

The Way To Christ John 1:1-14

The day finally arrived on which a mother had planned a gathering to celebrate the birth of her newborn son. She was excited to share the joy of his arrival with her friends whom she had invited over for brunch. She had put up festive decorations and made special treats for everyone, but worried over getting everything just right for her guests. She wanted everything to be perfect. As they arrived, she warmly welcomed each one. They were having a great time eating and drinking and talking, rejoicing over the birth of this little bundle.

After a while, one of the guests asked when they could see the baby. The mother went to get the baby from his crib, but he was nowhere to be found. Instant panic welled up inside as she wondered where he was. Then she suddenly remembered. She had taken the baby over to her mother's house that morning so she could focus on preparing for the party. She and her guests were having so much fun, they had forgotten the real reason for celebrating.

It is so easy in the hustle and bustle of activities around Christmas that we can forget the real reason it is celebrated. We can get distracted by all the preparations, decorations, and celebrations that we leave Jesus out of the focal point of the season. I hope this year, with all its craziness, that we have been able to focus our hearts and minds on the reason Jesus came in the first place – to save us from our sin.

This month we have considered some important truths about Christ to help us keep our focus on the Savior who came as a baby.

We considered first the worship around Christ. The angels, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna all rejoiced at the news of His. He deserves our worship and adoration.

Then we looked at the wonder about Christ. The pregnancy and a virgin birth was a wonder as were the proclamation of the gospel and the praise for Christ as Mary treasured it all in her heart and mind.

Last week we saw the witness for Christ in the angel who told the shepherds who in turn told everyone they saw and then from Anna.

Today, as we look at **John 1:1-14**, I would like for us to see the way to Christ.

In his opening verses of his first letter John writes: **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” (I John 1:1-3)**

John is essentially saying the same thing there as he does in the opening verses of his gospel. There was God who was in the beginning, He became man and lived among us to bring us eternal life. We got to see Him and spend time with Him and it is He who we testify about. The word testify means to give witness to the facts of something you have observed firsthand.

In considering the way to Christ, as we look at our text, we notice first His divine essence.

I. THE ESSENCE OF CHRIST – vs. 1-5

We must begin with the preexistence of Christ, that He existed before creation, before time, before anything else existed. Both John's letter and gospel parallel **Genesis 1:1** where we read **“In the beginning God.”** The Bible never tries to prove the existence of God but makes the claim that He exists and has always been in existence. **Hebrews 11:6** says we must believe in the existence of God by faith, something then that pleases God.

In order to understand the way to Christ, we need to look then at the inexpressible person of Christ.

A. The Inexpressible Person of Christ – vs. 1-2

John makes three important statements that confirm the deity of the One he had come to know so well. In time John came to know and understand that Jesus was God in the flesh. His first statement points out that Jesus is eternally God.

1. Jesus is eternally God – v. 1a

The word “**beginning**” can refer to source of origin, rule, right, or one in authority. When our passage says that the Word was in the beginning does not mean a point of origin for the Word, that there was a time He didn’t exist and then was created, but instead that when creation came into existence, He was already there. John Phillips writes “**In the beginning was the Word’ does not refer to a start, but to an infinite state.**”

When I say that Pastor Glenn Essenberg was in the beginning with Fellowship Bible Church, I don’t mean they came into existence at the same time, but rather that when Fellowship Bible Church came into existence, Pastor Essenberg was already here.

The idea of the preexistence of the Word is emphasized by the word “**was**”, which simply means ‘to be’ or to exist. It can also mean to dwell. In this case the word “**was**” speaks of a continuous action or state in the past not a completed action in the past. The word “**was**” carries the idea of the absolute and emphatic preexistence of the Word. He always existed and always will exist. He has no beginning or ending.

But who is the Word John is writing about? Both Greek philosophers and Jews had their own idea of what the Word was. The Greeks understood the term to mean something that was either spoken or unspoken. It was an impersonal, abstract principle of reason and order, the creative force and nothing more than the source of wisdom.

The Jews believed the Word referred to the expression of divine power and wisdom. They believed the Word was embodied in deity. While the Greeks thought it was impersonal, the Jews believed the Word was divine and personal. John is going to unveil who the Word is.

John MacArthur states “John presented Jesus to his Jewish readers as the incarnation of divine power and revelation...As the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ is God’s final word to mankind.”

Hebrews 1:1-2 “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.”

So if the Word is something spoken, then the writer of Hebrews is stating that the Word is Jesus. When John speaks of Jesus as the Word, he is saying that Jesus is “**the thinker, the omniscient genius behind the created universe (John Phillips).**”

The Word was already in existence beyond the beginning of creation into the infinite past, but the Word will always exist into what we consider the infinite future where there is no end. The Word is eternally God.

John then adds that Jesus is not only eternally God, but equally God.

2. Jesus is equally God – v. 1b

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” The word “**with**” indicates there is more than one person who was in the beginning. The Word and God coexisted. Old Testament Jews understood this in their creedal statement found in **Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.”** The very first verse of the Bible speaks of the plurality in the godhead or what we refer to as the Trinity. The noun is plural but the verb is singular referring to the Trinity – three persons, but one God.

Our universe is Triune comprised of space, time and matter. Space is triune made up of length, breadth and width. Time is triune made up of past, present, and future.

God is Father, Son and Spirit. One God, but three persons, one in essence but distinct in person and function. So when John refers to the Word as being with God, He means that He is equal to God

comprised of all the attributes the same as God, but distinct from God.

Later, Jesus would declare that He and the Father were one, something the Pharisees didn't like to hear because to them that put Jesus, whom they considered to be just a man, on equal grounds with God.

The word **“with”** also suggests to be in company with, or to be in fellowship with the Word, who is Jesus the second person of the Trinity and the Father. But Jesus is equally God.

The third truth is that Jesus is essentially God.

3. Jesus is essentially God – vs. 1c-2

All that God is – His character, His attributes, His nature, His person – Jesus is. Jesus is God and is independent of creation and as we see in **verse 2**, He was in the beginning with God when it was created pointing to His infinite power in **verses 3-5**.

B. The Infinite Power of Christ – vs. 3-5

Verse 3 tells us about His power to create.

1. His Power to create – v. 3

“All things” speaks about everything individually or separately. It literally reads **“not even one thing”** and refers to the detail that exists in creation. When it was made, not one detail was overlooked.

We measure the distance of space in terms of light years, the distance light travels in a year: 186,273 miles a second. Our sun is 8 light minutes away. But there are suns and stars billions of light years away. Astronomers can only guess the distance from one end of the universe to the other. The star Antares can hold 64 million suns the size of ours. The Milky Way galaxy is 100,000 light years in diameter traveling 200 miles an hour. It would take 2 million light years to complete one revolution.

From the vastness of the created universe, we scale down to the atom, which is the building block of the universe. It is less than one hundred fifty millionth of an inch in diameter. If the molecules of one drop of water could be made into grains of sand, there

would be enough sand to build a highway half a mile wide, one foot thick from New York to San Francisco. Each cell contains 200 billion molecules of atoms.

Hebrews 11:1 “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”

In other words, everything you see whether through a microscope or a telescope, God the Word, created by speaking, making everything out of nothing.

I really have a hard time understanding how someone can look at all this around us and conclude that we are nothing more than the product of a bolt of lightning that struck some primordial ooze billions of years ago forming the first single celled creature that over time and chance turned into me. Now, I may look like a protoplasmic blob, but I assure you it wasn't because of evolution.

But what baffles me even more are those who believe in theistic evolution which essentially says that God got the whole thing going and then let the process of nature through evolution result in the current tree of life. God's Word says He spoke and it came into existence immediately. He didn't need millions of years, nor did He leave it to chance. Scripture clearly says the Word made everything.

His power is seen in creation. His power is also evident in His communication.

2. His power to communicate – vs. 4-5

Even before the incarnation, the Word made God known to the world through creation and God continues to be made knowing in creation. **“The heavens declare the glory of God.”**

He continues to communicate life and light to the world about the existence of God. The word used for **“life”** in this verse speaks of spiritual life rather than physical life. John uses this term 36 times in his gospel. In **John 10:38**, Jesus says He gives eternal life. This life is His gift and in **John 14:6** He says that He is the Life, the source of this gift. **John 3:16** says that the person who believes in Him will

have everlasting life. As the light of the world, He points the way to eternal life, which leads us out of darkness.

There was once a dark cave, deep down in the ground, underneath the earth and hidden away from view. Because it was so deep in the earth, the light had never been there. The cave had never seen light. The word 'light' meant nothing to the cave, who couldn't imagine what 'light' might be.

Then one day, the sun sent an invitation to the cave, inviting it to come up and visit. When the cave came up to visit the sun it was amazed and delighted, because the cave had never seen light before, and it was dazzled by the wonder of the experience.

Feeling so grateful to the sun for inviting it to visit, the cave wanted to return the kindness, and so it invited the sun to come down to visit it sometime, because the sun had never seen darkness.

So the day came, and the sun entered the cave, it looked around with great interest, wondering what 'darkness' would be like. Then it became puzzled, and asked the cave, 'Where is the darkness?'

Because of sin, the world is steeped in the darkness of sin but along came the light to dispel that darkness. We choose whether or not to remain in darkness or follow the light. In **John 9:5** Jesus says He is the light of the world, the Light John the Baptist pointed to. **Verses 6-13** speak about a man who came to be a witness of the light. His name was John the Baptist. People asked if he was the light but he always pointed them to the true light, Jesus Christ.

One day Jesus came to where John was baptizing. On seeing Him, John responded by pointing to Jesus and referring to Him as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John's purpose was to testify of the light so that all men might believe and be taken out of the darkness of sin. But sadly, **verse 11** says that when Jesus the light came to His own people they would not receive Him.

How important it is to recognize that the baby born in the manger is the light of the world to lead men

out of darkness. This light is God. It is essential that Jesus is God, and just as important is that Jesus is man. In **verse 14** we see the experience of Christ.

II. THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST – v. 14

If we understand from **verse 1** that the Word was in every way God, we see in **verse 14** that the Word then became flesh and dwelt among us. We call that the incarnation – God becoming man. While the angel explained it to both Mary and Joseph on separate occasions, the mystery of the incarnation remains. We can only understand it by faith because no explanation will satisfy our finite mind. Only through the divine miraculous intervention of God could the empowerment of the Holy Spirit take a virgin and make her pregnant. When a baby is born, we have the wonder of a new little personality entering the world. But when Jesus was born, He had already existed in eternity past. His was not a new personality. Instead, God became flesh, just like you and me. He did not take on flesh, meaning he embodied someone already in existence. He didn't enter a body and take it over. It was the person of God the Son taking on human life.

Verse 14 says He dwelt among us and literally means He tabernacled with us. It's the same idea of pitching a tent. In the Old Testament, the Israelites pitched a tent called the Tabernacle where God's presence resided. The Tabernacle was rather plain on the outside. The exterior curtains were bleached by the sun. Its real beauty was hidden within. That's where the gold utensils were along with the colored fabric that adorned the interior of the Tabernacle. The same with Jesus. The Bible says that the outer person of Jesus was nothing to look at. **Isaiah 53:2** reads **"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him."** He wouldn't have been on the cover of GQ or men's health. But on the inside was His hidden glory. Peter, James and John saw a glimpse of that hidden glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

God the Son veiled His glory in the tent of a man in order to provide a way for man to come to God so that we could belong to Him. When Jesus took on

flesh, He made God accessible. In our current, sinful condition, we couldn't go to Him, so He came down to us in the form of a baby. **Philippians 2** says He humbled Himself when He took on flesh so that through Him we could have eternal life.

When **verse 14** says that the Word became flesh, it does not mean that He ceased to be God, but instead that in addition to His nature as God, He also took on the nature of man – everything about man – body, mind, soul, and will, experiencing the same things as man – thirst, hunger, exhaustion, and even temptation. He was fully God and fully man at the same time, both natures of which are important for us to be saved. **So why did He need to take on flesh to accomplish our salvation?**

The answer is in what the angel told Joseph and the shepherds and what Simeon and Anna believed that He would save people from their sin, to be a light to the Gentiles. He had to be born under the law in order to live perfectly by the law to be the perfect sacrifice required by the law. We have all failed to keep the law, which can't save anyone anyway. Paul says that the law only points out our shortcomings that we are all sinners. Only Jesus lived the perfect life to fulfill the law so that He would be our perfect sacrifice under the law.

Not only did He have to live a sinless life by keeping the law, as the Savior, He had to shed His blood to forgive sins, which requires a body.

Hebrews 10:5 “a body You have prepared for Me.”

Hebrews 9:22 “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

If Jesus was only God, He couldn't die, and His death would have meant nothing. So He had to be born as a perfect man in order to die for us.

I Peter 1:18-19 “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

I Peter 2:24 “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.”

I Peter 3:18 “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”

The importance of the incarnation cannot be overstated. He came to save the lost, to shine the light into the darkness of our hearts.

The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Like sunshine at noonday, His glory shone in;
The Light of the world is Jesus!

No darkness have we who in Jesus abide;
The Light of the world is Jesus!
We walk in the light when we follow our Guide!
The Light of the world is Jesus!

Ye dwellers in darkness with sin-blinded eyes,
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Go, wash at His bidding, and light will arise;
The Light of the world is Jesus!

Come to the light, 'tis shining for thee;
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me;
Once I was blind, but now I can see:
The Light of the world is Jesus!

The implication of the incarnation is evident in **John 3:16** and **Romans 5:8** – God loved the world so much He sent Christ who died for us so we would not perish but have everlasting life. As the song says: “Love was when God became a man, locked in time and space without rank or place.”

III. THE ENABLEMENT OF CHRIST – vs. 12-13

First, there is the invitation.

A. The Invitation Given

John has just stated that Jesus came to His own people to point the true way to the Father by being a light for them to guide them to eternal life, but they rejected Him, they turned Him down, refused to

follow the path He was leading them to. The word “yet” or “but” depending on your translation, is a shift from those in the previous verse who refused to those who have received the light, the Word, Jesus. The invitation is extended to everyone. Its extent is universal, but not everyone will accept it.

Have you ever received an invitation from someone that you rejected?

Maybe you had a legitimate reason at the time and had to turn it down.

Maybe you really didn’t want to go, so you made up an excuse to get out of it.

Maybe you didn’t like the conditions.

Jesus told the story of a man who planned a wedding feast and invited many guests. But they all refused the invitation of this generous host.

An invitation has been given to come to the light and people have no legitimate reason for rejecting it, but they willfully decline the invitation.

Maybe you’re giving some thought to this invitation. If you are considering the invitation of salvation, John says there are two expectations.

B. The Expectation Given

They are to believe and receive.

The real reason for the incarnation is that the Word, Jesus Christ, came to die for our sins and we are given an invitation to believe and receive. You may have received some great gifts this Christmas, but the greatest gift is eternal life.

The word receive means to become what we were not before. John essentially says that we were in darkness. Jesus, the light, came to be the way to eternal life, but we must believe and receive Him as Savior. When we do that, we become what we were not. We are changed on the inside in a way that now makes us the children of God. That is the anticipation – to become part of God’s family.

C. The Anticipation Given

The word “power” in the KJV is best translated in the NIV as “right”. When we believe and receive

Christ, the Word, as Savior we are given the right or privilege of being included in God’s forever family. It is the same idea presented by Jesus to Nicodemus in **John 3:3** of regeneration or being born again. It simply means rebirth or to be made new. This is something that Paul says is done through the power of the Holy Spirit (**Titus 3:5**). It can never be done by anything we do, but only through the Spirit who instantly changes us from living in the kingdom of darkness and placing us in the kingdom of light.

This new birth is holy and heavenly and results in being made alive spiritually by the work of God’s Spirit in us. Before this we are spiritually dead in our sins. But when we believe and receive, what we call faith, we are made alive (regenerated) by Christ.

Ephesians 2:4-5, 8 “But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace that you are saved. For it is by grace you are saved, through faith.”

A radical change takes place in which we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to God’s kingdom and we begin to desire to live a life of faith and godliness. We are now partakers of the divine nature, made new creatures in Christ.

When you believe and receive Christ the Word as your Savior, it is God’s work in us. John explains that this change can’t result from natural descent meaning I don’t receive eternal life because my parents have eternal life. I can’t receive eternal life because I decide it or will it. I can’t even receive eternal life because someone else wants it for me. I can only receive eternal life by being supernaturally born of God. It is for those who believe in Jesus’s name. To believe is to rest in or put your whole weight on. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

As we read the Christmas story, in one way or another, we are each like one of the characters in the unfolding drama.

We may be like the angel, excited to share the news of the birth of the Savior and can’t wait to share it.

We may be like the shepherds, who were convinced of the truth of the message of the angel, were convicted by it and went to see for themselves the marvel of the message told them by the angel, and they who were courageous to go and share with everyone they saw.

We may be like those who heard the news from the shepherds, and while they were amazed, they remained unmoved.

We may be like Herod, troubled and unwelcoming of the news about the new king.

We may be like Mary who treasured it all up in her heart.

We may be like the Magi who sought the newborn king to worship Him.

You may be like the inn keeper who decided there was no room. Your heart may be too busy with so many other things that you are distracted from finding the way to Christ.

Are you too busy with everything about the celebration of Christmas that you forget to realize why we celebrate Christmas in the first place?

Jesus came to be your Savior. **Do you need to believe and receive Him today so that you too can become part of His forever family?** He came for you. He came to give you eternal life. He came to give you the right to become the child of God.