

THE SON OF GOD HAS COME: JOHN 1:1-4

Focus Idea: In poetic and vivid language, the New Testament writer John reflects on the Incarnation (the “coming-into-flesh”) of the Eternal God. When Jesus Christ, who John calls “The Word,” was born, the world witnessed the glory of God and the light of life.

The Context: John’s is the last and most philosophical of the New Testament gospels, four semi-biographical accounts of the ministry of Jesus. While the other three books (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) present more detail on Jesus’ teachings and miracles, John turns his focus to Jesus’ divine identity and onto the cosmic implications of his death. John’s gospel functions with the explicit aim of encouraging belief in Jesus as the Son of God (20:31)

The Characters: John was one of Jesus’ disciples. Originally a fisherman from Galilee, John and his brother James were welcomed into Jesus’ traveling band of ministry assistants and became two of Jesus’ most intimate confidants. It’s likely that John was among the youngest of Jesus followers; the fact that he was known as a “Son of Thunder” (Mark 3:17) implies that he may have been impulsive or ill-tempered at times. In his opening chapter, the author refers to a second man named John; this second John was known as “The Baptist.” He lived near the Jordan River in Judea and called out for repentance and cleansing.

The Core: For many people, the Christmas story evokes images of mangers, wise men, and shepherds. But when John composed his account of Jesus’ life, he didn’t begin with the stable in Bethlehem. John presented a sweeping and majestic perspective on God’s activity in Jesus. His coming meant that the Eternal God had entered into flesh to bring light to the world. This text is a prologue, a sort of sonnet, about salvation, and it sets the stage for John’s record of Christ’s work in the world.

John describes Jesus as the “Word” (vs. 1). In Greek, John’s noun is *logos*. *Logos* (from which we get the endings of words like “theology” and “geology”, is a rich and multifaceted term. It gathers up concepts like “wisdom” and “order.” It implies purpose and intent. John asserts that it was Jesus, the *Logos* of God, that brought order to the chaos of creation (vs. 3) and formed the world (vs. 10). The Word was present from the beginning, and there was nothing that the Word did not make (vs. 2-3).

Remarkably, this creative and eternal wisdom entered into human flesh (vs. 14). In Jesus, God became a man. The Word joined his creation. His dwelling was marked by glory, grace, and truth.

The Incarnation transformed the world in many ways. Like the light of Genesis 1, the *Logos* bathed the world in new life. Though the darkness around was strong, it could not overcome the Light (vs. 5). Those who believed in this illuminating Word could become children of God (vs. 13).

Among those that hailed the Light was John the Baptist, a fiery wilderness prophet who called the nation to prepare for the coming of the Light. While many thought John might be the Messiah, the Baptist was clear – he came only as a witness to the true Light (vs. 6-8; see also Matthew chapter 3).

John is careful to note, however, that many did not accept the Word. At the outset of his gospel, his readers must understand that the world was (and remains) filled with those who rejected Jesus. Some did not recognize the *Logos*; others refused to receive him (vs. 10-11). But this in no ways diminished the divine glory of Jesus; the Word would accomplish the purpose for which he came.