

Christmas Is Heaven's Idea #1
Series: A Heavenly Christmas
John 1:1-5, 14,18

Introduction: Have you ever heard of a TEL? A tell in school is a snitch who informs the teacher of another student's misbehavior. That is not the word I am referring to. A tell in poker is when a person's body language gives away their hand. That, also, is not what I am referring to.

A 'tel' [T...E...L] in Hebrew, is a hill of civilization that has been built upon repeatedly over a long period of time. Jerusalem is a tel. Much of the Holy Land is a tel. You've probably heard of the city Tel Aviv. Tel means "hill" and Aviv means "spring."

If you dig down through the layers of time, you will find cultures and civilizations buried like hidden treasure. Would you believe that some tels in the Near East have more than twenty layers of civilization? That's deep!

What does this have to do with Christmas, you ask? Well, figuratively speaking, Christmas is a tel. Over the centuries, various cultures have taken the Christmas story and overlain their own traditions. Whereas that can be personal and beautiful, the original meaning can become hidden.

Think about the layers of Christmas culture in our day. Santa Claus, Christmas trees, city sidewalks, busy sidewalks, fruitcake, presents, children believing that the presents under the tree are from an old man in a red suit that travels to every home in the world in one 24-hour period riding in a sleigh pulled along by flying reindeer.

During my Christmas sermon series this year, I'm going to dig down to the bottom layer of the 'tel,' and talk about the true meaning of Christmas. We are going to find ourselves encountering some real mysteries. In the Bible you will discover that it not only tells the story of Christmas, but it also tells the significance of Christmas. It presents Christmas not only with the viewpoint of history, but also the viewpoint of theology.

If I were to ask you, “give me one word that describes Christmas” what would you say? Here is what I would say, **‘Immanuel’** which means God with us. **God always and forever refuses to be God without us. God is LOVE. He loves us. Christmas was an idea that was born in the heart of God from all eternity.**

I Timothy 3:16 says, *‘Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.’* [KJV]

There are four great passages in the New Testament which explain to us the mystery and the meaning of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. John 1 which we will look at this morning. Philippians 2. Colossians 1. And then Hebrews 1.

The STORY of CHRISTMAS was played out on the earth, but it was SCRIPTED in HEAVEN.

My Sermon Series for this month is called: **“A Heavenly Christmas”**

When Matthew and Luke tell us about the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ they begin in TIME. But John begins with ETERNITY.

My message today is...‘CHRISTMAS is HEAVEN’S IDEA’

Christmas was not an idea that some philosophers or politicians or theologians somewhere got together and decided it would be a good thing to do.

Let's look at what John says about the meaning of the birth of Jesus. **Turn with me to: John, chapter 1...**Some have said that John chapter 1 is the most profound page in the entire New Testament.

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2The same was in the beginning with God. 3All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

10He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

14And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Today I want to share three things: Jesus is Heaven's Language, Jesus is Heaven's Light, and Jesus is Heaven's Life. Let PRAY

Number one, Christmas means that,

I. Jesus Is Heaven's Language. [part of language is TRUTH]

If I wanted to gather all the information about Christmas from the four gospels, you'd be surprised by the gospel of John. There's no genealogy of Jesus' family in John's gospel like Luke and Matthew have. There's no story about the nativity, no Bethlehem story, and no manger in John's gospel. We don't find anything about the boyhood of Christ in the Gospel of John either. But John does one thing that no other gospel does: he takes us to Jesus' very beginning.

Bethlehem was the beginning of Christmas, but it wasn't the beginning of Jesus. The true Christmas story commences before creation, continues with a cradle, before carrying on to a cross, and it concludes with a crown.

Someone said that Jesus Christ is God spelling Himself out in a language which man can understand. Words are made up of letters. The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega. That means that He is the A and the Z and all the letters in between. Christmas means that when Jesus Christ came into the world, He was heaven's language. He was God's Word to mankind.

The Bible is the written Word of God. Jesus Christ is the living Word of God.

When it says Jesus is the Word, it tells us a little bit about the person of Jesus.

Why is the word "Word" capitalized? This is not talking about just a word in a sentence. This is a title. It is not referring to something; it is referring to Someone, and it is obvious as you read this chapter, John is talking about Jesus.

A. Jesus God's Word of Creation

Those first three words should remind you of another verse in the Bible - the very first one in Genesis. ***"In the beginning"*** refers to when everything had its

beginning - time, space and matter. However, there is one major difference between the way those three words are used in Genesis and the way they are used here in John.

In Genesis, you are looking forward to the creation of humanity. In John, you are looking backward to the presence of Jesus. Jesus was not from the beginning; He was before the beginning. He “was” in the Greek language signifies an action of the past that continues into the present. You can translate it this way, “In the beginning, Jesus has been the Word and always will be the Word.” In other words, Jesus had a birth, but he never had a beginning.

Here's what you must understand about the purpose and the meaning of Christmas. Bethlehem's manger was not the beginning of the Jesus. Jesus Christ existed before He was born. We call this the preexistence of Christ.

In Isaiah 9, verse 6, the Bible says, ***"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."*** You can't give what did not previously exist. These verses of Scripture make it very clear to us that before Bethlehem, Jesus Christ existed. "In the beginning was the Word." Literally that means, "in the beginning was continually existing Christ." Jesus Christ was the preexistent one.

"In the beginning was the Word." That sets forth the idea of eternity.

We really don't know how old the universe is. But I'm here to tell you, however old the universe is, Jesus Christ already existed. He was and is and ever shall be the eternal one.

That is impossible to grasp, because everything we know has a beginning and an end, but Jesus never had a beginning or an end. He is from eternity to infinity. There was a time when time was not, but there has never been a time when Jesus was not. Who was in the beginning? The Word. That is a perfect way to describe Jesus, because what is a “word?” You are both hearing and seeing what a word is right now. A word is a tool that is used for revelation and communication.

B. Jesus is God's Word of Revelation

A word is the visible expression of an invisible thought. You are hearing what I am thinking by what I am saying. I am communicating to you, my thoughts. The Word is the revelation of God given through Jesus and through the Bible.

"... and the Word was with God." (John 1:1, NIV) The word ***"with"*** is a very special term. It really means to be face-to-face or to be continuously toward someone. In other words, Jesus was not just in the neighborhood with God; he was face-to-face with God, fellowshiping with God, communicating with God.

Then, John drops the theological hammer, ***"...and the Word was God."*** (John 1:1, NIV) Jesus wasn't just in the beginning with God. He wasn't just with God in the beginning. From the beginning, he was God. It does not say that God was the Word for that would mean that only Jesus is God. It says the "Word was God."

You have two persons, but one God. We also know that the Holy Spirit is also God, so you have three persons, but one God, which is what we call "The Trinity." So, who is God? God the Father. Who is God? God the Son. Who is God? God the Spirit.

The Bible says that God is one God and yet God exists in three persons. I don't understand that, but I believe it.

I don't know how electricity causes one molecule to touch another molecule and it makes it possible to put lights in this building. I don't understand everything about electricity, but I believe in electricity.

I don't understand how a brown cow can eat green grass and give yellow butter and white milk. But I like butter on my English muffin and milk with my chocolate cake.

In the world of mathematics, the Trinity is not explained as - One plus one plus one equals three, but rather - One times one times one equals one.

The Trinity is stamped on God's world of nature in the universe. The universe is made up of time, space, and matter. Time is a trinity. It is made up of the past, the present, and the future. We do not understand this and yet the Bible says, "In the

beginning was the word." That's eternity. "In the beginning the word was with God. The word was God." That's deity.

Story: I like the way the little girl explained the Trinity. She said, "Three in one and one in three and the one in the middle died for me."

John tells us when the Word was - **in the beginning.**

He tells us where the Word was - **with God.**

He tells us who the Word was - **God.** Then, he tells us what the Word did - ***"He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."*** (John 1:2-3, NIV)

Now did Jesus create the world or did God the Father create the world? The answer is "Yes." Did you know that in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," the Hebrew word is "Elohim." It is a plural noun and literally you could translate it "gods," but there is only one God. That is why it takes a singular verb. "Created" is singular. So, who was at creation? God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, but only one God and that God created the world. So, who is Jesus?

Jesus is God's Word.

He is the word of revelation.

He is the physical, visible expression of the spiritual invisible God.

He is God's word of creation - he spoke the world into existence. It was Jesus doing the speaking.

C. Jesus is God's Word of Salvation.

When Jesus came into the world, He came to make visible the invisible God. He came to reveal the Father to us. If you want to know what God is like, you look at the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know what God would say, listen to what Jesus had to say. If you want to know what God would do, look at the things Jesus did. He came into this world to reveal the Father.

That's not all Jesus came into the world to do. Look at verse 14. ***"And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us."*** He came not only to reveal the Father, but the Word was made flesh. For what purpose was the word made flesh?

Think about 'made flesh.' He already existed and yet the Bible says when He was born in Bethlehem that the Word was made flesh.

There's another statement in Galatians 4, verse 4, which amplifies that. ***"When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law."*** The reference there is to the virgin birth of Jesus. When Jesus was born the Bible says He was born of the Virgin Mary. When He was made flesh, He was made flesh supernaturally.

Does it make any difference whether Jesus was virgin born or not? It makes all the difference in the world! If Jesus Christ were not virgin born that means He had a human father. If Jesus had a human father, that means He had a fallen nature. If Jesus had a fallen nature, that means He did not live a perfect life. If Jesus Christ didn't live a perfect life, that means He could not offer a perfect sacrifice for us. If Jesus could not offer a sinless sacrifice, that means He could not be our Savior. If Jesus Christ is not our Savior, that means that Jesus Christ is just a man like anybody else. No man can do for you and me what we need done for us! He was made flesh!

There's another verse that tells us what He was made for us. II Corinthians 5, verse 21. ***"For he (the Father) has made him (Jesus) to be sin for us."***

Jesus was made flesh. He was born. But Jesus also was made sin. That's why He was born. The meaning of Christmas is that God spoke His language in the person of His Son the Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ came out of eternity. He was born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life. Then the Bible says that when they took Him and put Him on that cross, outside Jerusalem, in that moment, He who knew no sin was made sin for us.

The most important question you will ever need to answer in this lifetime is "Who is Jesus Christ?" If you get that wrong everything else will be wrong.

Christmas means that, Jesus is Heaven's Language, secondly...

II. Jesus Is Heaven's Light.

Christmas is a story which is told in two parts. Both parts are told to bring us everlasting hope. One offers these things in time and the other, eternity.

We all learned the story in church and perhaps we played out one of the characters in a Christmas play comes from Luke 2:8-16.

'And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."16So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.' [NIV]

Please know that this story is not inaccurate, but it is incomplete. This is only a snippet of 'The Christmas Story' as we celebrate it.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" and John writes, "In Him was life and that life was (and is) the light of men, and the light shined in darkness and the darkness did not overcome it."

If you want to know what is going on in our world it is the same thing that has been going on since the beginning of time. There is a battle between light and darkness. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of light. The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of darkness. Here is the wonderful news. Light is the undefeated,

undisputed, champion of this battle. Darkness has never overcome light and it never can and it never will.

Verse 4 says. ***'In him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.'*** Verse 9... ***'That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'***

Jesus is heaven's language. He is the Word. Jesus is heaven's light.

We tend to take Christmas lights for granted. We see them on Christmas trees, and on bushes and buildings throughout the city. They're in practically every store and mall, and sometimes we've seen them in synchronized musical displays on homes.

Tradition tells us that Martin Luther decorated his "Christmas tree" as far back as 1510. At first people glued small candles to the tree branches with melted wax or attached by pins. Around 1890, candleholders began to be used to hold those Christmas candles. In the early 1900's, people started using small lanterns and glass balls to hold their candles.

On December 22, 1882 Edward H. Johnson (an associate of Thomas Edison) had the first string of electric lights created for his tree. There were 80 red, white and blue electric incandescent light bulbs about the size of a walnut hand-wired together. However, the lights were so expensive that it took over decade for stores to use them and nearly 50 years for them become popular in the general populace.

But once they became accepted around 1930 - for the past 95 years electric Christmas lights have been commonplace.

But as beautiful and pleasing as lights are at Christmas, they are but a pale reminder of the REAL LIGHT of Christmas.

A. Jesus is the One who turned the lights on in all of Creation.

Verse 3 says, 'All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.' That simply means that when Jesus Christ spoke, the whole

universe came into existence. The whole universe lit up. Genesis 1, verse 3, says, "And God said let there be light."

Remember that God's first command was "Let there be light!" And that's why He created the Sun and the Moon and the stars-to give light to dark places. And that's why, when God saw the darkness in our lives, He so loved us and sent His only begotten Son to this world so that - as John chapter 1 tells us - ***"(His Son) the Light shines in the darkness..."***

B. Jesus is also the One who is the light of Conscience.

Light was a common theme throughout the Bible: Isaiah 9:2 is a prophesy of the day the Messiah would come: ***"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."***

During Jesus' ministry He said, ***"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*** John 8:12

Jesus also said: ***"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."*** John 12:46

Paul said that Jesus sent him ***"to open (peoples') eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in (Jesus)."*** Acts 26:18

And Colossians tells us God ***"...rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves"*** Colossians 1:13

Sin darkens our lives. It darkens our past, our present and our future. Jesus also gave us light by taking the darkness out of our lives.

Turn to the book of Romans 1:19. ***'since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.'*** [NIV]

That means that everybody is brought into the world with some light. God has revealed through His creation, His existence, and His eternal power. Yet, the Bible

says that mankind has rejected that light of conscience. Now, man is living in darkness. Man is living in moral darkness, and spiritual darkness.

STORY: A first-grade teacher that was trying to teach her kids about the light that we get from the sun and the moon. She said, "Okay. Which is more important? The sun or the moon?" A little boy raised his hand and he said, "The moon." She said, "The moon? Why do you say the moon?" He said, "Because the moon gives us light at night when we need it the most. The sun gives us light in the daytime when we really don't need it."

Jesus is heaven's Light. The Bible says that the true light is shining. It says in verse 5 that the darkness comprehends it not. That means you can't turn it out. You can't take Christ out of Christmas. He is right in the center and heart of Christmas, and He is turning on the light in people who will open up their heart and life to receive Him as their Savior.

If you really want to have a Christmas like you have never had in all your life, all you need to do is to open up the windows of your heart and say, "Lord, let the light shine in." When Jesus comes to shine in your heart, you will know what Christmas is all about.

Jesus is heaven's Language, the Word. Jesus is heaven's Light, the True Light

III. Jesus Is Heaven's Life.

I love this passage. It just gets deeper and better. Now John tells us, ***"In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind."*** (John 1:4, NIV) In the New Testament, there are two different words for "life."

One is the Greek word "bios." Where we get the word "biology" from. That refers to physical life - the life that we live in the body and the life that will eventually come to an end.

There is another word. It is the word "zoe." This is the highest form of life. This is spiritual life. This is eternal life. Now, who needs life? Dead people need life.

STORY: An infidel and a Christian wife had a lovely young daughter who was dying of a terminal disease. She said to her dad, 'Daddy, do you want me to die with your belief or mother's belief?' Death puts all beliefs to the test.

We are all born obviously with physical life, but we are not born with spiritual life.

We are born physically alive, but spiritually dead. Let me make it easy. You are born with physical life, BUT you must be born-again to receive spiritual life. Put simply, we are all born with earthly life, but we need to receive eternal life.

There is a BIG difference between existing and living. Everybody exists, but not everybody lives. That is what Jesus meant when he said, ***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*** (John 10:10, NIV)

The second part of this statement is a spiritual truth that is also a scientific truth. He says, “that life was the light of all mankind.” When God created the world the first words we hear from God’s mouth are, ***“Let there be light...”*** (Genesis 1:3, NIV)

Why does God begin there? Because there can be no life in the physical world without light. Remember in biology learning about photosynthesis? That word literally means ‘put together with light.’ It is one of those things we take for granted, but we wouldn’t be able to live without it. Photosynthesis is the process where green plants and other organisms use light to convert elements into glucose. Glucose is a simple sugar that is the basic energy source for practically every living organism on planet Earth. The oxygen that we need to breathe is a by-product of photosynthesis. Fossil fuels like coal and petroleum that we have come to depend on to live are by-products of photosynthesis.

All of which needs the light of the sun to even happen. Without light, physical life would eventually cease to exist. Plants would die and without oxygen so would we. What is true physically is also true spiritually.

When our darkened eyes are opened and we actually see the light of Jesus, a spiritual photosynthesis takes place. We go not just from darkness to light, but from death to life.

It is the first time we are given eyes that can see God, ears that can hear God, and a heart that can know God.

We move from the temporal to the eternal. We move from the physical to the spiritual. We move from the natural to the supernatural.

Jesus is Heaven's Language, Jesus is Heaven's Light, and Jesus is Heaven's Life.

Conclusion: Warren Wiersbe points out that there are four things needed for life: You need air to have life. You need water to have life. You need food to have life. And you need light to have life - those four things. You think about Jesus. He spoke, in John chapter 3, about the Spirit being the breath. And He's the one that gives the Spirit, and the Spirit is the breath of life, the *pneuma* of life. You must have air.

You must have water. Jesus told the woman at the well that He was the living water. He said, in John chapter 7, ***'Anyone who's thirsty, come to Me and drink, and out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'*** He said that He is the light of the world. He said He is the bread of life. He is breath. He is air. He is water. He is food. He is everything.

In Him was life. Jesus said, ***"The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly."***

Eternal life: forever and ever and ever with God in heaven.

Abundant life: here on this earth. He wants you to have those two parts of life to really live life to the full. He is life. And He will give life to anyone who comes to Him in repentance and faith.

Verses 12-13 tell us that those who receive Christ and "believe on His name," are now called "children of God." Notice the three key verbs here: ***"believe... receive... become..."***

First, we ***"believe"*** in His name. This means trusting in who Jesus is and what He has done to save us from sin. Next, we must ***"receive Him."*** This is personal and intentional acknowledging Jesus not just as a Savior, but as my Savior and Lord. It's to those who receive Him that He gives ***"the right to become children of God."***

We do our part-**believe** and **receive**; and God does His part. He says, "**we become!**" In that moment, He imparts new life. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us, regenerating our hearts and giving us life from above. We are transformed, sharing in His divine nature and becoming true children of God.

" The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." ([NIV]

This is the miracle of salvation!