

Bible Helps

The Incarnation

What is John 1:1-18 about?

This is John's prologue to his gospel. It is his way of introducing us to the Jesus, the Son of God. John's introduction to his gospel is set apart from the gospels of Matthew and Luke in that he doesn't record a typical "birth narrative." In other words, in the gospel of John we don't have a manger scene, wise men, or even Mary and Joseph. The apostle goes back even further. He pulls back the curtain of time and takes us back into eternity past. He gives us a very unique glimpse of Jesus in all His fullness and glory. He allows us to see, for just a moment, the unique relationship that Jesus, the Son of God, had with God the Father.

Is there a way to break down this passage in order to understand it better?

Yes. Consider the following outline...

1:1-5: Jesus is the Eternal Word.

1:6-13: Jesus is the True Light.

1:14-18: Jesus is the Word become Flesh.

What does it mean that Jesus is the Word and the True Light?

To say that Jesus is the Word is to say that He reveals God. In the Old Testament we are told God does many things by and through His Word. He creates. He makes Himself known. (No one knows God apart from His Word!) By His Word, He heals and delivers. He judges. By His Word, God displays His wisdom. God expresses Himself in and through His Word. God reveals Himself through His Word. So, when John identifies the Word as Jesus, what he is telling us is that it's in and through Jesus that God is about to make Himself known. It's in and through Jesus that God is about to usher in a new era of redemption and judgment and wisdom.

To say that Jesus is the True Light is to say that He is the promised Old Testament Messiah. As the apostle John talks about Jesus being the true Light he's not just trying to be creative. He's not sitting over his desk wondering how he might make Jesus more acceptable or thinking through some artistic way to introduce Him. John is speaking about Jesus as the true Light because he wants to drive home a very important point about His identity. The OT prophesied that Israel's Messiah, the seed of the woman, the seed of Jesse, the promised One would come as a light. Israel's rescuer would shine brightly in the darkness of rebellion and sin. Jesus is that Light! See Isaiah 9:2 and 42:6-7.

Why is this passage so important?

It's important because it's vitally necessary that we understand Christ rightly. We can quibble about things like Bible translations and aspects of the Rapture. We can't quibble about Jesus! We accept Him as He is revealed in the written Word of God in full faith. To do anything but that is to play God, reinvent salvation, and run headlong into heresy.