faith is to have this life – this eternal life*
- NOT as something we achieve or attain by human effort – *but rather as Someone we receive by faith*
- In him was life – in him IS life

7. And the life was the light of men

John 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

- Not only is the Logos the source of all life – He is also the source of all light
- *He is the Light of the World*
- His life is the light of all men

Psalm 36:9 For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

C.S. Lewis: *“I believe in Christianity as I believe the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else.”*

- To say that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World is to say that He is the Light by which we see all other light – *His life is the true revelation of God by which we understand all other spiritual truths*
- *The Light has come into the world*
- Those who come to the Light will walk in the light – *those who turn away from the light will walk in darkness*

8. The light shines in the darkness

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

- The word translated “overcome” can also be translated “comprehended”
- *Both are true but “overcame” is probably the preferred choice*
- Light is stronger than darkness
- *A little candle can dispel a roomful of darkness and not be dimmed by it*
- Darkness cannot prevail against light
- And spiritual darkness cannot prevail against the Light of the Logos
- Jesus came into this dark world as the Light shining in the darkness
- *Jesus was born into a world that was darkened with sin, idolatry, false religions, violence, cruelty, injustice, oppression, slavery, abortion, infanticide, immorality,*
- Jesus was born into a world that was ruled by Satan and his spiritual forces of evil
- *The birth of Jesus was a declaration of war – the kingdom of God was invading the kingdom of Satan through the Incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ*
- And though Satan succeeded in putting Jesus to death on a Roman cross, in the wisdom of God it was by that very means – Jesus’ crucifixion and subsequent resurrection from the dead – *that our Lord Jesus Christ defeated Satan and the spiritual forces of darkness*
- The kingdom of darkness has already been defeated and Satan has already been dethroned by the rightful King – Jesus the Messiah and Lord

- *Yet the kingdom of darkness has not surrendered – and the world in which we live is also very dark with violence, cruelty, injustice, oppression, slavery, abortion, sexual immorality, false religions and false ideologies*
- As we continue in John 1, next week's message will focus more on the theme of light vs. darkness and Jesus as the Light of the World
- The reason Jesus is the Light of the World is because He is God in human flesh
- There is no one who can compare to Jesus Christ – the Word become flesh – who was with God in the beginning – and is in fact the Wisdom and Power by which God spoke the universe into being
- *As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is literally the Creator and Source of all light in the universe*
- There is no one like him – there is no light like His light
- God sent Jesus into the world to deliver us from the dominion of darkness and bring us into the kingdom of Light

Colossians 1:13-14 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- *Why are some people afraid to come into the Light – hiding in the darkness instead?*
- For fear that their sins will be exposed by the light – for fear that they will be judged and condemned if they come to the light
- *And it is true that light dispels darkness and exposes what was hidden in the darkness*
- But when we come to Jesus – His light does not condemn what is exposed – *His light cleanses and purifies and restores and renews and makes whole*
- *His Light is bathed in Love*

John 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

- *As the Word made flesh – the Light of the world – the true revelation of God to man -- Jesus revealed the Father's heart to be full of grace*
- The Grace of God which loves sinners unconditionally / the Grace of God which sent Jesus on a mission to save us from our sins / the Grace of God which says to us: *No matter what you've done / No matter who you are – I want you to become my son or daughter through Jesus Christ*
 - *The Grace of God by which God sacrificed His own Son Jesus so that we might become His beloved and forgiven children*
- The Light and Truth that came through Jesus Christ is not a truth to frighten away sinners from the Presence of God – *on the contrary – it is a light that beckons and pleads and seeks to draw us into relationship with a grace-filled God who has reconciled the world to Himself through the death of His Son*
- No matter what you've done / No matter who you are / No matter how far you have strayed from God / *No matter how indifferent or rebellious you have been toward God / No matter how much shame and guilt you may feel / God extends His grace to you in the Person of Jesus Christ – He offers you complete forgiveness and a new beginning in life*
- Simply put: He offers you Life – spiritual life – abundant life – eternal life
- *In Him is Life*
- Life that is yours for the asking – and believing:

Salvation Prayer