

Rooted: Core Truths

Week 1: Who Jesus Truly Is -- John 1:1–14

Picture an old man in a back room in Ephesus, a lamp burning low, a sheet of papyrus in front of him. He is the last of the twelve still living. He has buried friends, outlived emperors, and watched the little band that once huddled in an upper room grow into churches scattered across the world. He has been asked the same question more times than he can count, by Greeks and Romans, by skeptics and seekers, by his own grandchildren in the faith: who was this Jesus, really? Everyone has an opinion. A good teacher, some say. A prophet. A troublemaker. A martyr. John dips his pen, and he does not begin with Bethlehem, or with a genealogy, or even with the Jordan River. He begins before the beginning. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

That is John’s answer, and he wants no one to miss it. Before there were galaxies, before there was time itself, the Word already was. He was face to face with God, and He was God. Every star, every cell, every soul that has ever drawn breath was made through Him, and nothing that exists came into being apart from Him. In Him was life, and that life was the light of the human race, a light that has been shining in the darkness all along and that the darkness has never been able to put out. And then John writes the sentence that splits history in two: “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The One who flung the stars into space wrapped Himself in skin and bone, learned to walk, grew tired and hungry, and pitched His tent in the middle of our neighborhood. We have seen His glory, John says, the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

You have met a hundred half-sized versions of Jesus. There is the Jesus who is mostly a moral example, useful for teaching children to share. There is the Jesus of the inspirational poster, gentle and harmless. There is the Jesus people reach for when they are afraid and set back on the shelf when life calms down. It is possible to admire a Jesus like that and never once bow to Him. John will not let us settle there. The Jesus he knew is not a wise man who said some helpful things. He is the eternal God who stepped into His own creation, and what you do with Him is the most important thing about you.

That is where this study begins, with the biggest question a human being can ask and the most staggering answer ever given. Read these fourteen verses slowly, the way you would read a letter from someone who loves you and has waited a long time to tell you the truth. Let John introduce you, maybe for the first time, to who Jesus truly is.

Group Discussion: Ask almost anyone today who Jesus was, and you will get a respectful answer: a great teacher, a kind man, a religious leader, an example of love. Why do you think so many people are willing to praise Jesus as long as He stays a good man, but grow uncomfortable when He is called God in the flesh? What is at stake in the difference?

Personal Reflection: Think honestly about the Jesus you actually carry around in your mind during an ordinary week. Is He the eternal Word through whom all things were made, the God who became flesh, or has He quietly shrunk into something smaller and safer, a helper you call on when you need Him? Where might your picture of Jesus have grown too small?

Read John 1:1–14

Study Questions

1. John opens, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (v. 1). What does John want us to understand about who Jesus is from the very first verse, and how do the three statements (that the Word “was in the beginning,” “was with God,” and “was God”) together teach both that Jesus is fully God and that He is distinct from the Father?
2. Most of us, if we are honest, carry a Jesus who is a little smaller and more manageable than the eternal Word John describes. In what specific area of your life have you been treating Jesus as an advisor you consult rather than the Lord you obey? What would change this week if you took His full deity seriously?
3. John says, “all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (v. 3). Why does it matter that Jesus is not simply part of creation but the One through whom all things were created, and how does this truth shape the kind of trust and worship He deserves?
4. John writes that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (v. 5). Where is there a corner of darkness in your own life, a habit, a fear, or a wound, that you have kept away from the light of Christ? What would it look like to let His light into that place?
5. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (v. 14). What does it mean that the eternal Word became truly human without ceasing to be fully God, and why is the incarnation, God actually taking on flesh, essential to the Christian faith rather than an optional detail?
6. John says that “to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (v. 12). How did you first come to receive Christ, and in what ways does living as a genuine child of God still need to take deeper root in how you see yourself and how you live?
7. John testifies, “we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (v. 14). What does it mean that Jesus is full of both grace and truth at the same time, and why do we so often pit these two against each other?
8. Jesus held grace and truth together perfectly, never softening the truth to be kind and never wielding the truth to wound. In your own relationships, which do you find harder to offer, honest truth or patient grace? Name one relationship where Christ is calling you to grow in the one you lack.
9. John says these children of God “were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (v. 13), and that this birth comes to those who “receive” and

“believe in” Christ (v. 12). How does the rest of the New Testament fill out what it means to receive and believe in Jesus so as to be born of God, and why does Scripture never let saving faith stand alone, apart from repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ?

10. Look back across the whole passage. John has shown you the eternal Word, the Maker of all things, the Light no darkness can swallow, and the God who became flesh and moved into the neighborhood full of grace and truth. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth about who Jesus truly is that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Colossians 1:15–20, Christ as the image of the invisible God in whom all things hold together; Hebrews 1:1–4, the Son as the radiance of God’s glory and the exact imprint of His nature; Philippians 2:5–11, the eternal Son who emptied Himself and took the form of a servant; John 8:56–59, Jesus’ own claim that “before Abraham was, I am”; Genesis 1:1–3, the beginning and the first light, echoed in John’s opening words