



The Word Became Flesh

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus is the Word of God who came to reveal God and provide life to all who believe in Him.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: John 1:1-18

The famous radio personality Paul Harvey once told the story of a kind, good man who chose to stay home from church one Christmas Eve. The thought of God coming to earth as a man was incomprehensible to him and thus implausible, so he sent his family off to the Christmas Eve service and settled in at home.

As he sat in the quiet, he heard a thud against his window. When he went to investigate, he found a flock of birds outside. In an attempt to escape the cold, one of them had flown into his large landscape window. He took pity on the birds and began to think of ways to lead them to warmth.

The man tried in several different ways to lead them to his barn, but the birds scattered, frightened by the strange man. The man, recognizing the birds' fear, thought to himself, *"If only I could be a bird and speak their language. I could show them the way to the safe, warm barn. But I would have to become one of them so they could see, hear, and understand."* Then the bells of the church began to ring, and at that moment, a new sense of understanding dawned on the man.¹



What difference does it make to you that God became one of us?

Group Time

Point 1: The Word came to give life to all who believe (John 1:10-13).

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, ¹³ who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

The prologue to John's Gospel (vv. 1-18) shows us that the creative work of God was accomplished through the Word, who is the Son of God (v. 3). Jesus, the eternal Son, was the creative agent through whom God created everything. He built the house that is our world and universe, so He knows best how that house should be run (Heb. 3:1-6). If you want to know the purpose and meaning for anything, you ask the one who created it. In the case of Jesus, He entered into His creation with just such a message, but He was rejected by those who should have recognized Him.

Each one of us has a physical birthday, courtesy of our Creator. We are born physically alive, but spiritually, every one of us is born dead in our sins and separated from the life of God. The Bible is clear that we must be born again; in order for us to see the kingdom of God, we have to be brought to new life (John 3:3). But this spiritual birth cannot come about by physical means or plans—it is the work of God (1:13). The Spirit shines the light of Christ into our hearts (2 Cor. 4:6), and when we receive and believe it, a miracle happens—we are born again as a child of God and granted eternal life.

Adoption: Adoption into God's family is one of the positive benefits of justification. Not only are we _____ from the judgment against us through justification, but we also experience a change of _____—we become children of God. Through adoption our relationship with God, which was once lost through the fall, is now _____, resulting in the benefits of being an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ.



What are some ways we should respond to God's gracious gift of adoption into His family through faith in Jesus?

Point 2: The Word came to reveal God's glory (John 1:14-15).

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'")

From eternity, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, is the Word. The Word came into His creation in flesh to reveal God's glory to us in fullness. Jesus is the Word. Jesus didn't come merely to speak God's message to the world as a prophet of God; rather, Jesus *is* the message of God. As the One who is truly God and truly man, Jesus is God's ultimate message to a dying world: Who He is and what He has accomplished—in short, the gospel—is the greatest message the world has ever heard.

Jesus' Humanity: In addition to being fully _____, the Bible also affirms that Jesus is fully _____. Not only does the Old Testament affirm that the Promised One (_____) would be a man, but the New Testament also affirms that Jesus' earthly life bore all the marks of being a human.

Jesus, the eternal Word, came into this world in flesh to reconnect us with our original purpose for living, namely, to know God and glorify Him forever. In other words, Jesus came so we would be freed from sin to live for God's glory just as He did. As we know and follow Jesus by faith, we begin to emulate Him and live with that purpose in mind. This, in fact, was the original purpose for which we were created: All things were created by the Son, through the Son, and *for* the Son for the glory of God (Isa. 43:7; Col. 1:16).



What are some ways we can emulate Jesus for the glory of our triune God?

Voices from the Church

"The eternal Word was conceived by the mortal Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word's 'dwelling among us' summarizes his entire earthly life, from his conception till his ascension. It was a temporary dwelling with a purpose, namely, to reveal God (1:18) and to die in the place of humankind (11:50-53)."²

—Samuel Ngewa

Point 3: The Word came to provide grace and truth (John 1:16-18).

¹⁶ Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, ¹⁷ for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.

The Old Testament law that governed the life of Israel came through Moses for the purpose of preparing for and pointing forward to the grace and truth found in Jesus. The law revealed God's character and His righteous requirements for His people. But the law's intent was never for us to jump through hoops, keep the rules, and try to become righteous through our own efforts. No, the law showed us that we could never be righteous in our own works; therefore, the law confines us all under sin and shows us that we are indeed sinners in need of a Savior (Gal. 3:19,22-25).



How should we view the Mosaic Law in the Old Testament?

What the law could not provide—salvation—Jesus provided for us through His life, death, resurrection, and the sending of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 8:3-4). Though the law was good and true, Jesus, the one and only Son of God the Father, brought grace and truth to us in a fuller sense. The law was a shadow pointing to the substance, who is Christ (see Col. 2:17; Heb. 10:1). The Scriptures stress that Jesus is the reality, the revelation of God and the fulfillment of all the Law and the Prophets. The entire Old Testament pointed to Him so we would find life in Him, the giver of grace and truth.



How should the grace and truth given to us in Christ inform our worship of God?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read John 1:1-5

With the first portion of John's prologue speaking about the Word's eternal divinity ("the Word was with God, and the Word was God") and cosmic activity ("all things were created through him"; "that life was the light of men"), why is the middle portion concerned with John the Baptist (vv. 6-9)?

The Old Testament pointed forward to a messenger whom God would send as a forerunner to the Messiah. In Isaiah 40:3, a voice is described as crying out, "Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert." Malachi 3:1 reads, "See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me."

John the Baptist was not the light but pointed to the light, namely, to Christ, the eternal Word, the One who shines life-giving light to humanity. John the Baptist came to testify of Him: "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me'" (John 1:15).

The forerunner himself therefore testified that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah who was and is the eternal Word. The One about whom the forerunner testified actually existed before him, moreover, before anyone. The One to come was in a cosmic sense *before* the forerunner. The One who was to come, in other words, is the One who always *is*—the Great I AM.

Do not lose sight of the staggering significance of the incarnation this Christmas. John the Baptist, the last in line of the old-covenant prophets, prepared people for the coming of the Messiah who is also God. He prepared the way of the Lord, the Lord who was the God of Israel. The true light indeed was coming into the world (John 1:9).



How has the Lord Jesus proven to be light in your life?

Day 2: Read John 1:6-9

“The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world” (John 1:9).
What does this light do?

First, the light *illuminates*. We live in darkness without Christ, and the only way we can come to know Him is because the light—His light—shines in the darkness.

Second, the light *exposes*. The light rightly judges all humankind, our works and our motives. We don’t see our lives accurately until we see them in the light of Jesus.

Third, the light *guides* us. Jesus directs us through the Holy Spirit, the Counselor whom He sent.

Finally, the light *divides*. Though eternal life is offered to all humanity, the light nonetheless divides those who reject Christ from those who turn to Him.

Jesus, the true light, came into the world so that all might believe.



How have you seen these works of the Word’s light—illuminating, exposing, guiding, and dividing—in your own life?

Day 3: Read John 1:10-13

Adoption is a beautiful picture of the gospel in the home. Apart from Jesus Christ, we were all orphans, separated from God. We were all in sin, alienated from the life of God, but God has adopted us through faith in Christ (Gal. 4:4-7).

This gift of adoption as the children of God comes through our believing in Jesus Christ. What an incredible thought: We who were once enemies of God can be called children of God and co-heirs with Christ, receiving His inheritance (Rom. 8:16-17). It’s all because of God’s grace and mercy: “See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God’s children—and we are!” (1 John 3:1).



What are the benefits of being a child of God that stand out to you?

Day 4: Read John 1:14-15

In verse 14, the apostle John brings himself into the story: “We observed his glory.” In other words, he says, “I was there with the others, and we witnessed the Son’s incarnate glory.”

John saw the transfiguration of the Lord on a high mountain. Jesus’ face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light. John also heard the voice of God the Father: “This is my beloved Son; listen to him” (Mark 9:7).

This witness is essential to John, as stated in his first epistle: “What we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). And he wrote about these things “so that our joy may be complete” (v. 4).



In what ways do you testify to those around you of what you have seen and heard of Jesus?

Day 5: Read John 1:16-18

As the eternal Word, Jesus revealed God to us and He also identified with us as a human being. The last phrase in verse 18—“he has revealed him”—means that Jesus came to clarify for us who God is. The reason Jesus came to this earth is because God wants to be known. And Jesus is the fullest way we can know who God is.

Not only does Jesus identify with God, in putting on human flesh, Jesus also identified with us in our humanity (Heb. 4:15). Have you ever thought, “*Where is God? Why is He allowing this to happen to me?*” Christmas is meant to tell you that God does care and He does understand, so much so that in the incarnation He actually experienced suffering with us. We have a Savior who not only suffered *with* us but also suffered *for* us in order to end all suffering one day.



How does it bring comfort to you to know that the Son of God cares about human suffering and experienced it Himself as a human being?

UNIT 28

SESSION 1

1. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020) [eBook].
2. Martin Luther, quoted in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingle, and Lubomír Batka (OUP Oxford, 2014) [eBook].
3. St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 97.

SESSION 2

1. A. W. Tozer, *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit, in Life in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 24.
2. Andrew Murray, in *Andrew Murray On Prayer* (Whitaker House, 1998) [eBook].

CHRISTMAS SESSION

1. See Keiki Hendrix, "Christmas Classics: 'The Man and the Birds' by Paul Harvey," *Everyday Christian*, December 17, 2010, www.everydaychristian.com/blogs/post/christmas_classics_the_man_and_the_birds_by_paul_harvey]
2. Samuel Ngewa, "John," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1279.
3. C. S. Lewis, "The Incarnation," in *The Joyful Christian* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 52.

SESSION 3

1. R. C. Sproul, *Surprised by Suffering* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 40.
2. Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016) [eBook].
3. Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 111.
2. David Platt, "Is Your Definition of Faith Biblical?" *Radical*, July 27, 2018, radical.net/is-your-definition-of-faith-biblical.
3. Leo the Great, Sermons 21.3, quoted in *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. XI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

UNIT 29

SESSION 1

1. Randy Alcorn, *Managing God's Money* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011), 4.
2. St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 79.
3. Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), 91.

SESSION 2

1. Athanasius, *De Synodis*, in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, vol. IV in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), 453.
2. Eric Mason, *Unleashed* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015), 61.

SESSION 3

1. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 7, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 568.
3. John Newton, "Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 104.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Christianity Today*, "John Newton: Reformed Slave Trader," May 12, 2020, www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/pastorsandpreachers/john-newton.html.

SESSION 4

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1955), 56.
2. "James 2," in Bible Lessons International, 2012, bible.org/book/export/html/21430.
3. Adrian Rogers, *Adrianisms: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers* (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 2006), 57.
4. "Significant Statistics About Tithing and Church Generosity," CDF Capital, February 25, 2019, www.cdfcapital.org/tithing-generosity.

UNIT 30

SESSION 1

1. Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1981), 66.
2. Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, in *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 350.
3. Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 18, quoted in *Acts*, ed. Francis Martin, vol. V in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 2

1. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67, quoted in *The Early Christians in Their Own Words*, edited by Eberhard Arnold (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing, 2011), 83.
2. Rudolf Gwalther, Homily 65, Acts 9:10-16, quoted in *Acts*, eds. Esther Chung-Kim and Todd R. Hains, vol. 6 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014) [Wordsearch].
3. Billy Graham, in *Billy Graham in Quotes*, eds. Franklin Graham with Donna Lee Toney (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011) [eBook].

SESSION 3

1. Edward Mote, "The Solid Rock," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 511.
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Complete* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 1981) [Wordsearch].
3. Heinrich Bullinger, *Commentary on Colossians* 1:23, quoted in *Philippians, Colossians*, ed. Graham Tomlin, vol. 11 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures 4.1, quoted in *1–2 Corinthians*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Joni Eareckson Tada, "Share His Sufferings," in *Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross*, ed. Nancy Guthrie (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 143.
3. David S. Dockery, *The Doctrine of the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Seminary Extension of the Southern Baptist Seminaries, 1997), 36.