

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 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.

What child is this?

We try to teach our children proper etiquette when it comes to receiving gifts. For instance even if the gift isn't something they necessarily want, they're instructed not to toss it aside and request, "Next." But they should show their appreciation for the gift, and if they don't understand what it is they should before setting it aside.

The apostle John also want us to have the proper attitude when it comes to the gift we've been given. In the prologue to his gospel he writes poetically about "the Word." He isn't focused on the wrapping paper but he is mesmerized by the baby in the manger. John doesn't spend any time discussing the cattle lowing, the poor babe waking, the little Lord Jesus no crying making, or if the night was silent, calm, or bright. In fact it seems as if John knows very little about Christmas, why are we even reading from John's Gospel when there is no nativity? Because **John looks at the gift, his details show us he's thinking, he's thankful, and he wants us to know how much this child the word means to him.** John knows and he wants us to know.

We don't always appreciate what God has done in fact we often think he should do more. That's because we don't realize what he has done. Take look with John and see this gift.

John doesn't start in Bethlehem where this child is born, or in Nazareth when Mary and Joseph are Betrothed, He doesn't even start with the birth of the forerunner. He takes us all the way back to Genesis 1:1. John shows his appreciation with a bold start, "In the beginning." This is like anyone else starting off, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." thinking they can improve on it. Those words are already famous. Yet **John, does the one thing you don't do in Judaism; you don't mess with Moses let alone the Torah.** That's what John is doing. *In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*

"The Word - is God, is the one through whom all things were made, is life and light." He's not only trying to improve on the Torah but he's refocusing the Christmas story - pointing away from the cute, wonderful, gentle silent scene, away from all of the Christmas lights, trees, wreaths, Christmas songs and back to the light of the world that broke into a very dark place. Because this baby is God, the one through whom all things were made became flesh and nobody knew or cared. Jesus was not recognized as king and creator. Beyond belief because nobody knew, if they would have, *"They would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* (1 Corinthians 2:8).

We don't mess with the Word of God either. But over time we too become distracted by the trappings or traditions of Christmas, what we think makes Christmas. Things have to be just the way they are or else. We may even sterilize, sanitize, and romanticize the manger scene make it a cute picture of piety in reality it should shock us to think that this Child is our King. John isn't interested in those hallmark moments. He's interested in who this Child is: the Word of God became flesh to fulfill prophecy and destroy sin and death.

But is that the gift we want? It's the gift we often take for granted. It's not always the gift we want or appreciate. After all what difference does it make in our day to day life? Jesus doesn't seem to help in time of need. Bad things still happen, people still suffer. We suffer heartbreak and the loss of friends. Work slows and Jesus doesn't seem to put money on the table. Why bother?

Why bother? That's why Jesus came. He came because he knew all about the problems of the world in which we live and yet he came anyway. That demonstrates what kind of God we have. The kind of God who leaves all of the glory of heaven behind

to join us. The main point that John is making is that this child - is so much more.

If a gift is not appreciated. It's tossed aside. Jesus was set aside. He was deemed of no value or use in this world and crucified. But in spite of this rejection and the world that would not receive him. He came to that which was his own. But instead of taking his gift and walking away he gave them his life even when they wouldn't appreciate it.

Imagine you've return home for the Holidays, Christmas gifts in hand and family won't even let you in the door. You've been cut off. You'd probably write them off, return your gifts, and take your money back. But that's not what God did. John tells us, "The word became flesh and lived among us." Even though *the world did not recognize him. And his own did not receive him.* He came bearing gifts and left them behind.

His work for you is an accomplished fact. Jesus is the incarnate one (incarnation = carne), not just God among us but God just like us. He was 100% true man. **Jesus knows what it means to be human, the joy and sadness, the pain and hope, he became our brother and went through what we go through.** He did this all to give us the opportunity to know the unknowable God. He came in flesh and blood and revealed himself to the world.

That means that the pre-existent Son of God, by whom all things were made in whom all things are held together became a poor, helpless, little child and **he did this because despite our every effort, learning, ability we cannot come close to God or accept him into our heart.** Some make a big deal about accepting a gift as if it's something you have to do. That's not the proper response. Thank you is.

This is all his work, his gift for us. We cannot accomplish for ourselves what God accomplished when he became a child. Incarnation is the length to which God will go to get through to us. Came not in anger and wrath but as a baby in a manger. But one thing about babies is that they demand attention. John calls for our attention. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. Jesus brings gifts. The greatest of them being called children of God, this is achieved not by birth, or because you gave your heart to him but born because God works through his Word, he creates that desire in you.

That's the best reason why we give gifts to children on Christmas. It's not because they have earned them by their behavior throughout the year but for the

same reason God gives us the gift of his son, the gift of faith. It is by grace alone and for his glory. (which happens to be the same reason I give gifts to my children).

He gives us his son. He gives us himself, his body and blood for our forgiveness for every unappreciative moment or time we've rejected him. He points us to a better life than this one beyond the grave. He wants us to understand and appreciate his work for us. In order to do so you have to see it. *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts (Colossians 3).*

Children have to be taught how to be thankful. Help them carefully examine their gifts and do the same with the gifts God has given you. We haven't done a single thing. The only part we've added to our salvation is the fact that we need to be saved. This child is God's gift to you. He came into this world to save sinners.