

Pretty soon all the preparation will be over – all the gift buying, the wrapping and the giving ... the purchase of food and specially prepared meals ... the Christmas decorations ... Christmas music ... the Salvation Army Santa's – and of course, Christmas Sermons. All that which has been in preparation for weeks, if not months – and it will soon be over.

Time really does have tendency to go quickly. It was only 6 days ago that we had two feet of snow, and now, thankfully, it is slowly melting away.

Now, we are all familiar with the Christmas story of the birth of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We read the familiar words in St. Luke 2:2-14 (READ). The Savior had been promised since the fall of man. Throughout the Old Testament we read a multitude of prophecies concerning our Savior's coming – where he would be born, how he would be born and also how he would suffer, die and rise from the dead for the sins of those who believe in him.

And then after a couple of thousand years of prophecies he came. As Galatians 4:4 says: *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law...”*

It was in God's time that he came, just like it will be in God's time that he returns. However, in the economy of the Trinity — time as we know it — does not exist. It was just always there. The Scriptures tell us that for God, a day is like a thousand years.

If you have your Bibles, turn with me to our Gospel Lesson from this Evening – St. John 1:1-14. All Scripture is important – after all it is God's revelation to us, His children. But these verses are arguably some of the most important passages of Scripture and it is very appropriate for our study at Christmas. (READ).

Notice how it begins John 1:1: – *“In the beginning ...”* – those words should be very familiar to all of us. The very first words of the Bible in Genesis 1:1 says: *“In the beginning God ...”* The existence of God is taken as a given.

There is no attempt at proving the existence of God. It is something that has to be taken by faith. Hebrews 11:6 says: *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”*

So that is where we must begin – with faith or belief that there is a God. But, and here is where it is really important, because we see in our passage that the God that we believe in ... the God that we have faith in, is not alone. John 1:1-2: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”*

Here we see the truths that separate Christianity from all the other religions in the world – the existence of the 2nd person of the Trinity – here described as *“the Word”*. As we read later in this first chapter of John – John 1:14: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* This is a clear reference to the person of Jesus Christ, whose birth we are celebrating.

As I said, these are truths that defines Christianity. Other religions say that he was one of many – which is not true. Jesus was unique – he is “*the Word ... the Word made flesh.*” There was and only will be one Christ ... one Messiah.

Other religions say that Jesus was a prophet – which is true, but it doesn’t go far enough. They might say that Jesus was a great man – which is true but it doesn’t go far enough. They might say that he is a great example – which is also true, but again it doesn’t go far enough. All of these are distortions of what the true Christian believes because Jesus is much more than these things.

As we see in our passage there are distinctive truths that are revealed about Jesus whose birth we are celebrating. We see first of all – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.* At the beginning of what we know as the creation of the world, Christ was there. He is described as “*the Word*” – because it is he who has revealed God.

We read in Hebrews 1:1-2: “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*”

Jesus is the one who has revealed the Father to His creation. Jesus himself said in John 14:9: “*He who has seen me, has seen the Father.*” He also said in John 10:30: “*I and My Father are one.*” This is the 2nd person of the Trinity – God made flesh.

So what do we see – that Jesus was there in the beginning with the Father ... that he is one with the Father ... that he and his Father are one ... and that he is the one who has revealed his Father.

But, as we continue in John 1, we see that it doesn’t end there. John 1:3: “*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*” We usually associate creation with God. After all Genesis 1:1 says: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” – and then it goes on to describe the creation of the world in six days.

And yet, here in John 1 we read: *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* As always, as we compare Scripture with Scripture, we read in Colossians 1:16-17: “*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*”

We see here that our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, was active in the work of creation – and again, that he was there in the beginning – that before anything was created he was – *and in Him all things consist.*

These are, as I said, the truths that separate Christianity from all the other religions in the world. Jesus is much more than a great man or a great example, or one among a number of other great prophets like Elijah or Mohammed. No, he is Jesus the Christ – the pre-existent 2nd person of the Trinity who came to earth for us and for our salvation – he is “*the Word made flesh who dwelt among us.*”

As we continue in our passage, we see another important truth about our Savior – “*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*” Again, we know that Jesus came to give those who believe in him eternal life. The Scriptures make this very clear.

For example, John 3:16, 17: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved..*” And John 3:36: “*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*”

We celebrate the birth of Christ – not because he was a great man, an example of how we should live or even a prophet – but because he came to give us life – eternal life ... everlasting life for those who have trusted in him as Savior and Lord ... for those that believe that he died for our sins in our place.

This is the real meaning of Christmas. Gifts and giving are important. Special meals are important. The music and the sermons are important. But these are all secondary to why Jesus came – to save people from their sins.

In the announcement to Joseph we are told this in Matthew 1:18-21: “*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”*”

This is why he came – *and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*

And in the announcement to the shepherds we again read: Luke 2:8-11: “*Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*”

The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ – the one and only Savior of all who believe in him. That is what we celebrate at Christmas. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.* A Merry and Blessed Christmas to all of you.