

A Son Is Given

Advent Devotions from the Gospel of John

Week 1

A Son Who Makes God Known

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version.

Sunday

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. John 1:1-3

The focus of these verses is on a person called the “Word” who is both God and also with God. With these words John pulls back the curtain a bit concerning the being of God as triune – three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Spirit united as one God. Some use the analogy of a musical chord comprised of three separate notes. When played together they make a single unified sound. It is the Son whom John refers to as the “Word.” United with the Father and the Spirit, the Son is fully God, but as a distinct person we can also speak of him as being *with* the Father and the Spirit. John wants us to see the full deity of the Son, and so refers to him as the powerful word that God spoke in the beginning at the time of creation when he called into existence all things out of nothing. The Son of God is no less than the creator of the heavens and the earth and all they contain (see Colossians 1:6).

- At Christmas we celebrate the arrival of the eternal Word of God to bring salvation to a fallen world that is headed for destruction. How are we encouraged by knowing that this savior is the same divine word spoken to bring the first creation into existence? (See Isaiah 65:17)
- What do you think God’s new creation will be like? (See Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-5) What are you looking forward to most?
- Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for his promise of a new heavens and earth, and for his help to trust that through Jesus he will do as he has promised.

Monday

⁴ *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*
John 1:4-5

In these verses John tells us that the eternal Word is the source of both life and light. We live only because the one who is life has breathed into us the breath of life. And we see and know things only because the God who is light himself has illumined our minds and hearts to give us understanding. We'll talk more about new life later on in this series. In this chapter John's emphasis is more on light and our ability to know God's truth. In the beginning when God spoke the creation into existence his first words were, "Let there be light." At the start of a new creation God again speaks these words. At Christmas we celebrate that the Word of God has come to bring the first light of a whole new creation. One thing different about God's new creation is that this time the light will be eternal, and darkness will never overcome it. (See Revelation 21:25; 22:5).

- Without light we are unable to see and know the things around us. Also we are in danger of stumbling and falling. God gives us light to see and know the physical world, but also so that we can know him and his truth.
 - What things about the world do you most enjoy seeing and knowing?
 - What are some things you know about God, and why do those things bring you joy? (See Exodus 34:5-8)
 - How does knowing what God is like help you in living your life?
- Give praise to God for sending his Son to be the light of the world and who brings an end to the darkness of sin and death. Pray that he will help you to walk in his light.

Tuesday

⁶ *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.* ⁸ *He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.* ⁹ *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.* John 1:6-9

Heralds would prepare the way for the arrival of important people or events. John the Baptist was just such a herald (see John 1:23). God sent him to announce the coming of Jesus who is the light of God's new creation. We'll talk more about John later, but here we see that his role was to help people believe "*through*" Jesus (v. 7). It is Jesus who provides the light so that we can see God and come to him. If we are to know God, we must know Jesus first. Jesus told Philip that to know him was to know the Father (John 14:4-11).

- At Christmas the light who would reveal God and lighten the way to God came into the world. In John 14:6 Jesus makes the exclusive claim that he is the only way to God, eliminating all other ways. Not even the great prophet John the Baptist could claim to be the light. Jesus alone is the "true light" (v. 9).
 - If people want to know God and come to him, why is it so important that they know Jesus?
 - What are some things that you might tell others about Jesus that will help them to know him?
 - Can you think of friends or family members that you would like to know Jesus? How might you start a conversation with them about this light that has come into the world?
- Thank God for sending Jesus so that you can know him and receive the eternal life that belongs to all who believe. Pray that Jesus would illumine the hearts of friends and family who do not yet know him. And ask him for boldness to bear witness about him as John did.

Wednesday

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. 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. John 1:10-13

In these verses John points out the remarkable phenomenon that though the eternal Word (the creator of all things) entered the world that he had made, there were many who did not even recognize him. In fact, there were many Jewish people who had been told about him by the prophets, and who were supposed to be expecting his coming. But even they did not receive him. In fact, when King Herod heard about the birth of Jesus, he tried to kill him (see Matthew 2:13-16). Sadly, because of hearts corrupted by sin, all of us would be like Herod. But in God's mercy some are given new hearts – they are “born of God” (v. 13). As Jesus tells Nicodemus some are “born again” by the Spirit of God (John 3:3-8). These people whose hearts are changed can now believe in Jesus and receive him. And the promise is that those who do receive him are made God's children, and so are now heirs of eternal life.

- Many people celebrate Christmas, but not everyone believes in and receives the Son of God who on Christmas entered the world as a small child. The question for all of us is do we believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Word of God? And do we receive and welcome him into our lives? To do so means that we make him our first love, and that we make all our plans and desires second to his.
- If you have not received Jesus, now is a perfect time to do this. Acknowledge who he is. Ask him to forgive you for not recognizing him before now. Tell him that your life now belongs to him. And ask for his help to love him with a whole heart.
- If you have already received Jesus, then take a moment to thank him for giving you a new heart, and also ask him for help to remain faithful in your love for him.

Thursday

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.'")

John 1:14-15

These verses are some of the most remarkable in all of the Bible. They tell us that the infinite and eternal Word took on human flesh. At Christmas God himself became a man. We call this the “incarnation.” Without ceasing to be God the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity was born as a human being. This is a mystery for which we do not have all of the answers, but it shows God’s desire to live with us and enjoy a close relationship with us. The one who outranks us honors and lifts us up by his presence. He brings with him the truth of who he is, who we are, and his plan for all of creation. In him we see the very glory of God himself. And in that glory we see a God who is “full of grace” – a God who has come to forgive sin and to give the gift of eternal life.

- In the OT God lived among the people of Israel, first in a tent (the Tabernacle), and then later in a house (the Temple). Jesus speaks of his body as God’s temple (John 2:22). The apostle Paul speaks of believers who are indwelt by God’s Spirit as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16).
 - The incarnation reminds us that the God of all creation wants to live closely with us. What does that say to you about God? How does this make you think of yourself?
 - How does knowing this make you want to live your life? (See 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Give thanks to God for desiring to be with you, and for coming near in Jesus to make known to you his grace and truth.

Friday

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.* John 1:16-17

The birth of Jesus marked a significant change in history. At that moment, which the apostle Paul calls the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), a climactic shift occurred that moved things from a period of promise and anticipation to the time of fulfillment and realization. The law of Moses hinted at the grace and truth of God through its many ceremonies, feasts, and sacrifices, but the reality to which all these things pointed would only appear in their fullness with the coming of Christ in history. The law spoke of grace and truth, but it would be Jesus who would be “full” of these things (John 1:14). And it would be out of his fullness that God’s people (both OT and NT believers) would finally come to receive what God in previous times had only promised.

- A common element in our celebration of Christmas is the anticipation that leads up to it. We see this especially in young children who can’t wait to open the presents they are hoping for. Many Old Testament believers were waiting expectantly for the gift that God had promised. People like Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men got to see this gift first hand in the birth of Jesus. At Christmas we remember how God made good on his promise, and we still wait with anticipation the fulfillment of the promise that he will come again to finish his work of salvation.
 - What is a favorite part of celebrating Christmas that you most anticipate?
 - How is Jesus full of grace in truth in a way that the law of Moses was not? (See Hebrews 10:4, 10-14)
- Give thanks to God for his faithfulness in keeping his promise to send a savior. Ask for his help to wait patiently as you anticipate his return.

Saturday

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

This final verse of the opening section to John's gospel gives us a summary of what John has been saying up to this point. John tells us that God the Son, who has been at the side of God the Father from all eternity, has come to make God known. By knowing Jesus, we know the Father. By looking at Jesus, we who have not seen God can now see him. In him we come to know the truth of God, and we come to experience his grace. At Christmas we celebrate the invisible God making himself known to us.

- As you prepare to worship God tomorrow, remember that God has come to you in Jesus, and that he wants you to know him, his truth and his grace. Think again about the things that Jesus taught and did during his earthly ministry. If you are reading this together as a family, talk about these things, and come tomorrow ready to praise God for who he is and for the great things he has done.