



The Incarnation of God

John 1:1-18

Notes: References used in developing this Bible Study were the *MacArthur Study Bible* and the *MacArthur Study Guide* on the Book of John, both by John MacArthur. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

1:1 – What does *in the beginning* mean? What began?

This is referring to the creation of our world, the beginning of the space-time universe.

What is *the Word* mean?

The original Greek word is *logos*, which stood for impersonal wisdom, rational principle, or divine reason. John applied personality to this concept, Jesus personifies wisdom. If there is any question this is talking about Jesus here, see John 1:14.

Why does John use the Word to describe Jesus? Why doesn't he just say Jesus instead of using symbolic language?

God's Word is what He gave us so that we may know Him. Jesus was the personification of that expression. Strategically, the term "Word" serves as a bridge-word to reach not only Jews but also the unsaved Greeks. John chose this concept because both Jews and Greeks were familiar with it.

What does it mean that *the Word was with God*?

The Word, as the Second Person of the Trinity, was in intimate fellowship with God the Father throughout all eternity.

What does the phrase *the Word was God* tell us?

That the Second Person of the Trinity had all the essence or attributes of deity; that is, Jesus the Messiah was (and is) fully God. It is interesting to note that the Jehovah Witnesses who do not accept the triune nature of God have such a problem with this verse that their version of the Bible inserts the word "a" in there so that it reads, "the word was a god."

1:2 – What does John 1:2 tell us about the Second Person of the Trinity?

The Second Person of the Trinity was not created, He has always existed.

1:3 – What does John 1:3 tell us about the Second Person of the Trinity?

Jesus was God the Father's agent in creation. He is not only our Savior, He is also our Creator.

1:4 - What does it mean that in Jesus was life?

Our Creator Jesus is the one who gave us life. And when our nature caused us to have spiritual death, Jesus made it possible for us to be born again.

What does it mean that the life that Jesus gives us was the light of men?

In Scripture "light" and "darkness" are very familiar symbols. Intellectually, "light" refers to biblical truth while "darkness" refers to error or falsehood. Morally, "light" refers to holiness or purity while "darkness" refers to sin or wrongdoing. "Darkness" has special significance in relationship to Satan who rules the present spiritually dark world as the "prince of the power of the air" promoting spiritual darkness and rebellion against God.

1:5 - What does it mean that the darkness does not comprehend the light?

A better meaning of this term in context might be "overcome." Darkness is not able to overcome or conquer the light. Just as a single candle can overcome a room filled with darkness, so also the powers of darkness are overcome by the person and work of the Son through His death on the cross.

1:6 – Who was sent from God?

As forerunner to Jesus, John the Baptist was to bear witness to Him as the Messiah and Son of God. John's ministry ended the "400 silent years" between the end of the OT and the beginning of the NT when God had given no revelation.

1:7 – What was John the Baptist's mission?

John came as a witness sent by God so all may believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the long-awaited Anointed of God.

1:8 – Why wasn't John the Baptist the Light of men?

John the Baptist was the agent of belief, Jesus Christ is the object of belief. This is seen in the following passage:

Acts 18:24-26 - Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the

Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

1:9 – What does it mean that Jesus as the true Light gives light to every man?

The Creator enabled every person to have enough of a revelation of God to believe Him...

- (1) The creation is a witness of God to all people:
Romans 1:19-20 - what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,
- (2) All people have key elements of God's law written on their hearts:
Romans 2:14-15 - for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

Are either of these sources of general revelation about God sufficient for a person to come to a saving knowledge of Him?

No, the complete light of Jesus Christ is necessary for this to happen. Certainly responding to the light of creation or God's Law written on one's heart can cause a person to seek God and lead to salvation. I'm sure that many a person who has responded in such a way has been saved by missionaries God sent so that they may know Jesus.

The Apostle John refers to the world a lot, 78 times in his gospel, 24 times in 1-3 John and 3 times in Revelation.... What is the world?

Depending on its context, the world is a reference to (1) the physical created universe, (2) humanity in general, and (3) the invisible spiritual system of evil dominated by Satan and all that it offers in opposition to God, His Word, and His people. Most of the time that John uses the term, the third use is what is intended and thus it has decidedly negative overtones.

1:10 – What does it mean that the world did not know Jesus?

This is a reference to the spiritual condition of those who live in opposition to God. A person may have knowledge of Jesus but if they do not have a personal relationship with Him, they do not know Him.

What does it mean to have a personal relationship with Jesus?

This means that you communicate with Him, it is not possible to have a relationship with someone unless you speak to each other. This is how it is possible to know another person. We speak to Jesus in prayer and He speaks to us in many ways, through our thoughts that have been guided by the Holy Spirit, through other people, through circumstances, and especially through God's Word.

1:11 – Who was "His own" that did not receive Jesus?

Certainly this could be a reference to Jesus coming to minister "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). But in context here, I believe this refers to Jesus coming as a man and His ministry to all mankind.

What does it mean to receive Jesus?

This means to respond to the light He has given us about Himself. God wants a personal relationship with us, it is not possible to have a relationship with anyone if only one of the parties desires that relationship. God has already made all the overtures necessary for us to have a relationship with Him since Jesus paid our sin penalty for us so that our sins may be forgiven. The ball is now in our court to respond to Him. Life is a test to see who will respond to Jesus and who will reject Him.

1:12 – While mankind in general did not receive Jesus, what did He do about the few who did believe in His name?

To these he gave as an act of His grace the right to be children of God.

Why does it say we have the right to become children of God? Why doesn't it just say He made us His children?

To truly be a child of God, it is more than a one-time event where you receive Jesus as your Savior. The initial receiving Him as your Savior is the beginning of an eternal relationship. Those who have truly received Him as Savior will continue to be in a relationship with Him by receiving Him as Lord of their lives as well. You become a child of God when you follow through in having a personal relationship with Jesus.

What does it mean to be a child of God?

This means that we are born spiritually to know God and will spend eternity with Him. Those who are not children of God are dead to God in their spirit, they can not know Him and will spend eternity separate from Him.

What does it mean to believe in the name of Jesus?

It means to trust in who Jesus is, to have faith in His character, that His promises will absolutely, positively come to pass as He said they would.

How does a person come to believe in the name of Jesus?

This is answered in the next verse: for a person to believe in the name of Jesus, they must be “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

1:13 – What does it mean to be born of God?

This verse makes clear what this is not, it is not talking about physical birth or something any of us can bring about on our own. It is not a man’s will that produces salvation but God’s will... This is what Jesus was talking about in John 3:7, “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

1:14 – What does it mean that the Word became flesh?

While Christ as God was uncreated and eternal, He took on humanity. The Infinite became finite; the Eternal was conformed to time; the Invisible became visible; the supernatural One reduced Himself to the natural.

Does this mean that the Second Person of the Trinity ceased to be God when He took on human form?

No, He was still 100% God, He just manifested Himself as a man so that He could dwell with us. He limited His self while in His mortal body to perform the mission to redeem mankind...

Philippians 2:5-8 - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

What does it mean that Christ dwelt among us?

The Greek word translated “dwelt” here means “to pitch a tabernacle,” or “live in a tent.”

The term recalls to mind the Old Testament tabernacle where God met with Israel before the temple was constructed (Ex. 25:8). It was called the “tabernacle of meeting” (Ex. 33:7) where “the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11).

How did God dwelling with man differ between the Old Testament and New Testament?

In the New Testament, God chose to dwell among His people in a far more personal way through becoming a man.

How is it that we beheld the glory of God when He was on earth as a mortal man?

Although His deity may have been veiled in human flesh, three of the disciples certainly saw a glimpse of His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8). And they all saw Him display the attributes or characteristics of God (grace, goodness, mercy, wisdom, truth, etc)...

John 14:9 - Jesus said... He who has seen Me has seen the Father;

Also, Jesus fulfilled prophecies that made it clear He was the Messiah. Those who studied all of Scripture would recognize that the Messiah would be God...

Isaiah 9:6 - For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

What does it mean that Christ was the only begotten of the Father, does this mean that He was created, that He had a beginning?

Here it is important to look at the historical context for how the original Greek word was used. The word does not come from the term meaning “beget” but instead has the idea of “the only beloved one.” It does not pertain to origin but rather unique prominence and refers to the exclusive character of the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Godhead.

How was Jesus full of grace and truth?

Jesus did not have to pay our sin debt but He did so that our sins may be forgiven and we may be saved. We did nothing to deserve this, Jesus just bestowed unmerited favor on us. Jesus personified the Truth of God... everything He said was true...

Hebrews 6:18 - it is impossible for God to lie

1:15 – What was John the Baptist’s witness of Jesus?

John the Baptist’s testimony corroborates John the apostle’s statement regarding the eternity of the Incarnate Word.

1:16 – What is it we have all received?

We who know Jesus as Savior have received His grace in full. There is no partial pouring out of God’s grace on His children, no additional work that must be accomplished for our salvation to be secure... Jesus did all that is required.

What does grace for grace mean?

This phrase emphasizes the superabundance of grace that has been displayed by God toward mankind, especially believers.

1:17 – What is the contrast made here?

The law which was given by Moses is contrasted with God’s grace.

What does the purpose of God’s law differ from His grace?

The law was a demand for holiness and was given to us to convict us of our need for God’s grace. God’s grace was manifest in the person of Jesus who came to save us.

1:18 – What does it mean that no one has seen God at any time? People saw Jesus, wasn't He God?

This is a reference to God the Father who no mortal man has seen because, "*God is Spirit*" (John 4:24).

What does it mean that Christ is in the bosom of the Father?

This term refers to the relationship of mutual intimacy, love and knowledge that exists in the Triune Godhead.

What is it that Jesus has declared?

Jesus revealed God to us. Jesus helped us understand many things about who God is and what He expects of us.