

## Christmas 2011 ~ John 1:1-18 The Birth of Christ from the Perspective of Heaven

Mark read the story of the birth of Christ from Matthew chapter 2, but our text tonight is the Gospel of John 1:1-18.

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This same one was in beginning with (or more literally, *equal to*) God. All things became (or created) by Him; and without Him was not anything made that has been made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness did not overcome it (literal translation). There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This would be John the Baptist, not the gospel writer, John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness (or testify) concerning the Light. This Light who was the true Light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came into His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to these He gave the power (or authority) to become the sons of God, that is to the ones believing in His name: who were born, not from out of bloods (that would mean bloodline), nor from out of the will of the flesh, nor out of the will of man, but those who have been born from God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him, and cried, saying, "This was He of whom I spake, He that comes after me is preferred (that is, *has priority*) before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have we all received, and grace succeeding grace. It is a Greek phrase that shows grace coming in like the waves of the ocean. One wave of grace after another, taking the place of the first wave that comes in. So His grace just continues to come towards us, one wave after another. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son (*begotten* means *unique*), who is in the bosom of the Father, He declared Him.**

I do not know if you have seen the video that is going around the Internet. I just saw it for the first time yesterday, but it was entitled Christmas in Heaven, anybody see it? Christmas in Heaven. And it is music along with a video presentation. It is kind of sad because it is someone who is singing about their loved ones who have left, gone to heaven; and now as they are celebrating Christmas together here on the earth, they wonder what Christmas is like in heaven, and that is what the song is all about. In heaven are the wise man still bowing? In heaven..., and they rehearse the whole story of the birth of Christ.

And I thought it would be interesting and in fact probably appropriate for us - each year we have gone through the different narratives of the birth of Christ - to actually study from the Gospel of John because John presents to us the birth of Christ from the perspective of heaven. And we get so caught up down here with our parades, and with our celebrations and I am not here to quench that. But if you will notice that when Jesus was born He was born in a stable and put in a feeding trough. And not so that He can claim poverty, but He did not want the glorification from the world. And so He chose the low road. He would not be happy and

pleased with a great parade and lights and everything in His honor. He does not want that kind of praise.

So I thought it is interesting, with many, many people celebrating the birth of Christ - some even now hold birthday parties for Jesus - we have to understand that it was not His birthday. That takes away from His incarnation. We are talking about God coming in the flesh. He became flesh. That is not the time that He began, it was not His birthday.

So tonight I want to share four things with you very quickly from this chapter. First of all, verses 1-5, The Person Who Came as the Christ Child. In verses 1-2 we want to study His character, three things about the character of Christ.

#### 1) His Existence

You will notice in our text the verb *was* is repeated in our text. And in the Greek text it is very important because it designates continual existence in the past. So he says, **In the beginning was the Word.** Christ is not called *the Christ child*, He is called *the Word*. In fact, the baby that was born in Bethlehem in the feeding trough was the Word of God, who not only created the entire universe but also holds it together, according to the book of Hebrews chapter 1, carries it along by His Word. All of history by its word.

So, **In the beginning was the Word.** He was already in existence at the time the material universe was created. He had no beginning, He has no end, like we know beginning and end to be. So we need to keep this in mind as we reflect on the birth of Christ, that was not His beginning. He always has been. But as we will see when we get down to verse 14, *He became flesh*. It does not say *He was flesh*; it says *He became flesh*. So the first thing is the existence: eternally existent.

#### 2) Equality

It says, **And the Word was with God.** The word *with* in Greek is a preposition that represents equality, face-to-face with God. So *the Word was face-to-face with God*, that is, *equal*. So the Christ child who came, who is the Word of God and has always been in existence, He was equal with God.

Now Paul in Philippians 2:1-5 tells us of how Jesus being in the form of God emptied Himself - that is, He let go of that title and designation - and humbled Himself and came down here to earth and took on flesh, and took on as a humble servant, even submitted Himself to the death on the cross. But then was highly exalted by God through the resurrection, and He ascended up on the right hand of the Father. What was His attitude and His approach to this life? Lowly. Humble. But He did not rob God by being equal to God, but rather He did not come and enforce that on people. He came as a slave. And if anybody had a right to demand praise, and to demand that adoration of the people, it would be Jesus. But no, He took the low route, He took the humble route. But He has always been in existence. He was equal, existent with God.

3) His Essence

**And the Word was God.** In nature and in quality He is God.

So we have three things. His existence, He always has been. Secondly, His equality, He is equal with God. As a matter fact, His essence, in nature He is God Himself.

It says in verse 18, **Now no one has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.** Another Greek phrase that is a translation of a Hebraism that talks about equality. Two people are one. Jesus said in John 10:31, **"I and the Father, We are one."** And so He is in the bosom of the Father, they are equal, and He has declared God to us. So His character, eternally existent; equality, equal with God; and His essence, He is the very nature of God himself.

Secondly in verse 3, under the person, His relation to Creation. There is a positive statement and there is a negative statement to cover all the bases about His relationship with creation. **All things were made by Him** (or through Him). So He is the creator, and it says *all things*. All things means all things. But on the negative side of it, it says, **And without Him was not one thing made that has been made.** So approaching it from the negative side. He made all things, in fact, there is not even one thing made that was not made by Jesus Christ and through Him as far as creation goes.

Thirdly, The Cause, verses 4-5. The cause for Him coming. **In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness (literally) did not overcome it.** The cause for the coming of Christ is for the light of the world, the light of God, to shine in the darkness. That was not something that was well received. Darkness does not want light to shine in it.

We know from John chapter 3 that we studied last week in our Ephesians study that the Light has come; and those who are attracted to the light of Christ are drawn to the light, and those who are practicing evil try to get away from the light. I cannot impress upon you that it is the missing link in understanding much of the Bible. Something that John starts here, and he amplifies for us in chapter 3, is that everyone's responsibility to God comes from their response to the light, not to words.

That is why we encourage, when children get old enough to sit in. We have heard people say, "Well, it is an adult Bible study and kids cannot understand it." They will be exposed to the light, that is the whole point of it. They might hear a word. The Holy Spirit might bring something back to them in later years. That has happened before, that we know of. But they are exposed to the light.

What I have done lately, and I encourage you do the same thing. When I am with a group of Christians, or I am in someone's church visiting, whatever the case may be, when I hear of what they say about how they are going to run things - that children should not be in church for instance - I picture Jesus. The Lord coming into town and saying, "Okay now, here is how we have to set things up. Take the kids and take them over there. That will be Sunday school number one, and take..." You know? No. He said everybody, "Let the little children come to

Me." It is not that He knew they would understand, but that they were exposed to the light. The light of the world, God's energy, God's Spirit was touching them, reaching them, drawing them.

I know of people now, and I cannot help but attribute it to the exposure to the world, that as they became teenagers and became young adults that there was a drawing to the light that they had heard ten, fifteen, twenty years earlier. They remember that light and that light was there drawing them to come back to that original enlightenment. So everyone is going to have to be responsible to the light. That is it. God has a way that when we respond to the light, and we respond positively to the light, His Spirit then draws us.

That is why Jesus, when He was talking to the Pharisees there in John chapter 6 and they began to argue with Him, and He did not argue or debate back. He just says, "You know what the problem is? The Father is not drawing you." He went back to that point where He says, "You are fighting with the light," so there is no debate. Either the light is drawing you, or you are trying to get away from the light, and argument sometimes gets rid of the light.

There are positive religious groups today that exist in order to destroy the truth. People that go door-to-door and knock on the door and you can show them the truth. It is like you are talking to somebody that is hypnotized. It does not even phase them because they do not care what you say. They are there to defeat what you say [about] who Jesus Christ is so that they can present their presentation that no, He is not God and present some of their other false doctrines. So it is interesting that even Satan himself can raise up churches with tremendous wealth, and tremendous influence over human beings; and raise up these religious groups to preach from the Bible, and teach from the Bible, and talk about a Jesus Christ, only to defeat the truth of Christ. And that is how Satan works a lot of the time. And they go to door-to-door, and you cannot reach them, at least most of them, not unless the Holy Spirit is there to touch them. I have been in those situations before, where God's Spirit used me to minister to them. I could see it happening. But then there are other times when they could care less. They already have their sales presentation, and they are not interested in what is happening.

But I cannot stop impressing upon you that everyone's responsibility is to the light, not to words. If a person responds to the light, the Lord will get the words there, and get them that message, and tell them who the light is, and they will be drawn by the Spirit of God. But not everybody is drawn.

So, first of all, the person of Jesus Christ. His Character, His relation to creation, and His cause in coming; to be the light of the world to shine in the darkness but the darkness could not overcome it.

Verses 6-9, The Preparation for the Coming of Christ. Verses 6 to 8, The Commission of John. **There was a man who had been sent from God, whose name was John.** This would be John the Baptist. **The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. John himself was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness concerning the Light.**

And then verse 9, The Communication of God, that Jesus Christ was the true Light, not John. John bore witness to the light, but **Christ is the true Light, which enlightens every person coming into the world.** That is how it literally reads. In John's Gospel he says that every single person coming into this world is enlightened by Jesus Christ with the Light.

Romans 1:18-32 tells us that no one will be able to stand before God and say that they have an excuse. And so when we think that we have to mobilize, and get our human efforts together, and reach people for Christ because they have not heard yet - What if they die and never hear the gospel?! - God already has it taken care of. It is not a matter of being irresponsible, but there is no stress and there is no pressure for us to perform to do God's work for Him. He already knows.

Plus my second approach to that type of presentation is that when Jesus did command the apostles to go out and to reach the world for Christ He said to tell them the commandments that I have given to you. There are many, many people who are being pressured and stressed to be sent out that have not even been trained. They do not have the foggiest idea what the Scripture says. But they are trained with this salesmanship mentality to go around and share the same message with people over and over again like a salesman, because "it is our job." Our "job," our *duty* is my personal relationship with Jesus Christ first. And then the outcome of that, the outflow of that is what the Lord wants to use me for. He will call me if He wants me to go. He will show me. I will not have to second-guess.

But I also do not have to put pressure on people to perform and do God's work for Him. You see that level of approach shows the person does not understand who God is. Jesus Christ enlightens every person coming into this world. Our problem is we cannot categorize that segment. We cannot take people and say, "Oh, you have been enlightened and you have rejected the Light." We can categorize people religiously, but we cannot categorize people spiritually. And we like to take everything and bring it down to our human control and our understanding. That is not the way it works. We have to leave that up to God.

So far we have seen the person of Christ, and the preparation for Christ. Thirdly, verses 10 to 13, The People's Response. Look at verse 10, **He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not. He came into His own.** And by the way, in the Greek text *His own* is neuter plural meaning *creation*. **He came into His own created things.** And then you have a masculine plural, meaning *the Jews*: **He came into His own and His own people did not receive Him.** This is the condition that He came into. He came into his own creation, specifically to His own people the Jews, and they rejected Him.

But there are also those that received, in verse 12, **But as many as received Him, to those He gave the authority to become children of God, that is, to the ones believing on His name.** So the condition of people: the Light came, some people responded and rejected Him; His own people responded and rejected Him; but then there were those who did respond and received Him and experienced conversion, verse 13.

These people **Who were born, not from out of bloods.** In the Greek text the word *blood* is plural showing *bloodline*. You can be born in a certain family and that does not mean

you are saved. It could be every person in your family is saved and someone born into that family does not make that child saved. Secondly, **Nor of the will of the flesh.** Human will. You do not become a Christian just because you want to be. Thirdly, **Nor of the will of man.** And this word *man* is a special word designation for *husband*. The children are not going to be Christians just because the husband says, "You are going to be a Christian." **But rather**, in contrast to all these human efforts, **But rather those who are born from out of God.** Those who experience a spiritual birth from God, not from man.

And so Paul says in II Corinthians 5:17 that if a person is in Christ they have become a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold all things are become new. Conversion, a birth from God. That is not a religious experience, it is a spiritual experience.

So under the people's response we see that He came into creation, and specifically to His own people, and found their condition in darkness and they rejected Him. But to those who received there is conversion in verse 13.

Lastly, verse 14, The Perception of His Coming. We have seen His person, the preparation for His coming, the people's response, but the perception of His coming is very important.

Verse 14, **And the Word became flesh.** In verse 1 we saw that He always was but now *He became*. There was a point in time in history, it is that time that we celebrate the birth of Christ that He became flesh, but He has always been in existence. It is not His *birthday*. **The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as the only begotten** (or only unique) **from the Father, full of grace and truth.** As Isaiah said in Isaiah 7:14, **A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and He will be called Emmanuel, God with us.**

The reason these texts are so important - to get a perspective of the birth of Christ from heaven and escape for a moment together the way the world, and the way we traditionally celebrate the birth of Christ, is to remember behind all this, what is the truth about Jesus Christ? He was conceived by the Holy Spirit but only that human part of Him. He was always in existence as equal to God. And His birth is not celebrated by the world because the Light came into darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

You get the sense every year, if you are out shopping, or go to the parade, or whatever the case may be, you get the sense that people would love to celebrate Christmas just as long as you keep Jesus with Santa Claus. There is the religious side of Christmas and then there is the get for yourself side of Christmas. Thinking that is what the birth of Christ is all about. God was born in the flesh. It is His incarnation. God taking on human form to dwell amongst us.

So it is interesting that John, in his presentation of the birth of Christ, takes the perspective from heaven, not the perspective from the earth. The events that actually happened but things that we spoil with some of our celebrations of it. So it is good every few years to stop and take John chapter 1 and realize the true perspective behind the birth of Christ. Who is He? Why did He come? What was the people's response? The word of God, Jesus Christ Himself,

became flesh and dwelt amongst us. He was full of truth and grace. And those who receive Him receive all of the grace and all of the truth that is of Jesus Christ.

So really when we celebrate the birth of Christ we should be celebrating, if we celebrate it correctly, two births: God coming into this world and God coming into us. Bringing us a birth, a spiritual birth, that we might become children of God. So it is more than celebrating the birth of a prophet from two thousand years ago, or even our Lord and Savior from two thousand years ago. But it is understanding the plan of who Jesus Christ is and why He came and who He is today. He is the same. God Himself in us, our hope of glory.

Let's close with prayer.