

The sermon

Intro

Who is Jesus?

This Advent season we've been answering the question, Why did Jesus come to earth? This morning we'll answer a different question, Who is this Jesus that came to earth?

I love a good origin story, a good backstory. How did Spiderman become Spiderman? This morning we'll get Jesus' backstory. No origin story. Jesus has always been.

This morning we look at an eyewitness summary of Jesus' life.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Point 1: Jesus created all things (1:1-4)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. – 1:1-2

This brings us back to Genesis 1:1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. – **Genesis 1:1**

Before matter, before the heavens and the earth, before the foundation of the world, before time began, there was the Word. The Word is Jesus (1:14).

Jesus existed before creation. Jesus was with God before creation. Jesus was God before creation.

Both with God and God himself. What's going on here? We're getting a glimpse into the Trinity. God = the Father. The Word = Jesus = God the Son. Jesus is fully God, yet distinct from the Father, who is also fully God.

It's passages like this that have led the church to conclude there is one God who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.

Why is Jesus called the "Word"?

The Greek word *Logos* translated "**Word**" is the standard word for oral communication (speech) and written communication (books). The title "**Word**" indicates God communicated himself to us through the person of Jesus. Like the Bible is God speaking to us in written form, Jesus's life, his words and works, is God speaking to us in human form. God communicated many things about himself in the man Jesus Christ.

So "**Word**" means Jesus is God's self-expression, God's self-disclosure, God revealing himself to us in human form.

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. – 1:3

Everything that came into existence by God's speech in Genesis 1 (earth, stars, trees, mountains, oceans, cows, dolphins, humans, angels, etc.), all these things were made through Jesus. God spoke it. Jesus carried it out. "**through him**" means Jesus was the active agent of creation.

Think of it like this. God the Father is like MA Haskell. God the Son is like the Haskell employee who came to my house and installed my furnace. On one hand, MA Haskell installed my furnace. On the other hand, my furnace was installed by the man Haskell sent to come into my basement.

The man who was born of the virgin Mary and died on the cross is the being who brought all things into existence.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. – 1:4

In eternity past, Jesus possessed life. In the beginning, Jesus gave life to men.

“and the life was the light of men” sounds confusing. It seems like ***“life”*** has shifted from life in general to Jesus himself is ***“the life.”***

Jesus said to him [Thomas], “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. –
John 14:6

Jesus, the life, brought light to men.

What does this mean for us?

Jesus made everything. So everything belongs to Jesus. Jesus holds the whole world in his hands (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3). Life is his to give. Life is his to take. Jesus can do whatever he wants with his creation. Jesus doesn't have a code enforcement officer he needs to answer to. Jesus doesn't have stockholders he needs to satisfy. Jesus doesn't have an accessor who gives him a tax bill. Jesus reports to no man.

We err when we think we should have a say. We err when we think we can question him.

Eternal life is found in Jesus. We have to come to Jesus on his terms if we want to possess eternal life. Jesus determines the terms because everything belongs to him.

Practical question: how should the fact that everything belongs to Jesus affect how I respond to him?

Point 2: Jesus was rejected by his creation (1:5-11)

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. – 1:5

“The light” is Jesus. ***“the darkness”*** is the realm of evil, those who oppose God (Satan, demons, fallen humanity).

“the darkness has not overcome it” means Jesus was victorious over the darkness. ***“overcome”*** means the darkness didn't overpower Jesus. Didn't take his rule from him. Jesus remains King over creation!

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. – 1:6-8

John is John the Baptist. John was sent to give testimony to the identity of Jesus (***“the light”***). So that people would believe in Jesus.

The apostle John, the writer of *The Gospel According to John*, is being careful to clarify the difference between John the Baptist and Jesus. John wasn't the light. John came to point people towards the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. – 1:9

The one who is light (Jesus) came into the world (darkness). The world is blinded by Satan. Blinded by sin. The world goes in the wrong direction because it can't see.

Jesus gave ***“light to everyone”*** he came in contact with. Jesus gave light when he turned water into wine, when he healed the sick, when he cast out demons, when he raised the dead. Jesus gave light when he explained the Old Testament, when he corrected the erroneous practices of the scribes and Pharisees, when he revealed himself as the bread of life (6:35).

The light (Jesus) entered darkness (the world). Anyone who personally encountered Jesus was given light. Today, when a person reads the Bible, hears a biblical sermon, watches a biblical YouTube video, has a conversation with a Christian about Jesus, that person is given light.

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. – 1:10-11

World is used in two ways. **First**, a physical object/location that Jesus made and lived in. The earth. **Second**, a category of people that doesn't know Jesus in saving relationship because they've been blinded by Satan (2 Cor 4:4). They're dead in their sins. So they do life according to their own desires, popular opinion, etc. rather than God's word. They don't know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. They don't believe.

Jesus came to Israel ("*his own*") and Israel, for the most part, rejected him ("*did not receive him*"). The scribes and Pharisees were outraged when he claimed authority to forgive sins (Matt 9:2-3) and dined with sinners (Matt 9:10-11) and didn't follow their customs (Matt 12:1-2; 15:1-2) and healed on the Sabbath (Matt 12:9-14; John 7:23). The curious crowds were mixed. Some thought he was John the Baptist; some thought he was Elijah; some thought he was "*Jeremiah or one of the prophets*" (Matt 16:14). Some demanded a sign (John 6:30). Some didn't like what he said ("*I am the bread that came down from heaven*" – John 6:41). Some said he was demon-possessed (John 7:20). Some were afraid to believe because they'd be kicked out of the synagogue (John 9:22).

In the end, "*the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus*" (**Matt 27:21**). The crowds kept shouting "*Crucify, crucify him!*" and demanded that the insurrectionist and murderer Barabbas be released (Luke 23:18-23).

What does this mean for us?

Jesus came into darkness giving light to all he encountered. And the darkness said we don't want him. The people said the light must die. Should we be surprised when people have zero interest in the gospel (**DEFINE GOSPEL**)? Should we be surprised when the gospel makes people angry? Should we be confused when the gospel creates division?

Practical question: why do people reject Jesus?

Point 3: Jesus was received by some (1:12-13)

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, – 1:12

The majority of Israel rejected Jesus, but some believed.

The word "**receive**" is interesting. Jesus **took** the bread at the Last Supper (Matt 26:26). The "*two-drachma tax*" was something people **collected** (Matt 17:24). Servants were sent to **get** fruit from the vineyard for the vineyard owner (Mark 12:2). The idea is taking something Jesus offers. Saying, "Yes, I want that." When Jesus says, "*I am the bread of life*" (John 6:35), it's saying I'll take that bread.

To receive Jesus is to believe in Jesus.

We move from not child of God (child of the devil – 1 John 3:10) to child of God by faith.

who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. – 1:13

Those who received/believed Jesus were "**born...of God**" = born again. Raised to newness of life Rom 6:4). No longer enslaved to sin (Rom 6:6). A heart in which "*rivers of living water*" flow (John 7:38).

We don't become born again by physical birth (blood). We don't make ourselves born again by our own decision or desire ("*will of the flesh...will of man*"). The new birth is an act of the Holy Spirit.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. – **John 3:8**

Jesus commands us to believe. He doesn't command us to be born again.

What does this mean for us?

John's point is the majority rejected, but some believed. And blessing flowed to them! There's a lot of negativity: "*his own people did not receive him*" (1:11). But it's not all negativity: "*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*" (1:13).

The gospel isn't rejected in every case. Some believe. Some move from not God's child to child of God! As we learned last week, the Father is drawing sinners to the Son (6:44). **Practical question:** do I have confidence that some will believe?

Point 4: Jesus revealed the Father (1:14-18)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. – 1:14

Jesus, the one who made all things, "*became flesh.*"

"*became flesh*" means before the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary (Matt 1:20), Jesus was a Spirit-being without physicality. "*became flesh*" means addition, not subtraction. Jesus added to his deity. He didn't take from his deity. Fully man. Fully God. Still spiritually present everywhere (Matt 28:20). Now physically present in one place.

Having become flesh, Jesus "*dwelt among us.*" God was now physically present with man.

"*we have seen*" = eyewitness testimony of the apostle John and those disciples who lived with Jesus. How else could we know these things?

Jesus was "*full of grace and truth*" meaning not lacking in any way.

(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.') – 1:15

Jesus was conceived six months after John the Baptist (Luke 1:24, 26). John's public ministry came before Jesus' publicly ministry. But Jesus outranked John, because Jesus existed before John existed. Jesus has eternally existed as the Son of God.

For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. – 1:16

Grace flows from Jesus' full reservoir of grace. Jesus' cup is full. "*grace upon grace*" means grace on top of grace.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. – 1:17

"*For*" = explanation of "*grace upon grace.*" Grace came through the Law. Unmerited blessing. Israel did nothing to earn its status as God's people. Israel did nothing to earn the just laws that would have made for societal blessing. Israel did nothing to earn promises of health, wealth, crops, military success that would have come through obedience.

Grace came again when Jesus dwelt among the people. Exposure to the light was grace. Jesus' true words were grace. Your Bible is grace. You did nothing to earn possession of these words of life.

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. – 1:18

In the Old Covenant era, God was never seen with human eyes. In Jesus, the invisible God is known.

“made him known”

The idea is Jesus' life, his words and works, is a full, clear revealing of God.

Jesus made known God's power (omnipotence) when he turned water in wine, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, commanded the wind, and rose himself from the grave.

Jesus made known God's knowledge (omniscience) when he told the woman at the well about her five husbands (John 4:17-19) and when he foretold the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 24:15-25; Luke 21:10-24).

But what stands out most to me is that Jesus revealed God's stance towards sin and God's mercy/compassion towards sinners.

Jesus made known God's stance towards sin when, early in his ministry, he drove the money-changers out of the temple with a whip (John 2:13-17) and shortly before his death when he drove the money-changers out while flipping their tables and chairs (Matt 21:12-13). When he verbally scorched the scribes and Pharisees, calling them things like children of hell, *“blind guides...blind fools...whitewashed tombs...you brood of vipers”* (Matt 23:15-17, 27, 33). And when he went to the cross *“to give his life as a ransom for many”* (Matt 20:28). The Father piercing Jesus for our sins shows how serious God is about sin.

Jesus made known God's compassion and mercy when he cast out demons and healed all the sick in town (Matt 4:23-24). When he dined with the despised tax collector Matthew (Matt 9:9-13). When he answered Jairus' plea by bringing his 12 year old daughter back from death (Luke 8:40-42, 49-56). When he wept over the pain Mary was in because of her brother Lazarus' death, whom Jesus was about to raise (John 11:32-35, 38-44). When he charged Peter *“Feed my sheep”* despite the fact that Peter had publicly denied Jesus three times (John 21:15-19).

Practical question: do I see God through the lens of Jesus' words and works.

Conclusion

Jesus' words and actions reveal both God takes sin seriously and God extends mercy to sinners through Jesus Christ.

Jesus died on the cross for those in darkness, the world, so that whoever believes would experience God's forgiveness in Christ. So that whoever believes would experience eternal life.

On the cross, God the Father treated God the Son, Jesus, as if he lived your sinful life. If you trust in Jesus, God will treat you as if you lived Jesus' perfect, sinless, not guilty life.

In order to come to Jesus, we need to recognize his authority. He made us. We belong to him. In order to come to Jesus, we need to recognize our brokenness. I need God's forgiveness. I need God to make me new.

Do you believe? If not, turn from your sins by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection. Tell us if you do.