

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: Doctrine ***
*** Topic: God the Son—Pre-existence and Prophecy * John 1:1-18 * 4/12/26 ***

MAIN POINT

“I believe.... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.... He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.”

The Nicene Creed

INTRODUCTION

Do you know the story behind your name or one of your kids’ or grandkids’ names, either about what the name means or why that particular name was chosen?

Names are important. In today’s lesson, we will notice that John started his gospel by assigning several vitally significant descriptive names to Jesus.

***Note to study leader:** In today’s lesson, we continue in the sermon series on doctrine by looking at God the Son. This lesson looks specifically at God the Son’s pre-existence and God the Son in prophecy.*

UNDERSTANDING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 1:1-5

Peeking ahead at verse 14, who is “The Word”?

Why do you think John’s gospel starts with “in the beginning” rather than describe Jesus’ birth?

The Word is Jesus. He is described in these verses as already being God, and being with God at the beginning of creation. John is making it very clear that Jesus was not a created person who came into existence at his birth.

What is the purpose of a word? Peeking ahead at verse 18, why do you think Jesus is called “The Word in these verses?

Words are used to communicate ideas to us. God is Spirit, and God is holy. He is completely transcendent from His creation. Humans tend to learn by tying the new to something they already know. Jesus perfectly communicates God to us.

What characteristics about “the Word” can you find in these verses?

In the beginning, the Word already existed. He was with God at creation, and He was God at creation. Through Him all things were created. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. He shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot seize (e.g. Phil. 3:12) or comprehend (e.g. Acts 4:13) it. This again ties back to creation, where on Day 1, God created light. And this light was from God Himself, as the sun would not be created until Day 4. This may be difficult for us to picture today, but we read in Revelation 21:5, in the new Jerusalem, there will be no need for the sun, since God Himself will be our light, and the Lamb Jesus will be our lamp.

It is noteworthy to point out that at creation, God didn’t illuminate everything but separated the light from the darkness. We see a picture here of the effect Jesus would have on the world as described in John 1 (2 Corinthians 4:6 and 6:14-18).

The Greek word translated as “Word” is “logos”. It “signifies both the outward form by which the inward thought is expressed, and the inward thought itself.” Marvin Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 1:6-18

According to these verses, what was the role of John the Baptist?

He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, Jesus.

According to verses 12-13, how do we become a child of God?

Believe in Jesus and receive Him. This isn’t just intellectual belief, we need to place our trust in Him.

What does verse 18 add to the description of Jesus?

Verse 18 repeats some of the truths we already discussed in verses 1-5.

Note to study leader: translators have different wordings for verse 18. KJV says, “...the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” NIV says, “but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” ESV says, “the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” The Greek (Blue Letter Bible) in verse 18 describes Jesus as, “...monogenes theos...”. “Theos” is “God”, and “monogenes” is not easily translated. It comes from two Greek root words, mono meaning “single” (e.g. the English word “monotone”), and “genes”, meaning “kind” (e.g. the English word “genetic”). So the word literally means, “made of a single substance with”. For humans, that would mean a parent passing their genetic code on to their children, but this doesn’t mean Jesus had a birthdate as God. He has always existed with God, and is Himself God. This is captured very well in the Nicene Creed, which describes Jesus as “begotten, not made”.

GOD THE SON IN PROPHECY

Note to study leader: Make a list on the white board as people come up with specific prophecies about the Messiah given in the following verses.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What prophecies about the Messiah’s lineage are mentioned in these Old Testament verses, and how were they fulfilled?

<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
• Genesis 3:15	Luke 3:23, 38: The Messiah would be a descendant of Eve.
• Genesis 22:18	Luke 23:34: The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham.
• Genesis 21:12	Luke 23:34: The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac.
• Numbers 24:17	Luke 23:34: The Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.
• Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:23, 33: The Messiah would be a descendant of Judah.
• Isaiah 11:1	Luke 3:32: The Messiah would be a descendant of Jesse.
• Jeremiah 23:5	Luke 3:31: The Messiah would be a descendant of David.

How would you summarize the importance of Jesus’s genealogy based on these prophecies?

Jesus’ genealogy given in Matthew (through Joseph) shows his right to the throne through the line of David, and Jesus’ genealogy in Luke (through Mary) shows us He is the promised seed of Adam and Eve who will one day crush the serpent’s head, and is physically descended through the human line from each of these prophecies.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What other prophecies about the Messiah are mentioned in these Old Testament verses, and how were they fulfilled?

<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>Fulfillment</u>
• Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1: The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
• Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18, 22-25: The Messiah would be born of a virgin.
• Isaiah 40:3	Matthew 3:1-2: The Messiah would be given gifts.
• Isaiah 35:5-6	Matthew 9:35: The Messiah would perform miraculous healings.
• Psalm 41:9	Matthew 10:4: The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend.
• Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15: The Messiah would be sold for 30 pieces of silver.
• Psalm 22:16	Luke 23:33: The Messiah would be crucified.
• Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38: The Messiah would be counted among transgressors.
• Psalm 34:20	John 19:33: The Messiah's bones would not be broken.
• Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34: The Messiah's side would be pierced.
• Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60: The Messiah would be buried in a rich man's tomb.
• Psalm 16:10	Acts 2:31-32: The Messiah would raise from the dead.

What do these prophecies together reveal about Jesus?

Mathematicians such as Peter Stoner have calculated the odds of one person fulfilling all of the prophecies about the Messiah and have concluded it is virtually impossible to have happened by chance. And even more so when you add in all of the supernatural prophecies, such as the virgin birth. Jesus is who he claimed to be and is worthy of our trust. His life demands a response from all of us.

Note to study leader: The Bible also contains many prophecies about the second coming of Christ. The plan is to look at these in later doctrine lessons on prophecy.

APPLICATION

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 6:56-69

How can you apply the wisdom shown by Simon Peter in this account?

Jesus had just told the people that unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood, they would have no life in them. He was being deliberately vague at this point, since the time to fully reveal the plan of salvation hadn't yet arrived. The people grumbled, saying, "This is hard teaching, who can accept it?" (verse 60), and from that time on, many of His disciples "no longer followed Him" (verse 66). Peter was an "unschooled, ordinary" man (Acts 4:13), and yet he realized life is found in nothing else and no one else than Jesus. We all need to remember this truth.

What does John's focus on the pre-existent, creative Christ mean to you?

How should the fact that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about Messiah provide encouragement to you as a Christian?

PRAYER

Thank God that Jesus wasn't just a good philosopher or teacher, but that He is God the Creator. Thank God that Jesus voluntarily became a man to make God known to us and become our Savior when we placed our faith in Him. And thank God that this isn't a blind faith, but a very reasonable faith, as we can know Christ is who He said He was through what He did, what He taught, and by the many prophecies He fulfilled.

COMMENTARY

John 1:1-18

1:1-2. The central focus of this verse is eternity. Like His Heavenly Father, Jesus always was and therefore existed at the beginning of time. It is interesting that John should call 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 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.

1:3. Unlike the Gospel writers before him, John tells us that Jesus participated in creation and again states his case twice for emphasis. 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 of Jesus Christ, the Word, in creation. John could hardly say it more clearly: without Him nothing was made that has been made. 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.

1:4. Here we find the first appearance of our key word—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.

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. In verse 11, the first appearance of the word own appears in the neuter gender and the second is masculine. What significance could such a distinction have for interpretation? One possibility is that Jesus came to earth, the place He had created, and the second tells us that the people who lived there turned Him away. He was not welcomed or accepted.

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. 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: “When the time came to completion, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as 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 Exod. 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.