

**"The Logos"
(John 1:1-18)
Pastor Peter Yi
December 10, 2017**

(John 1:1-18)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

The beginning of the New Testament section of the Bible begins with four biographies of Jesus Christ, which are also known as Gospels. Of the four Gospels, only one of them, the Gospel of Mark, has no mention of the birth of Jesus Christ. Matthew and Luke tell us about the birth of Jesus in great detail. John's Gospel is different. It too tells us about the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, but in a very different way. When we read, it doesn't mention shepherds and manglers. It doesn't mention Jesus' parents. John is speaking on a very different plane.

If you've read any biography of a famous person, the beginning of the biography almost always mentions the person's birth. It tells us who the parents and maybe even the grandparents were. The father might have been a prominent person or a person of very low position in society. The author will mention the town he was born in, and maybe at that time, show a picture of the home that he grew up in and that's about it. They don't dwell on it. It's not terribly significant. What people want to get to is the person's adult life, where he made his mark, where he did the thing that made him famous. 80% of the biography will be about that, but when you look at the biographies of Jesus, they are unlike any other kind of biography.

No other biography known to us, says that the person I am speaking of is the fulfillment of thousands of years of prophecy. No other biography mentions the theological significance of the person's birth. No matter how famous you are. No matter what your contribution to society was, as an inventor or an entertainer, or an athlete, or a soldier, or a politician, your birth is not a really important part of the story. With the birth story of Jesus, you'll come to see that it is very different. Let's take a look:

(John 1:1-18)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

For this season of Christian, we're going to stay in this chapter and try to get a deeper understanding of what the birth of Jesus Christ and his incarnation means for us. My goal for these next several sermons is the same as John's goal in the writing of his Gospel. His goal is found in 20:31 (John 20:31) "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

For the person who is not yet a Christian, my hope is that you will come to understand who Jesus was and why he came and you would believe in him and find life. For those of us who are Christians already, my hope is that we will come to understand more fully than ever before who Jesus is and why he came, and that our faith, which is always based on knowledge, would increase in measure to our understanding, and we too would find deeper and more meaningful and purposeful life in Jesus.

The focus of today's sermon is the Logos. Logos is the Greek word for "Word." We'll be focusing on verses 1,2 and 14. We'll be talking about two main points. First, **The Logos was God**, and **The Logos was a human**. In other words, the author is trying to tell us something phenomenal, something incredible about the Logos, that the Logos was God and that the Logos was also human.

The Logos was God

Let's begin with a definition of Logos. What does this word mean? Well, interestingly, there was a Greek understanding of the word and a Jewish understanding of the word.

Before the time of Christ (500 B.C.) Greek philosophers began to adopt the word and use it to signify that which gives shape, form or life to the material universe. So if you were to ask an ancient Greek person what is it that gives shape and form to the universe? He would have answered, "The Logos." One particular example is interesting. One commentator shares this. He says, "Philo, who was a disciple of Plato, makes a distinction between the ideal world, which he calls 'the *logos* of God', and the real world which is but its copy. So for Philo, *logos* can refer to the ideal man, the primal man, from which all human beings come from (Carson). So already in the understanding of the Greeks the word *Logos* had god-like qualities—the *logos* was impersonal, but it did things like create and it had qualities of perfection, it was the original template for what we see in this world. So hold on to that idea.

In Judaism – Logos is God's activity. It's the means by which God does things. It's the way he interacts in our world. Let me give you some examples. God has many works, but his major works are four things. Creation, Revelation, Judgment, and Salvation. How does God create? Through speech, through the Logos. How does God reveal? Through speech, through the Logos. How does God judge? He pronounces his judgments through the Logos. How does God save? He saves through his word, through the Logos. In all these four things that God does through speech, words, logos; they are all expressions of his self-revelation.

So, hold on to those two ideas of logos—the Greek idea and the Jewish idea. To the Greeks it was an impersonal, yet very important concept, the original idea, the master template, the Logos was reason. To the Jews it was the way that God himself acted among us. The Logos was always personal because it came from a God who entered into a relationship with them.

Now, with those two thoughts in mind, with this backdrop, John writes one of the most powerful beginnings of any biography ever written. "In the beginning was the Word (the *logos*), and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God." Just let that sink in.

In this single sentence John tell us three things about this Logos: his existence, his relationship, and his identity.

It tells us about His existence.

The most famous opening line ever written, in all of English literature has to be these three words, "In the beginning." Any Jewish person reading the first three words of this Gospel, would have been immediately taken back to Genesis 1:1, to the very first words of the Bible. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1 takes us back to a period before the existence of humanity, before the formation of the planet earth, before even the universe, before anything. And it tell us, in the beginning before there was anything, there was God. In the beginning God existed.

When John mimics Genesis 1:1 at the beginning of his Gospel, he is saying something incredible about the Logos. He's saying, Just as in the beginning there was only God, that only God existed, In the beginning, before there was anything, there was the Logos. The Logos was always there. This is scandalous. How could someone other than God have existed when only God existed? But then later in the Gospel, Jesus says things like, "Before Abraham was, I am," meaning, before Abraham existed, I existed. That's crazy talk.

His Relationship

Then in the next phrase he tells about the relationship of the Logos.

If I were to just read the first phrase, I would naturally and logically conclude that the phrase, “In the beginning was the Logos,” meant that the Logos was God the creator, God the Father, the Old Testament God, but the second phrase keeps the reader from making that conclusion because it says, and the Logos was *with* God. You cannot be with someone and also be that person, too. When someone asks us, “Who were you with?” We don’t say I was with me. You might say, I was alone, or I was by myself, but never, I was with me.

We know that God was there at the beginning because Genesis 1:1 tells us. But now John tells us that there was another person who was also there at the beginning, the Logos.

So now, we have God the father/creator and we have this Logos, who was with God. That’s his relationship.

Now finally, to *His Identity*

The first two phrases began painting a picture of what or who this Logos was. He was eternal. He always existed. He was there from the very beginning. But also, the Logos was distinct from God and in a relationship with God. And then the final hammer blow comes down when John says, and the Logos was God. (Drops mic, walks off the stage)

Even in the verses that follow, the great acts of God...creation and the giving of life are attributed to the Logos:

³ Through (the Logos) all things were made; without (the Logos) nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In (the Logos) was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

Wow! What are we to do with that? Do you know what it’s supposed to do? Well just like all the great literature that begins with a great opening line, it’s telling us...read on. Find out. Discover who this Logos is. The book of John is actually one very long Gospel tract. It was written for evangelism, to help a seeker learn, discover and encounter the one and only true God. So, this is the claim. This is part of John’s thesis. The book you have just picked up is going to blow your mind. This Logos is God. Read on to discover more.

In addition to telling us that the Logos is God, John is also telling us that the Logos is human.

This Logos, this reason, this revelation, this template, this Word, to John and to us, is God’s ultimate self-expression. Twice in the first two verses it tells us that the Logos was with God. The fact that John describes this Logos as distinct from God and that John uses the word ‘Logos’ to describe this being implies, infers that God by nature, is relational. God existed in the form of at least two persons from this passage and then from other passages of Scripture we discover that God always existed as three persons. The Logos from the beginning, co-existed in a personal relationship with God.

Now, I remember hearing or reading this. A non-Trinitarian God, cannot by nature be relational. Relationship would have been something he did after he created. But it wasn’t part of him from the beginning, if all there was from the beginning was this singular God. But if God, like the Christian God, always existed in plurality, then all he’s ever known is relationship. He’s never known a moment where he didn’t eternally exist in relationship. So again, hold onto this information as we move through the text.

Now as we read on and get to verse 14, John returns once again to the Logos and says,

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

So, we've learned that because there was God at the beginning and the Logos also at the beginning, that God exists as a relational being, at least between each other, and the Holy Spirit. However, that doesn't mean that God has to be in a relationship with us, does it, as if he needed or required our relationship? No, I don't believe it does.

But, when we read in verse 14 that the Logos became flesh and made his dwelling among us, then it tells us that he wanted to begin a relationship with us. What other reason would there be to enter the world of humans apart from wanting to be in a relationship?

What exactly does it mean that the Logos became flesh?

A German theologian Herman Ridderbos said it like this (my paraphrase):

The Word becoming flesh doesn't mean mutation or changed into as if the Logos ceased being God the moment he assumed flesh. Nor does it mean that the Logos was half God and half man. Nor does it mean that he possessed some of the attributes of God, but not all, and some of the attributes of man, but not all. Rather, it's saying that he became human without compromising his Godness. So now, this human, who is still the Logos, now possesses all of humanity and at the same time retains all of his deity.

Then, John tells us that the Logos made his dwelling among us. The word "dwelling" is the same word that is used for two things in the Old Testament. One is the Tabernacle. The tabernacle was God's portable temple. Just as God's people were nomadic and moved from place to place, God also to be with and among his people decided to also live in a tent. This tent was located at the center of the 12 tribes of Israel, so that God could remain close to and central to all that Israel was and did.

The second use of the word is that of the Tent of Meeting. This was the place where Moses would meet every day, face-to-face with God. So in the OT, the word "Dwelling" represented God living among the people and the place where people could meet with God personally and intimately.

Now, John says, this Logos, this God became flesh and tented, tabernacled, dwelt, resided, lived with us. This Logos is indeed personal. Who is this Logos? This word is the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

What does all of this tell us? It tells us that God desires to communicate with us and he desires for us to respond to his communication. In any relationship, really the foundation of any relationship is Logos. It's communication, words, and revelation that begins, deepens, sustains and grows a relationship. In all communication a gap is being bridged. Without communication the gap and the distance remains, and even grows. But communication brings the two sides together.

All other religions say, try to reach God, try to appease him, try to be good enough. Try to build a ladder tall enough. But only in Christianity do we find a God who says, I'll reach you. You don't have to ascend, rather I'll condescend. You don't have to climb up, I'll go down. You don't have to become God. I'll become a man. I'll reach you. And he did that at the very first Christmas, when he sent his Son Jesus as the Logos, as the communication, to enter this world. Jesus came to live the perfect life we were called to live and he died the death penalty we were supposed to receive, so that the gap between God and us could be bridged. Because God did that for us, because he took the initiative, that's why Christians are called to be peace-makers. That's why we are to always take the first step, to make the first move to restore broken relationships. We cannot remain in sour relationships for very long.

Jesus Christ is the Logos, he was with God in the beginning, in fact he was God, but then he became flesh, for us. This is the meaning of Christmas.

Let's pray.