

# The one who came at Christmas

## Introduction

It is traditional in most Churches to speak about the birth of Christ on the Sunday before Christmas. However, Scripture does not tell us to remember Christ's birth. Nor do we know the day He was born. Yet the birth of Jesus has shaped the course of human history.

So, in keeping with tradition, we want to consider the birth of Jesus Christ. But instead of following the accounts recorded in Matthew and Luke, we will turn to the Gospel of John. John never mentions the stable, the wise men, the shepherds or the "angels singing<sup>1</sup>." So what does the Gospel of John reveal about the One Who came at Christmas?

The Gospel of John emphasizes the Deity of the Lord Jesus. And our theme this morning is, ***it is important to emphasize the Deity of Jesus Christ, not only at Christmas, but whenever we think about Him.***

- I. The Deity of Christ is important, because the church at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century misunderstood it. **We see this in 2 ways:**
  - A. First, almost every chapter in the Gospel of John either *clearly* states the Deity of Jesus Christ or attributes the abilities and nature of God to Him. Consider:
    1. In answering the women at the well in Samaria, Jesus said, **John 4:26**, "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*."
      - a. Leave out the italicized "*he*"; italicized words are not found in the original text of Scripture, but are added by the translator(s).
      - b. The verse literally says, "Jesus said to her, **I am** is the One speaking to you."
      - c. "I am" is the name God revealed to Moses, **Exodus 3:13-14**, "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? (14) And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."
      - d. Unless one denies the plain statement of Scripture, Jesus Christ told the woman at the well in Samaria that He was the God of the burning bush.
    2. After healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5, Jesus openly stated His Deity to the religious leaders of Israel, **John 5:17-18**, "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. (18)

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<sup>1</sup> The account of the angelic "choir" is Luke 2:13-14, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, (14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The most important word is "saying" in verse 13. Scripture nowhere records angels or other spirit being singing.

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."

- a. Critics of God's Word have long stated that Jesus never claimed to be God. **However, denying what the Bible says does not change the truth.**
- b. This is not the last time the religious leaders would be confronted with the Deity of Christ. And it is not the last time they would openly reject it. Perhaps the most dramatic is **John 8:58-59**, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. (59) Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

B. Second, Scripture never wastes words but says exactly what is needed.

1. The Bible never says "Don't do" or "Stop doing" something unless the recipients were doing it. Would John write, "Stop loving the world" in **1 John 2:15** if his readers were not loving the world<sup>2</sup>?
2. The Bible never says "Do" something if the recipients were already doing it. Would Paul tell the Thessalonians, **1 Thessalonians 5:18**, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" if they were already doing it?
3. The Bible never says anything repeatedly unless there is a problem. Paul wrote, "Know ye not" 10 times in 1 Corinthians<sup>3</sup>. A major problem at Corinth was the smug attitude that "we know it all," **1 Corinthians 4:7**, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and **what hast thou that thou didst not receive?** now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" When Paul said "know ye not" 10 times, it was a not-so-subtle reminder that the Corinthians did not "know it all."
4. Therefore, the Gospel of John repeated asserts the Deity of Christ because the Church at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century misunderstood the importance of it.

II. The Deity of Christ is important because that is where the Gospel of John begins.

A. John's Gospel has a unique style.

1. John tells us why he wrote his Gospel, **John 20:30-31**, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this

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<sup>2</sup> Our favorite illustration comes from parenthood. Mom and Dad are leaving their children with a baby sitter to go out for an evening together. Would Mom ever say, "Don't you take out your magic markers and start drawing on your bedroom walls" unless their children had already done it? Every parent knows that if their kids had never done this, telling them not to do it would be like pouring gasoline on a fire. Likewise, the Bible never says "Stop doing" or "Don't do" unless the original recipients were *doing or planning to do* something contrary to God's will.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16; 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24.

book: (31) But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

2. John's Gospel has an introduction summarizing what he wrote, John 1:1-18<sup>4</sup>.
  - a. John reaches back before time, John 1:1, literally, "In a beginning" the Second Person of the Trinity, the Eternal Word was there.
  - b. It was the Word Who was the Creator, John 1:3, and the One Who revealed Deity- what God is like, to men, John 1:4- 9.
  - c. While His people, the Jews rejected Him, John 1:10-12, Jesus completely explained Godhood (Deity) to humanity, John 1:13-18.

B. The first words are the key to John's Gospel, and the final answer to why it is important to emphasize the Deity of Jesus Christ. **John 1:1-2**, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God."

1. The time frame is clearly set.
  - a. There is no definite article before "beginning;" it is better translated as "In a/any beginning."
  - b. "Any beginning" means that wherever we start, the Word was there.
2. The duration is clearly defined.
  - a. "Was" (**ἦν** for those using a Greek interlinear) means that this One was continually there.
  - b. A continual presence of the Word means that the Word is eternal.
  - c. The Gospel of John<sup>5</sup> also states the eternity in another manner. Whenever Jesus says, "I am," He is actually saying, "I continually am."
  - d. Eternality is ONLY true of God. In **Psalms 90:2**, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." "Everlasting" is literally, "eternity." (Hebrew, **לְעֹלָמִים**; ~**לְעֹלָמִים**; ~**לְעֹלָמִים** While these 2 points are enough to establish the Deity of the Living Word, John continues with:

3. The unmistakable fact: Jesus is the Word, and the Word is God.

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<sup>4</sup> Of the 4 Gospels, only John records that Christ's earthly ministry was at least 3 years long. We know this because John records 3 Passovers during Christ's ministry. The first one is in John 2:13, 23; the second is in John 6:4 and the third is in John 13:1. Based upon the 3 Passovers, it is possible to determine when some of the events in His ministry happened.

<sup>5</sup> In yet another way, Jesus gave a 3 fold declaration of His eternity in Revelation 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

- a. The Word stood facing the Father, "...the Word was with God."
- 1) "With" (**proj** for those using a Greek interlinear) means "facing."
  - 2) There is a definite article before "God;" it is "the God," normally used in reference to God the Father. **Ephesians 1:3**, "Blessed be **the God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."
  - 3) To be "*facing*" the Father means the Word was *standing, not kneeling*. In much of human history, people kneeled before royalty. An unusual example is when Bathsheba bowed before her husband, King David, **1 Kings 1:31**, "Then **Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth**, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever." While David was her husband, he also was the king, and Bathsheba followed the protocol of the royal court.
  - 4) To stand face to face with a king means equality. Without question, the Word held complete equality of nature with the Father. Jesus Himself said this in **John 10:30**, "I and *my* Father are one." Literally, He said, "I and the Father, **we are** one thing." **There is no question about it- Jesus is completely equal to the Father.**
- b. The Word is God, "...and the Word was God."
- 1) God is used in 2 ways in John 1:1<sup>6</sup>. The first "God" is the Father, *a Person*. The second use of "God" refers to *the quality of being Deity*. Jesus is the Word in the Gospel of John, and He is God/Deity.
  - 2) The Word was the member of the Trinity Who appeared in the Old Testament. **Genesis 18:1-2**, "And **the LORD appeared** unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; (2) And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, **three men** stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground."
    - a) Abraham is the "him" in v. 1 who saw "three men," v. 2.
    - b) Two of the men were angels, **Genesis 18:22**, "And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: **but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.**" Angels appeared as men in the Old Testament.
    - c) Abraham recognized Who this was; he "...bowed himself toward the ground," v. 2.

<sup>6</sup> It is not unusual for the Bible to use a word in more than one way. In John 1:10, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Here "world" is used in 2 or 3 ways. Jesus was on the planet earth (the 1<sup>st</sup> "world"), and the universe (the 2<sup>nd</sup> "world") was made by Him, and the people (the 3<sup>rd</sup> "world") did not know Him.

- d) In **Genesis 18:3**, "And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant." Abraham called Him, "my Lord," and added "if now I have found favour." This was not the common form of address- especially of finding favor.
- c. Remember an important principle in Bible study: Scripture never wastes words. If the Holy Spirit moved John to write emphatically the Jesus Christ is Deity, then the church at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century *must* have had problems in recognizing and accepting it.
- Some things never change; there is nothing new under the sun. How many sermons today will only see a babe in a manger? How many churches will proclaim that the One born in the manger was God in flesh?
  - Remember that the church of Laodicea represents the condition of the church before the rapture. **And the words of Jesus to the pastor at Laodicea tell the story of a church that did not believe in the Deity of Christ, Revelation 3:14**, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God<sup>7</sup>." **Why was it necessary for Jesus to tell this pastor that He is God?**
4. An eternal, unchanging relationship to God the Father, **John 1:2**, "The same was in the beginning with God."
- a. Although this verse *may* sound like a repetition of v. 1, it is not.
- 1) John 1:1 establishes that the Word has continually been Deity, wherever one looks in eternity past.
  - 2) John 1:2 adds an important point, that the Word has continually had the same relationship to the Father.
    - a) Once again, John uses "was" (**ἦν** for those using a Greek interlinear), meaning something that began prior to the present and has continued in an unbroken manner. We would translate this, "continually was."
    - b) John again says that Jesus was "with," literally, "facing the Father." (**πρὸς** for those using a Greek interlinear)
    - c) In v. 2, "God" again has the definite article. "The God" refers to God the Father- although "the God" sounds awkward in English.
    - d) John would only need to say that the Word's relationship to the Father has continually been the same if it was a problem.

<sup>7</sup> "Beginning of the creation" (**αρχῆς**) should be translated "the chief one of the creation." He is the chief or preeminent One Who created all, John 1:3, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

e) Now the picture is complete. No matter how far back into eternity past we look, Jesus, the Word, has continually been Deity. He has continually stood before the Father, as One equal in nature. His relationship to God is unchanged.

➤ Here, the words of **Hebrew 13:8** are appropriate, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

b. The message here is that God the Word has never been any less Deity wherever we look in eternity past.

c. It has been said that every modern heresy began within the first century of the church- by the time John wrote. Because the Bible does not haphazardly record truth, it should be obvious that the early church had problems with the Deity of Jesus Christ. **The idea that Jesus was somehow less than full Deity did not begin in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

## Conclusion

This morning we have turned our attention to one of the greatest themes of the Bible. Few doctrines in Scripture are more important than the Deity of Christ. And sadly, in our time, just as in the early church, the Deity of Jesus Christ, the One Who came at Christmas, will be largely overlooked and even forgotten by many churches this morning. Those churches may proclaim the birth of the baby Jesus and some will note that He came to be the Savior.

But we have seen that this One Who came was God Himself, the Word, the One Who appeared in the Old Testament to mankind. He is Deity, God, and is equal in nature to the Father. And yet He laid aside His glory and took to His Person a human nature. And among the things He did was to provide a perfect salvation. No one else could have done this, only God. And that is why we need to remember at Christmas that the One Who came was God in human flesh, the Word, our Lord, Jesus Christ.