

Main Idea: According to John 1:1-5, there are two things about Jesus that put Him in a class all by Himself.

- I. The unique identity of Jesus (1-2)
 - A. Jesus is the Logos, the Word (1).
 1. He was in the beginning.
 2. He was with God.
 3. He was God (and still is).
 - B. Jesus is unlike any other person (2).
 1. Many who say they believe in Jesus believe in a very different Jesus.
 2. The only Jesus that can save you from your sins is the true Jesus.
- II. The unique accomplishments of Jesus (3-5)
 - A. Jesus is the Life-bringer (3).
 1. He created everything.
 2. Not one thing exists apart from Him.
 - B. Jesus is the Light-bearer (4-5).
 1. He revealed the way.
 2. He is the way.
 3. Not everyone sees the way.

Make It Personal: Three questions to ask ourselves...

1. Do I know this Jesus?
2. Is there evidence I know Him?
3. Who can I share Him with this week?

When I was in Israel in 1980 I bought this nativity set in Jerusalem from a man named Bagdadi. I remember looking carefully at several sets before I bought this one and examining the craftsmanship. Were the facial features realistic? Did the eyes look right, the smile, for Mary, Joseph, but especially for the baby. The olivewood images created by this craftsman had to look right.

But therein lies the challenge. What should He look like? What *did* He look like? Who exactly was and is this baby? Vital questions, especially as we approach the celebration of His birthday.

Some say it doesn't matter. The holiday is about us anyway, a time to enjoy family, give gifts, take a holiday from the real world.

Of course, we know better than that. This is His birthday. But still, you might respond, “Surely, everybody around here knows who Jesus is, don't they? Maybe not in other countries, but everybody in Wheelersburg knows, don't they?”

No, they don't. Indeed, it's possible that we ourselves in this room don't really know who He is. Who is this baby? Who is this Christ-child *really*?

A great teacher? Yes, in a few years He will grow up and be a great teacher. But He's so much more. A miracle-worker? For sure. He will do amazing miracles. A person who will die on a Roman cross? Yes, indeed, He will die, and then He will leave His tomb alive on the third day.

Yet there's something else about Him that we must know, that many don't know, something foundational to everything I've just mentioned.

When Christmas comes, many will turn to the gospel of Matthew and the gospel of Luke to read the Christmas story, and rightly so. These two accounts tell us *how* God became a man. In Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2 we learn about the angel's visit to Mary,

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ This sermon has been adapted from earlier messages preached at WBC in 2005 and 2010.

the trip by donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the crowded inn, the manger scene, the shepherd's visit, the angels' singing.

But there's another Christmas text that addresses who He really was, and is. It's the one we're going to examine today, and for the next two Sundays. It's John 1, which looks at Christmas not so much from a historical vantage point as a *theological* one. Matthew and Luke tell us *how* God became a man. John tells us *why*, and *what the significance is*, and most of all, *who*.

Who is this baby? For the next couple of weeks, we want to explore the prologue to John's gospel, John 1:1-18, and answer that question. It's an incredible account. Commentator William Barclay suggests, "The first chapter of the Fourth Gospel is one of the greatest adventures of religious thought ever achieved by the mind of man."

I do not mean to minimize the historical approach to Jesus' birth. My concern is that there are thousands and thousands of people who will celebrate Christmas this year, who will sing "Away in a Manger," who know the facts of the birth narrative, yet who fail to fathom who He really is and why He came.

God can use the apostle John to help us. This morning we'll explore verses 1-5. This evening we'll ponder verses 6-13, next Sunday, verses 14-18, and December 31 we'll finish by taking a close look at the phrase "grace and truth" in verse 17.

I am convinced that what we're about to see is life-changing. So let's begin our series, "*When God Became a Man*."

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-5

God wants us to know His Son. That's why He gave us four Gospel accounts that present His life to us, one by Matthew, another by Mark, by Luke, and the last by John.

John's Gospel is different from the other three Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "synoptic" gospels because they look similar (from the Greek *syn* meaning "together" and *opsis* meaning "appearance"). But the Gospel of John doesn't follow the pattern of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for reasons we'll discuss a little later.

Just scan the pages of John's Gospel. What stands out to you? A couple of things grab my attention. First, **the stories**. This gospel is full of true stories that show us how Jesus interacted with and transformed the lives of individual people. For instance, walk through the book and you'll see Jesus interacting with the following people...

In chapter one—John the Baptist, the call of Andrew and John the son of Zebedee, as well as the call of Philip and Nathanael

In chapter two—Mary the mother of Jesus at the wedding in Cana, the money-changers in the temple

In chapter three—Nicodemus

In chapter four—an unnamed Samaritan woman and other Samaritans, then a royal officer in Capernaum

In chapter five—an invalid at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem

In chapter seven—Jesus biological half-brothers

In chapter eight—a woman caught in adultery

In chapter nine—a man born blind

In chapter eleven—Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead

In chapter twelve—Mary who anointed Jesus with costly perfume

In chapter thirteen—washing the 24 dirty feet of the 12 apostles

In chapter fourteen—a conversation with doubting Thomas

In chapter twenty—a post-resurrection appearance to doubting Thomas

In chapter twenty-one—Jesus restores repentant Peter to Himself and to ministry

So John gives us stories that demonstrate how Jesus interacted with and transformed the lives of real people, all kinds of people—rich people, poor people, religious people, sin-wasted people, all kinds. And He does the same today.

The second thing that stands out to me as I read the Gospel of John are Jesus' **teaching sessions**. John includes several of Jesus' "sermons", such as...

Chapter five—His teaching about His unique identity

Chapter six—His "Bread of Life" message

Chapter seven—His controversial message given to the religious leaders at the Feast of Tabernacles

Chapter eight—His "Light of the world" message

Chapter ten—His "I am the Good Shepherd" message

Chapters 14-16—His upper room discourse

Chapter 17—His high priestly prayer

So what do we find in John? We find **stories** and **sermons**. We find what Jesus *did* and what Jesus *said*. This is truly a book that can help us know Jesus better.

In John 1:1-5, John begins by declaring two realities regarding Jesus. Point one, the unique *identity* of Jesus, in verses 1-2. Point two, the unique *accomplishments* of Jesus, in verses 3-5.

I. The unique identity of Jesus (1-2)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."

A few years ago I had breakfast with a young man who was searching. I encouraged him to read the Gospel of John in order to get to know who Jesus was and what Jesus had done. The next time I saw him I asked him if he'd done so. He said he tried, but couldn't make sense of what he was reading. Perhaps you've felt the same way.

At one level, John's message is both clear and easy to understand. God became a man and lived among us, says verse 14. That's what happened in the incarnation. But at a deeper level, John 1 raises all sorts of questions. Who is the *Word*? If it's Jesus, why doesn't John just say *Jesus*? And why all the figurative language, with terms like light and darkness (4)?

What's going on in John's Gospel? Thankfully, John himself tells us in the theme verses, John 20:30-31. Notice verse 30, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book."

So John's book is a biography of the life of Jesus, but it's not exhaustive. As John admits in the last verse of his book, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written (21:25)."

John says he is quite selective. He's writing with a purpose in mind. He knew God had already given the world three biographical accounts of Jesus' life, written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.² John wrote his account more than sixty years after Jesus went back to heaven. He has a different audience in mind. He's trying to introduce a primarily non-Jewish audience to Christ. He's talking to a generation much like ours that didn't know Jesus, people who had never seen nor heard Jesus like he had.

² This explains why John doesn't give us the record of Jesus' birth like we find in Matthew and Luke. Nor does He tell us about Jesus' childhood.

And what's his aim in this gospel? He explains in 20:31, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." This is an evangelistic book, a book intended to help non-Christians get to know the truth about Jesus, not just for knowledge sake, but so they would *believe* in Jesus the Christ and by believing experience life through Him.

That's a pretty bold claim, isn't it? To suggest that a person, namely Jesus, is the key to life? You'd better back that up John. What makes Him so special that we should believe in Him? That's exactly what John takes twenty-one chapters to show us.

And where does he begin? At the beginning? No. If you want to know Jesus, you must go back further than the beginning. And when you do, as John did in 1:1-2, you discover two insights into Jesus' unique identity.

A. Jesus is the Logos, the Word (1). "In the beginning was the *Logos*." *Logos* is the Greek term translated "Word" in our English Bibles. We know from verse 14 that the *Logos* refers to Jesus, the One who became flesh and dwelt among us. But if that's true, why didn't John just say, "In the beginning was Jesus"? Why does He call Him the *Logos*?

Here's a factor that helps us answer that question. Though Christianity began with the Jews (around AD 30), it quickly spread beyond the Jews. As historian William Barclay suggests, "Within thirty years of Jesus' death it had traveled all over Asia Minor and Greece and had arrived in Rome. By A.D. 60 there must have been a hundred thousand Greeks in the church for every Jew who was a Christian."

What's more, many Jewish ideas were completely strange to the Greeks. The concept of the Messiah, though familiar to the Jews, was not so to the Greeks. In evangelizing Jews it was quite meaningful to announce, "The Messiah has come! It's Jesus!" But a Greek would hear that and respond, "So the Messiah came. Big deal."

That category meant very little to the non-Jewish world. So what's the best way to present Jesus to non-Jewish, pagan people? How do you present Christianity in a way that makes sense to Greek-thinking people?

That was the challenge John faced around AD 90. He was living in a Greek city (Ephesus). How could he reach the Greeks? What could he tell them about Jesus that could open their eyes to His relevance?

Then it dawned on him. There was a term that would appeal both to Jews and Greeks, a term that summed up the unique identity of Jesus. He is the *Logos*, the Word.

A word is a powerful thing. During WWII, when Britain was facing extinction under the constant barrage of the Nazi bombers, Winston Churchill gave hope to a nation. How? By speaking to his people over the radio. He knew the power of a word.

When John Knox preached in the days of the Reformation in Scotland, it was said that the voice of that one man put more courage into the hearts of his hearers than ten thousand trumpets braying in their ears. In Knox we see the power of a word.³

What's in a word? We communicate with words. We speak them and write them. Words are symbols that represent something else. For instance, when I speak the letters A-P-P-L-E, you begin to see something, don't you? You see a round red or yellow object. You don't eat the word, for the word is a symbol. It represents and communicates something.

Jesus is the *Word*. But the English term "word" really doesn't do justice to the Greek *Logos*. In Greek thought the term *logos* goes back to 560 BC and a philosopher named

³ Observation by William Barclay.

Heraclitus,⁴ who taught that everything was changing from day to day. His famous illustration was that it's impossible to step twice into the same river. You step into a river, then step out. If you step back in, it's a different river, for the water flows on and has changed. To Heraclitus everything was like that, in a constant state of flux.

But if that's the case, why isn't the world in complete chaos? The answer of Heraclitus was that this change and flux are not haphazard. It is controlled and ordered and follows a pattern. What controls the pattern is the *Logos*, the *word*, the *reason* of God. To Heraclitus, the *logos* is the principle of order in the universe, the mind of God that controls the world and every person in it.

As time passed, the Stoics picked up the concept, too. The Stoics asked questions like, "What keeps the stars in their courses? What makes the tides ebb and flow? What brings the seasons around at their appointed times?" And their answer was, the *Logos* of God. The *logos* is the power that puts sense into the world.

Then came another figure in the Greek world, Philo, a first century, Jewish philosopher. Philo used the term *logos* no fewer than 1,300 times in his writings. He said that the *logos* was the oldest thing in the world, the instrument through which God made the world. He said that the *logos* was the thought of God stamped on the universe, and that the *logos* was the intermediary between the world and God.

There's a rich Hebrew background to *logos* too. The "word" theme runs throughout Scripture. For instance, in Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God." In Isaiah 55:11, "So is my *word* that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty."

We see it later in the New Testament as well. In Hebrews 1:1-3, "In time past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful *word*." In Revelation 19:13, "His name is the **Word** of God." Revelation 22:13 says, "He is the alpha and omega," the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. What do you do with letter? Make a *word*.

Now plug this understanding of *logos* in the ancient word into John 1:1. It's as if John is saying to the readers of his day, "For centuries people have been thinking and writing about the *logos*, the power that made this world, and the power that controls this world, the power by which men come into contact with God. I'm here to tell you that the *logos* is not an abstract power. It is a person, and His name is Jesus. He's the *Logos*, and I am writing this book to introduce you to Him."

In verse 1 John informs us of three truths regarding the *Logos*.

1. *He was in the beginning.* "In the beginning was the Word." In the beginning? We've heard those words before. Where? Those are the first words of Genesis. John connects the event that took place in Genesis 1:1 with the *Logos*.

In the beginning [Greek word, *arche* from which we get "archeology"], when God created the world, the *Logos* was. The *Logos* had no beginning. This speaks of Jesus' eternity. There's no antecedent to Him. He predates time.

Dear friend, keep in mind this Christmas season that the *Logos* existed before the manger. He was in the beginning.

2. *He was with God.* John states, "And the Word was with God." Notice the preposition, not *under* God, not *after* God, not *above* God, and not *behind* God, but "with" God. Literally, *pros Theon*, "towards God". The word suggests that there has

⁴See Barclay, pp. 34ff.

always been the closest possible connection between the *Logos* and God. There's a unique intimacy between the Father and the Person we meet in John's gospel. Commentator William Hendriksen translates the phrase, "And the Word was face to face with God."

This John is one of Jesus' apostles, and he later wrote another book which we call 1 John. John begins 1 John with similar words: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the *Logos* [Word] of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was *with the Father* and has appeared to us (1 John 1:1-2)."

The Bible says that no one can see God and live (Ex. 33:20). But the Word did. He was *with* God.

3. *He was God (and still is).* "And the *Logos* was God." Nothing higher can be said. All that can be said of God can be said of the Word.

Notice carefully. John says, "The Word was God," not, "God was the Word." There are two persons in that statement, not one. And in the Greek text there's no definite article before God, which indicates that the Word does not by himself make up the entire Godhead.⁵ The Bible teaches that God exists as *three* persons, three persons equal in essence, but distinct in function, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

We are speaking about what is known as the pre-existence of Christ. That's hard for us to fathom, yes, but here we see a very practical implication. It means that God was always like Jesus. Sometimes people say that God was stern and wrathful in Old Testament times, and then Jesus came, and changed God's anger into love. Not so. God has always been like Jesus was when He walked the earth.

This brings us to a second insight into Jesus' unique identity. It's in verse 2, "He was with God in the beginning." You'll notice that verse 2 gives us no new information, but merely repeats truths #1 & #2 from verse 1. Why the repetition? For emphasis. Because it's so amazing. Because the subject of this biography is so unique, so one of a kind. It's as if John is saying, "Yes, you heard me correctly! The One I'm writing about is truly in a class all by Himself!" This is the second insight.

B. Jesus is unlike any other person (2). So let's consider a question? Is this the Jesus in which we believe? My friends, if we don't believe in the *Logos*, the one who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was and still is God, then we don't know the Jesus of the Bible. It's sad, yet true.

1. *Many who say they believe in Jesus believe in a very different Jesus.* When the Mormon Tabernacle choir sings, "O Come, Let Us Adore Him," please realize they are not singing about this Jesus. When someone says, "O, I believe in Jesus, but I don't believe He's the only way to God," they have not grasped who the *Logos* truly is.

You say, "Does it really matter?"

2. *The only Jesus that can save you from your sins is the true Jesus.* That's not my opinion. Keep reading this gospel. That's what Jesus Himself said. And John begins by making sure we know that the true Jesus is the *Logos*, the One who's in a class all by Himself, the God-man. Truly, Jesus Christ possesses a unique identity that puts Him in a class all by Himself. This is what qualifies Him to be our Savior and why He deserves our worship.

This brings us to point two, from His unique identity to His unique accomplishments.

⁵ Observation by Tasker.

II. The unique accomplishments of Jesus (3-5)

Listen to the resume of the *Logos* in verses 3-5, "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing 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." The NIV says, "...but the darkness has not understood it."

In his prologue, John introduces us to several key themes which will run throughout his book. Here we see two themes that pertain to Jesus' unique work. What has Jesus done that's unrivaled by any other being in the universe? John highlights two accomplishments.

A. Jesus is the Life-bringer (3). Listen to the KJV's reading, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." What's that saying about Jesus as the Life-bringer? Two things, one positive, one negative.

1. *He created everything.* "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." That's Genesis 1:1, and it states that God created the universe. But John 1:3 clarifies that it was done literally *through* the *Logos*. As Leon Morris clarifies, "The Father created, but He did it 'through' the Word."⁶ Both the Father and the Son were at work in the creation of the world.

Colossians 1:15-17 elaborates, "He [the Son, 14] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created...All things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Let that sink in. As the Life-bringer, Jesus the Christ created all things. We are not here by the random outcome of evolutionary processes. This universe is the personal handiwork of a Master Craftsman, a Creator, and this Creator is none other than the One who is laying in that manger.

Staggering, isn't it? He created trees, and now He's laying in a feed trough made from one of His trees. All things were made through Him. The star that guides the shepherds. The womb that carried Him for nine months. All fashioned by Him.

This, friends, is why the theory of evolution is so dangerous. It's man's attempt to explain the existence of this world apart from the Life-bringer. Think carefully. God in His Word says that His Son created all things. The sun. The plant life. The animals. Man. Woman. All created by God and specifically by the Son of God.

But the natural man says no. He must say no. Because of original sin and his own sinful bent, he does not want God ruling his life, so he must come up with an alternative explanation as to how this world originated.

Evolution is a faith-based explanation of how the world came into being. It is built upon the presupposition that God does not exist, that there is no Life-bringer, no Creator. Creation itself becomes the life-bringer.

The evolutionist says, "You can't prove that God exists." It actually goes both ways, for the evolutionist can't prove that He doesn't exist. That's a discussion for another day. But what's vital for us to see now is that the Bible not only teaches that God created the world, but that His Son was, shall we say, the general contractor and foreman on the job.

John takes that statement a step further, as must we.

2. *Not one thing exists apart from Him.* That's the end of verse 3, "And without him was not anything made that was made." The positive, He made everything. The negative, nothing exists apart from Him.

Do we realize how great this baby is? There's not one thing that exists that He didn't make. Every star, sea creature, man, woman, child, unborn child, everything. Even

⁶ Leon Morris, *John*

Satan who was a created angel, as were the demons who rebelled and were expelled from heaven.

Dear friend, we can trust Jesus, and here's why. He is the all powerful Life-giver. Nothing exists apart from Him. And if that's true, then nothing surprises Him. There's nothing outside of Himself that might influence Him. It simply couldn't happen. Even the cross was no surprise to Him.

Do you remember what Jesus told Pilate during His trial? In response to Pilate's barb, "Don't you realize I have the power either to free you or to crucify you?", Jesus replied in John 19:11, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

The more I learn about Jesus the more amazed I am by Him. See that baby in the manger. He looks weak and helpless. And in sense He is, for when the Son of God entered this world, He truly humbled Himself. He lay aside the independent use of His divine attributes.

Paul puts it this way in Philippians 2:5–8, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Again, staggering to ponder. The One who died for us is the One who gave us life, our Creator, the Most powerful person in the universe! And that means to reject Him, to say no to His offer of salvation, is to commit the greatest act of treason imaginable. He is the Life-giver. Indeed, He's *your* life-giver and mine.

And that's not all. What else is true of this child? He's not just the Life-giver.

B. Jesus is the Light-bearer (4-5). If John is giving us Jesus' resume of accomplishments, and verse 3 speaks of His work in *creation*, verses 4-5 seem to sum up His work in *redemption*.

Listen to the NIV, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it [or, "the darkness comprehended it not," as in the KJV]."

Jesus is the Life-giver, yes. But something has happened to those to whom He has given life. They have turned from Him. They have transgressed His good instructions for them. They have lost their way in darkness.

So what does He do about this problem? The Life-giver becomes the Light-bearer. What does that mean? What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is the *Light-bearer*? Think about light. What does light do? It shines. It reveals. It makes things clear.

This is what the Light-bearer has done.

1. *He revealed the way.* According to verse 4, life is in Him. In John's Gospel the word "life" occurs more than 35 times and its verbal form another 15 times. What qualifies Jesus to help a world under the sentence of death?

This fact. Life is in Him. He created life in the beginning, and now He alone can restore that which is dead and bring it back to life.

But how does He do it? Verse 4 says that the life was (or became) the "light of men." When Jesus entered this world, He did what light does. He made something clear. He showed the world how life is meant to be lived.

Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." In John 9:5 He put it this way, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Does life not make sense to you, my friend? Do you feel like you're groping in the dark and getting nowhere. Then look to the Light-bearer. Jesus has revealed the way. Study His life, and as you do you'll find out how life is meant to be lived.

But He's not just our example. As sinners, we need more than that. We are blinded by our sin. We can't see the way out, even when the light is shining. And Jesus takes care of this problem too. Here's how. He not only revealed the way, but *is* the way.

2. *He is the way.* It's not just what He *did*, but what He does. Notice John's use of the present tense in verse 5, "The light *shines* in the darkness." Yes, Jesus came to be the Light that would show people lost in the darkness the way to go to get back to God. But He does more. He not only shows us the way, He Himself *is* the way. He says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father except through me."

Indeed, as John says, the light *is shining* in the darkness. Present tense. It's happening right now.

"Follow Me," He says. Keep reading. Where is the Light of the world going in John's gospel? Ultimately, He's going to be nailed to two pieces of wood (made from a tree that He created) outside of Jerusalem. And as He's hanging there, it's going to get dark, at high noon, as He takes upon Himself the sins of all who would ever believe in Him.

Follow Him, my friend, as He enters that darkness. Know that the Light of the world endured that horrible darkness so that we can escape that darkness, and begin walking in the light.

And as you keep following the Light, you'll hear Him say, "It is finished," for He's paid our debt in full. And He walks out of His dark tomb alive, as shall we, if we put our faith in Him.

Have you? Do you remember the day the Light began shining in your life?

Why doesn't everybody come out of the dark? Jesus revealed the way, didn't He? And Jesus is the way, isn't He? Here's why. There's a problem.

3. *Not everyone sees the way.* The final verb in verse 5 is difficult to translate (*katalambanein*). "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." The NIV says, "But the darkness has not understood it." The KJV says, "And the darkness comprehended it not." As D. A. Carson points out, both interpretations express a truth, and both are seen in John's gospel.

The ESV says the darkness has not *overcome* the light. This word can be used of extinguishing a fire. That's what the world tries to do with the Light, doesn't it? Extinguish it, get rid of it, but still the Light shines.

The NIV says the darkness has not *understood* the light. It doesn't comprehend it.

The word can also mean "to apprehend," which can be taken in both ways. One, the darkness hasn't been able to apprehend the light, like we'd say the law wasn't able to apprehend the criminal. Schofield takes it in this sense "the darkness *overcame* it not". But it can indicate that the darkness can't apprehend the truth in the sense of "understanding."

It seems to me (and this is Carson's conclusion) that the latter sense seems to fit better here, especially in light of verses 10-11. "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him."

This again demonstrates the severity of the human problem. We enter the world in the darkness, and even when the Light of the world Himself comes, sinners don't see

Him. Jesus later explains in John 3:19, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."⁷

Is there hope? Yes. The Light of the world took care of this problem too, by sending the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who opens blind eyes so that they see the beauty of Christ.

Make It Personal: Three questions to ask ourselves...

1. *Do I know this Jesus?* My heart is gripped by the sobering thought that many who are attending church services this month, including those who profess to know Jesus, know a different Jesus than the One we've seen this morning in John 1.

Perhaps it's true of you. Is this the Jesus you know, the eternal *Logos*, the Life-bringer and Light-bearer? Do you know *Him*?

In verses 11-12 John says, "He came to His own but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

Have you truly believed in Jesus? Have you received Him?

You say, "I'm not sure. How can I tell?" In a word, evidence.

2. *Is there evidence I know Him?* What kind of evidence? This kind. He is the Life-bringer, right? So is there evidence that the Life-bringer has given you a new heart and a new life? He's also the Light-bearer, right? Has He given you eyes to see the beauty of what He has done for you on the cross, and are you now walking with Him in the light?

When we come to know Jesus, this is the kind of evidence that He produces in us. The apostle John puts it this way in 1 John 2:3, "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands."

Do you delight in obeying Jesus commands? Husbands, have you been loving your wives as Jesus commanded? Wives, are you seeking to respectfully encourage your husbands? Young people, have you been obeying your parents as Jesus commanded? If we know the Life-giver, this is the kind of life He produces.

3. *Who can I share Him with this week?* Let's all think about the people God has placed in our lives, perhaps a neighbor in need, a classmate who's hurting, a person at work who's going through a hard time. Let's share Jesus with them this week!

Closing Song: #137 "*What Child Is This?*" (all three verses)

December Benediction: 2 Corinthians 2:14

⁷ It's worth noting that light and darkness are opposites, but they are not opposites of equal power. Light is stronger than darkness. One little candle can dispel a roomful of darkness.