Who Is He?

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John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2]He was in the beginning with God. [3]All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being [4]in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. [5]The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. [7]He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. [8]He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. [9]The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. [11]He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. [12]But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, [13]who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

1. Who is Jesus?

Last Sunday Christians all over the world celebrated the birth of Jesus. For the past 2000 years, people have celebrated Jesus' birth every year. Without Jesus, we can't have our faith, our church, or Christianity. For many of us, we would say that Jesus is the most important person in our life, even more than ourselves. Yet about 70% of people in the world do not believe in Jesus. For many people, Jesus is just one of the important religious leaders. Who is Jesus? Is he the Messiah who came into the world to save all humanity? Is he a man? Or is he divine? The identity of Jesus has been one of the most important questions to many people throughout history.

2. The Gospel of John

All four gospels begin by telling who Jesus is. However, the way each gospel introduces Jesus is quite different. Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, likely because the gospel was written for the Jews. Jesus is traced through David the king back to Abraham the patriarch. In Luke, Jesus is traced back to Adam emphasizing Jesus' universal mission. What about Mark? Mark does not say anything about the birth of Jesus. Mark starts with the preaching of John the Baptist. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic gospels. The word "synoptic" comes from the Greek word *synoptikos*, meaning "able to be seen together." The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke

have similar perspectives on Jesus' ministry and share many of the same accounts of Jesus.

The Gospel of John is quite different from the Synoptic gospels. The author does not talk about the birth of Jesus, of his baptism, of his temptation. There is no account of the last Supper, nothing of Gethsemane, and nothing of the ascension. The gospel of John has none of the parable stories. The author of John's gospel begins with a theological prologue. When and by whom is the fourth gospel written? The gospel of John was probably written last among the four gospels roughly about the end of the first century. The gospel itself does not say anything about the writer and place where it was written. But John 21:20 gives us a clue that the writer is "the disciple whom Jesus loved" who is John the disciple.

Why did John write the fourth gospel? During the end of the first century, the gospel of Jesus Christ had been introduced into the Gentile world. By that time, the Christian church was no longer predominantly Jewish; it was in fact overwhelmingly Gentile. So it was necessary that Christianity had to be restated. This was not the detailed factual truth of Christianity but the terms and the way to explain who Jesus was had to be changed. The author found a solution to the change. He uses the conception of the term *Logos*.

3. Logos

John 1:1 begins, ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*** In verse 14, he says, "***And the Word became flesh and lived among us***." The author of John's gospel begins with the preexistence of Jesus before creation instead of the birth narrative as in Matthew and Luke. He uses a term "word" to explain who Jesus is. The term "word" is Greek word "*logos.*" In Greek, *logos* means "word" and "reason."

The Gentiles in the first century did not have a concept of a savior or messiah as the Jews. They never thought about the coming of the creator God into this world as a human. When the term "logos," is used to explain who Jesus was many Gentiles were able to understand the identity of Jesus and accept him as the Messiah. When the Gentiles applied the word to the universe, they meant the rational principle that governs all things. Night and day came with regularity and the year kept its seasons in unvarying course. The stars and the planets moved in their unfaltering path. What produced this order? They answered "the logos," the mind of God makes the order of the world possible. What gives man power to think, to reason, and to know? The answer is the logos, the mind of God, dwelling within a man makes him a rational being.

The author of John's gospel thought of Jesus in this way. He said to the Gentiles. "The logos has come to earth in the man Jesus. Jesus was presented as nothing less than God acting in the form of a man." Jesus' words and works, all of his life and death, make God known in the world.

In the Old Testament, the word is used as a way of referring to God. Thus, the author of John's gospel used the term *logos* that was meaningful to both Jews and Gentiles. He emphasizes that the logos came into the world as a human being and lived among us. Jesus is the incarnate word of God. As the Word became flesh Jesus brings God fully to the world.

When the identity of Jesus was introduced in the term "logos," it was easy for the Gentiles to understand who Jesus was. The same thing happened in Korea. Before Christianity was introduced in Korea, there was a term "Haneunim," meaning the ruler of heaven. When the first missionaries translated God into Korean language, they used the term "Hananim" that has very similar sound to "Haneunim." "Hana" in Korean means one and so hananim means one God. By using "hananim" which helps Korean understand who God is many early Korean Christians were able to understand the identity of God without too much difficulty. The author of John's gospel helped many Gentiles in the first century to accept Jesus as their Messiah through using the term "logos." What do you think would be the "logos" for us today? What would make people understand and be drawn to Jesus and the church?

4. Christmas Cantata

Last Sunday, our sanctuary was packed with lots of people. And many people visited our Facebook page and listened to the Christmas Cantata. Someone wished she could have been in church to listen to the music in person. We learned Christmas music attracts people. We know the power of music. Many people love music and find pleasure, relaxation, and comfort in listening. Through music, many have also heard the Gospel of Jesus. Our hymns and gospel music have a power to transform the minds of people.

Last week, I was meditating on how to make the good news of Jesus Christ relevant to more people in the world. There must be many ways of communicating the message of Jesus to the people. We must use all kinds of ways to share the gospel. Our intention of using various communication tools is not for our own sake such as church growth. But we explore every possible tool to help people meet Jesus and receive Christ for their sake.

John 1:11 & 12 say, "***He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. [12]But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God***." In this passage, we can picture parents who are searching for their runaway children. The creator God came to be with his own children. How sad it would be if God's children do not welcome the creator God and run away. Yet we should embrace the run-away children first before we invite them to Jesus.

5. Why They Do Not Come to Christ

Many Christians tend to think that believing in Jesus is very easy and those who do not believe in Jesus and do not come to church are a little out of the ordinary. We can be tempted to judge those who do not come to church after Christmas. But if we see what the Bible says about Jesus from a non-Christian perspective, we find that many accounts are not acceptable. For example, the stories of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus are hardly believable. So when non-believers hear what believers say about our faith, they think we are out of our minds.

A good example is found in Acts 26:24 which says, "***Paul, you're crazy! Too much learning has driven you out of your mind***" (CEV). This is what King Festus says to Paul when Paul talks about his life journey to King Agrippa. If we invite our children, grandchildren and our friends to church, they might say the same thing because for them what the Bible says about Jesus does not make sense. Yet still today so many people believe in Jesus. How can they believe in Jesus? Ephesians 2:8 says, "***For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God***." We do not believe in Jesus because what the Bible says makes sense or because we are smarter than others. Rather, God has given us the gift of faith so that we can accept Jesus as our Lord and savior. And we realize that God sent us many witnesses to help us to believe Jesus.

6. Who is a Witness?

In verses 6 & 7, the author says that John the Baptist was sent by God to be a witness to testify to Jesus. Did you notice that we had a wonderful witness? As you may know, she is not in Royal Cape Cod Rehab Center any more. She is resting at her heavenly home. Her son Russ shared with me a recent story. A few weeks ago, they met Joanie's doctor in the hospital. Her doctor told them there was nothing he could do for Joanie. Her two sons and her daughter-in-law felt so hopeless they cried, but Joanie was so calm. She told her sons and her daughter-in-law that she was not disappointed. She accepted her impending death. Until she breathed her last breath, she smiled always and never complained about her illness. She showed us what it means to believe in Jesus. She was strong and courageous and a powerful witness.

7. Conclusion & Application

Who is Jesus to you? John says he is the one who came to live with us to help and save us. He is the life and light to us. We know that everyone needs someone like Jesus. John tells us God sent John the Baptist as a witness to Jesus. We are also here as witnesses to the Lord. How can we help others to find Jesus? We need to have more creative ideas to invite them to Jesus. I pray that through a concert and many fun activities in our church we meet new people and help them be brought closer to Christ. Amen.