

## **Title: The Word Made Flesh**

**Text: John 1:1-18**

### **John: Cosmic Christmas**

#### **Christmas Gospels:**

Four Gospels; four different ways of seeing the Christmas Story.

- Mark gives us the man-on-the-street eyewitness testimony of Jesus, beginning with His being declared God's Son at His baptism.
- Luke gives us the historian's perspective, anchoring the birth of Jesus in the Greek and Roman world in which He lived.
- Matthew gives us the royal perspective, describing Jesus' birth as the coming of Israel's long awaited King.

So what about the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John? John's Gospel does not have a story of Jesus' birth, like Matthew or Luke. John's Christmas Story could be called "Cosmic Christmas." It is the story of Jesus coming that begins before the creation of Time and Matter, and that ends with God's wonderful New Creation taking root in our world.

It is the story of the God Who chooses to be known. It is the story of the Word.

#### **Words:**

Words: we say them, read them, write them. We phone them, email them, text them. Our world is filled with words.

In the more than 3500 years since the invention of the alphabet we've found any number of ways to use words. Ancient people wrote each other letters. The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought instant long distance communication through the telegraph and telephone. Nowadays, the fastest way to communicate is often through a text message.

Researchers tell us that 72% of teens text regularly, with one in three sending more than 100 texts per day. Texting is so convenient and non-threatening that people text each other when they are in the same room. And why not? It's fast-paced and to the point. No busy signal or answering machine. In fact, a text message is virtually the only form of communication nowadays that you *expect* to be answered in a timely – i.e. immediate – fashion!

But texting is not the same as a face to face encounter.

### **Face-to-Face:**

Dr. Thomas Lewis has researched the power of face-to-face communication. He experimented with mothers and babies, and found that if a mom maintains a “still face” and doesn’t show any *immediate facial feedback* to the baby, the infant becomes *immediately distressed*. Even a “small delayed response” will cause a distress reaction. Dr. Thomas goes on to point out that we adults have the same need for *immediate facial feedback*. Which raises an interesting question in a world of texts and tweets. Lewis says that adults have the same neurochemistry and need *immediate facial feedback*. He writes that “...no matter how much we practice communicating through text, the brain still finds it stressful.” (as quoted on pattiwood.net)

Words or face-to-face? When God wanted to communicate with us He made ample use of words. But in order to close the deal, He determined to meet us face-to-face!

### **Remember that U-Shaped Story?**

#### **The Top of the “U”:**

John’s Gospel begins with a wonderful poem that serves as the prologue to the rest of his story. This prologue starts with the same words as the Book of Genesis and retells the Creation Story:

*John 1:1-4 NIV*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*

Here we are once again, as in Genesis, at the very *beginning*, or perhaps better, *before the beginning*. The world is about to be made. In the Genesis God creates by simply speaking things into existence, beginning with the creation of Light:

*Genesis 1:3 NIV*

*And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.*

John takes us back to that moment of Creation, revealing to us that God’s creative Word was more than a thought or command. His Word was the Person we would one day come to know as God’s Son. The first thing that the Word creates – as in Genesis – is Light. The greatest achievement of the Word is the gift of Life.

Remember that “U-Shaped” plot from our study of Revelation? Well, here it is again. We are in Heaven’s throne room where the Father and the Son set forth to make the world.

And yet there remains work to be done:

*John 1:5 NIV*

*The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it.*

We have begun the journey from the top of the “U” down into the darkness and brokenness of a world in desperate need of repair.

### **The Bottom of the “U”:**

John swiftly moves us down to the bottom of the “U-Shaped” plot. He tells about a man – John the Baptist – who was sent to serve as a witness to the fact that God was coming in the Person of the Word to repair the world.

*John 1:9 NIV*

*The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*

The world would have nothing to do with Him:

*John 1:10-11 NIV*

*He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

Here’s the world we know. The darkness it embraces is not physical, but spiritual. It is the darkness of hate and greed, of shame and guilt, of pride and arrogance. It is the darkness of a world that refuses to accept its Creator when He comes to bring it Light and Life.

### **Back to the Top of the “U”:**

But John has told us that the Word who is Light can never be defeated by the darkness:

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

The Light *does* shine into the hearts of people like you and me. And every time it does, something wonderful happens:

*John 1:12-13 NIV*

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*

With those words John has brought us back to the top of the “U.” We have become what God meant us to be in the first place. We have been re-created, re-born, born again. God has done what this broken world could never do: given us back *His eternal Life*.

## **The Word Made Flesh**

### **More than a text:**

It took more than a text message from God for the Word to come into our world and give us His Life:

*John 1:14 NIV*

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

In order for the Light and Life of God to truly come into our lives, we need *face-to-face* communication with Him! And isn't that what the Christmas Story is all about? From His first moments on earth He gave and received that *immediate facial feedback* that is essential to fully knowing each other.

In his letter to Christians, John puts it this way:

*1 John 1:1-2 The Message:*

*From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we're telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us.*

### **The Word made known to us:**

As he comes to the end of his prologue John finally reveals the identity of this mysterious Word made flesh:

*John 1:16-17 NIV*

*From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

Not another set of laws or prophecies, but a flesh and blood human being, born and placed in a manger. It was only through Jesus the Messiah that we could experience both God's ultimate forgiveness, and be set free from the lies and deception of this world through His unfailing Truth.

**Knowing God:**

The goal of communicating is *knowing*. We share a message, send a text, make a phone call or have a face-to-face conversation so that the other person will come to know something that they didn't know before. And when we communicate at the deepest level, we seek to know them and be known.

So how does that happen when it comes to the God who created all things? Only when God's creative Word comes into our world in a way that we can know at the deepest level. John puts it this way:

*John 1:18 NIV*

*No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.*

Or, as John puts it a few chapters later:

*John 3:16 NIV*

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Some things can only be done face-to-face. Knowing God is one of those things. The Word – who was God – had to become flesh and bone in order for us to know God.

And that is John's Christmas Story.

Is it yours?