

## **“New Beginnings Count”**

### **John 1:1-18**

([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+1:1-18](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+1:1-18))

Dr. David W. Swink

Chilson Hills Church, Brighton, Michigan

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### **God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do!**

Do you wonder why the Apostle John began his gospel with, “In the beginning...”? The other gospels begin with the birth or baptism of Jesus. John goes all the way back to the beginning of creation. Surely the Apostle John knew how the other gospels began. He is writing at least twenty years after the other three were written. Most Biblical scholars agree that John must have seen the other gospels before he wrote his account of Jesus. Whatever caused him to begin at the beginning of the universe?

Perhaps you have not ever thought to ask about the beginning of things, but a student of the great Reformation leader, Martin Luther once asked him, “Professor Luther, what was God doing before God created the world? After all, if God is uncreated and eternal, God must have had a long time before God created us. What did God do with all that time?”

There was widespread giggling in the class.

The annoyed Professor Luther responded, “What was God doing before creation? God was out gathering sticks to beat the hell out of dumb students like you who ask stupid questions!”

Maybe this is a stupid question in your mind. If so, perhaps you want to take a nap for the next few minutes. However, if you are interested in beginnings, then you might want to pay attention.

The Apostle John wrote in a time when the Christian church was young. The New Testament was not fully written. Many different ideas about Jesus were being tossed about. In Ephesus, where John lived in his later years there was a strong current of Gnosticism. The Gnostics believed that Jesus was the Eternal Word of God, the Son of Light, and a great Spiritual Being who came to earth to defeat the forces of darkness. What they did not believe was that Jesus was a human man, born of a woman, crucified on a cross, and resurrected to new life. John uses the Gnostic’s language to emphasize the importance of understanding Jesus as fully God. And, John links their language with another equally important understanding: Jesus is fully and completely human. Therefore, John can write and we can all read:

**“The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw his glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous from inside and out, true from start to finish.” (John 1:14 *Message*)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+1:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+1:14))

As we turn the pages of the calendar to the year 2010, our concern is not so much with the Gnostics. We do not have any trouble thinking of Jesus as a great man, wonderful teacher, terrific friend. We have the opposite problem. Our culture has collapsed the understanding of the Divine presence among us. We say we believe in God, but we do not live like God really exists. We say we are committed to God, but our lifestyles suggest that we think we are our own little gods. God is OK as long as God is some ephemeral, quasi-grandfather type, at work on the other side of the galaxy. We do not want God to get too close except when we are in need and call for help.

### **Does the presence of God in our lives make us uncomfortable?**

Apparently so, one writer says: “I would like to buy \$5 worth of God, please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don’t want enough of God to make me love the outcasts or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$5 worth of God, please.” (Author Unknown, quoted in *Homiletics*/ January, 1998, p.16)

The Apostle John's words for us in this time and place are just as important, just as biting, just as correcting for us as for those in First Century Ephesus.

- We need to understand that Jesus Christ existed prior to creation itself.
- We need to acknowledge that God is much greater, more awesome, and more magnificent than our imaginations can ever understand.

Astronomers tell us that our universe began 14 billion light years ago. Jesus Christ was present at that creation. Jesus Christ existed before that creation! Does that fact make you feel infinitesimally small compared to the enormous magnitude of God. Now, work on another fact! God came to earth in Jesus Christ to give each of us life! As the Apostle Paul wrote in **I Corinthians:15**, ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+15](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+15)) Jesus came to reopen the Garden of Eden's gate! Wow, what a true miracle and mystery. The Christ who came for us in Bethlehem is the same today, as at the beginning of all creation, and for all eternity.

Christ is Christ whether before time, within time, or at the end of time. Christ is trustworthy because Christ is Christ who chose to become involved with us in our journey on this planet. Christ came to enable us to know who God is and who God wants us to be. The Apostle Paul under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote of this same understanding to the Christians in Philippi. This Holy Scripture tells us the truth that we can read together:

***Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:***

***Who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
But made himself nothing,  
Taking the very nature of a servant,  
Being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
He humbled himself  
And became obedient to death---  
Even death on a cross!  
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
And gave him the name that is above every name,  
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
In heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
To the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:5-11)***  
([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=philippians+2:5-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=philippians+2:5-11))

Holy Scripture tells us God's truth that God is for us, not because of anything we have done; not because we deserve it; not because it is our right, but just because God is love. We cannot explain it. We cannot describe it. We cannot control it. We cannot even fully understand it. But, we can bet our lives on the love of God given to us in and through Christ Jesus. For all eternity we can trust Christ! Christ is a foundation stone upon which we can build an abundant, joyful life. There is a constant truth in our universe of continuing change! Christ is present in our lives!

Perhaps a different view of this same truth can help us. Maxie Dunham writes in *Jesus' Claims—Our Promises*, “Lloyd C. Douglas, author of *The Robe* and other novels, lived in a boarding house when he was a university student. On the first floor resided a retired music teacher, infirm and unable to leave his apartment. Every morning they had a ritual: Douglas would come down the steps, open the old man's door and ask, ‘Well, what's the good news?’ The other would pick up his tuning fork, tap it on the side of his wheelchair and say, ‘That's middle C! It was middle C yesterday; it will be middle C tomorrow; it will be middle C a thousand years from now. The tenor upstairs sings flat, the piano across the hall is out of tune, but, my friend, that is middle C!’ The old man had discovered a constant reality on which he could depend, an unchanging truth to which he could cling.”

You can have a constant, everlasting, eternal reality upon which you can build your life. Jesus Christ is present in your life. Christ was there; is there; and will be there for all eternity.

## **Who is Jesus Christ for you?**

Jesus Christ is the one who loved you enough to give his life for you.

Right from the start of all things, Christ decided that you and I need to know the true nature of love.

Right from the start, Christ knew that you would not be able to reach your full potential as a human being without knowing God's love.

Right from the start, Christ wanted you to be able to live abundantly.

Right from the start, Christ decided that you and I need to build our lives upon God's truth.

There is a power counter to God who will lie and seek to bind us to himself by binding us to a false understanding of ourselves. God's love will liberate you from the father of lies because it liberates you from your false self to enable you to be your true self---that self which is grounded in the true reality.

Therefore, base your life on Jesus Christ; distrust every claim for truth where you do not see truth united with Christ like love; and be certain that you are united with God's truth and that God's truth has taken hold of you only when love has taken hold of you and has started to make you free from yourselves.

Right from the start of this New Year I challenge you to make Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior, your daily partner and friend, your daily master and teacher. Right from the start of 2010, I challenge you to set aside a time of prayer and Scripture study so that you learn more of Christ each day. Right from the start, beginning today, place Christ within the center of your heart and life so that you will know the truth and be set free to live your true mission to this earth. Accept the love of Christ into your life right now and choose to trust Christ this year. For Christ is the Word made flesh that does indeed dwell with us. The truth of God that you can count on is:

**God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do!**