

# Who is Jesus?

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Merry Christmas. Nowhere I'd rather be than with you on this day. So John chapter 1, perhaps some of the most read verses at these times, and yet some of the verses in Scripture that need to be explored again and again and again.

John chapter 1, I'm going to read verses 14 through 18. 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. John, that's John the Baptist, bore witness about Him and cried out, This is He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me.

For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth come through Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 26 ] No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.

May God bless the hearing and the preaching of His Word this morning. You know, one of the most well-known short stories, most well-known stories about Christmas is a story of the gift of the Magi from the early 1900s.

Captured an understanding of Christmas deeper than many stories in these days. It tells the story of Jim and Della, a poor couple trying to find the perfect gift for each other.

Something every couple can relate to. In their home, though, in their poor home, there were two things they treasured most. One was the watch. Jim's gold watch.

It belonged to his father before him and his father's father before his father. It was a magnificent gold watch. Fit for a king. Unfit for Jim.

[ 2 : 29 ] And so it was his prized possession. The other thing that was a prized possession in their home was Della's hair. Della's long, beautiful brown hair shined and streamed down about her, drawing the attention of everyone around.

As Christmas approached, Della was anxious to find this perfect gift for Jim. Something fitting to thank him for all the hard work he does for her and for their family and for being an honorable man.

And she stows up over the year a number of pennies, one at a time, to save up for this Christmas gift. And on Christmas Eve, she counts them all. She has \$1.87.

Even in the early 1900s, that's not enough to buy anything nice. And she doesn't know what to do. She only has one day to figure out what to do. She decides, though, what she must do.

She puts on her coat, goes down to the street, down the street to a hair shop of all kinds. She decides to sell her hair. She goes into the shop.

[ 3 : 37 ] How much would you buy my hair for? The shopkeeper says, \$20. She says, give it to me quick. She rushes out with her \$21.87 to find that gift for Jim before all the shops close.

And she finally lands upon, her eyes land upon, a golden watch chain. Perfect to go with Jim's golden watch. She knows immediately this is the only watch chain fit for the watch.

The prized heirloom watch. She rushes home. Later that evening, she has dinner prepared. She's waiting for Jim to arrive home. And he arrives home, and he's a bit shocked, as you would imagine, to see her with no hair.

Looking like a young boy. Nevertheless, he hugs her and gives the gift he has for her. She opens it and realizes that it is a set of combs.

It were the combs that she had seen in the stores, combs she had longed to buy, combs that would fit her hair. So he bought her these combs so that she could use it to comb her beautiful hair.

[ 4 : 50 ] But now, she has no hair. She says, oh, Jim, I love them. My hair will grow back soon, and I can use them.

Jim opens Della's gift to find the watch chain. Jim sat down and smiled. He said, let's put our gifts away for a while.

They're too nice to use now because I sold the watch to buy you the combs. It's such a wonderful story.

It captures a deeper meaning to Christmas. And so many, Jim and Della, sell the most valuable thing to themselves to buy something nice for the other. They give up something of much greater value to themselves to give something to others.

It reminds us of the magi, the three wise men, and what they did with their gifts to Jesus. But the story, if we hold it before us, pushes deeper still. No one gives up more to give to others than Jesus Christ.

[ 5 : 57 ] Wonderfully, at the heart of Christmas is not about us giving up to give to others. The heart of Christmas is realizing all that Jesus has given up to give to us.

That's what I hope this meditation on John 1 will help us do. Worship and rejoice. Jesus the Christ has come to us. Point one, the Son of God was in the beginning.

The Son of God was in the beginning. Now, I was raised in South Carolina. I was raised in the South. And my mom is one of those people that loves family history. When I was a boy, I used to get so bored at family history when she brought it up and pulled out the picture.

She said, so-and-so married so-and-so. They had a couple kids. And those three kids moved here and there. And they married so-and-so. Had a few kids. And on and on. For what seemed like hours and hours, all I wanted to do was get back to my Legos or back to my guitar.

But over the years, I've come to learn to enjoy family history. It's fascinating to see where our families come from. Well, John wrote the book that we're reading right now to tell us about the family history of Jesus Christ.

[ 7 : 07 ] But he doesn't begin with Mary and Joseph. He doesn't tell us about Zachariah and Elizabeth. Or their parents. Or their parents' parents.

Or anything like that. He goes back much further. John goes all the way back to the beginning. I'm sure you kids remember how the Bible begins. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

You notice John 1.1 says, in the beginning was the Word. In the beginning was the Word. He takes us back to the beginning to say something about Jesus Christ.

John is saying that way back before the stars and mountains were made, the Word was alive. Now, the Word, that's a funny way to use it. But the Word is just another name for Jesus Christ.

For all that God has to say about himself. And all that he has to say about himself, he says in Jesus. So, he's the Word. So, think about that. Before anything was created, the Son of God was alive.

[ 8 : 08 ] He's always been alive. And he never began. Now, the beginning of John 1 says, in the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. The Word was with God.

And the Word was God. Now, that's a silly way of talking at first. I mean, how can you be with someone and someone? Now, it would be silly if I said, Kim is with my wife.

And Kim is my wife. It wouldn't make sense. Either Kim is with my wife or Kim is my wife. By the way, she is my lovely wife.

But with the Son of God, that makes sense. What John is saying is not silly at all. It's that the Son of God is God. And the Son of God was with God.

John is pressing us deep. And it's probably as far as we can go this morning. But he is God. And was with God at the beginning. So for years and years and years, long before the mountain and stars were made, God the Son and God the Father were with each other.

[ 9 : 14 ] The story of Christmas doesn't begin in a stable in Bethlehem. It begins in eternity past. It begins with God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit being with one another, relating to one another, delighting in one another.

This is the family history of Jesus Christ. Wonderfully, it tells us Christianity does not begin with God making his way to you or me. Christianity begins and revolves around this relationship between God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit who are with one another before time.

Forever. Second point, the Son of God became a man. The Son of God became the man. And this is the text I just read. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The Word became flesh. Now, if you're following John, this is very surprising. It just said that in the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God for all eternity.

But suddenly, it became flesh. Notice it doesn't say that the Word became man. It doesn't say the Word became a human being.

[ 10 : 27 ] It says the Word became flesh. Now, the people who first read this book, when they heard the word flesh, they thought, yucky. Kind of like eggplant and collard greens.

Gross. Who wants those things in their life? Even more than that, when they heard the word flesh, they thought, dirty, earthly, and evil.

Dirty, earthly, and evil. In so many ways, the world is still flesh. It's filled with all that is dirty, earthly, and evil.

We have strayed from God, sinned against God. We've made a big mess. But God is so much different than that. God's not dirty, earthly, or evil in any way.

He's high and lifted up. He's holy, holy, holy. He's mighty. Yet, John says, this pure, holy, mighty God became flesh, entering our dirty, earthly, evil world.

[ 11 : 30 ] And becoming like us. A couple years ago, there was a successful TV show that captured some of the wonder of Christmas called Undercover Boss.

The format was very simple. They would find an owner of a successful company and have him go undercover. And get a job at the company that he owned.

To work for the employees of the company that he owned. To see how things were actually going. One episode, the owner of White Castle Burgers, kind of like Crystal Burgers, put on an apron and began flipping burgers at a local White Castle restaurant.

He even messes up the bun machine and ruins thousands of hamburger buns. This is the owner. This is the man, the inventor. And he ruins them. The owner of DirecTV starts climbing ladders and installing satellites.

One of my favorites is the owner of Waste Management. He begins picking up trash with the other employees, cleaning porta-potties and whatnot. But he's so bad at his job, the manager fires him.

[ 12 : 38 ] I guess before the show was up, you know, before the game was up, he fired the owner. When Jesus was born, it was like that. God went undercover.

God came to earth and became like us. Jesus is unlike anyone who has ever been born. He's completely God and yet a true man. We call this the incarnation.

We don't call Jesus' birth his creation because Jesus never began. We call it his incarnation because it's not the coming of a new person.

It's the coming of an old, old, old person of God the Son himself. While the Son of God had always been God, he became what he was not, a man, a baby.

Have you ever squeezed all of your clothes and socks and shoes and toys and books into a bag for a trip? Well, Jesus squeezed all of his godness into a human man's form.

[ 13 : 39 ] He was 100% God and 100% man. You do the man, 100% God, 100% man, yet one only, 100% Jesus.

One of the most helpful explanations I know of it is from a song I sing with my kids from a recent Sovereign Grace Kids album. It says, Jesus, he's fully God and fully man.

That's really hard to understand. So let me try to explain. Jesus, his word upholds the galaxies, but he babbled like a baby in his mother's arms.

I think I need a little something in the back. Yeah, a little clap. Jesus understands the universe, but he had to go to school to learn.

That's true. How to write his name. If you know this, sing it with me. He's totally God, totally God, and totally man.

[ 14 : 51 ] Both in one. He's the great I am. To save the world.

Fulfill God's plan. He had to be totally God, totally man. Yeah.

That's it. That captured it for little kids to get. By the way, never sung in a sermon here. So there you have it. So this will not happen next week.

He's totally God, totally man. He who receives endless praise of angels is born off the grid in a little unimportant town in Bethlehem. He upholds all the matter and molecules of the universe, became a true real deal baby.

He who flung the stars into places, laid to rest underneath them. He who needs no food or drink or nutrients is weak, helpless, and made to nurse as a child.

[ 15 : 55 ] He who knows the name of every star and every person is made in his image has to learn how to spell and write his own name. The creator, scriptures say, creator became a creature.

The infinite became an infant. The invisible appears. The eternal God lives in space and time. He's 100% God and 100% man.

Scripture says he grew up. He got older. He got stronger. He did all the things we do. He went fishing. He worked a job. He played games with friends.

He went to school. He went to church. He lived a life. J.I. Packer says it well. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth.

He became like us in every respect except one. He never sinned. He never sinned in word, thought, or deed.

[ 16 : 57 ] Point three, the Son of God came to save. Son of God came to save. John has told us so much about Jesus now.

Jesus was there in the beginning. The Son of God came to save. Son of God became like us. The only question is, was it good? We had the whole Bible before us, but those first ones that heard about his incarnation didn't.

Was it good that God would come close to people? If you remember the story of the Bible when God delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt, he invited Moses up on the mountain, but he said, the rest of you stay back.

In fact, don't even touch the mountain lest you die. Later, when God led them through the wilderness, so he's a holy God. He's not to be trifled with. When God led them through the wilderness, he lived in a tent in the middle of them, but he said, still you must approach me by sacrifice.

So if Jesus came so close, is it good for us? Wouldn't he just see how cruel the world is?

[ 18 : 10 ] Wouldn't he just see how sinful it is? Wouldn't he just punish us for our sins? And this is where John's story gets better. Jesus became man and came near to us.

The Bible says he dwelt among us. Literally, that means he put his tent next to ours. One translation says he moved into the neighborhood.

The idea is he didn't stay at a distance. Didn't stay in D.C. or something like that. He came down close to where you live, came into your life, and he came because he wanted to tell you something.

Verse 18, it says, No one's seen God, the only God who's at the Father's side. Jesus has made him known. Jesus came to tell us about God.

This is where it gets really good. Christianity, sometimes you think Christianity's just like every other religion. You know, they all roads lead to home. All roads lead to Rome. You know, all religions lead to heaven or something like that.

[ 19 : 06 ] But that's just not true. You stack them up next to each other. Christianity is unlike every other religion in this respect. Every other religion tells you that God is far away. You are in a yucky world filled with flesh, and God's far away.

You've got to work up to get with him. And that's what Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, all these things are doing some form of that. You have to pray. You have to work hard. You have to sacrifice.

You have to fast. You have to do all these things. But Jesus did not talk like that. He told the world how great and awesome God is, how kind and loving God is, how glorious and wise God is.

And he said, do you want to get to know this God? Well, then follow me. I'm the God that was far off that came near that I might lead you to me.

He said, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Follow me, and you can know God. See, Christmas is really kind of like a ladder. We think about Rapunzel who opens her window and throws down her hair.

[ 20 : 11 ] Well, in some ways, God threw open a window at the incarnation, and he sent down, lowered down Jesus, to build a ladder up for sinful men to God.

Jesus was building the ladder. It's all he thought about his whole life. No one else could do it. Only Jesus could do it because we already know he's totally God and totally man. If he were just man, no matter how good he could be, he could never get us close enough to know God.

If he were just God, no matter how kind he was, he could never come close enough to truly know us. But because he's truly God and truly man, he can do it.

To complete this ladder, Jesus had to go all the way to the cross. J.I. Packer helps us again. He says, The crucial significance of the cradle at Bethlehem lies in its place in the sequence of steps to Calvary.

Actually, sorry, I started going on my own thing there. Lies in its place in the sequence of steps down that led the Son of God to the cross of Calvary. And we do not understand the cradle at Bethlehem till we see it in this context.

[ 21 : 26 ] I love that phrase. If you'll take that phrase home, it'll do work in your heart. At his birth, the sequence of steps began. Every day, Jesus got closer.

He told stories. He healed people. He performed miracles and so much more. But he knew he was going to the cross. It was hard. His disciples said, What are you doing, man?

We got a good thing going. What are you talking about going back to Jerusalem? They'll kill you in Jerusalem. That's the point, Jesus said, as it were. He was betrayed by his best friends.

People made fun of him. They spit on him and they whipped him. They abused him. In the end, they nailed him to the cross. It was all a part of God's plan. After his death, the ladder was finally complete.

It's what in so many ways was whispered in a picture to Jacob. There is going to be a way to God, a grand staircase to God for all who are far off.

[ 22 : 29 ] All the guilt and sin and shame that kept us from God was wiped away through the cross of Jesus Christ for all who will come to him. I love the way the old carol talks about it. You know, you get into the beginning of the Bible and, you know, you read about the fall of man.

You read about the curse of God on all of all the world, on all mankind. I love the way the third verse of Joy of the World says it.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns invest the ground. He comes to make his blessings. No longer curses against those who have sinned against him, far as the curse is found.

Anyone can go to the Father through this ladder because anyone can go to the Father through Jesus. You don't have to be a certain age. Praise God, you don't have to be clean and pure.

You don't have to be strong. In fact, Jesus likes the weak. You don't have to be wise or important. Anyone can climb. Scripture says, let the righteous man, I mean, let the wicked man forsake his ways.

[ 23 : 47 ] The unrighteous man, his thoughts. Let them return to God for he'll abundantly pardon. That's what God reveals to us in Jesus. So worship and rejoice. Jesus the Christ has come to us.

I pray this Christmas, this day, all our eating and singing and giving gifts were most stunned and amazed at the gift of Jesus Christ. It's unthinkable.

And yet it's unthinkable true. No one's given up more to give to others than Jesus Christ. No one's given up more to give to you.

To all who are far off. That we might have life again. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. I want to invite you to stand. We're just going to sing.

We're going to sing another song. We're going to sing Joy of the World acapella. Joy of the World. So I'll try to give us a decent key.

[ 24 : 49 ] Y'all ready? Joy to the world. The Lord is come. Let earth receive her king.

Let every heart prepare him room. And heaven and nature sing. And heaven and nature sing.

And heaven and heaven and nature sing. Joy to the world. The Savior reign.

Let men their songs employ. While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plain.

Repeat the sounding joy. Repeat the sounding joy. Repeat, repeat the sounding. No more.

[ 25 : 47 ] No more. Let sins and sorrows grow. No thorns invest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow.

Far as the curse is found. Far as the curse is found. Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace. And makes the nations prove The glories of his righteousness.

And wonders of his love. And wonders of his love. And wonders, wonders of his love.

Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [trinitygraceathens.com](http://trinitygraceathens.com) Thank you, sir.

[ 27 : 01 ] Thank you, sir, thank you, sir, thank you, sir,! Thank you, sir, thank you, sir, thank you, sir, thank you, sir, Thank you.