

CHRISTMAS IN THE GOSPEL
OF JOHN
Or
Who Is This Jesus of Christmas?
Message 3

INTRO: We have been looking at John 1:1-5. Somewhere in eternity past, the godhead made a plan, and was that the second Person of the Triune God would become man in the fullness of time in the history of man. And We are in the time of year that we commemorate that time when the Word became flesh, and God became man. It is the time of the birth of Christ. In John 1:1, we are in the first point, the primary history of the Word. We have looked at the Word, the title of these verses. We have looked at the first point in the section of the primary history of the Word, "In the beginning was the Word..." I mentioned last message that I did not quite finish to my satisfaction on the words, '... in the beginning...'

So, this morning before we consider the words, "...and the Word was with God" let me add a few things to the last message. Go once more to Colossians 1. We talked about verses 9-14. And look once more at verse 15 (read). And then we asked, "Now, who is this image of the invisible God?" And I said, "Well, the appositive in the verse tells us. It is the firstborn of or over all creation! Then we saw that the next verse begins with the word 'for'. It will give us the reason why Jesus is the firstborn of creation. And I said, "And before we look at that, if the JW doctrine is true, we would expect it to say this, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for He was the very first one ever created." Is that not what you would expect if the JW's are right? But now let me read what it says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over or of all creation. For by Him all things were created! Wow! That is different from what one would expect if the Son of God, Jesus, was the first thing God ever created."

Then we looked at the reasons given why Jesus is the firstborn. I believe the correct translation is that He is the firstborn over creation. The first reason for that is given in verse 16, "For by Him all things were created..." Second, verse 17, "For He is before all things." Third, still in verse 17, because, "By Him all things consist." Literally, by Him all things are held together. Fourth, now, in verse 18, "He is the head of the body." And we asked, what does that have to do with this? Well, it says, "He is the head of the body, who is the beginning." And then we asked, "Of what is He the beginning?" Well, Paul is

careful to tell us. He writes, "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead! And why does God have Him as the firstborn from the dead? That He might have the pre-eminence in all things!

As I see it then, Christ was not the firstborn in eternity past. He was not the firstborn when He was born of Mary. He was not God's firstborn, but His only born! He is called the 'only begotten Son of God'! But He became the firstborn when He arose from the dead. He was the firstborn from the dead! You see, firstborn presupposes there are others who are or will be born from the dead as well. Listen to 1 Corinthians 15:22-23, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, (and we could say the firstborn) afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

I. THE PRIMARY HISTORY OF THE WORD

B. Where The Word Was

Now, remember, we are looking at the primary history of the Word in John 1:1. So, look at our verse again. We have seen when the Word was. It was in the beginning. But, we may ask, where was the Word? Well, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God..." The Word was with God. Now John 1:1 has resulted in fierce controversy starting with the Arians in the days of the Apostles, and continuing today in the Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults. The JW's do not believe Jesus is God, capital G. He is 'a' god, small g.

This morning I want to give you another grammatical point. It will become very crucial in the next point, where we must conclude, was the Word, God? Or was the Word 'a' god? Our point this morning is with regard to the article. In English we have the indefinite article. Some homeschooler tell me, what is the English indefinite article? It is 'a' or 'an'.

You see, if I say, "Last week a robber broke into a house in town and stole a very rare antique." It was 'a' robber; so you don't know who it was. He broke into 'a' house. So you don't know which house it was. And he stole a rare antique, and you don't know if it was a clock or a coin or whatever else.

Then there is the definite article, so I won't ask the homeschooling dads, and the pastoral students may not answer; so I'll ask the homeschooling moms; what is the English definite article? It is 'the'. You see, you can't say he broke into 'the' house unless you know which one. You can't say 'the' robber, or 'the' antique unless you know which one.

Now there are a number of rules that go with the article in the original language. The language of the NT does not have the indefinite article. It only has the definite article, 'the'. So look at the first clause of 1:1. It says, "In the beginning..." But the original says, "In beginning...", not in 'a' beginning. In English we don't say it like that so we add the article. You will notice that the KJV and the NKJV don't italicise the article to indicate it is not there in the original. Why? Because it has to go there in English. We will look at this more later.

Well, let us now come to our clause. You see, in this second great gold lettered clause we find where the Word was. The Word was 'with' God. But you might make a note in the margin of your Bible that in the original it says, "... and 'the' Word was with 'the' God. Let me make a brief note in case some Greek student should listen to this message that I believe the preposition 'pros' translated 'with', indicates locative of place.

Now, the English leaves the definite article out before God, because we do not speak like that in English. But the original says, "...the Word was with the God." Now I want to read for you a very literal reading of the first two clauses, "In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God." Why was the definite article not added in the English translation? Because we do not speak like that, just like we don't say, "In beginning..." but, "In the beginning...". And why does the Greek have the definite article here? Of the various uses of the definite article in the NT language, I see only one possible reason. It is used to point out a monadic noun. What does that mean? It means it is used to point out a noun of which there is only one such being. There is only one God. Therefore it says, "...and the Word was with 'the' God." There is no other God! Remember this for the next message.

Next, we must make another point from the preposition 'with'. The Word was 'with' the God. Let me read from the Watchtower booklet called, "Should You Believe in the Trinity?" It is a masterpiece of deception. Here is what it says about the preposition, 'with'. It says, "Note, however, that here again the context lays the groundwork for accurate understanding. Even the King James Version says, 'The word was *with* God.' (Italics ours.) Someone who is 'with' another person cannot be the same as that other person. In agreement with this, the Journal of Biblical Literature, edited by Jesuit (Catholic) Joseph A. Fitzmyer, notes that if the latter part of John 1:1 were interpreted to mean 'the' God, this, 'would then contradict the preceding clause,' which says that the Word was with God" (pg 27).

Let me explain what they are saying. Notice the last part of this verse which says, "...and the Word was God." So they are saying this could not be translated, "...and the Word was the God." And why could it not be translated like that? Because the clause we are in says the Word was with God and since, if you are with someone, you cannot be the same as the one you are with, then this last part of the verse could not be translated, "...the Word was the God." Why do they jump through all these hoops? To give credibility to their translation of the last clause like this, "...the Word was 'a' god" (small g).

By now we have passed two things the JW's remain silent on. First, they don't mention that they don't translate the first clause as, "In a beginning..." But that is what they did with the last clause, but the 'a' is not there. Second, I want to show you something they conveniently leave out in the second clause. In the original, the second clause, the one we are working on, says, "...and the Word was with the God." The definite article from this clause is assumed in the next clause. But they fail to mention that the King James leaves out the definite article in our clause, while in the original it is there. And why do they not mention it? I think it would destroy their translation 'a' god, in the next clause? And why does the King James leave it out? Because it uses proper English. Why does the King James version put in the definite article in the first clause which says, "In 'the' beginning..." when the Greek leaves it out? Why does the JW translation do the same? Because that is proper English. When you translate, you must do some of

these things because the language you are translating into is a different language.

So, what of their argument that you cannot say as Trinitarians would say, that the Word, which we believe is God, was with the God. Because you cannot be with the same one as the one that you are with! But that is only true if you do not understand that God is one God in three divine Persons! Putting all of Scripture together, the Trinity is the way the Bible presents God. He is one God in three Persons. So the Person who is here given as the Word, who became Jesus in the flesh, was with God, who is the head of the Triune God. And if you argue that that goes beyond a human's capacity to comprehend, so do all the attributes of God! And that is also why Paul said, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh..." (1 Tim. 3:16).

The JW's put out a Watchtower magazine and I have one on the Trinity called, "Should You Believe In The Trinity?" One article in it is called, 'What Does the Bible say About God and Jesus?' It starts like this, "If people were to read the Bible from cover to cover without any preconceived idea of a Trinity, would they arrive at such a concept on their own? Not at all. What comes through very clearly to an impartial reader is that God alone is the Almighty, the Creator, separate and distinct from anyone else, and that Jesus, even in his prehuman existence, is also separate and distinct, a created being, subordinate to God."

Two days ago we commemorated Christmas. What would any unbiased reader make of this very familiar verse, "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." I ask you, what would an unbiased person do with a verse like that but stop and take note and say, "What can this possibly mean?"

What if such an unbiased person should read John 8:58, "Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Or John 10:30, "I and My Father are one." Or John 10:33, "The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." Or John 14:9, "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen

the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" And we could add a host of verses here.

Well, for some time I have waited to get back to Proverbs 8. Let us do that now. We begin with 8:1-2, "Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet." There is a place where the paths meet, and from here you can go right or wrong. And Wisdom is there to direct in the right way (THE LIGHT?). You see, in Proverbs 7 is the way of the harlot. She is so enticing. That is how sin is. It promises so much enjoyment and fulfillment, and delivers such sin and shame. And now, here is the place where the paths meet, and right here wisdom has taken her stand.

Verse three, she cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors. At the place of judgment between right and wrong, she is there. And look at what she says in verses 4-11 (read). Well, she says much more about wisdom, but we go now to verse 22 (read). The Hebrew verb, as it appears here, it can mean to acquire, create, buy or possess. So, our question is, which is the right idea here. Of the numerous translations possible the translators have translated it 'possessed'. The point we are working on is when the Word was with God. If in fact, wisdom here is that which is referred to as the Word in John 1:1, and I think it is, then the Word was there before the works of old, or before creation.

Now note verse 23. It says, "I have been established from the beginning, before there ever was an earth. Now note the word 'established'. Here the verb (nawsak) may mean, to pour out; to cast metal as images; to anoint. The KJV translates it as 'set up'. So does Darby. But Young's literal translates it as anointed. I want to recommend that it means, 'to be poured out'. I believe we are talking about when the Triune God agreed within the three Persons of the Trinity that the second Person of the Trinity, the Word, who would become Jesus Christ, that the Word would become flesh! There, in the mind of God, in eternity past, He was poured out when He accepted the fact that He would become man. The actual pouring out would happen in the Garden of Gethsemane and the following day when He would be poured out for mankind.

Now, what makes me think that this word, nawsak here has the intended meaning of being poured out. You see, it says that this happened at the beginning of His way. It was when the plan was made to make man and that Christ would die for mankind. It was, according to the verse, before His works of old, or creation. Well, look at verse 24 (read). Wisdom says, "When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water." Now look closely at the words, 'when I was brought forth.' The word 'to bring forth' is the Hebrew khool. It is not cool. Nothing about this is cool. It is khool which means to be made to writhe, be made to bear, or to be brought forth. It speaks of something extremely painful, like giving birth. And maybe you say, "Just a minute, maybe He was born way back there before He was born to Mary on earth. Maybe the JW's are right."

Here is what I believe we have. In eternity past, notice, it is before His works of old; it is from the beginning; it is before there was an earth; it is when there were no depths; it is when there were no fountains abounding with water; it is before the mountains were settled; it is before the hills were brought forth; it is while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields or the primal dust of the earth; that is when the plan that the second Person of the Triune God, the Word, the Wisdom of God was brought forth. You see, verse 25 uses the same words of being brought forth.

And let us read verse 25 once more, "Before the mountains were settled, I was brought forth..." Go now to Psalm 90:1-2, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

Now let me tell you something about the words, 'from everlasting to everlasting.' I have told you that I cannot find a word for our English word eternal in either the Hebrew OT or the Greek NT. When the writer wants to express the idea of unendingness, in the Greek they use the phrase, *eis twn iawniwn twn iawniwn*. We saw that in the last message. It means, 'into the ages of the ages.' That expression speaks of eternal in the forward direction.

In Hebrew of the OT, when they want to speak of the same thing, they have the phrase, 'olam, ad olam.' Now consider

Psalm 90:2. It says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from 'olam ad olam' you are God! There is no stronger language in the Bible to talk about the eternity of this One, and this One it speaks of is the second Person of the Triune God! This is an amazing statement on our subject!

Now here is how I want to recommend the Lord said of Jesus way back there in the Psalms, 'this day have I begotten You', and 'I was brought forth before creation.'

Here is how all of this took place in eternity past. Here is what I believe. There was a day in eternity past, before anything was created, that God made a plan. And this plan ultimately included that the Word would become flesh and live among men, and that he would be crucified and die and be resurrected again. It was then that the second Person of the Trinity, the Word, was poured out in anguish. It was then, in the mind of the Triune God, a fact established and completed. It only waited for the right time to come. And in the fullness of time, Jesus was born.

Go to Psalm 2 again briefly. Look at verse 7 (read). Because of this, Strong speaks of, "That the Sonship of Christ..." So, as I see it, Psalm 2 and Proverbs 8 speak prophetically of what would happen, and did happen. Was Jesus born in eternity past? No. He was born 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. That is the significance of Christmas. Did He exist in eternity past? Most definitely! But not as God's Son, but as the Word and the Wisdom of God!

Before I close this message, let me give a little teaching on who God is. As I thought of this, I thought, "I wonder what I wrote in my doctrinal paper in Bible school. In Bible school, in completing the Bachelor of Theology, the most difficult course there, we had to write a Bachelor of theology paper and a doctrinal statement.

With regard to the doctrinal statement, we had to cover 10 doctrines. We were given 50 theological terms that had to be in the paper; like total depravity; inspiration; edification, plenary inspiration, coexistence etc... etc... We had to cover each doctrine in 50 words, and for each point made, we had to give two Scripture references. Then we had to write a glossary that gave an explanation for every term we used such as grace, or inerrancy or sanctification etc...

Well, the doctrine we are dealing with in John 1:1 is the doctrine of the Godhead, or the Trinity, only we have not touched on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. And I thought I would read for you the statement I wrote on the Godhead, leaving out all the references. It is simply this: "There is only one God. He eternally exists in a unity of three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three distinct Personalities coexist in complete equality."

Our subject in John 1:1-5 is the second person of the Trinity, and here is the barebones of the statement I wrote on Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, therefore true deity. He was born of the virgin, Mary, therefore truly human. In the incarnation His human and divine nature united into an indissoluble union. He lived a sinless life. He made atonement for all mankind, died, was buried, and rose again. He ascended into heaven and was exalted to the right hand of the Father, where He is ministering as our High Priest."

Now we have not dealt with the Holy spirit. The JW's and I think all cults treat the Holy Spirit as an *it*, not a Person. Listen to this quote from a JW writing which mentions the Holy Spirit as related to the birth of Christ. Here is how it reads, "By means of holy spirit (not a or the Holy Spirit, but holy spirit with a small h and s), *By means of holy spirit* Jehovah God performed the miracle of transferring the life of his heavenly Son to the womb of the Jewish virgin Mary so that he could be born as a perfect human. * Such a miracle is easily within the power of Almighty God. As the angel who explained matters to Mary put it, "with God no declaration will be an impossibility.- [Luke 1:30-35, 37](#)"

To the Jehovah's Witnesses, the one they call Almighty God, is capital G God. And Jesus Christ is a small 'g' god. And the Holy Spirit is not 'the' Holy Spirit, capital H and S. He is just holy spirit with small letters. Now, let me tell you what that is. That is another god, another Jesus, and another holy spirit!

On another assignment I wrote a paper on the Trinity. My study abilities were far from what they are today, and I don't have the paper, but I know how I ended the paper. It went something like this: "When you study God in the Bible you can come out at no other place than the doctrine known as the Trinity."]]

Well, if we are correct, and God is the Triune God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it means Jesus is divine. He is God. After writing those papers and the doctrinal statement many years ago, I have studied the Bible many thousands of hours. I have sought to be as objective as possible in Bible interpretation. In all those years I have never had anything presented to me or read or studied any passage of Scripture that would cause me to doubt that the God of the Bible is the Triune God presented in Scripture.

Now, I want to add one more thought this morning. It is important. Let me put it in question form: If Jesus was truly and fully a divine Person who has existed from eternity past, when He agreed to be conceived and born and die by crucifixion, was that really a big deal for a divine Person? Do you think it was really a big deal for Him to lay His glory aside and become man, human? Was it really a big deal to agree to come and live among sinful people, and be despised and rejected? Was it a big deal for him to suffer physically? After all, He was divine? Was His suffering real?

If we should go back to the early Church, they battled all these doctrines about Christ. Today we hardly give these doctrines a thought. If you would research the questions I have just raised in just one systematic theology book, such as Strong's Systematic Theology, you would be surprised how much study has gone into such questions. To deal with these questions requires the study of much Scripture.

Let me ask, you, when the Word became flesh and Satan tempted Him after 40 days of fasting, as a divine Person, do you think He was really hungry? Let me ask you, when Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, do you think He was actually tempted? I have thought of these things and looked into them as my little computer allows and my mind literally staggers. You see, before creation, when the Word was with God, He was God. But when He became man, He was man. He was tempted so much by Satan's temptations as much as is possible for a human to be tempted.

Let me ask you, when He was mistreated, when He was tied up by sinful man, when He was spit upon, when He was beaten, when He stood before Pilate and Caiaphas and Herod, was it

actually hard for Him? Was it a big deal to Him? After all He was divine. I am asking you, as a divine Person, was His suffering real? Was He fully God, and was He fully man, as we say He was? I am asking you, do you think He was fully man? When He sweat, as it were, drops of blood because of His anguish of soul; was He putting on a show? I am not asking you because I think you might doubt it. I am asking you to cause you to think of what it means, "...and the Word was with God..." and what it means that He became flesh; and what it means that somewhere in the past He agreed to do all this for us.

You see, I can see how He was brought forth in eternity past. In eternity past, when the second Person of the Triune God agreed to become man, He knew what it would mean to become man! Consider with me some amazing passages. It says that after He had fasted for forty days, afterward he was hungry. Now, I have said I believed He was fully God. Is it possible that He could get hungry? Listen to this from the book of Hebrews 8:8-9, "...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered..." The divine Son of God learned obedience by the things He suffered?" Ponder that!

Scripture says He was tempted in all points like we are (Heb. 4:15). What was it like for Him to be with God, and to agree to become man? Here is what I believe. Man is such a complex being, and being enveloped in flesh and being subject to feelings and temptations from the devil and desires for all kinds of things is such a trying experience; that when God became man, that kind of existence was extremely hard for Him! What you and I go through in life is no little thing! To live by faith, to trust God, to walk upright in life was a test for God in the flesh. It is no wonder that we sometimes find it almost more than we can bear. But, the second Person of the Triune God knows what it is like for us by having experienced the same thing!

CONCL: Why does John begin with the subject of the Word when He opens his book of Jesus Christ? We are commemorating the birth of Jesus. But the birth of which Jesus do we commemorate? As Warren Smith points out in the book, "Another Jesus Calling", there are other Jesus's. The apostle Paul speaks of another Jesus. Which Jesus's birth do we commemorate. This Jesus we talk about, who is He? Is he the one who was created a spirit being

before the creation of the earth as the JW's believe? Is he the brother of Satan, as the Mormons believe? Let me come closer to home. Is He the Jesus that loves and forgives unconditionally? Let me ask each one of us: the birth of which Jesus do we commemorate on this day?

I trust it is the Jesus who has eternally existed. He was the Word, and then the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, and she was with Child; and the Child was both human and divine. He did not begin at that time. He only began His existence in human form at that time. He is not 'a' god, small g. He is God, capital 'G'.

Is such reasoning hard to understand? Can your mind grasp and understand and explain this God? Is this God contrary to human experience? The answers are yes, to all of these. Can we comprehend God? No! Does that mean that the doctrine of the Trinity is not true? Can you explain God's justice in all you see around you; all the sickness, suffering, sorrow and trouble? Can you explain His mercy in all you see around you? Can you understand and explain His goodness, His graciousness, His eternity etc... etc... Answer? No! Does that mean it is not true? No! That means that God is beyond human comprehension. And should that surprise us?

Here is the Lord's counsel in Isaiah 55:69, "Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." And why does the Lord counsel like this? Listen to the reason: "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

May I ask you, how far above our thoughts and our ways are God's? Let me ask you, how far are the heavens above the earth? Well, omniscient Google says it is 45 billion light years. Now, we are talking about the 'known universe'. Now, may I ask you how far 45 billion light years is? Well, light travels at 186,000 miles per second. So you have to multiply 186,000 by 60 to get one minute. That one million, one 116 thousand miles. Now you have to multiply that number by 60 to get one hour's worth of light years. That is 669 million, 600 thousand miles. Now you have to multiply that number by 24 to get one days worth of light travel. And you have to multiply that by 365 and $\frac{1}{4}$ to get a years worth, and how far is that? Well, that is sixteen billion, 70 million, and 400 thousand miles. Now to reach the

edge of the known universe, you have to multiply that number by 45 billion, and my calculator quit. And God's ways are above our ways more than that final number!

We are talking about the pre-existent Christ in John 1:1, and I ask, taking John 1:1 as it is written, maybe it is not all that complicated for God! And if you take that largest number and say it represents years. There, way back there, the Word was with God! Now if you calculate back from today to get to 2,000 years ago when Christ was born, that large number is not noticeably smaller. And if you calculate back to creation, even that does not put a dint in those numbers. And if you go back those multiplied trillions of years of the number that it took to reach the end of the known universe and make call it years, there was the Word! And if you should go forward just that many years from today, the millennium will hardly move the number, and there will be the Word that became flesh! And you can never go so far ahead that He won't be there as the Christ, our Redeemer! And if you and I walk faithfully with Him until He comes for us or until we die, no matter how far ahead you go, there we will be with our Redeemer! And now I ask, is it worth it to live this wee, tiny little life-span entirely for Him! Yes! And amen, and amen!