

John 1:1-18. The Christmas Story's Profound Questions (and Answers)

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Just bow our heads in prayer. Father, Father, how God, the Son of God, could remain God, yet take into Himself our human flesh and human nature and live amongst us. Father, that is a, it is not against reason. It's not opposed to reason, but it is deeper and wider and vaster than our reason can comprehend.

And so we ask, Father, that you help us to use the best of our reason that we can't, that we have, to ponder your word and use the best of our imagination and use the best of our heart, all that is within our heart, our affections, our emotions, our desires. Father, that you might use all that is within us to ponder these profound truths of your word. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So as I shared last night, as I shared last night, I, like a lot of ministers, don't really like preaching on Christmas.

[2 : 31] You know, everybody knows the story. You can't really surprise them with anything and all that stuff. And it's just hard to preach on Christmas. But as I shared last night, I love meditating upon the text. And if you get nothing else out of the sermon today, I just encourage you that next year, in the week or two before Christmas, just to look and contemplate Luke chapter 2, verses 1 to 20.

And like to really look at it, make notes, like journal it, and do the same with Matthew 1, 18 to 25, and especially with John 1, 1 to 14. And for those of you who are theologically inclined, there's a whole raft of ancient heresies of the church, which are all struck down with these 14 verses.

It's actually quite amazing. So, I've pondered, and what I'm doing today is I'm sort of going to put four questions that this text poses to us to ask.

Four very, very wise questions to help us in life that this question asks. The four questions aren't like, how can I lose more weight, or how can I make more money?

You know, how can I look young when I'm old? Like, those are the questions our culture thinks are really important questions. And by the way, it's not a bad question to figure out how to make more money.

[3 : 49] Some of us are thinking of how we're going to have to pay off our Christmas bills. But, I mean, to live an examined life, a life that's not just flimsy, but is deep.

Four, this text, well, actually, it's going to be like four and a half questions that this text invites us to ask. And, the first one, in fact, is actually going to be me breaking a rule.

I think if you were to take a course, if you go online and take some courses on preaching, or courses on preaching at Christmas, what they'd probably tell you is, don't raise controversial topics.

Stay far from it. Just preach Christmas is probably what they'd say. But the problem is, this text asks an unbelievably controversial question.

And so, to say, you know, avoid controversial topics at your Christmas sermon, because there's lots of people here, and you want to sort of, you know, reach them. Avoid all of them, and preach Christmas.

[4 : 47] The problem is, if you preach Christmas, you have to raise at least a couple of very controversial questions. You'll see what I mean. Let's look at it. It's John chapter 1, verses 1 to 3. And, well, at 1 to 14, in fact, we're going to probably read all the way up to 18, which is sort of the prologue of John's Gospel.

And here's how it begins. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. Now, just pause here. Here's the first profound question.

If you could put that up, that would be great. Has the universe come into existence by a what, or by a who? Oh, George, you aren't supposed to talk about things like that, especially on Christmas.

This is, this is, this is how the Christmas text begins. And it's a very profound question, if you think about it for a second. So, just to be very clear, like, this is, look at, listen to the text again.

[5 : 58] In the beginning was the Word, so before there was anything, before there was, in a sense, what we would consider time, the Word existed. And, the Word was with God, and in the original language, that word with, is only used of two human beings being together.

So, it wouldn't be, like, if we went home, and you'd say that our dog Billy was with Donnie, in Greek, you would use a different word for with. But, if you also wanted to say that Tommy and Emma are home with each other, you'd use a different word for them, because it's two people.

So, this is a person word. And then it says, and the Word was God. So, now you have the fact that there's, like, two gods, which we'll get, we won't talk about, but it's, that's another controversial thing.

But he was in the beginning with God. And then here's that sentence, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. And that, that invites us to, to pose to ourselves a very, very profound question.

Has the universe come into existence by a what, or by a who? Now, this question is a question that doesn't say you can't look at evidence, and you can't, you can't study science, and you can't look at paleontology, and, and you can't try to get knowledge.

[7 : 19] This is like a deeper question than knowledge. It's how you structure knowledge. It's not, like, science isn't just that you accumulate. Doing science isn't like doing really well in a trivia contest.

Like, doing science isn't like just being able to know a lot of random facts. Like, science is all about having a, like, a theory, a structure, a way of knowing. And, and here's the thing. Like, all of the, all of our culture says that, that's a simple answer.

They don't, our culture wouldn't like this question. For different reasons than we do. We don't like the question because it means we might come into conflict with our culture.

But our culture doesn't like the question because it, it's an uncomfortable question for our culture. They, they say, well, of course the answer is, the whole, like trees and, and, and butterflies and everything came into existence because of a what.

But here, here's the problem. Why is it that if we came to anything else in existence, we would not accept that a what brought it into existence?

[8 : 28] we would say there had to be a who. Like, nobody would accept that this, this phone came into existence by a what. They obviously has to be a who. But creation is, a cell is vastly more complicated.

Like, human beings can't actually make cells yet, but they can make iPhones. humans. And we don't accept anywhere that a what creates something.

We all know that in everywhere other than all of existence, the answer is always a who. A who creates, a who creates, a who creates. And, and in fact, we also know that a what couldn't create a who.

And we, we would know that all the way, all, all the way. Like, if, if, if you went to a deserted island and you, not a deserted island, you went to an island that no, like, civilization had never been to,

and you came across a human being, like, nobody would accept that that human being came about just by natural processes, like of what's.

They, they'd know that that human being had a mother and a father, that a who created that. So why is it that when we look at the most important question, which is that the very existence of the universe, of trees and, and ourselves and everything, why is it that we accept in that one instance that a what created it, not a who?

[9 : 47] Why is it that we try to only look at data and fit data into a mold that implies a what did it, rather than just ask the most obvious question, and it's not an anti-scientific question.

It's not anti-scientific to say that human beings created a phone. Like, nobody would say that's anti-scientific. To ask, well, isn't it very obvious that whose can create other whose and whose can create what's, but what's can't create whose?

And that's what this text asks us to question, to just ask ourselves, to think about, to ponder. So while we ponder it, we're going to watch a mini movie, uh, uh, from the speak life.

It's the three to one countdown. And just before we show it, uh, most of you, in fact, all of you are probably veteran church goers. Uh, one of the things I, and I don't know what the right answer is.

One of the things you'll notice in this, he tries to create, he, uh, he, he connects the Trinity and the fall of Adam to, uh, to the birth of Jesus.

That's what he tries to do that. And he does it all. Almost all of it is done by slicing together words of Christmas carols and Christmas hymns. Anyway, let's enjoy. Let's enjoy. Long lay the world in bleak midwinter pining.

[11 : 20] From Adam's fall declining, sorrow mining, hope resigning. Yet this song to heaven inclining. Come, oh, come, Emmanuel, the ransom captive Israel.

Descend and all our dark dispel. Be pleased as man with man to dwell. This countdown to the first Noel, they did foretell. The prophets preached, Emmanuel, God with us.

Come to break the spell. So low within that manger lies he who built the starry skies. Surprise, that's God with us. The royal son.

The second of the three in one. Three is first when counting down. The father, son and spirit bound before all things behind above. A unity, joy, hope and love.

Then sent by love and filled with joy. God's hope became a baby boy. See him lying on a bed of straw. The little Lord Jesus, whom angels adore.

[12 : 18] And all will surely ask, what for? When Adam's ruin beckoned, God sent down a second. Word of the father now in flesh appearing.

Christ was volunteering, human nature commandeering. Adam's life he would redo. This, the meaning of the two. The second of the three became the second of humanity.

And he would do it right. And bear our wrongs. And take our curse where it belongs. And rise again like morning sun. And ask us all, will you be one?

What child is this? Shares our abyss that we might share in all that's his. Made one with us that we might be united for eternity.

So joy to the world. The Lord is come. Good tidings sing. In three, two, one. Those of you who are curious, that was done by Glenn Scrivener.

[13 : 46] And he's written a very interesting book called 321, which he begins with the Trinity. Then Adam and the second Adam. And then Union with Christ to explain the Christian life.

It's a very short, simple, but profound book. Let's continue reading. And what we're going to read now asks another very, implicitly asks us of our culture as Canadians, a very profound question.

It's a missiological question that could be asked of Hindus. It could be asked of primitive tribes. It could be asked of paganism in the original, of the time of Christ and of the Old Testament.

It can be asked of moderns. And the question it asks is this. Is life an accident, a tragedy, or a gift? Let's look at what it says in verse four. So we've already had this claim that God, the Father, and the Son, and later on we'll figure out the Holy Spirit, but here that God, the one God, the Father, and the Son, or the Word, and the Father, have created all things.

[14 : 56] And then in verse four, it says, in him was life, and the life was the light of men. And we'll just pause there. So there's this profound sense, profound teaching that God is life, and God gives this gift of life.

Now, why is it a very profound question to ask? Is life an accident, a tragedy, or a gift? In fact, it's very, it's very, very interesting. If you go back on the Dig and Delve webpage, and you can look it

up, and Oz Guinness has, we sponsored a conversation between the Christian thinker Oz Guinness, and we partnered with the Atheist Club of Ottawa to discuss a question. And they, they were, we would pick our speaker Oz, and they would pick their speaker. And we gave them a list of about five or six questions, and they actually chose, does life have meaning? That's what they chose.

We were really surprised, actually, because we thought they would have picked, like, the game-winning one for atheists, like, you know, the problem of evil, or something like that. But in fact, they chose that, you know, does life have meaning?

And, this isn't me just saying it. Oz, there are two things that happened in that conversation that were very profound. Oz Guinness is just always brilliant. He did a great job.

[16:10] And in a sense, he kicked the butt of the, of the Atheist. But he didn't really kick the butt of the Atheist. You can see, what happened, is the Atheist was very, very, very honest. Not 100% honest, but 95%, 98% honest.

And what he said is, well, no, there is no meaning to life. Like, from an atheistic perspective, there is no, like, if there's just evolution, there is no meaning to life.

And, you could tell that that was, in fact, as the thing went on, I was, I was collecting questions with the head of the Atheist Club.

And after, after, after, like, the first two questions, I just let her pick all the questions. Because the Atheists were very bothered, and they were asking very, very tough questions, but the tough questions just dug them deeper into a hole, because the Atheist professor gave very honest answers.

Like, quite honest. Actually, we probably don't have any free will. Like, no, actually, there is no, there is no meaning to life. And they just got more and more bothered. I just let them ask all the questions.

[17:11] And it was very, very interesting that after it was all over, I had to lock up. And, and this sort of goes back to my earlier point. The Atheist Club, they were the last to leave other than me.

And they comforted themselves and said, well, it doesn't matter if, if this debate didn't go like we wanted. Evolution proves atheism. They said that time and time again. It was very interesting. But you see, here it is, from that perspective, life is an accident.

And in most of paganism and in Eastern religions, life is a, is a tragedy. There's this ancient oneness, and something or other broke the oneness, right?

Or there's some other type of tragedy of rape, or some other type of thing like that. And that's what human beings came into existence for, to be slaves. And, and only, but you know, so you see, in an odd way, if you were to ask the average Canadian, do you believe that life is an accident, a tragedy, or a gift?

I would say that most Canadians would say that it's a gift. And they don't realize, they've just given the Christian answer to it. That's the Christian answer to the question. That life is a gift.

[18:18] Only the Christian, only Christians teach that. That life is a gift. It's not a tragedy. It's not an accident. It's a gift. As we ponder that, let's look at the next video, The Greatest Light.

Picture this. It's a cold winter's night. Snow is gently falling.

Darkness surrounds you. And you struggle to see. Everything is obscure. Every direction. Every direction.

Meaningless. But suddenly. Light. The night Jesus was born, they tell us that a light appeared in the sky.

A light that not even the greatest of astronomers could identify. A light so bright that even darkness had to flee. A light so powerful that even the worst of what we had done was not only exposed.

[19:29] It was not only exposed. It was cleansed. Forgiven. And forgotten. You see, this is why Jesus came to earth. To give us that light.

So that we would have the same joy and the same love and the same light everywhere we go. And the best news is, this is a light meant for all.

It is freely offered. You see, Christmas is more than the warmth of friends and family. More than nostalgia, the gifts, and memories.

It is about the greatest gift ever given. Because a world in darkness has not only seen a great light. No, we have seen the greatest light.

And His name is Jesus. This video, the movie that we just watched, and the next one are touched on the whole thing of light and darkness.

[20 : 35] And the scripture text that we look at for Christmas invites us to ask another very profound question. Like, it's a very profound question that's life-changing. It is everything that exists, the DNA, the cells, everything that exists come about because of a what or a who.

That's a profound question. It's a profound question to ask yourself, is life a tragic accident? Is it an accident? Is it tragedy or is it a gift? That's a profound question.

And then the third question is this, is darkness a feature or a bug? Is darkness a feature or a bug? Listen to verse 5. So we've already heard in verse 4, and Him was life and the life was the light of human beings. Verse 5, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Now, what's so profound? So one of the, there's a very interesting commentary. I don't know if it's still in print. It's by a fellow by the name of Leslie Newbigin. He was a missionary to India for like three decades, four decades, long, long, long time.

[21 : 44] And he actually had a very unique experience because when he came back to England, he sort of saw England from a missionary's eyes.

And he realized that there are all these things in their culture that the culture didn't understand that he saw. Anyway, he had been a missionary amongst Hindus and Muslims in India. And he wrote a very interesting commentary on the Gospel of John.

And one of the things which is very interesting is he says, if you think about John's Gospel, that this, John's writing this to go to lots of different people groups, and that at the end of the day, God is also planning it to go to like vastly more people groups than John would have ever imagined.

How is it that you communicate the Christian truth to many different cultures? And Leslie Newbigin thought that John was quite profound because he used very simple types of language that have resonance in lots of different cultures like light and darkness and life and just very simple concepts that would bridge many cultures.

And so we all have a sense, in fact, we all know very profoundly that there is something that's darkness. And darkness is the fact that there's...

[23 : 01] Darkness is meaninglessness. Darkness is evil. Darkness is ugliness. Darkness is hatred. Darkness is lies.

Darkness is death. Like, it's a very, very flexible and multifaceted type of an image. And we all have a sense of it. And in fact, just as I said, many Canadians, without realizing it, give the Christian answer that life is a gift, they would also...

Many, many Canadians would like to... Would like... Is it... I can't remember what the poet was. It might have been Dylan Thomas who talked about raging against the darkness or the night and never surrendering to it.

And that resonates with Canadians. And they don't realize that actually what they've just given is... They've actually given the Christian answer to that. They have the Christian longing for that. And so you see, from an evolutionary or a Hindu or a Buddhist perspective, and even from a Muslim perspective, darkness is a feature of creation.

Right? We all understand the difference between a feature or a bug. There's things that get screwed up in your iPhone or your whatever type of phone, and they send things to fix it because there's like a bug in it.

[24 : 16] They have to fix it. But there's certain things that aren't bugs. It's how they want it to work. It's a design feature. And so you see, in fact, the major answers to this question are that, in fact, the matter is is that you just got to suck it up, buttercup, that darkness is just a feature.

But only Christianity says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. God created light and life out of the fullness of his light and his life.

Darkness comes from somewhere else. And the darkness shines. The darkness is going to try to overcome the light, but the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will never overcome it. And as you go on reading, the light will defeat the darkness. Darkness is something that didn't come from God. It is not a feature of reality. It is a bug. And so Canadians, not realizing they're now speaking like a Christian, which would horrify many atheists and other people to hear that they're speaking like a Christian.

When they say rage against the darkness, Jesus says, amen. You should join me. You should join me.

[25 : 26] As we ponder this, let's look at another mini-movie, Light of the World. Light of the World. A brilliant light pierced the darkness on that first Christmas night.

It wasn't the immense star so bright that intrigued experts of the night sky to follow it. It wasn't even the multitude of angelic messengers with the light so intense, so radiant, it frightened brave shepherds to fall to their knees.

No. This light was far greater, more powerful than every star and every sun. This light was a baby. A tiny, newborn wrapped in cloth lying in a manger where animals feed. A baby named Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

Because Jesus was a gift for each one of us and he arrived with a purpose to shine light into all dark places. You see, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the light.

[26 : 55] a light that shows us there is no place you can go that can escape God's love. No dark corner where his love cannot find you.

A light that has the power to cut through any darkness, to calm the most anxious thoughts, and to fill every heart with unspeakable joy.

There is a light that shines brightly in the darkness, and his name is Jesus, light of the world.

The story continues. These first five verses have been sort of very abstract, but they've both been very abstract, but also very personal since we understand light and we understand life and we understand darkness.

And actually, even the way to describe God, the Son of God, as word, means that there's meaning in words, right? There's meaning. And so it's saying at the very heart of the universe, the very beating heart of the universe, and only Christians can say at the very beating heart of the universe, the very beating heart of the universe, there is light, there is life, there is love, there is meaning, and that for Canadians who sense that there must be meaning, they are longing for an answer that only the gospel gives us, not them, but us.

[28 : 24] And now it switches into history. Look at verse 6. There was a man sent from God whose name was John the Baptist. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light.

Why did he do that? So that all might believe through him. Well, what are they going to have to believe? Well, we'll see that in a moment. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world. So he's coming, and now he was in the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and yet the world did not know him.

Notice that the same he that made everything has now actually come and lived in our world, not some other world, alternative reality, but our world.

And yet our world didn't know him. In fact, our world crucified him, but that's at the end of this particular, close to the end of this story. And that's he came to his own, his own people, and they did not receive him.

[29 : 33] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Now, this is like my half question. I said there were like four and a half questions. This is my half question. What if this is all true? What if you are cut off from the creator, and from life, and from light?

What if you are cut off from the creator, from life, and from light? And you know, maybe you look at the universe, and sometimes it looks as if the universe doesn't care about you, and God doesn't care about you, and other times you have a sense that there must be someone up there, out there, who cares for me.

How do you answer that question? Well, that's what John's trying to get us to understand. And he's trying to get us to understand that this coming into the world of the one who created the world, the coming into the dark world of the one who is light, and who is life, and who is love, that he came so that you would know him.

He wants to include you. Now, you'll notice, those of you who were yesterday, this is the fourth of the same videos that I showed last night. The fifth one, which is a different one, is going to come up at the very end.

[31 : 03] But let's look at another video as we pause on this half question before I ask the final question. This is the other shepherd. Glory to God in the highest!

Peace on earth and good will toward men! Tobias!

There you are. Got the coffees. Land of Goshen, that line was long. Woo-hoo! All right, a couple of coffees. Tobias, here's yours with extra goat milk.

Had to smell that the whole way here. Thank you so much. And I have a juniper tea. Which one of you guys had the juniper tea with two extra shots of honey, huh? You look like the juniper.

And an extra large boba tea for me because I made the run. And it's all good. Ira, if you will.

[32 : 14] Guys, where's all the sheep? Zeke, come back!

No thank you! We're not making this up! Oh, you're not making this up? Oh, golly gee then, Amen!

Then maybe I will believe that what, a gaggle of angels came down?

Technically, they're called heavenly hosts. Not the time, Tobias. It's always the time for proper nomenclature. That's the motto I live by. Fine. A heavenly host of little cherubs.

No, no, no, no. Not little. They were humongous. Yeah, Ira buckled like a newborn lamb. I might have a new concussion. I taste pennies right now.

Okay. Come on, ladies! Sweet pea! Zeke, we're leaving the sheep. Bathsheepa! Bathsheepa! The angels told us where to find the Messiah.

[33 : 12] Figures. Figures. Figures the angels would tell you and not me. You want to know why? Because I am always, always, always, always left out of things. I am left out. Every time.

That's not true. It is so true. How about the time that I stayed back and I watched the sheep while you all went to go chase those wolves for that farmer and what did you get in return? A year's worth of free olive oil! You guys remember that olive oil?

Remember when we put them on those crackers? Hello? Hey! Hee-hee! Hey! How about the time that I missed out on that amazing water spot at the Sea of Galilee because I was searching for herbs for Ira's weak stomach?

Can we just say my stomach was disappointed in me? Fine. Fine. Then riddle me this. How about the time that my best friend forgot to tell me about Tobias' surprise birthday dinner for some strange oversight of, oh, forgetting that I exist?

I am left out of everything. So why shouldn't I be left out of this? The Messiah. I guess he's just leaving me out, too.

[34 : 23] Get off me! Stop it! Not the face! Leave me alone! Stop! Think! Stop! You stop! Come here! Listen to me! Listen to me! Listen. I'm sorry.

I'm sorry you missed out on so much. That's on us. But today, in the town of David, the Savior was born to us.

To all of us. I can't let you miss out on that. Well, better not keep that baby waiting.

idea! Head stop for more boba teas on the way? Not a chance. The final question is, who is Jesus?

And this question fits with all the others. This is a very profound text of Scripture, well worth meditating upon. And even if you're outside of the Christian faith, to meditate upon this text is to actually start to not only understand what Christianity is about and its beauty and its harmony and how it's emotionally satisfying as well as intellectually satisfying, but it's an invitation to ask the deepest questions.

[35 : 42] And it fits with the fact that it's a who that created all things. It's a keeping that life is in fact a gift. It's in keeping with the fact that something's gone wrong and darkness has come in, but this is not something God designed, desired, or intended, and that God is going to deliver us from darkness.

And that comes up here with verse 14, in fact, 14 to 18. And the Word, that's right, God, that's light, that's life, that's love. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And now John speaks personally and he says, we have seen His glory. Glory is the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. And by the way, it's only until the very end of the novel, the story, that you see what John means by God revealing His glory.

And you find it that if you follow all the way through, there's all this, we're going to see His glory, we're going to see His glory, we're going to see His glory, and then finally in verse, in chapter 17, we find out what the glory is and the glory of God is Jesus dying on the cross.

That's the glory of God that John saw. and the other apostles. And then he says, John the Baptist bore witness about Jesus and cried out, this was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks

before me because He was before me and from His fullness, that's Jesus's, we have all received grace upon grace for the law that was given through Moses, for the law was given through Moses, sorry, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[37 : 15] Christ, no one has ever seen God, the only God, that's the full Trinity, but God who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.

He has made the Trinity and the Father known. That's the Christmas story and it's for all of us and the text says that our response to this is to receive Him, to believe Him and this is all the language of personhood.

You receive people into your home, you receive a person into your life, you believe into a person and trust into a person, it's the very essence of what it means to relate to a person and that's what God asks us to do in this little baby, this baby who becomes a man, this man who dies on the cross, this man who defeats death and rises from the dead and will come again.

We are invited to receive Him and believe Him. We're going to watch our final video and right after the video we're going to pray, we're going to move on to the rest of our service and I just want to warn for the very youngest child, the first moment or two of this is maybe scary because it's going to show that the thing is called If Scrooge Had Been a Christian or If Scrooge Were a Christian and so when the ghost Marley appears the first couple of times, it's sort of scary and you might want to cover the kid's eyes.

So let's see it. Other than that, I believe it's called That was many indeed and it's called Pueblo. They would stand from her brother and the Turkish was one while in Death and she found in Death and sound Ebenezer.

[39 : 16] No, Jonah, you old scallywag. Just go to Nineveh already. Go on, shoot. Ebenezer! Wally, my old friend.

You've been expired for seven years. So why do I owe this pleasure? Pleasure. I come, I come, I come, bringing grievous news, Ebenezer.

Grievous news, alas. The only news worth an ear is that it's Christmas and that Christ has come to us. Marley, my old friend, are you quite all right?

Well, I'm dead. So no, I'm not all right. And I am also bound by these chains, forged in life by selfish deeds.

Human welfare, not money, should have been my business, Ebenezer. Yes, yes, the good book does say that it is better for a poor man to walk in his integrity than for a rich man to be crooked in all his ways.

[40 : 30] That would have been nice to know. This night, when the clock strikes one, you shall be visited by the ghost of Christmas past.

Oh, humbug! My past is gone. The judgment that I so richly deserve is as dead as you, buried in Christ Jesus who ransomed my sin on the cross.

My past will never haunt me again. Are you done? I'd like to mention John 3, 16. It's a great verse. I am trying to deliver an iconic speech.

I'm so, so sorry. Yes, the speech is wonderful. Please continue with your presentation. It is beautiful. It's brilliant. Please, go ahead. Not the first ghost.

That's a ghost. Oh, yeah. You, you, you shall not shun the second ghost, for it is more frightening than the first, for the ghost of Christmas present.

[41 : 27] Present? Oh. Hmm. God is present in my present. For the love of God? Sure, why not? Isn't it wonderful?

He governs my steps, makes straight my path, and if I'm willing, he indicates where there is a need, and Molly, I can meet to the need that very day. This whole haunting thing is much more difficult than they said it would be.

Yes, those chains look tremendously heavy. They are. Listen, Scroogey, between you and me, can I interest you in a ghost of Christmas future?

Let go and let, yeah. A good book does indicate that we should cast aside all our worries about the future because today has enough trouble of its own.

And Molly, my friend, you look like you have lots of troubles. Well, it seems I've wasted your time. Clearly, the Lord has done my work for me.

[42 : 29] I would bid you adieu. One second. Landliness is next to godliness. Right.

God bless us, everyone. I'll see myself out. Don't get out. Bye. That worked just a minute ago.

He just shared the gospel for the benefit of following Christ. Let's stand and we'll close in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise for Jesus.

We thank and praise you that Father, we thank and praise you that when we give ourselves to Jesus, that every sin and every shame of our past, of our present and our future is dealt with by his blood shed on the cross.

We thank you, Father, that he came, he set aside his glory and splendor and took unto himself our human nature and came and walked amongst us so that we might be saved, that we might be, that we might be united, Father, with Christ and become your children by adoption and grace.

[43 : 46] Father, we thank and praise you that that was the whole purpose and the whole plan and we ask, Father, that you help us to ponder Jesus, ponder the truth and the beauty and the goodness and the glory and the greatness of who he is and what he has done for us, unworthy as we are and that, Father, who he is and what he has done will become more and more real to our hearts every day until we see you face to face and you smile and welcome us into your kingdom.

And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.