

John 1:1-18  
The Embodied Word  
WRCoB 12.23.23

Each of the four Gospels begin differently.

The Gospel of Mark begins with  
John the Baptist baptizing the adult Jesus  
Marking the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry

On the other hand, Matthew and Luke begin their Gospels  
With differing accounts of the birth of Jesus.

When we get to the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John  
We see John beginning in a distinctly different way.

John reflects back to the very beginning of creation  
Using language similar to that in Genesis.

In the beginning was the Word  
And the Word was with God  
And the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God.

John uses metaphors to speak truths about Jesus.

He is light, he is life

He is The Word but not just a word

For the Greek word, *logos*, is not only the spoken word.

Logos, as it is used here, is the very power of God!

God spoke logos and things came into being.

“Let there be light.” And there was light.

God’s Word created the universe.

Look, we know words are powerful, right?

Things come into reality from a spoken word.

When I say, “I love you”

There’s power in those words

Because a feeling becomes a thing.

Multiply that by a gazillion times

Because when God’s speaks

It unleashes the very power

That created the heavens and the earth!

And so. John says, this Word

That brought all things into being

Becomes flesh and dwells among us.

So, right from the “git-go”

John’s gospel makes it very clear

That Jesus

Was more than a carpenter’s son

More than a Rabbi, or a teacher, or a prophet

Was more than an ethical exemplar

That Jesus was the Word Incarnate

Possessing all the qualities and power of God.

What an amazing proclamation.

It is one of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

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Though we share the same God

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

With the Muslims and the Jews

Though we all consider Jesus a great prophet and teacher

The similarities stop there.

For Christians believe in the Embodied Word

God becomes a person

Immanuel, God-with-us.

Jesus descended from Heaven

Was conceived through the Holy Spirit

And birthed by a peasant girl named Mary.

Muslims and Jews find that too preposterous to believe.

Hear this from the Quran, Islam's Holy Scriptures.

*Those who say: 'The Lord of Mercy has begotten a son,'  
preach a monstrous falsehood, at which the very heavens  
might crack, the earth break asunder, and the mountains  
crumble to dust ... that they should ascribe a son to the  
Merciful, when it does not become Him to beget one!*

No, it doesn't **become** the Lord of Mercy to **beget** a son.

And it does seem rather outrageous, doesn't it?

But it is our confession of faith.

And a powerful message  
To think God would do such a thing out of love.

So powerful in fact, that the very idea  
So incredulous as it seems  
Has transformed billions of people  
Throughout the ages.

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**14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us . . .**

This word, “lived” in verse 14 is an interesting word study.

*More literally translated, the Greek verb eskenosen – ‘lived’ actually means to pitch a tent or in Biblical understanding, a tabernacle.*

In other words, God became a human being  
And pitched his tent among us.

If you’re an outdoorsy person like me  
You’d think that was pretty cool.

For those who don’t think it’s cool  
Keep the imagery of dwelling among us then.

Eugene’s Peterson’s “The Message”  
Actually, comes closest to the original language.

**John 1:14 MSG The Word became flesh and blood,  
and moved into the neighborhood.**

God pitching his tent or tabernacle

Is reminiscent of an earlier time in the history of Israel.

At that time instead of God's Word becoming flesh

God's Word was written on stone tablets

Brought down Mt Sinai by Moses.

The tablets were carried in the Arc of the Covenant

And they were housed in, you guessed it

An eskenosen, a tent called a tabernacle.

It was believed that God was present

In the most holy of holy places

In the center of this tabernacle.

But now, God's Word became flesh

And came to live among us.

Seriously, how cool it that?

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Think about this!

God has embodied the Word in a baby who can't speak.

This wordless babe is God's final Word.

I quote from a sermon by Eugene Peterson

*Christmas is the celebration of a conclusion. A baby who cannot yet talk is the divine Word of God spoken to humankind. A child lying in a manger on a dark night in a poor town completes thousands of years of sacred history.*

God spoke a word that started the process of creation.

God spoke more words

First to Abraham

Then to Moses

And then to the prophets

As the Book of Hebrews states

### **Hebrews 1:1-2 CEB**

**In the past, God spoke through the prophets to our ancestors in many times and many ways. <sup>2</sup>In these final days, though, he spoke to us through a Son.**

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The Bible is a book of words.

All God-breathed and useful as Paul tells Timothy.

Sharper than a two-edged sword

According to Hebrews.

A compilation of history, and poetry, and songs

A collection of words written by inspired authors.

The words carry spiritual truths. n that sense the

- **Bible is the Word of God** with power to convict and transform lives.

But when we talk about THE Word of God

We're talking of Jesus of Nazareth

- **Jesus is THE Word of God** the Word that spoke creation into being, the embodied Word.

**Hebrews 1:3a NRSV**

**He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint  
of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his  
powerful word.**

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And so, as we reflect on the birth of Jesus  
    Standing in awe with the angelic host  
        In the humble presence of the shepherds

Let's remember too, the Gospel of John's introduction  
    This wordless babe in a manger.

He is God's living Word  
    Who became flesh  
        And pitched his tent in our neighborhood

Glory to God in the highest  
    And on earth peace to all.