

When we think about Christmas and the Bible, ~ we naturally think ~ of Matthew's account ~ of the virgin birth ~ and the visit of the Magi

And/or ~ we think ~ of Luke's account ~ of Gabriel's visit to Mary ~ and ~ of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

➤ We think ~ of the decree going out from Caesar Augustus, ~ of Joseph and Mary going up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, ~ and ~ of Mary giving birth to Jesus in a manger.

➤ We think ~ of the shepherds in the field, ~ of the heavenly host announcing peace on earth to those of good will, ~ and ~ of the shepherds finding the baby in the manger.

When we come to the opening/prologue of John's gospel, ~ 1: ~ 1-18, ~ we don't find these things in it.

➤ However, ~ [Jn. 1: ~ 1-18](#), ~ which we'll look @ today, ~ is very much ~ a Christmas message.

It all has to do ~ with the approach ~ the 3 authors took ~ in writing about ~ the 1st advent of Jesus.

➤ Matthew & Luke ~ approached Jesus' incarnation ~ by reporting on the events surrounding Jesus' birth and his birth itself.

▷ In literary terms, ~ we could say that ~ they focused on ~ writing a report ~ regarding the 1st advent of Jesus.

➤ John, ~ on the other hand, ~ did not write a report.

▷ Rather, ~ he approached Jesus' incarnation ~ from a ~ theological standpoint. 1/13

▷ He wrote ~ a doctrinal essay, ~ setting down ~ crucial theological truths ~ about Jesus and his 1st advent.

▷ If we are ~ to understand and celebrate Christmas ~ in its fullest meaning, ~~ we must not neglect the truths ~ which John's prologue ~ contains.

We could call Jn. 1: ~ 1-18, ~ John's Christmas Essay.

▶ John focuses on ~ amazing, ~ deep, ~ theological truths ~ that will enhance ~ our understanding and celebration ~ of Jesus' 1st advent.

▷ Additionally, ~ these truths ~ will boost ~ our understanding and praise ~ of our Savior.

Scratching the surface. ⇨ So, ~ let's dig in.

John begins, ~ vs 1.

In the beginning ~ was the Word, ~~ and the Word ~ was with God, ~~ and the Word ~ was God.

▶ Jesus as ~ the Word ~ means ~ that he is the living revealer of God, ~ the very voice of God in this world.

▷ Heb. 1: ~ 1-2a, ~~ Long ago, ~ at many times and in many ways, ~~ God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ~~ but in these last days ~ he has spoken to us ~ by his Son.

Jn. 1: ~ 1 ~ tells us 3 things ~ about the Word.

▶ 1st, ~ preexistent. ~~ In the beginning ~ means in effect ~ before the world was created.

▷▷ In ~ [or, ~ before] ~ the beginning ~ the Word already existed. 2/13

➤ 2nd, ~ he was with God. ☞ I.e., ~~ he enjoys ~ a special relationship ~ with God.

➤ And 3rd, ~ the Word ~ was God. {Grammatical. ⇔ John = Jewish}

This Jesus ~ who walked the earth ~ was actually ~ God himself.

➤ The Light of the World Now shone as a man, And walked through the valleys He'd carved with His hands. A servant to those He'd breathed into life, He felt our injustice And shared in our strife.

Jn. continues setting down ~ crucial theological truths ~ about Jesus and his 1st advent, ~ vs 2.

Repeats himself, ~~ He was in the beginning with God.

➤ John wants us to be ~ in no doubt ~ as to his meaning.

▷ Jesus ~ is the Word incarnate. ☞ Jesus ~ is therefore God incarnate.

➤ This ~ is at the heart of the gospel.

▷ Because ~ a Jesus ~ who is merely a good man and a marvelous teacher, ~~ or a Jesus ~ who is someone we think of as divine and inspiring but not actually God, ~ †

→ is a man-made myth, ~ powerless ~ to save a single soul.

➤ To live and die and rise again for sinners in order to ~ objectively and definitively ~ remove our guilt & sin ~ and give us new life ~ requires that Jesus ~ be the Son of God incarnate.

➤ The best example in the world ~ could not actually save a flea. 3/13

▷ We did not need ~ good advice, ~ moral influence, ~ or myths that make us feel good.

⇒ We needed ~ real atonement ~ cancelling ~ real sins.

▶ John was establishing the qualifications of Jesus the man ~ to be the Redeemer of other men.

▷ The only ~ one who could and did provide ~ real atonement, ~ the cancellation of real sins.

▷ Jesus canceled ~ the charge of our legal indebtedness, ~ which stood against us and condemned us.

⇒ He has taken it away, ~ nailing it to the cross.

John continues his Christmas essay ~ in vs 3.

(NIV) ^{3a} Through him ~ all things were made ~ [i.e., ~ both visible and invisible]; ~ ~ ^{3b} without him ~ nothing was made ~ that has been made.

▶ While the Father ~ initiated creation, ~ through Him ~ confirms that Jesus was ~ the direct agent ~ of creation.

▶ (vs 3) Without him ~ nothing was made ~ that has been made.

▷ Wd ~ nothing ~ is emphatic. ⇨ Not even one thing.

⇒ Without him ~ not even one thing was made ~ that has been made.

▷ Emphatically asserts ~ everything ~ owes its existence ~ to Jesus. ⇨ Creator 4/13

Let's continue looking at these ~ amazing, ~ deep, ~ theological truths ~ that Jn has put forth, ~ vs 4.

In him ~ [i.e., ~ the Word] ~ was life, ~~ and the life ~ was the light of humanity (ZECNT).

➤ Boiled down, ~ idea here is this.

▷ All life ~ originates from and is given by him, ~ i.e., ~ the Word, ~ Jesus. ~~ And his life ~ brought light ~ to humanity.

➤ All life ~ originates from and is given by Jesus.

▷ But he also gives ~ eternal life ~ to all those who believe in him.

⇒ IOW, ~ Jesus ~ is the source of both ~ physical and eternal life.

➤ And his life ~ brought light to everyone.

▷ Several instances in Isaiah ~ depict the coming of Messiah as ~ a light entering the darkness.

⇒ E.g., ~ Is. 9:2 (NIV), ~~ The people walking in darkness ~ have seen a great light; ~~ on those living in the land of deep darkness ~ a light has dawned.

▷ And Jesus referred to himself as a light.

⇒ Jn. 12:46 (NLT), ~~ I have come as a light ~ to shine in this dark world, ~~ so that ~ all who put their trust in me ~ will no longer remain in the dark.

➤ Everywhere Jesus went, ~ he brought light. 5/13

▷Light means ~ understanding and moral insight, ~ spiritual vision.

▷But more than just shining or reflecting, ~ the light of Jesus ~ penetrates and enlightens hearts and minds.

➤Everyone who comes into contact with Jesus ~ can be spiritually enlightened & given eternal life.

▷When Christ's light shines, ~~ we see ~ our sin ~ and his glory.

▷We can ~ refuse to see the light ~ and remain in darkness.

▷But whoever responds ~ will be spiritually enlightened & given eternal life by Jesus.

▷He will fill our minds ~ with God's thoughts.

▷He will ~ guide our path, ~ give us God's perspective, ~ and drive out the darkness of sin.

John continues stating ~ crucial theological truths ~ about Jesus and his 1st advent ~ in vs. 5.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Form of vb for shines ~ means ~ the light still shines.

➤Jesus' life & message ~ are still effective.

➤His light ~ continues to shine through the gospel.

▷In 2 Cor., ~ Paul says ~ the light of the gospel ~ displays the glory of Christ. 6/13

Then John adds, ~ the darkness ~ has not overcome it.

➤ In John's gospel, ~ darkness ~ is the world estranged from God, ~ spiritually ignorant and blind, ~ fallen and sinful, ~ dominated by Satan.

▷ The dominion of darkness.

➤ Vs 5 implies ~ that light ~ has invaded the darkness, which resists.

▷ And it also implies that ~ the resistance ~ is and continues to be ~ unsuccessful, ~ for the light continues shining.

➤ John makes it clear.

▷ Christmas ~ is not about ~ a cute, cuddly baby.

⇒ It's about our warrior God, ~ the Light, ~ invading the dominion of darkness, ~ in order to rescue us from that dominion.

➤ John also makes the following clear.

▷ Light & darkness ~ are not equally matched duality.

▷ In the battle between Jesus and Satan, ~ Jesus, ~ the light, ~ is the overwhelming victor.

▷ I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it (NLT).

Continuing with John's theological essay, ~ vs 9.

The true light, ~ which gives light to everyone, ~ was coming into the world. 7/13

In John's gospel, ~ true ~ means ~ the genuine or authentic ~ revelation of God, ~~ as opposed to all false messiahs.

➤ Tr.: ~~ The Word ~ was the authentic light, ~~ that enlightens every person ~~ by his coming into the world.

➤ And ~ as the authentic revelation of God ~ the Word alone ~ can give light to everyone.

➤ Only the true light ~ is able to enlighten the sinner ~ with the light of God.

➤ This means Jesus ~ is the ~ only source ~ of salvation.

Moreover, ~ John says the authentic light ~ enlightens every person.

➤ This does not mean ~ that everyone ~ will be saved.

➤ The light shining ~ on every single person means ~ all are brought ~ to the place of decision.

➤ But then the light of God ~ separates humanity ~ into believers and unbelievers ~ depending ~ on their response.

➤ Every human being ~ experiences the light of God in their lives, ~~ but many, ~ probably the majority, ~ reject the light.

➤ They cannot extinguish it, ~~ but those ~ who love darkness instead of light ~ will hate the light.

John continues sharing with us ~ crucial ~ theological truths, ~ vs 10-11 (CSB).

He was in the world [earth], and the world [universe] was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 8/13

➤ *The world did not recognize him* ~ signifies ~ humanity ~ in its opposition to God.

Did not recognize him ~ points ~ to the failure or refusal of humanity ~ to recognize ~ the true identity of Jesus ~ as Messiah and Lord.

➤ And it also points ~ to the failure or refusal of humanity ~ to render him ~ the appropriate honor.

The next theological truth John states ~ is that ~ this rejection ~ was not universal, ~ 1:12.

But to all who did receive him, ~ who believed in his name, ~ he gave the right ~ to become children of God.

➤ Only through believing in Jesus ~ can one become a member of God's family.

➤ Receive & believe ~ are essentially synonymous.

▷ And they imply ~ not merely intellectual agreement ~ with some facts about Jesus ~~ but also ~ welcoming and submitting to him ~ in a personal relationship.

➤ To give the right ~ means for Jesus to bestow authority on believers ~ as children of God.

▷ Believers have the right ~ to belong ~ to a new family.

▷ And our status changes ~ from peasant ~ to royalty.

▷ The new birth ~ makes us part ~ of the royal household of heaven.

▷ From the door of an orphanage to the house of the King. No longer an outcast, a new song I sing; From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong; I'm not worthy to belong here, but praise God I belong. 9/13

▷ Eph. 2: ~ 19 (NIV), ~~ Consequently, ~ you are no longer ~ foreigners and strangers, ~~ but ~ fellow citizens with God's people ~ and also ~ members of his household.

John continues his focus on ~ amazing, ~ deep, ~ theological truths, ~ v. 13.

Here John makes clear ~ that neither ~ physical birth ~ nor ethnic descent ~ nor human effort ~ can make people children of God.

► Only God's supernatural work ~ can make people children of God.

▷ Titus 3: ~ 5b-6 (NIV), ~~ He saved us ~ through the washing of rebirth ~ and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ~~ whom he poured out on us generously ~ through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Next, ~ Jn. writes ~ 1 of the most amazing & deepest theological truths ~ ever written, ~ vs 14.

And the Word ~ became flesh ~ and dwelt among us, ~~ and we have seen his glory, ~ glory as of the only Son from the Father, ~ full of grace and truth.

► The only basis ~ for humanity entering the realm and family of God ~ is for God ~ to enter the realm of humanity himself ~ and provide redemption.

► John states it clearly. ⇒ The Word ~ became human.

▷ The Creator ~ has become ~ a creature. ⇒ More than that, ~ he has made his home ~ among humanity.

Jesus ~ is the only Son from the Father.

► Only Son pertains ~ to what is unique ~ in the sense of being ~ the only one ~ of the same kind or class. 10/13

➤ As the Son of God, ~ Jesus is ~ without spiritual siblings ~ and ~ without equals.

➤ No one else ~ can lay claim ~ to the title Son of God ~ in the sense in which it applies ~ to Jesus.

John says ~ we, ~ [i.e., ~ apostles] ~ have seen his glory.

➤ The apostles ~ were firsthand eyewitnesses of God's glory, ~ which was ~ in these last days ~ displayed in Jesus.

John says ~ the glorious revelation of God ~ which the Word displayed ~ was full ~ of grace and truth.

➤ In vs 17, ~ John states, ~ grace and truth came ~ through Jesus Christ.

➤ Despite the world's hostile darkness, ~ Jesus entered the world to save it.

➤ As John says later, ~ God did not send his Son into the world ~ to condemn the world, ~ but ~ in order that ~ the world might be saved ~ through him.

The next theological truth John states ~ is that ~ through the fullness of Jesus' grace, ~ we have received ~ grace upon grace, ~ vs. 16.

I.e., ~ From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.

➤ And the blessings given by Jesus ~ can never be exhausted.

John's Christmas essay ~ reaches its grand conclusion ~ with the proclamation ~ that Jesus ~ the Word ~ is the fullest ~ revelation of the Father.

Vs. 18 (NIV), ~ 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. 11/13

► John's statement, ~ **no one has ever seen God**, ~ does not mean ~ people have never seen visions of God. ⇔ OT.

▷ Those visions were partial, however, ~ & no one ~ has ever seen God ~ as he truly is.

⇒ I.e., ~ no one ~ has ever seen God ~ in his essential nature.

► The phrase ~ **in closest relationship** ~ refers ~ to the unmatched intimacy ~ of Jesus' relationship with the Father.

▷ This enabled him ~ to reveal the Father ~ in an unprecedented way.

▷ Lit. ~ John says here ~ that Jesus ~ is ~ in the Father's lap.

⇒ This is an idiom ~ for greatest possible closeness.

► It is because ~ of his intimate relationship, ~ as well ~ as his being the only one who has ever seen the Father, ~ that Jesus ~ can make him known.

► The word for ~ **has made him known** ~ means ~ to set forth in great detail ~ or ~ expound.

▷ John is saying then, ~ that Jesus, ~ being himself God the Son, ~ having the greatest possible closeness to the Father, ~ and the only One who has seen the Father, ~ made the Father known.

▷ I.e., ~ through his ~ person, ~ words, ~ & works,

▷ Jesus has set forth the nature of the Father ~ in great detail.

▷ So much so, ~ that Jesus answered Philip's request ~ to see the Father ~ by saying, ~ **Have I been with you so long, ~ and you still do not know me, Philip? ~ ~ Whoever has seen me ~ has seen the Father.** 12/13

➤ To see Jesus is to see the Father. ⇨ To know Jesus is to know the Father.

▷ Want to know what God is like? ⇨ Look at Jesus.

▷ Want to know what God thinks about you? ⇨ Look at Jesus.

▷ Want to know how much God loves you? ⇨ Look at Jesus.

➤ Now, ~ we should point out here that no one can have a relationship with God the Father apart from Jesus.

▷ 1 Jn. 2:23, ~ "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

▷ It is quite clear.

⇒ Only through Jesus ~ can people ~ receive eternal life & have a relationship with God.

Conclusion.

As we ~ celebrate Christmas ~ & ~ think about all of the things Matthew & Luke reported on, ~ let us always keep in mind ~ these amazing, ~ deep, ~ theological truths ~ that John wrote about. 13/13