

Jesus is God and Man

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I'd like to sort of begin your attention, as it were, over these next few weeks on the Advent, the first Advent of Christ. The second one, of course, hasn't happened yet. We can talk about how it will happen or not when it will happen, but the first one we can discuss.

But I'd like us to begin this sort of lead into, if I can call it the Christmas period, or the first Advent period, by looking at the first few verses in the Gospel according to John, chapter 1. And we'll read the first 18 in total.

Okay, so that's John, chapter 1, and beginning at verse 1. Now hear God's Word.

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. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. 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, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 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 the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[2 : 4 1] John bore witness about him 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 we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side. He has made him known. Well, may God bless the reading to us.

John tapped the one. And as you do that, You make your way there. It's already there. Brilliant. We will begin this Sunday, at least, considering the...

You need to be pleased about one thing at this moment. One thing in particular. Do any of you know what it is?

Well, I'll tell you what it is, seeing that none of you have got an idea. Okay. As your pastor, I hold to what's called the regulative principle of scripture. Very, very important. Really important.

[4 : 2 8] And what that means is this, that I'm only allowed to say what the Bible says. Okay. That is why you'll never hear me stand up in front of this church and say, I believe God is telling us to... Right? I don't have the authority to do that. I'm not a prophet.

Okay. I'm just not allowed to... The regulative principle. Which means that I won't interpret that loud sound as though God is trying to tell you something this morning, like you're not quiet enough.

But if he was telling you that, I'd perfectly agree with him. Was it just a joke? Okay. Okay. I'm only teasing. John chapter one. And here we are considering the advent of Christ. But as you recognize, at least if you have read John one, like we have this morning, the advent story in John, it's not a typical advent story where it begins with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus is God and therefore has no birth.

He is before time. He is the word of God who was with God and who is God. But it is also really important for Christians to affirm that Jesus was fully man, that he is both fully God and fully man.

Now, even if you can't fully explain that truth, sometimes you just have to get down on your hands and knees and praise God for it, like the Trinity. That the Trinity is one of those beautiful mysteries which can make perfect sense when reading it in scripture. But the moment you start playing around with it with your own limited logic and you make a mess of it, you just have to go back to the word of God and bow down and worship God for the truth that he has revealed. Some things are made known to us and other things are not, as Deuteronomy 29, 29 indicates. But what John does, just like all the other gospel accounts do, is that we need to recognize the identity of the Messiah. We need to recognize the identity of the one that God sent. Now, John has no problem whatsoever in telling you that the one whom God sent is this person, Jesus Christ. So the issue here is not recognizing who

[6 : 52] Jesus is. The issue here is recognizing who the Messiah is and then recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah. Does that make sense? There's a distinction to be made there. In other words, you can recognize a person on two levels. You can recognize them for the job that they do and you can recognize them for the person that they are. Well, God has made promises about a Messiah. He has described what the Messiah will do, what he'll say, who he will be. But of course, when the Messiah turns up, we have to be made aware who this Messiah is, who this King is, born of the Jews. And Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are not slow in coming forward and telling us that that Messiah is this person, Jesus. That the Messiah you look for, that you hope for, the Christ, the anointed one who is sent from God to seek and to save the lost, to forgive us of our sins, that person that all your hopes and dreams are built on, that person is Jesus.

So the issue here is not about recognizing Jesus, but recognizing the Messiah in Jesus, recognizing that Jesus is the one sent from God. Now, for those of us who follow Jesus and those of us who share Jesus to others in our commitment to make Jesus known, we understand how important it is to establish the identity of Jesus. As the one promised from God. Here's the first reason.

Because if you don't establish the right Messiah, then Jesus has to be, or has not to be, depending on who you think he is, whether or not he's the right person to die for our sins. What I mean by that is, is that the Gospels are very, very clear that only one person can die in our place. And therefore, we must be really certain who that one person is, bearing in mind that when Jesus was crucified, there were two other men beside of him who were crucified. This is why Paul says in Corinthians, that I am determined to know nothing among you except this one, it says in the Greek, except this one having been crucified. In your English translations, it'll say, except Jesus Christ and him crucified. So, as to make it abundantly clear that only his death, only the, only him is, only he is able to save us from our sins. So, the issue behind Advent is the issue of identity. Recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah and recognizing that only that person could seek him to save the lost and die for our sins. Why is that so important? Well, it's important for a number of different reasons, as we will see. So, here's a summary of John as we go through. You'll begin to understand that John introduces Jesus by describing him as the Word, the Word who is God and who was with God. And so, we're meant to understand here that God is in

Jesus. Jesus is God. They're both the same in this, in a triune sense. And the way we get to meet Jesus today, at least the way we get to meet Jesus first today, is through his Word. Okay? And John wants to point out to us at the end of his letter that that's not a downgrade to meeting Jesus in the flesh.

Okay? If you go back to when Thomas didn't believe, and then Jesus appeared so that he could put his hands on Jesus to see if he really was who he says he was, risen from the dead. The next thing that John points out to us is, blessed are those who have never seen and yet believe. What Jesus is teaching us, and what John is teaching us in the record, is that to believe the Word of God is the equivalent of putting your finger in the side of Jesus. That's how real it is to the person who has truly come to believe the Word of God. That's how real it is to believe and have that real relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the New Testament declares that there's much more to know about Jesus than just what is written in a few verses. This is why we have a whole Bible, even the Old Testament, and in Luke, it tells us to go back and read the Scriptures carefully. Jesus begins with Moses, and then he declares to those disciples, you need to understand that everything that Moses says concerns me. So, even the Old Testament concerns Jesus. Now, if a person rejects the Word of God, they are therefore rejecting the Messiah. If a person rejects the Word of God, they're rejecting the Christ. They're rejecting the person who can save them, because that is how they get to know the person who can save them through the Word. But if the Word is rejected, then so too is the Word of God rejected. Sorry, if the Word of God is rejected, so too is the person of God in Jesus Christ rejected. Most importantly, then, we recognize that this person, this Messiah, this Christ, is the only one to give you the right to belong to the kingdom of God. He's the only one who can give you the right to belong to the family of God. In other words, if you put it into a question form, what right do I have to belong to God? What right do I have? Well, I have no right of my own other than the right given to me in this person, Jesus Christ. I come but to belong to God, as do any of you who belong, because that right, that privilege, that gift has been given to you in Jesus

[12 : 45] Christ. John, therefore, wants us to be clear on the identity of Jesus, but he wants us to be clear on the identity of the Messiah also, the one that God promised. So, we're going to break this up into a few sections. The first here is identity. Every single one of the Gospels want to portray Jesus in a different way, but want to convince you that Jesus Christ is the one that God promised. Matthew does this in his way. Luke does it in his. Mark has a different way of doing it, a hot skip and a jump.

He moves very, very quickly, but nevertheless, even Mark says, everything that I'm about to write is so is to convince you that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, which he says in his opening verse. In other words, everything that you read from now on is to convince you of this one thing, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So, when you see him healing, when you see him doing miracles, when you see people astounded at his authority, you shouldn't be surprised. Why? Because it's the Son of God who's doing this.

In other words, don't be surprised at this. This is what you should expect the Son of God to be able to do. Mark, of course, is divided slightly differently than any of the other Gospels, but the identity of Jesus comes out. Who is Jesus? First eight chapters of Mark and why Jesus must die the second half. John wants to go deeper. He wants to go all the way back, even before the world was created, and remind you that Jesus Christ was there in creation, that creation was created by him and through him. And the reason we get to enjoy the world that we do, and we get to enjoy the bodies that we do, and go on holiday and do all these other type of things and serve him, is because it has been given to you through the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the identity that we are being open to here in the beginning of John. Yet it says, even though the world was created through him, the world, verse 10, did not recognize him. He came unto his own, and his own people did not receive him.

And there's the problem with identity. All of this work that God has done, and the Messiah turns up in the flesh, known as Jesus Christ. And as he walks the streets, not only is he not recognized as the Messiah, partly do we might say because he came as a man, and who would expect God to come that way? But also, they rejected him. Despite the miracles, despite the teaching with authority, they rejected him. Now, one of the issues that John has to deal with in his day, just like we have to deal with in our day, in a slightly different way, but nevertheless is the same, is how do we deal with the promise of God? Now, here's how promises work. Here's how prophecies work. When a prophecy happens in the Old Testament, it is spoken in year, let's say, 500 BC, but it's spoken of a time that's going to be later down the road, further down the road.

Which means that while the prophecy exists today, it's spoken about the future, there's going to become a point when that future will be a past. I'll give you an example. When Jesus said about his death and resurrection, he was speaking about his very imminent future, but which we now understand to be our past. So, he was speaking about the future from his point in time, but from our point in time, it's now the past. And what happens here with the advent of Jesus Christ is that all of these promises of the Old Testament saying the Messiah will come, this is where you'll find him, this is what he will be like, and all of these promises saying this is who the Messiah is going to be, then the promises get fulfilled, and then you have people who still believe in the promises, but don't believe that they've been fulfilled in Jesus.

[17 : 07] And then you have others who believe in the promises and also believe that those promises have been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you've got a problem. To put this a slightly different way, you might remember when John sent his disciples off to Jesus, and the question that John sent them away with was this, are you the one that we're waiting for, or should we look for another? Okay, John the Baptist. Are you the one that we're waiting for, or should we look for another?

What's John doing there? Well, he's saying, I believe the promises of God. I believe that God will send a Messiah. I believe everything that God has said, but what I now need to know is whether or not you are the fulfillment or we're to carry on looking. And Jesus, of course, tells his disciples, go back and tell John what you see and hear. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk. All of these are signs of God's King coming. All of these are signs of the messianic reign of the Lord Jesus Christ coming on earth. These are all the signs that God said would accompany his Messiah. So Jesus is sending these disciples back saying, there's your answer. As though John won't need to know anything more. He should be able to put two and two together and work it out for himself. That that fits with that. Therefore, this person, Jesus Christ is the Messiah. And yet we live in a day, okay, where I know a good few Jews who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. They believe the promises of the Old Testament.

They believe that God has made promises concerning an anointed one that he will send, a Messiah that he will give to the world, but do not believe that Jesus is that person.

And so the issue that we have today, just like John had in his day, is recognizing that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. That's the issue. Not just about recognizing Jesus, but recognizing the Messiah of God God in Christ Jesus. Even the disciples who spent three and a bit years with Jesus, having listened to all of his teaching, having witnessed all of his miracles, saw him crucified and were not waiting at the grave. Not a single one of them were waiting at the grave.

He promised that he would rise from the grave. It was almost as if their natural understanding of life and death overtook their supernatural understanding or the supernatural nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20 : 15] That he's not a man as you expect to understand him in normal terms, but he is the God man. This is the next point then. Jesus being God and man. I have no difficulty believing this.

I have no difficulty understanding it to the level that I do. And I'm sure that there are people who could ask me questions that I possibly couldn't answer. Nevertheless, do I know enough, and is the Bible revealed enough to convince me that Jesus is both God and man? Oh, without a doubt.

No problem. One of the ways that we're meant to understand this is, of course, through faith. And that faith is a gift, and when you have it, you're able to see, of course. But more importantly, that that faith must always go alongside with the written word, Jesus Christ himself. Let me try and explain it in a couple of different ways. It says that Jesus is both God and man, but the problem that you have is you don't want to undermine one to defend the other. I'll give you a couple examples.

It says that God never sleeps nor slumbers. Psalm 121. Okay. And that's comforting to a believer who wants to know, is God there when I'm calling out to him in the middle of the night? And the answer is, yes, God never sleeps nor slumbers. Okay. Wherever I am, wherever I am, at whatever time I am there, God is awake. I'm not having to wake God up like some people misinterpret the parable in Luke 11, who can't be bothered to get out of bed to answer the man at the front door. That is not a description of God, though it's often taught that way. God never sleeps nor slumbers. But Jesus Christ, in one story, is asleep with his head on a pillow in a boat in a storm.

Okay. Okay. God never sleeps, but Jesus does. And what we are meant to understand there is what Donald MacLeod says, probably one of the best theologians, you know, of his day, says that there is subtraction by addition. And what he means by that is, is that when God came into human form, into humanity itself, there are certain subtractions which take place. In other words, Jesus cannot be everywhere at the same place like God can be, because the physical body will not allow it. Okay. He sleeps. Another example would be that God knows everything. He knows the beginning from the end. And yet when Jesus is in the crowd on the way to a house to heal a young girl, he doesn't know who touched his garment. And he turns around and says, who touched me? Well, some people will say, well, he must have known because he was God. But in saying that, they end up denying his humanity.

[23 : 20] No, Jesus is both God and man. We shouldn't diminish his humanity in order to defend his deity. And neither should we diminish his deity in order to exalt his humanity. We are meant to understand, however difficult it may be, however difficult it may be to wrap your heads around it, that the plain teaching or revealing of scripture is that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. God sent his son then into the world as a man, flesh and bone. And the way I like to illustrate this is that we must always understand Jesus from the point of view that the word of God reveals about him, just like you, just like you. In other words, did Jesus have breakable bones? In other words, did Jesus have bones like my bones that would break if they were hit? That would break if they were put under enormous pressure?

Yeah, there was nothing special about Jesus's bones. They were bones just like our bones. But not one of his bones was broken. Why? Not because they weren't breakable bones, but rather because the word of God concerning his bones says that not one bone would be broken.

And that's how we're meant to understand these simple distinctions. It's about what the word of God says about us. You may be sat here this morning thinking, I don't know how I'm going to get through another winter. Physically, I just don't know how I'm going to do it. Mentally, I don't know how I'm going to do it.

Financially, I don't know how to do it. Emotionally, I don't know how I'm going to do it. Right, I'm sure those are real tangible struggles. And you won't get through it, not because you can't fail.

But you won't fail because the word of God concerning you says you won't fail. That's important. Okay? I only make it through each day by the grace of God, not because my bones hold me up, not because I have the physical strength that other people do not have. I don't.

[25 : 35] But rather, the word of God concerning me says, I'll get you through today, and I'll get you through tomorrow, and I'll get you through the next day. And so we are meant to understand these very delicate distinctions. This is the joy of reading scripture. This is the joy of digging deep to take hold of these because they do us so good. And being able to walk away being absolutely certain, though we may not understand everything, but being fully convicted in what God has spoken to us. Another thing which we are meant to understand is that Jesus Christ in coming in the flesh is really important.

In the letter of 1 John, John describes any person who does not believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh as an antichrist. Now, I find it very interesting that John would describe a person in that way, because we know that Christ refers to the deity. We know that Christ refers to the anointed one sent from God. And what John is describing here is he's saying that anyone who does not believe that the Christ came in human form, who could speak and hear and walk and listen and do all these very human, physical things. Any person who does not believe that is an antichrist, and there have been many.

Many people deny the fact that God has sent his Son in human form. And yet, the way John opens up his gospel is so that we would understand that very truth, that God in Jesus is the God-man, both fully God and fully man.

One of the things that we wrestle with when we wrestle with the Lord Jesus Christ is sometimes there's no movement on our end. You know, we want to go, yeah, but, what, but, this, but.

What John opens up to us here is that as you get to know Jesus through the word of God, you will either receive him, or, like his own people, don't receive him. He came unto his own, and his own people received him not. They did not receive him. So, the issue here is even, either you recognize who Jesus is and receive him, or you're still confused about who Jesus is, and you bypass him. But it will never be anything different than that. That's all the options will ever be. From the day Jesus came to the second advent, the options will either be, either you truly believe in your heart, by faith, in the word of God, that what has been revealed to you here is so that you may believe, and by believing have life in his name. Or, he comes to you through the word of God, and like his own people, you say, no, I'm still waiting.

[28 : 46] I'm still waiting for God to do something. And yet, I find it very interesting that we live in a world where people complain that God has never done anything, and yet bypass Jesus Christ.

Is that not the greatest thing that God has ever done for the world in which we live in? Here's the exhortation, then, as we sort of bring this to a close.

John wants you to be very, very clear that the way a person comes to receive the Lord Jesus Christ is by hearing the word and by believing that word. And that when you hear the word of God, and you believe the word of God, and you receive the word of God, and you're not turning it away, you're not rejecting it in any way. It is the equivalent, if you read the whole book of John, it is the equivalent experience, as Thomas had, is putting his hand in the side of Jesus.

Jesus. That's how real it will become to you. And you will not be able to be convinced otherwise, because God empowers you through his spirit to believe his word with full conviction.

It doesn't mean you understand everything, but it does mean that you are settled in what God has revealed. And some of these Jews that I know, you know, who are, this is back down in Lancashire, there's some, quite a few over in Yorkshire, down in Manchester, you know, there's pockets of them.

[30 : 09] Yeah, these are clever guys. You know, they know the scriptures, at least the Old Testament, back to front. I mean, they're way smarter than me, which may not take much, you think. Thank you for your compliment.

But, and yet they don't see Jesus. Why? Because it's not about intellect, is it? It's not about intellect. It's about believing what has been revealed about Jesus concerning these promises being fulfilled.

So here's the exhortations we close in. Knowing God begins with being introduced to God, but it doesn't stop there. Knowing God begins by being introduced to God through the written word of God, or the word of God being spoken to someone. And what that means is, is the only way you're ever going to get to know God is by reading his word, or having his word being spoken to you by somebody else.

But while it may begin there, it doesn't stop there. In other words, the relationship with God is about being brought into the family of God, that you, upon believing that Jesus Christ is the one whom God said, the one whom has been sent, the one who has died in your place for your sins.

There, in that moment, God has given you the right to be brought into the family of God, never to be separated from him again. But like in the day of Jesus, there are some people who will not accept that Jesus Christ is God's promise kept. And what I would like to declare to you today, or am declaring you today, is that Jesus Christ is God's promise kept. And that promise includes you and your right to belong to the children of God, to the family of God. Some will say that God doesn't do anything to deal with my problems. Well, I think he's done everything to deal with your problem, at least the problems that you should be dealing with. And they are your relationship to him, or rather how you relate to God. In other words, God has given us this time before he sends his son again, if I can put it as simply as this, for you to get right with him. Okay, I'm going to say it again.

[32 : 30] God has given the world this time before he sends his son for a second time for men and women, boys and girls, to get right with him. God has made peace, it says in 2 Corinthians 5. God has already made the peace through the blood of the cross, through giving us Jesus. So we then turn, believe in those words, in those actions of God, and have, in that point, been given the right to enter into the family of God. But with this I'll finish. In your commitment to make Jesus known, there are two things you need to do. One, you need to not just make Jesus known, but make the Messiah known in Jesus. That all the promises concerning what God would do for the world are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. That every promise, it says in Corinthians, that God made concerning the fulfillment of his plans and purposes are yes and amen in Christ Jesus.

Amen.