

Nine Lessons and Carols

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[0 : 00] Would you pray with me? Heavenly Father, we pray that the light of Christ would shine in our hearts today as we hear your word.

! Illuminate our minds to recognize you, that we may believe in you and receive you. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, friends, we've been hearing the story of God's love for the world unfolding through the story of Scripture, culminating, of course, in the birth of Jesus.

And what I love about this service is it gives us this long background that helps us make sense of why we celebrate Christmas. And better yet, the story is capped off with this incredible passage from John's Gospel.

Our passage from John chapter 1 interprets the whole story and shows us its meaning. It shows us why we celebrate, why we have a service like this at all.

[1 : 08] And so for just the next few minutes, I want to unpack it with you. To let the Apostle John speak to us and to help us to understand the meaning of Christmas. John was a disciple and a friend of Jesus.

He knew him. He knew him in the flesh. And John wrote these words as an old man under the inspiration of God. And by God's grace, he's recalling and revealing the truth about the Jesus that he knew.

And there's so much here. But really just time to look at three things that John says that help us understand why Christmas is so important.

Why it's absolutely vital. So here's the first thing. John says that Jesus is the Word. It's verse 14.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we've seen his glory. Glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[2 : 15] This is Jesus. The baby born in Bethlehem. The person that John knew. The carpenter from Nazareth.

The itinerant Jewish preacher in Israel in the first century. This flesh and blood man is the Word. And so we ask, what is the Word?

And John tells us the Word is God. John tells us that the Word was in the beginning with God.

And he himself was God. The Word stands outside of time and space. He's there before creation. He was with God in the dark eternal past before all things.

And this is astonishing. John is saying that Jesus is not a great religious leader. He's not like the Buddha.

[3 : 21] He's not a great prophet like Muhammad. He's not a teacher like Gandhi. John is saying that Jesus is God. And more than that, he's saying that Jesus is the Word.

The Word of God is God's active speech by which he created everything. Remember Genesis chapter 1.

God said, let there be light. The Word is God speaking into the nothingness and creating everything.

That's who Jesus is. And the Greek for this is logos. Which means that Jesus is the internal logic of all of creation.

He's the architect and organizing principle for all of reality. Everything was made through him and made for him. And in him all things hold together.

[4 : 28] John is saying that Jesus is the reason that the world is rationally ordered. The fact that we can do science.

The fact that mathematics works. The fact that we can vibrate sound waves and make beautiful music. The fact that our minds and our bodies can perceive things and live in this creation.

This is all because things were made through Jesus. The eternal logos that stands behind all of creation. And this is incredible.

That's the first thing that John says. He says, Jesus, this man from Nazareth, is the Word. However, even though Jesus is this Word through which everything was created.

When he came into creation, the world did not recognize him. And rejected him. We were made through the Word.

[5 : 39] And yet when he appeared in the flesh, we did not recognize him. And friends, if all this is true, it means that you and I have terrible spiritual intuition.

Absolutely terrible. Most of us think that we can see things pretty clearly, right? That we're objective. That we're thoughtful.

That we can discern spiritual things. A friend this week pointed me to a study that happened here in Canada in 2017. It showed that a whopping 95% of drivers think that they are above average drivers.

While an equally astonishing 93% of drivers admit to doing terrible things for safety while driving. Like drinking alcohol.

Texting. Checking apps. 93% admit to that. And in Canada alone, there's 1,500 car crashes per day. And yet virtually nobody is willing to own up and take responsibility.

[6 : 51] We do not see reality rightly in regard to our driving. And we're in the same boat spiritually. Our spiritual intuition, our understanding of reality is not just poor, it's broken, the Bible says.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, sin blinded the human race. So each of us, by nature, are darkened to God.

We don't see him for who he is, as the creator of all things. And we often live blissfully unaware of his call on our lives to live righteously.

And not only that, we actively rebel against it. Sin has caused our minds and our hearts to be turned in on ourselves.

And we're blind to the fact that we're spiritually dead. So despite Jesus being this word who made everything and who offers us true life, in our darkness we do not recognize him and we reject him.

[8 : 02] And yet there is good news. And this is the final thing. The amazing good news of Christmas is that God continues to shine his light and offers us redemption.

It's verse 5. It was never up to us, John says, to climb up to God to find him.

God comes down to us. And the darkness and the evil and the death of this world can never overcome the light of Christ.

