



Central
Peninsula
Church

...to make and mature more followers of Christ

The Birth of the King
Matthew 1:1–17; John 1:1–5

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series: The Story

Over the past six months we have walked through the first 21 chapters of The Story ending our study of the Old Testament last week. The Old Testament has been longing and pointing forward to this climactic moment—the birth of Jesus Christ, the King of kings. Even though it's March 1, we are talking about the Christmas story today. I don't think I've ever preached about the birth of Jesus any other time except right before Christmas. So, this is kind of weird for me! Turn to your neighbor and say Merry Christmas!

In the messages I've preached about the birth of Jesus Christ, I've focused on the manger, shepherds, wise men, Mary and Joseph. Those are important aspects of the story but they are all from a human viewpoint of his birth. But what did the birth of Jesus look like from God's perspective? When you stop and honestly consider the birth of Jesus, the whole story is really quite strange. It doesn't fit nicely into our preconceived ideas of how God should work. If you are not a Christian, this idea that God came to earth, put on human flesh, and died for us, just doesn't make a whole lot of sense. It is much easier to talk about everyone else around the Christmas story. It's more familiar to us. It makes more sense. But God coming to earth as a helpless baby is hard to swallow. Frederick Buechner, a writer and theologian, described God becoming man as, "A kind of vast joke whereby the creator of the ends of the earth comes among us in diapers. Until we too have taken the idea of the God-man seriously enough to be scandalized by it, we have not taken it as seriously as it demands to be taken."

Does the story of the birth of Jesus disturb or scandalize us anymore? If you are not a follower of Jesus, have you looked deeply into this claim that God himself came into the world as a baby? And what, if anything, does any of that mean to our lives today? That is what we are going to consider this morning.

God's perspective of the birth of Jesus is found in a book of the Bible called the Gospel of John. John was a fisherman whom Jesus called to be his disciple along with his brother James. John became part of the inner circle of disciples with Jesus and one of his closest friends. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, John writes this letter, which is really a short biography of the life of Jesus. In this Gospel, John starts off with a heavy dose of theology by talking about the deity of Christ. That is to say, he begins

with answering the question, Who was Jesus. John's answer has disrupted people's lives and angered others for centuries. He says Jesus is God. Let's read John 1:1-5,12,14:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word

Why does John begin the story of Jesus this way? No other gospel writer starts like this. The book of John is so unique, theologians call it the fourth gospel and put it in a category on its own. Why begin the story of Jesus by calling him the Word? Why not use titles people were calling Jesus, like Son of Man, Messiah, Lamb, or Lord? "Word" is from the Greek *logos* which we get the English words logic and reason. John begins his Gospel with what preachers call a "hook." He draws us in. *Logos* rung a deep chord within his ancient culture. Heraklitus, a philosopher who lived in Ephesus said that *logos* is omnipotent wisdom that steers everything. With this term, John is able to meet people on common ground and share the story of the greatest journey ever taken—God coming to earth. He uses this term to reach as wide an audience as possible. John goes on to describes four truths about the Word in these opening verses. First he writes, the Word was with God in the beginning.

The Word was With God in the Beginning

Verse 1 says, "*In the beginning was the Word.*" If you are somewhat familiar with the Bible, that phrase should ring a bell. The first book of the Bible is called Genesis, the book of beginnings,

and the very first line of that book is, *“In the beginning God...”* God is the subject of the first sentence of the Bible and the beginning of John’s Gospel. John wants to make an immediate connection between the Word and God. Like God the Father, the Word has no beginning; he existed before anything in all creation. The Word was with God in the very beginning.

Have your kids ever asked you, “What was God doing before the creation of the universe?” Mine have. My honest answer is, I have no idea! I am sure he wasn’t bored because he lives in perfect community and fellowship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We call that the Trinity. I don’t know what the Word was doing before the universe was created. But, according to John, the Word was there. Not only was the Word with God in the beginning, John says, the Word was God.

The Word was God

You need to understand, to the original audience that statement was simply ridiculous. For the Jewish reader to say, “the Word was God” was blasphemous. To the Greeks, “the Word became flesh” was unthinkable and ridiculous. To John, this new understanding of the Word was the Good News of Jesus Christ. As one of the 12 disciples, John was an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus. Listen to what he would write later about the Word,

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. (1 John 1:1-2)

John wrote his Gospel, as an eyewitness, to testify to this primary truth—the Word was God. The Word was life. The Word was eternal life. When you read through John, what you see is that everything Jesus said and did flowed from who he is as the Word. Jesus is fully God and though he became a man, he never ceased being God. God could have chosen a thousand ways to communicate with us, but since he designed us, he knew the best way to communicate with us would be face-to-face. In The Story he was first with Adam and Eve in the cool of Garden, but because of our rebellion, we separated ourselves from him. The Story is all about God’s relentless pursuit to be with his children again. The prophets, the tabernacle, and the temple all were a foreshadow of Jesus Christ. God didn’t send an angel or a prophet, God came himself to be with us. Jesus is “Immanuel—God with us.” The Word was God. The third truth John writes about in his introduction is the Word made everything.

The Word Made Everything

Look at verse 3 again, *“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”* Think about that statement for a second. The Word made **everything**. Now, some of you don’t believe that but I want you to consider a few things. The Psalmist wrote, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands”* (Psalm 19:1). All we have to do is look up at the night skies to see God the Creator. If you’ve ever seen the stars without light pollution, you know. Astronomers believe the universe is constantly expanding and we are discovering new planets all the time. According to Psalm 19, the primary purpose of the universe is to show off the majesty, glory, magnificence, creativity, and power of the Word. John says, the Word made the heavens.

Let me give you another example of the creative power of the Word. Look how cool this dog this is. It’s a Bergamasco Shepherd (picture shown). These herding dogs were bred for the freezing Alps and have thick dreadlocked coats. I want one! Look at this funny animal. It’s a Ankole-Watusi (picture shown). Ankole longhorns live in Africa. Their horns are used in defense and cooling and can weigh up to 100 pounds each and reach 8 feet from tip to tip. This is a Dumbo Octopus (picture shown). My kids love that one. This is a Irrawaddy Dolphin (picture shown). They are found only in coastal areas in South and Southeast Asia. This animal is one of my favorites, it’s a Saiga Antelope (picture shown). And you thought you had a big nose! The saiga is a critically endangered antelope that inhabits the Eurasian steppe and Mongolia. Its strange nose is extremely flexible and helps to filter out dust kicked up by the migrating herd. Last one—a Red Lipped Batfish (picture shown). Isn’t that cool? Why do I show you all these bizarre animals? Because according to John God created them all by his powerful Word and the Word is creative!

Or take one more example. You have a hundred trillion cells in your body. Each one of them, scientists will tell you, is like a complex city, like the city of New York on a cellular level. Every second of every day your cells are operating with millions of parts and interactions. Lewis Thomas, a scientist and not a Christian, said this about the beauty of a single human cell: “If I could explain what goes on in a human cell, I would for the rest of my life hire a plane and fly it back and forth across the earth just to proclaim the incredible wonder of how and why a cell works.”

The Apostle John wants us to know that Mary’s child, the man from Galilee who walks with, eats with, and plays with real flesh and blood humans is none other than the Maker of the universe, the Dumbo Octopus, the Red Lipped Batfish and every single human cell. Sure, there are other theories that both Christians

and non-Christians use to explain all this, but don't miss the point John is making. The Word, the all powerful wisdom of God, was with God in the Beginning. The Word was in fact God. The Word made everything. And the last truth John tells us is, the Word became a human being.

The Word Became a Human Being

Look with me at verse 14, "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*" When Caesar Augustus was ruling the world, the One who spoke the universe into existence lay speechless in a cattle trough. When Quirinius was the governor of Syria, the star-Maker entrusted himself to a teenage girl. When Herod the Great was on a power trip, God the *logos* needed a mother to feed him and change his diapers. The term theologians call this great miracle is the Incarnation. It means "in the flesh." God entered into our messy and broken world, *incarne*, in the flesh. And it's this doctrine of the God-man, the deity of Christ, that separates Christianity from all major world religions. All other religions say, you are on a journey to find God and you better be good. Christianity says, God came to find and rescue you. You can't be good enough.

The One who made the world entered the world in person—body, soul, spirit. The Creator became a creature. God became man. The Word moved into the neighborhood and took up residence among his people. Jesus was 100% human and 100% God. I can apprehend it but I can't comprehend it. But that is exactly what the Bible teaches. The God of the universe humbled himself and became a man. He felt what we feel. He was tempted. He experienced pain. He laughed and cried. He was hungry and got tired. God entered the story of our lives and became a child. A weak, needy, poor, miserable, and helpless baby. And yet he was still God. Why is this important? Dorothy Sayers writes, "If Christ was only man, then He is entirely irrelevant to any thought about God; if He is only God, then He is entirely irrelevant to any experience of human life."

If Jesus was just a great moral teacher, then he can't save us from our sin. If Jesus was only God, then he couldn't be the mediator between God and man. John says he was both God and man. The Word was with God in the Beginning. The Word was God. The Word made everything. And the Word became flesh. That's the

Who. Now, I want to answer the Why. Why did Jesus come and what does that have to do with my life?

Becoming a Child of God

If I could tweet my sermon in 140 characters, here is what I'd write: God, the Creator, became a child so that you might become a child of God. That's why Jesus entered the Story. He came to adopt you into his family as his child. You are not born a child of God, as Oprah claims. The Bible says you become one. John explains in verse 12, "*Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*" Those who receive Jesus and believe in him become children of God.

Jesus, the Word, came to save you from sin and from yourself. He wants to remove your guilt, bitterness, resentment, addictive habits, and fears. Who can save us? Not the government. Not business. Not academics. The problem of sin lies in the human heart and only God can transform the heart. The entire Story we've looked at for 21 weeks is proof of that. We constantly run away from God! So, God sent his Son, the Word, into the Story to once and for all win us back. God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ is where true freedom, real purpose, and abundant life are found. Athanasius, a famous church father said this, "Jesus became what we are so he could make us what he is." In Jesus your past is forgiven, your present is given purpose, and your future becomes even brighter.

How do you become a child of God? John tells us, you receive Jesus into your life, you believe he is yours, and you say thank you. Once you receive Jesus into your life and believe, you begin a lifelong process of learning how to follow him and trust him. We call that discipleship.

Let me end with this quote, "The Word did not become a philosophy to be discussed, a theory to be debated, or a concept to be pondered. The Word became a Person to be followed, enjoyed, and loved." Let's follow him wherever he takes us. Let's enjoy him no matter what happens in our lives. And let's love him for who he is today—the Word.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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