

## ***SBCOD Bible Study Notes***

**7-2-25**

***John 1***

### **The Word Became Flesh – Verses 1-5**

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

**1:1** What Jesus taught and what he did are tied inseparably to who he is. John shows Jesus as fully human and fully God. Although Jesus took upon himself full humanity and lived as a man, he never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the source of eternal life. This is the truth about Jesus, and the foundation of all truth. If we cannot or do not believe this basic truth, we will not have enough faith to trust our eternal destiny to him. That is why John wrote this Gospel— to build faith and confidence in Jesus Christ so that we may believe that he truly was and is the Son of God (20:30-31).

**1:1** John wrote to believers everywhere, both Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles). As one of Jesus' 12 disciples, John writes with credibility and the details of an eyewitness. His book is not a biography (like the book of Luke); it is a thematic presentation of Jesus' life. Many in John's original audience had a Greek background. Greek culture encouraged worship of many mythological gods, whose supernatural characteristics were as important to Greeks as genealogies were to Jews. John shows that Jesus is not only different from but superior to these gods of mythology.

**1:1-5** What does John mean by "the Word"? The Word was a term used by theologians and philosophers, both Jews and Greeks, in many different ways. In Hebrew Scripture, the Word was an agent of creation (Psalm 33:6), the source of God's message to his people through the prophets (Hosea 4:1), and God's law, his standard of holiness (Psalm 119:11). In Greek philosophy, the Word was the principle of reason that governed the world, or the thought still in the mind, while in Hebrew thought, the Word was another expression for God. John's description shows clearly that he is speaking of Jesus (see especially 1:14)— a human being he knew and loved, but at the same time the Creator of the universe, the ultimate revelation of God, the living picture of God's holiness, the one in whom "all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). To Jewish readers, to say this man Jesus "was God" was blasphemous. To Greek readers, "the Word became flesh" (1:14) was unthinkable. To John, this new understanding of the Word was the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**1:3-5** When God created, he made something from nothing. Because we are created beings, we have no basis for pride. Remember that you exist only because God made you, and you have special gifts only because God gave them to you. With God you are something valuable and unique; apart from God you are nothing, and if you try to live without him, you will be abandoning the purpose for which you were made. Do you ever feel that your life is too complex for God to understand? Remember, God created the entire universe, and nothing is too difficult for him. God created you; he is alive today, and his love is bigger than any problem you may face.

**1:4-5** "The darkness has not overcome it" means the darkness of evil never has and never will overcome or extinguish God's light. Jesus Christ is the Creator of life, and his life brings light to humankind. In his light, we see ourselves as we really are (sinners in need of a Savior). When we follow Jesus, the true Light, we can avoid walking blindly and falling into sin. He lights the path ahead

of us so we can see how to live. He removes the darkness of sin from our lives. In what ways have you allowed the light of Christ to shine into your life? Let Christ guide your life, and you'll never need to stumble in darkness.

### **The Forerunner Of The Word – Verses 6-8**

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

**1:6-8** We, like John the Baptist, are not the source of God's light; we merely reflect that light. Jesus Christ is the true Light; he helps us see our way to God and shows us how to walk along that way. But Christ has chosen to reflect his light through his followers to an unbelieving world, perhaps because unbelievers are not able to bear the full blazing glory of his light firsthand. The word witness indicates our role as reflectors of Christ's light. We are never to present ourselves as the light to others, but are always to point them to Christ, the Light.

### **The Rejection Of The Word & Receiving Of The Word – Verses 9-13**

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

**1:9-11** Although Christ created the world, the people he created didn't recognize him (1:10). Even the people chosen by God to prepare the rest of the world for the Messiah rejected him (1:11), although the entire Old Testament pointed to his coming.

**1:12-13** All who welcome Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives are reborn spiritually, receiving new life from God. Through faith in Christ, this new birth changes us from the inside out— rearranging our attitudes, desires, and motives. Being born makes you physically alive and places you in your parents' family (1:13). Being born of God makes you spiritually alive and puts you in God's family (1:12). Have you asked Christ to make you a new person? This fresh start in life is available to all who believe in Christ.

### **The Word Became Flesh – Verse 14**

**<sup>14</sup>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.**

**1:14** "The Word became flesh" means becoming human. By doing so, Christ became (1) the perfect teacher— in Jesus' life we see how God thinks and therefore how we should think (Philippians 2:5-11); (2) the perfect example— as a model of what we are to become, he shows us how to live and gives us the power to live that way (1 Peter 2:21); (3) the perfect sacrifice— Jesus came as a sacrifice for all sins, and his death satisfied God's requirements for the removal of sin (Colossians 1:15-23).

**1:14** "The one and only Son, who came from the Father" means Jesus is God's only and unique Son. The emphasis is on unique. All believers are called "children of God," but Jesus is one of a kind and enjoys a perfect relationship with God the Father.

**1:14** When Jesus was conceived, God became a man. He was not part man and part God; he was completely human and completely divine (Colossians 2:9). Before Christ came, people could know God partially. After Christ came, people could know God fully because he became visible and tangible in Christ. Christ is the perfect expression of God in human form. The two most common errors people make about Jesus are to minimize his humanity or to minimize his divinity. Jesus is both God and man.

### **Bearing Witness To God's New Order – Verses 15-18**

**<sup>15</sup>** (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.’”) **<sup>16</sup>** Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. **<sup>17</sup>** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **<sup>18</sup>** 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.

**1:15-17** Law and grace are both aspects of God's nature that he uses in dealing with us. Moses emphasized God's law and justice, while Jesus Christ came to highlight God's mercy, love, faithfulness, and forgiveness. Moses could only be the giver of the law, while Christ came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5: 17). The nature and will of God were revealed in the law; now the nature and will of God are revealed in Jesus Christ. Rather than coming through cold stone tablets, God's revelation (truth) now comes through a person's life. As we get to know Christ better, our understanding of God will increase.

**1:18** God communicated through various people in the Old Testament, usually prophets who were told to give specific messages. But no one ever saw God. Jesus is both God and the Father's unique Son. In Christ, God revealed his nature and essence in a way that could be seen and touched. In Christ, God became a man who lived on earth.

### **John the Baptist Denies Being the Messiah – Verses 19-23**

**<sup>19</sup>** Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. **<sup>20</sup>** He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.” **<sup>21</sup>** They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.” **<sup>22</sup>** Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” **<sup>23</sup>** John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”

**1:19** The priests and Levites were respected religious leaders in Jerusalem. Priests served in the temple, and Levites assisted them. The Pharisees (1:24) were a group that both John the Baptist and Jesus often denounced. Many of them outwardly obeyed God's laws to look pious, while inwardly their hearts were filled with pride and greed. The Pharisees believed that their own oral traditions were just as important as God's inspired Word. These leaders came to see John the Baptist for several reasons: (1) Their duty as guardians of the faith included investigating any new teaching or movement (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22). (2) They wanted to find out if John had the credentials of a prophet. (3) John had quite a following, and it was growing. They were probably jealous and wanted to see why this man was so popular.

**1:21-23** In the religious leaders' minds, there were four options regarding John the Baptist's identity: He was (1) the prophet foretold by Moses (Deuteronomy 18: 15), (2) Elijah (Malachi 4: 5), (3) the

Messiah, or (4) a false prophet. John denied being the first three personages. Instead, he called himself, in the words of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, “a voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD’” (Isaiah 40: 3). The leaders kept pressing John to say who he was because people were expecting the Messiah to come (Luke 3: 15). But John emphasized only why he had come— to prepare the way for the Messiah. The Pharisees missed the point. They wanted to know who John was, but John wanted to prepare them to recognize who Jesus was.

### **John Explains His Identity To The Religious Leaders – Verses 24-28**

**<sup>24</sup> Now the Pharisees who had been sent <sup>25</sup> questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” <sup>26</sup> “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. <sup>27</sup> He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” <sup>28</sup> This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.**

**1:24-26** John was baptizing Jews. The Essenes (a strict, monastic sect of Judaism) practiced baptism for purification, but normally only non-Jews (Gentiles) were baptized when they converted to Judaism. When the Pharisees questioned John’s authority to baptize, they were asking who gave John the right to treat God’s chosen people like Gentiles. John said, “I baptize with water”— he was merely helping the people perform a symbolic act of repentance. But soon one would come who would truly forgive sins, something only the Son of God— the Messiah— could do.

**1:27-28** John the Baptist said he was not even worthy to be Christ’s slave, to perform the humble task of unfastening his sandals. But according to Luke 7:28, Jesus said that John was the greatest of all prophets. If such a great person felt inadequate even to be Christ’s slave, how much more should we lay aside our pride to serve Christ! When we truly understand who Christ is, our pride and self-importance melt away.

### **John Testifies About Jesus – Verses 29-34**

**<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”**

**1:29** Every morning and evening, a lamb was sacrificed in the temple for the sins of the people (Exodus 29:38-42). Isaiah 53:7 prophesied that the Messiah, God’s servant, would be led to the slaughter like a lamb. To pay the penalty for sin, a life had to be given— and God chose to provide the sacrifice himself. The sins of the world were removed when Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice. This is the way our sins are forgiven (1 Corinthians 5:7). The “sin of the world” means everyone’s sin, the sin of each individual. Jesus paid the price of your sin by his death. You can receive forgiveness by confessing your sin to him and asking for his forgiveness.

**1:30** Although John the Baptist was a well-known preacher who attracted large crowds, he was content for Jesus to take the higher place. This is true humility, the basis for greatness in preaching, teaching, or any other work we do for Christ. When you are content to do what God wants you to do and let Jesus Christ be honored for it, God will do great things through you.

**1:31-32** At Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist had declared Jesus to be the Messiah. At that time God had given John a sign to show him that Jesus truly had been sent from God (1:33). John and Jesus were related (see Luke 1:36), so John probably knew who he was. But it wasn't until Jesus' baptism that John understood that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus' baptism is described in Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; and Luke 3: 21-22.

**1:33-34** John the Baptist's baptism with water was preparatory, because it was for repentance and symbolized the washing away of sins. Jesus, by contrast, would baptize with the Holy Spirit. He would send the Holy Spirit upon all believers, empowering them to live and to teach the message of salvation. This outpouring of the Spirit came after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven (see 20:22; Acts 2). John the Baptist's job was to point people to Jesus, their long-awaited Messiah. Today people are looking for someone to give them security in an insecure world. Our job is to point them to Christ and to show that he is the one whom they seek.

### **John's Disciples Follow Jesus – Verses 35-42**

<sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

**1:35** These new disciples used several names for Jesus: Lamb of God (1:36), Rabbi (1:38), Messiah (1:41), Son of God (1:49), and King of Israel (1:49). As they got to know Jesus, their appreciation for him grew. The more time we spend getting to know Christ, the more we will understand and appreciate who he is. We may be drawn to him for his teaching, but we will come to know him as the Son of God. Although these disciples made this verbal shift in a few days, they would not fully understand Jesus until three years later (Acts 2). What they so easily professed had to be worked out in experience. We may find that words of faith come easily, but deep appreciation for Christ comes with living by faith.

**1:37** One of the two disciples was Andrew (1:40). The other was probably John, the writer of this book. Why did these disciples leave John the Baptist? Because that's what John wanted them to do—he was pointing the way to Jesus, the one John had prepared them to follow. These were Jesus' first disciples, along with Simon Peter (1:42) and Nathanael (1:45).

**1:38** When the two disciples began to follow Jesus, he asked them, "What do you want?" Following Christ is not enough; we must follow him for the right reasons. To follow Christ for our own purposes would be asking Christ to follow us—to align with us to support and advance our cause, not his. We must examine our motives for following him. Are we seeking his glory or ours?

**1:40-42** Andrew accepted John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus and immediately went to tell his brother, Simon, about him. There was no question in Andrew's mind that Jesus was the Messiah. Not only did he tell his brother, but he was also eager to introduce others to Jesus (see 6:8-9; 12:22). How many people in your life have heard you talk about your relationship with Jesus?

**1:42** Jesus saw not only who Simon was, but who he would become. That is why he gave him a new name— Cephas in Aramaic, Peter in Greek (the name means “a rock”). Peter is not presented as rock-solid throughout the Gospels, but he became a solid rock in the days of the early church, as we learn in the book of Acts. By giving Simon a new name, Jesus introduced a change in character.

### **Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael – Verses 43-51**

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

<sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” <sup>46</sup> “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip. <sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

<sup>48</sup> “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” <sup>49</sup> Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.” <sup>50</sup> Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” <sup>51</sup> He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.”

**1:43-45** Nazareth was despised by the Jews because a Roman army garrison was located there. Some have speculated that an aloof attitude or a poor reputation in morals and religion on the part of the people of Nazareth led to Nathanael’s harsh comment. Nathanael’s hometown was Cana, about four miles from Nazareth.

**1:46** When Nathanael heard that the Messiah was from Nazareth, he was surprised. Philip responded, “Come and see.” Fortunately for Nathanael, he went to meet Jesus and became a disciple. If he had stuck to his prejudice without investigating further, he would have missed the Messiah! Don’t let people’s stereotypes about Christ cause them to miss his power and love. Invite them to come and see who Jesus really is.

**1:47-49** Jesus knew about Nathanael before the two ever met. Jesus also knows what we are really like. An honest person will feel comfortable with the thought that Jesus knows him or her through and through. A dishonest person will feel uncomfortable. You can’t pretend to be something you’re not. God knows the real you and wants you to follow him.

**1:51** This is a reference to Jacob’s dream recorded in Genesis 28:12. As the unique God-man, Jesus would be the ladder between heaven and earth. Jesus is not saying that this would be a physical experience (that they would see the ladder with their eyes) like the Transfiguration, but that they would have spiritual insight into Jesus’ true nature and purpose for coming.