

The Life Before Christmas

John 1; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 12-4-2022

The biggest problem with Christmas is not commercialism or busyness or pagan rituals, but ignorance. (10, 26, 31, 33) Jesus is not just a cute baby in a manger or just a good teacher. The true celebration of Christmas recognizes what *more* Jesus is!

1. Life Before the Womb

John begins his gospel account by highlighting the fact that Jesus existed before He was conceived in the womb of Mary and born into this world as a Man. (15, 30) We often talk about life in the womb or life after the womb, but here, John talks about life before the womb. John testifies that the One born after him, existed before him!

- **Before Creation** (1-2) For John, the ‘Word’ is not merely a principle behind the universe but a Person behind and active in the universe. (Proverbs 8:1, 12, 22-32, 35)
- **At Creation** (3)
- **In the Wilderness and in the Temple** (14) The word for ‘dwelt’ means to ‘pitch one’s tent’ and refers to the presence of the glory of God in the tabernacle in the wilderness and in the Temple in Jerusalem. (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11)

2. The One Sent from Heaven

John makes it clear that the One conceived in the womb of Mary and born into the world was God Himself: God the Son sent by God the Father. (1, 9-11, 34; 3:13; 3:31-34) We usually think of babies being born, but not being sent on a mission by God. And being sent on a mission, this baby came to be ‘in the flesh’:

- **The God Who Speaks:** Jesus is exalted as the Word of God: *God Spoken or Speaking*. (1-5) The idea of ‘Word’ means self-expression or the expression of one’s inner thoughts or heart. Our words or communication make our invisible thoughts and emotions and desires and attitudes (heart) visible! (John 14:8-9; Hebrews 1:1-4) In Jesus, the invisible God speaks to reveal His heart, what He is really like.
- **The God Who Shows:** Jesus is exalted as the Light of God: *God Revealed or Showing*. (4-5, 9, 14, 18) ‘Explained’ means to tell or narrate or ‘exegete’. “It is therefore a fixed principle, that God, who was formerly invisible, has now made himself visible in Christ.” (John Calvin) The ‘Light’ refers to both goodness and illumination. (Genesis 1:1-5) Jesus shines the light on God’s goodness or reveals His goodness to us through His life: what we see Jesus doing is what the invisible God does and is doing.

- **The God Who Serves:** Jesus is exalted as the grace of God to us: *God Present or Serving*. (14, 16-17) ‘Grace and truth’ is a reference to the last part of God’s description of Himself in Exodus 33 and 34 – ‘lovingkindness and truth’ (Morris). (Exodus 33:18-19; 34:6-7) Grace is love for the undeserving that results in serving their good. Jesus came to love and serve the good of undeserving sinners like you and me through good deeds but ultimately through the cross.

- **The God Who Saves:** Jesus is exalted as the Lamb of God: *God Substituting or Saving*. (29, 35-41) It is hard to know what the phrase ‘Lamb of God’ would evoke from 1st century Jews but it is likely to be a reference to the entire OT sacrificial system since a lamb was the most common sacrificial animal. It may also be the answer to Isaac’s question in Genesis 22 (Morris). (Genesis 22:7-8) Jesus is the Substitute Sacrifice that has been provided for the salvation of the world.

- **The God Who Satisfies:** Jesus is exalted as King of God’s people: *God Ruling or Satisfying*. (47-51) ‘Under the fig tree’ refers to supernatural knowledge that probably had to do with Nathanael’s personal fellowship and devotion to God. Nathaniel identifies Jesus as the Messiah in terms of ‘Son of God’ and ‘King of Israel’ and speaks better than he knew. Indeed, Jesus is the fulfillment of Jacob’s ladder to heaven and the only Mediator between God and man (Genesis 28:12). (Psalm 2:6-12; 1 Kings 10:9; Acts 8:12; John 2:9-11, 13-17) Jesus is a Ruler who satisfies His subjects fully and forever! Jesus is a Ruler who will oppose all that opposes God.

3. The Gift to Be Received

John makes it clear that the identity of the One conceived in the womb of Mary and born into the world makes it a matter of life and death. (10-13, 43) To be ‘born of blood(s)’ is a reference to natural birth; to be born of the ‘will of the flesh’ is a reference to personal good works or merit; to be born of the ‘will of man/husband’ is a reference to human authorities; none of these give us the right to be part of God’s family. Only those who have been born of God (begotten of the Father) by His Spirit (John 3) are given the right to be the children of God.

- **Christmas as Just a Celebration:** It is a celebration, but, for many people, Christmas is just a reason to celebrate (food, parties, gifts, etc). It carries no life altering significance.

- **Christmas as Just a Story:** It is a story, but, for many people, Christmas is something much less than supernatural: innocent at best and diabolical at worst.

- **Christmas as a Divine Offer of Deliverance:** “Christ, therefore, offers himself to us by the Gospel and we receive him by faith.” (John Calvin) (John 3:3, 8, 14-17, 18-21; 1 John 5:5-13)