



# First Baptist Church Selmer

THE QUESTIONS OF CHRISTMAS • WHAT DID JESUS DO? •  
JOHN 1:1-4, 10-18; 1 JOHN 4:7-12 • 12/14/2025

## MAIN POINT

When we speak about the gospel, we carry the miraculous message of the incarnation, God becoming human, so that we might be with Him forever.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**How do you think our culture would define love? How is this different than how you think Jesus defines it?**

**How is the Christmas story a demonstration of God's love for you?**

God's ultimate demonstration of love for us is what we celebrate at Christmas, when God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as a gift to the world to bring us back to a relationship with Him. Christmas sets in motion Jesus' sacrificial work for us, which culminates at the cross. Today's study of (John 1) and (1 John 1) teaches that Jesus was both God and man, and helps us understand how important this truth is to the gospel we share with others.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:1-4.

*1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men." (ESV)*

**Why do you think John began his Gospel by talking about how Jesus existed from eternity past?**

**Many people argue that Jesus was a prophet who did good works but wasn't the Son of God. How do John's words argue against that idea?**

**What does it mean that Jesus is "the Word"?**

By describing Jesus as "the Word," John presented Jesus as God's expression of Himself to us. Through creation and then again in coming to earth, Jesus revealed what God wanted us to know about Him and about who we are in Him. Before Jesus was born in a manger, before the angel told Mary she was pregnant, before any of the Old Testament prophets spoke about a Messiah, Jesus was with God, and He was God.

**Why was it important for John to point out that Jesus had a role in creation (v. 3)?**

In the same way that God the Father brought physical life through Jesus in creation (see Psalm 33:9), He also brought spiritual life through Jesus. Jesus came to earth to bring salvation to mankind. John points to the Son's unity with the Father that we see throughout all of Scripture. John 1:1-4 sets the stage for the good news of the gospel: Jesus is the Son of God, and in Him is eternal life.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:10-11,14-15.

*10 "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."*

*14 "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. 15 (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.") (ESV)*

**Some people claim that Jesus was not actually a real historical person. If Jesus was completely human, what facts about Him must be true?**

**Why is it necessary for people to understand that Jesus is fully human?**

A major theme in John's Gospel is the rejection Jesus encountered, including from many Jews who didn't recognize Him as the Messiah. Even with the countless signs, fulfilled prophecies, and Jesus' own statements about Himself, they did not accept Jesus as God's

Son. Even though they were a religious people, they did not understand who Jesus was because they expected something totally different.

**Why was Jesus so different from what everyone expected?**

**What kind of savior are the people in today's culture still looking for?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:12-13,16-18.

*12 "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."*

*16 "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (ESV)*

**Why do you think the Jewish people had a hard time accepting that Jesus came to save the whole world and not just the Jews?**

To think that God wanted to save the entire world was a crazy idea to the Jewish people. They grew up believing the Messiah would save only the Jews. No wonder so many Jews thought Jesus was preaching false words.

**How has your family or cultural background shaped your spiritual journey?**

**If you're a Christ follower, how have you experienced the "grace after grace" John talks about in verse 16?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 4:7-12.

*7 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." (ESV)*

**Based on these verses, what is the biblical meaning of love?**

## **What happens to our efforts to love each other if those efforts aren't connected to Jesus' love for us?**

God did more than shout down from heaven, "I love you!" to the people on earth. He demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to die on the cross. That's the nature of love—it's more than mere emotion or sentiment. True love is intentional and action-oriented. When we begin to grasp the depth of Jesus' love for us, we will find ourselves freed to love each other in that same sacrificial and intentional kind of way.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Why is it dangerous to think of Jesus as only God and not also fully human?**

**What is the danger of seeing Him as a man, but not God?**

**Why do you think love is such a defining mark of the Christian?**

**What are some tangible expressions of this kind of love you might practice this week: At your workplace? In your home? With your friends?**

## **PRAYER**

To close today's group time, thank God for sending His love and grace to us through His Son. End the time praising God for the sacrifice He made on our behalf. Challenge your group members to be motivated by the gospel during the Christmas season.

## **COMMENTARY**

| JOHN 1:1-18

1:1-2. Some interpreters have translated the opening phrase of this Gospel, "*Before there was a beginning, the Word had been.*" Indeed, the familiar repetition of Genesis 1:1 almost looks as if John wrote a Gospel of two beginnings—a creation account that parallels physical birth and spiritual rebirth. But it is important to notice that we are dealing with two beginnings, not creations. The central focus of this verse is eternity. Like His Heavenly Father, Jesus always was and therefore existed at the beginning of time.

Interestingly, John called Jesus the Word rather than some other name to introduce his book—interesting, but not surprising, since the Jews often referred to God in such

terminology. The doctrine at stake here is the deity of Christ. Jesus is God, and John wanted to make that point immediately. In fact, this prologue (vv. 1-18) begins and ends with a strong statement of this doctrine.

The term "*Word*" (logos) would have been familiar to the Greeks as well. Their understanding centered on the ultimate reason or the rationale of the universe rather than the personal God revealed to Abraham and his descendants. John claimed that the God of creation, the ultimate mind of the universe, had taken on human form; he had become incarnate.

The Bible allows no place for atheism and no room for doubt about how God has spoken—through the Word. Before there was a beginning, the Word had been coequal with God throughout all eternity. But what did the apostle mean by "*with God*?" The Greek word is "pros", which literally means "toward," implying a face-to-face relationship. He told us later in his Gospel that the Godhead consists of a trinity, but here in verse 1, we learn plurality. So Jesus, the Word, is eternal and personal. Nothing can separate the heavenly Father from His Son. Verse 2 merely emphasizes verse 1.

1:3. Unlike the Gospel writers before him, John tells us that Jesus participated in creation and again states his case twice for emphasis. Surely this is a deliberate link with Genesis, and it sets the stage for other New Testament Scriptures that show us Jesus' involvement in creation: "*For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him*" (Col. 1:16). "*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe*" (Heb. 1:1-2).

Creation is a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. Virtually every other aspect of theology rests upon our understanding of God as the origin of all life and of the role Jesus Christ, the Word, in creation. John could hardly say it more clearly: without Him nothing was made that has been made—everything from subatomic particles to galaxies. Only God, who created all things, can redeem them. Creation is the foundation stone of the gospel. Christ could not have been created, for He created all things. There was a "historical Jesus," but this terminology refers only to His thirty-three years on earth. His life had no beginning, and it will have no end.

1:4. Here we find the first appearance of our keyword—life. The revelation of the Lamb was also the revelation of life. Jesus Christ the Creator provides physical life; Jesus Christ the Redeemer provides spiritual life; and Jesus Christ the Savior provides eternal life. In

verse 4, John also introduced another key word—*"light."* The life becomes the light of men. Notice these positive terms. What a wonderful contrast to death and darkness.

In the Word, God's person and power were revealed to humanity. Here again, we see a reference to creation since, in the Genesis account, light was the first evidence of God's creative work. God is always the source of light and life. Christ the Son, the Creator, provides life and light to humanity. He alone is the life-giver and the light-bearer.

1:10-11. Immediately after describing the announcement, John tells us about apathy toward the message of regeneration. The world (*kosmos*) is another of John's theme words; he used it seventy-seven times. With the device of repetition, John taught incarnation, creation, and rejection all in one verse (v. 10). Depravity and blindness thwarted God's efforts to reach out to his own creation—and still do.

1:12-13. Early in his book, John established the heart of the gospel, still two chapters away from the famous John 3:16. From the announcement of regeneration followed by apathy, the apostle introduces the acceptance of regeneration. Like most things in life, there is a right way and a wrong way to respond to God. The right way (and the only meaningful way) is to believe the gospel, receive the Savior, and accept new birth as a result. The wrong way somehow links a relationship to God with human qualities such as physical birth, self-determination, or the choice of another person. In John's theological vocabulary, believed and received are synonymous when it comes to the gospel.

1:14. This may be the most important verse in the Bible on the doctrine of the incarnation. John went back to verse 1 to pick up one of his favorite themes, the Word. God became human; God showed us His glory; God offered us grace and truth; God literally *"tabernacled"* among us. Remember the tabernacle in the center of the camp? It represented the place of the law, the abode of God, the source of revelation, the site of sacrifice, and the focus of worship. Now in the new covenant, Jesus provides all these. And not only was Jesus here, but He demonstrated the glory of the One and Only. Other prophets, including John the Baptist, were sent from God, but the Word came directly from the Father's presence.

Finally, we cannot pass lightly over the wonderful phrase, *"full of grace and truth."* John used the word *"grace"* again in verses 16 and 17, then never mentioned it for the rest of his Gospel! He used *"truth"* many times, but here the combination grabs us. Jesus perfectly blended two of the most important qualities of the divine nature and displayed them in human personality.

1:15-16. The full expression of John the Baptist's comparison between himself and his Lord does not appear until chapter 3, but the phraseology of verse 15 answers the question, "When did the incarnation occur?" Historically, many conservative Bible scholars place the date at 4 B.C., but that is hardly the point of this passage. The incarnation occurred at a specific point in God's plan for the world. Paul spelled it out clearly in his letter to the churches of Galatia: *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons"* (Gal. 4:4-5). In time, Jesus followed John the Baptist, but in importance He holds the preeminence. At this point in his narrative theology, John the apostle could not hold back a testimony to God's grace: We have all received one blessing after another.

1:17. The contrast between law and grace forms a major portion of Pauline theology, but we get a thumbnail sketch here from John. Moses provided a standard of righteousness that no one could meet. Then the Prophet whom Moses promised (1:25) came, and He brought a standard of righteousness centered in grace and truth. Like John the Baptist and John the apostle, Moses was a servant. But Jesus is the Son. This verse drives the dividing spike between the old and new covenants, introducing a new way of God's dealing with humankind.

1:18. This verse takes its place beside verse 14 as key passages on the incarnation, telling us that Jesus is the exclusive explanation of the Father. But did not Moses see God (see Ex. 33)? Not in this sense. Moses saw what theologians call a "theophany"—God's appearance in some temporary form. Now, John tells us, He has taken on human flesh and will live among people on earth. Some New Testament experts have translated the phrase, "God only begotten." John left no stone unturned, no argument unclarified. Jesus is the very essence of God and, according to this verse, His purpose in coming to earth was to exegete, to interpret, to explain the Heavenly Father. Numerous Bible passages remind us that Jesus came to feel what we feel, to show us what God is like, to prioritize human life—and all of that is true. But ultimately He came to die. And as John's Gospel will show, the incarnation became the gateway to the cross.