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Subject: TLC Senior Pastor Handout Sermon Series: John #1

## **Background: John's Christology** (Taken from *The New Bible Commentary*)

The focus of John's Gospel is *theological*; specifically *Christological* — to produce faith in Jesus (20:31). And so this will be our focus in a sermon series from the gospel of John. We will come to see Jesus more clearly and fully—and see ourselves for who we are in and through him. This picture will be revealed in the wonderful collage which John paints. In particular, he shows us Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

Jesus as Messiah is the topic of discussion among the Jews on a couple of occasions (7:26, 27; 10:24). Moreover, three times John records confessions of the Messiahship of Jesus (1:41; 4:29; 11:27). To John, Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Messianic hopes of the Jewish people. In full harmony with this is his frequent appeal to the OT testimony.

Jesus as Son of God is even more prevalent. Many times Jesus brings out his filial relationship with the Father and there are frequent occurrences of the term 'Son' without further description. The plan of salvation was effected by the Father through the Son. It was through love for the world that God sent his Son (3:16). The Son is the agent through whom the Father reveals himself (1:18). The claim of Jesus to be the Son of God was the basis of the charge before Pilate that according to Jewish law he ought to die (19:7).

Much less frequently John refers to **Jesus as Son of Man**. It is the Son of Man who not only reveals the Father but who will be lifted up (3:13-14). This process of lifting up will result in the glorification of the Son of Man (12:23). Moreover, there are many indications of **the perfect humanity of Jesus** in this gospel. He experienced human emotion, hunger, thirst and tiredness. The exalted Christology is never allowed to detract from the perfect humanity of Jesus.

In the prologue of John (1:1-18), the **pre-existence and deity** of Christ are explicitly expressed. The Word (Gk. *logos*) was not only with God in the beginning, but was God (1:1), and it was this Word who became flesh and is identified with Christ. Whatever the origins of the idea of the Word for

John, his own Christology is clear. Jesus is not a mere man but the pre-existent Son who shared with the Father the creation of the world (1:3).

A further feature of John's Christology is the number of statements of Jesus introduced by the significant 'I am'. In this manner he described himself as 'the Way', 'the Truth', 'the Life', 'the Resurrection', 'the Bread', 'the Shepherd', 'the Door', 'the Vine'. All of these titles explain different aspects of what Jesus came to be and to do for humankind.

There are many figures of speech used to describe the nature of the **work of Christ**. The sacrificial lamb (1:29), the temple of his body (2:21), the serpent in the wilderness (3:14), the shepherd giving his life for his sheep (10:11), the grain of wheat (12:24). The death of Jesus was even recognized as expedient by the high priest, but John sees a deeper meaning in it than Caiaphas (11:51). There is throughout the gospel a sense of the inevitable as Jesus' 'hour' draws gradually nearer.

A further important factor in John's theology is the frequent mention of **the Holy Spirit**. His work in regeneration (3:5-8), his promised outpouring following the glorification of Jesus (7:37-39), and the five sayings about him in the farewell discourses (chapters 14-16) are all found only in John's gospel. He is described as Counselor, as dwelling in the believer, as the teacher, as a witness to Christ, as convictor of the world and as guide into all truth for Christ's people. Of all the gospels John shows most clearly that the continuation of the ministry of Jesus would be through the agency of the Spirit.

In addition, we may note the **strong OT background** in John. There is also a mixture of stress on **God's action** in choosing and **human responsibility** in responding. We move now to the first sermon from John's gospel. Much of this material is from *The Bible Expository Commentary* by Warren Wiersbe. May God guide us as we study and teach from the written Word about the Living Word Christ. God is here! —Ted Johnston

### John sermon #1

## God is Here! (John 1:1-14)

### Introduction

“Will God dwell on earth?” asked Solomon in dedicating the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:27). God's glory had dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. 40:34), and then it descended on Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:10, 11). But eventually it departed from disobedient Israel (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22, 23) and a long dry spell ensued. But then a marvelous and new thing happened: the glory of God came to His people again, but this time in person—specifically in the person of God's one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

The writers of the four Gospels give us “snapshots” of our Lord's life on earth. Matthew wrote with his fellow Jews in mind and emphasized that Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. Mark wrote for the busy Romans. Whereas Matthew emphasized the King, Mark presented the Servant, ministering to needy people. Luke wrote for the Greeks and introduced them to the sympathetic Son of man.

But John writes for both Jews and Gentiles, presenting Jesus as both Messiah and Son of God. We know that John had Gentiles in mind as well as Jews, because he often “interpreted” Jewish words or customs for his readers (John 1:38, 41, 42; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13, 17; 20:16).

John's emphasis for his Jewish readers was that Jesus not only fulfilled the OT prophecies, but he also fulfilled the *types*: Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and 'Jacob's Ladder' from heaven to earth (John 1:51). He is the New Temple (John 2:19-21), and He gives a new birth (John 3:4ff). He is the serpent lifted up (John 3:14) and the Bread of God that came down from heaven (John 6:35ff).

Whereas the first three (‘synoptic’) gospels major on describing *events* in the life of Jesus, John emphasizes theology — that is the *meaning* of these events. For example, all four Gospels record the feeding of the 5,000 but only John records Jesus’ sermon on “The Bread of Life” which followed that miracle when He interpreted it for the people.

The primary theme of John is the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and if you commit yourself to Him, He will give you eternal life (John 20:31). Have you committed yourself to him?

To declare Jesus as the Son of God is to declare him to be fully God. John makes this vital point in his first chapter; recording seven names and titles

of Jesus that establish Jesus' identity as no less than eternal God. In this sermon we'll look at the first two.

### **1. Jesus is the Word (1:1-3, 14)**

Much as our words reveal to others our hearts and minds, so Jesus Christ is God's "Word" to reveal His heart and mind to us. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). A word is composed of letters, and Jesus Christ is "Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1:11), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. According to Hebrews 1:1-3, Jesus Christ is God's last or final and complete Word to mankind, for He is the climax and summation of divine revelation.

#### **a. The eternal word**

***<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.***

He was with God in the beginning, not because He had a beginning as a creature, but because He is eternal. not because He had a beginning as a creature, but He is God and He was *with* God. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

#### **b. The creative Word**

***<sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.***

There is certainly a parallel between John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1. God created through His word: "And God said, 'Let there be....'" "For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). God created all things through Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16), which means that Jesus is not a created being. He is eternal God; the Creator.

#### **c. The incarnate Word**

***<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

He was not a phantom or a spirit when He came to earth, nor was His body an illusion. John and the other disciples each had a personal experience

that convinced them of the personal reality of Jesus and his body (1 John 1:1, 2). Even though John's emphasis is the deity of Christ, he makes it clear that the Son of God came in *the flesh* and was subject to the infirmities of human nature and the flesh (yet without sin): John points out that Jesus was weary (John 4:6) and thirsty (John 4:7). He groaned within (John 11:33) and openly wept (John 11:35). On the cross, He thirsted (John 19:28), died (John 19:30), and bled (John 19:34). After His resurrection, He proved to Thomas and the other disciples that He still had a real human body (John 20:24-29), now glorified.

How was this divine, eternal “Word made flesh”? By the miracle of the Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). He took on Himself our humanity and identified with us in every aspect of life from birth to death. “The Word” was not an abstract concept of philosophy, but a real Person who could be seen, touched, and heard. Christianity is Christ, and Christ is God.

The revelation of God's glory is an important theme in the Gospel. Jesus revealed God's glory in His person, His works, and His words. John recorded seven wonderful **signs** that openly declared the glory of God (John 2:11). The glory of the Old Covenant was a fading glory, but the glory of the New Covenant in Christ is an increasing glory (see 2 Cor. 3). The Law could reveal sin, but it could never remove sin. Jesus Christ came with *fullness* of grace and truth, and this fullness is available to all who will trust Him (John 1:16).

## **2. Jesus is the Life and Light (1:4-13)**

### ***4a In himself was life...***

*Life* is a key theme of John's Gospel— mentioned 36 times. What is essential for human life? Air, water, food and light. Jesus is all of these:

- He gives the "breath of life" (John 3:8; 20:22) by his Spirit
- He is the Water of life (John 4:10, 13, 14; 7:37-39)
- He is the Living Bread of Life that came down from heaven (John 6:35ff)
- He is the Light of men (1:4), the Light of the world and the Light of life (John 8:12)

Jesus not only has life and gives life: He *is* life (John 14:6). And his is the life-giving light.

#### **4b ...and that life was the light of men.**

Light and darkness are recurring themes in John. God is light (1 John 1:5) while Satan is “darkness” (Luke 22:53). People love either the light or the darkness, and this love controls their actions (John 3:16-19). Those who believe on Christ are “sons of light” (John 12:35, 36). Just as the first Creation began with “Let there be light!” so the New Creation begins with the entrance of light into the heart of the believer (2 Cor. 4:3-6).

#### ***5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.***

You would think that blind sinners would welcome light, but such is not always the case. The coming of the true light brought conflict as the powers of darkness opposed it. A literal translation of verse 5 reads: “And the light keeps on shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it or understood it.” The Greek verb can mean “to overcome” or “to understand.” Throughout the gospel of John, we see both attitudes revealed: people will not understand what the Lord is saying and doing and, as a result, will oppose Him. John 7-12 records the growth of that opposition, which ultimately takes Jesus to the cross, but the apparent defeat there was the ultimate victory. The darkness could not overcome Jesus who is the Light.

But the world did not understand this Light. Whenever Jesus taught a spiritual truth, His listeners interpreted it in a material or physical way. The light was unable to penetrate the darkness in their minds. This was true when He spoke about the temple of His body (John 2:19-21), the new birth (John 3:4), the living water (John 4:11), eating His flesh (John 6:51ff), spiritual freedom (John 8:30-36), death as sleep (John 11:11-13), and many other spiritual truths.

***6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.***

Satan strives to keep people in the dark; because darkness means death and hell, while Light means life and heaven. This helps explain the ministry of John the Baptist. John was sent as a *witness* to Jesus Christ, to tell people that the Light had come into the world. The nation of Israel, in spite of all its spiritual advantages, was blind to their own Messiah! The word *witness* is a key word in John: the noun is used fourteen times and the verb thirty-three times.

***9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.***

John the Baptist was one of many who bore witness to Jesus, “This is the Son of God!” Alas, John the Baptist was martyred and the Jewish leaders did nothing to prevent it. Why did the nation reject Jesus Christ? Because they “did not recognize him.” They were spiritually ignorant. Jesus is the “true Light” — the original of which every other light is a copy — but the Jews were content with the copies. They had Moses and the Law, the temple and the sacrifices; but they did not comprehend that these “lights” pointed to the true Light who was the fulfillment, the completion, of the Old Covenant.

In John we find Jesus teaching the people that He is the fulfillment of all that was typified in the Law (the Old Testament). It was not enough to be born a Jew; they had to be born again, born from above (John 3). He deliberately performed two miracles on the Sabbath to teach them that He had a new rest to give them (John 5; 9). He was the satisfying manna (John 6) and the life-giving Water (John 7:37-39). He is the Shepherd of a new flock (John 10:16), and He is a new Vine (John 15).

But the Jews of that day were so shackled by religious tradition that they could not understand spiritual truth. Jesus came to His own world that He had created, but His own people, the Jews, could not understand Him and would not receive Him.

They saw His works and heard His words. They observed His perfect life. He gave them every opportunity to grasp the truth, believe, and be saved. Jesus is the way, but they would not walk with Him (John 6:66-71). He is

the truth, but they would not believe Him (John 12:37ff). He is the life, and they crucified Him!

***12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.***

What a marvelous promise of God! Anyone who receives Christ (rather than rejecting him like his own people did) will be born again and become one of God's children! John says more about this new birth in John 3, but he points out here that it is a spiritual birth from God, not a physical birth that depends on human nature.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus— the Word; the Light and Life. God with us. God for us. Have you received him? Have you become God's child through new birth? If not, this can be your birthday!

*Sermon Series* is provided by Ted Johnston. It assists preachers and teachers in preparing expository sermons and Bible studies in series that typically cover whole books of the Bible. This issue begins a new series in the gospel of John. It features material from *The Bible Expository Commentary* by Warren Wiersbe with additional material from *The New Bible Commentary*.

OT Old Testament  
Gk. Greek

## **GROWING in our RELATIONSHIP with the TRIUNE GOD**

***John 1:1 “In the Beginning”***

*Compare John 1 with Genesis 1.*

***John 1:2, 3 “Made Through Him”***

*How did creation take place?*

***John 1:4 “The Life Was the Light”***

*What some characteristics of light?*

***John 1:5 “Light / Darkness”***

*What are some characteristics of darkness?*

***John 1:6-8 “Witness to the Light”***

*What do you know about John?*

***John 1:9-11 “The World Did Not Know Him”***

*Why was Jesus not recognized or received?*

***John 1:12, 13 “Born ...of God”***

*Compare this with John 3:1-15.*

***John 1:14 “The Word Became Flesh”***

*Compare this with Galatians 4:4, 5*

***Please study sermon series: John #1***