

The Christ Before Christmas

John 1: 1-5, 14

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On the evening of Halloween, 1938, the famous actor, Orson Welles, presented a special broadcast on national radio. Based on a science fiction thriller, War of the Worlds, the radio broadcast was such an authentic adaptation of the book that thousands of people really believed that America had been invaded by Martians. Multitudes fled from their homes in sheer panic. Since that scary broadcast there have been many portrayals of visitors from Outer Space, especially in the movies. Most of these imaginary beings have been evil villains, intent on destroying life, especially human life on planet earth.

There was One, however, who really did arrive from the great beyond just over two thousand years ago. He was not imaginary, and He did not come from another planet in our solar system or from some far distant galaxy. He came from the realm of heaven and He came to help us, not to harm us. This divine intervention is introduced in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. It is a magnificent declaration of God's determination to bring light and love into our world. It is also an important and poignant reminder that there was and is a Christ before Christmas.

Let's be honest. Many people, even some Christians, have a hard time believing that there was a Christ before Christmas. They have read the accounts of Christ's birth in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and have come to the conclusion that everything started with the birth of Christ. Christ came into existence when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Thankfully, the writer of the Gospel of John casts that misconception aside. He provides us with a vivid portrait of a Christ that was very much alive before He entered into our world as a tiny baby. So let's take a look at what the author of this gospel has to say to us in those opening verses of the life and ministry of Christ. Hopefully it will help us to gain a much better understanding of the majesty and magnitude of what God did for us when He sent His only begotten Son into our world.

But what about the pre-existence of that Son? Writing to the early church, John knew that Christ was the "anointed One of God." God had chosen and appointed Him for a special purpose here on earth. That's literally what the word "Christ" means. He also knew that this anointed One had been given the name of "Jesus" when He was born in Bethlehem. It means "God's salvation" and that's why God sent Him into our world. His mission was to save humanity. But how could John describe this Son of God before He came to earth, during those eons of time when He was with His Father in

heaven? He needed a new word, something that would accurately describe His pre-existence before the birth in Bethlehem. Looking back through the pages of the Old Testament, it suddenly dawned upon John that there was a perfect word to identify the Christ who was before Christmas. It was right there in those first verses of the book of Genesis. Over and over again those opening verses in Genesis declared that the whole of creation came into existence when God spoke. For example, in verse three, God said, "Let there be light," and suddenly rays of light burst forth into existence. This Christ before Christmas was, therefore, the Voice of God, the very Word of God.

Furthermore, John also began to realize that there were a variety of ways in which this Word of God could be described. So he included that description in the opening verses of his gospel. He said that this Christ before Christmas was the Divine Word of God. He said that this Christ before Christmas was the Creative Word of God. Lastly, he said that this Christ before Christmas was the Incarnate Word of God. Let's look at each of these descriptions and discover how they can help us come to a richer and more meaningful understanding of the nature and character of God's Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the first two verses of his gospel, John declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." What is John telling us? He is telling us that the Christ before Christmas is the divine presence of God and like God He is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. At the end of the book of Revelation, Christ declares, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 22:13). Those two words, alpha and omega, are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Saying that He is the alpha and the omega means that Christ sums up the totality of time, both past, present and future. In fact, like God He stands outside of time. Christ possesses the same eternal and divine nature as His heavenly Father. Just as John states in that opening verse of his gospel, "Christ was not only with God from the beginning, He was and is God."

In the Gospel of John we also learn that the Christ before Christmas is the creative Word of God. In the book of Genesis the very first verse boldly declares, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But how did God do that? The Bible says that God spoke the creation into existence. He spoke and the universe began to take shape and form. The Christ before Christmas was the author of creation. This is what Saint Paul tells us in his letter to the Colossians, "For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). The Christ before Christmas, God's voice, His divine Word, brought the universe into existence and that spiritual declaration is

now being confirmed scientifically. Researchers have recently discovered that the universe was created by a symphony of sound. Writing about this discovery for the British Broadcasting Corporation one of their correspondents wrote in a compressive article, "Before stars and planets, before blackholes and white dwarfs, before even atoms and rays of light, the Universe reverberated with something surprising—sound".* Just as the Bible says in the book of Genesis, it was the voice of God that brought forth all that there is and that Voice, that Word from on high, was the voice of the Christ before Christmas.

Finally, the Christ before Christmas was the Incarnate Word of God. The Word of God took shape and form and became focused in a single human being when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. As John states, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1;14). But he doesn't stop there. Listen to the rest of verse fourteen, "We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." This means that Christ was separate from and yet at the same time uniquely unified with His heavenly Father. Both during the creation of the universe and especially when Christ became a human being, He was the incarnate Word of God. Literally, the word incarnate means "to take on human form, to be made out of flesh and blood." Christ's incarnation was the embodiment of who God is in a way that could be touched and seen and heard.

An illustration from the pages of history may prove to be helpful as we try to understand what God accomplished. In the opening days of the Second World War, Winston Churchill was chosen to be the Prime Minister of England. He faced a daunting task, rallying the people of Great Britain to rise up and defeat the forces of Nazi Germany. He addressed the nation and that speech took on a life of its own. As he told the nation that they would have to fight their enemies on the beaches and on the land and if need be door to door, the people of England rose up with an undaunting determination that led to ultimate victory. Most of the people in England never met Winston Churchill personally. But they heard his speech on that radio broadcast to the nation and they saw portions of it in the news reels that followed. Those words became a tangible expression of Churchill's nature and character, a declaration of who he was and what he believed. In the same way the Word of God in the person of Christ Jesus, as He entered into our world as a tiny baby, became the living and tangible expression of who God is.

Writing to fellow believers, John opened his first letter to them with these words, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). As we enter into this upcoming Christmas season, let us never forget that the One

who created the entire universe was also the One who came to live among us, so that through Him we might know and experience the love of God.

*[bbc.com/future/article/20231003-the-primordial-hum-from-the-beginning-of-the-universe](https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20231003-the-primordial-hum-from-the-beginning-of-the-universe)