

Power and Weakness: the Word became Flesh

John 1:1-18

Christmas can be a magical time of year. The Bible tells us why. On the very first Christmas something from out of this world really did break into this world.

Christ is the Word

For the people who first heard them, John's opening words would have been revolutionary. For Jewish people, God's power of creation, rescue and justice – his Word – are all rolled into one man, Jesus. For those shaped by Greek philosophy, the governing principle behind the universe, the *logos*, is not an abstract principle, but a person. That meant you, as an individual person, mattered.

John says that Jesus, the Word, had no beginning. No one, however great could say that of themselves. He says that he was *with* God. That means that the Word is a Person in loving relationship with God. That explains why we can find loneliness so crushing – we have been made in the image of the God of community.

Then John tells us the Word *was* God, God the Son, the creator of everything. All spiritual light comes from him – all our moments of transcendence point back to him.

Is this just speculative philosophy? Maybe, if it wasn't *who* John is writing about.

The Word Became a Man

No other religion has God coming down to rescue us. But that is what God does in the incarnation. God came and 'pitched his tent' among us, and revealed his glory, previously hidden in the Tabernacle, in Jesus. This is the God we all need: one who understands our lives as they really are, who has entered the darkness of our world.

In the Bible, darkness is a picture of sin and spiritual blindness. Into that darkness God has shone – through the birth of his Son, born in the darkness of the stable. And yet, the world does not receive him. The world thinks God is indifferent to our suffering, when in fact it is us who are indifferent to his coming into our darkness. But if his coming meant rejection, at his birth and at the cross, why does he come at all?

That You Might Become a Child of God

Many societies and cultures divide along ethnic lines. John says you're not in or out of the people of God on the basis of your ethnic identity. But neither is it based on your willpower, as if you can try to save yourself. It's to those who receive Jesus that God opens the door to his family. Christ was born a baby that you might be reborn. He was rejected that you might be accepted. This is God's grace to us.

It is not that we are saved by grace, but then must live by our own effort. It is grace upon grace, John says. Grace changes the way we see ourselves, and others. It is grace that makes Christmas so magical.