

# Portraits of Christ: In the beginning (*John 1:1-5*)

## I. Introducing Jesus

*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word...*

1. The apostle John gives the longest introduction to the appearance of Jesus of all the gospels: “*In the beginning...*”
2. Mark simply says “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ” and jumps right in. Matthew starts with a long genealogy tracing Jesus back to Abraham as the promised blessing of **Genesis 12:3**. Luke starts with an even longer genealogy tracing Jesus back to the promised seed of Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3:15**.
3. John with three words introduces Jesus not with a genealogy, but with a reference to a full biography of His life prior to **John 1:14**, tracing Jesus right back to **Genesis 1:1** – “*In the beginning God...*”

## II. In the beginning God...

*Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God ... created the heavens and the earth.*

1. In between the fourth and fifth words of the English Bible there is an eternity of time in which there was God alone.
2. Meditating on the One who *was* is essential. We can end up with a very distorted view of a person if we go into relationship with them assuming that they had no life prior to meeting us.
3. In particular, with Jesus the most frequent error that we make is we think about Him exclusively in terms of dealing with rebellious, sinful, broken men like us and assume that He must be near the end of His patience. He may be compassionate enough to restrain from outright destroying us, but it must be taxing to be that longsuffering, and He most certainly can't be enjoying it.
4. What we miss is that for all of eternity past, God has had an abundance of joy and life in Himself that has not and cannot be quenched.  
*John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*
5. The God who was in the beginning is “*elohim*” – plural – God has always existed in perfect fellowship with Himself within the Trinity. What is God like of Himself? We know much of what God is like from how He relates to and reveals Himself to His creation. What do we know of how God relates to Himself? There are a number of passages that give us insight, and the picture they paint is fascinating (**Genesis 1, Psalm 2, Psalm 45, Proverbs 8, Luke 10:21, John 17**).  
*John 1:1 ...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.*
6. They paint a picture of the blessed God in whose presence is fullness of joy – a joy that did not come into being for us – it's always been there, He just invites us to partake of it.  
*1 Timothy 1:11 ...the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.*  
*Psalm 16:11 ...In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

### III. In the beginning God created...

*John 1:3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

1. It was out of the abundance of God's heart that He spoke creation into existence.  
*Matthew 12:34 ...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.*
2. This is one picture that we have through which we can ponder Jesus' place in the Trinity: He, as the Word of God, is "the abundance of God's heart." Or as the author of Hebrews puts it: "the brightness of God's glory."  
*Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 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; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*
3. Jesus is pictured as at the Father's right hand during creation – His eternal delight now rejoicing with Him in His handiwork.  
*Proverbs 8:26 While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world. 27 When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, 28 When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, 29 When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, 30 Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, 31 Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight was with the sons of men.*
4. We know that Jesus is in **Genesis 1** as the Word of God – speaking creation into being, but He has another part to play in the account: "rejoicing in His inhabited world."  
*Genesis 1:3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good... 6 Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." 7 ...and it was so... 9 Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. 10 ...And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 ...And God saw that it was good... 14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so... 18 ...And God saw that it was good. 20 Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." 21 ...And God saw that it was good... 24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. 25 ...And God saw that it was good.*

5. When it comes time for God to create the image-bearers, the whole drama repeats, but it's taken up a notch. More than just speaking man into existence, Jesus can't contain Himself and breaks into song (verse 27 is poetry in the Hebrew). His creation is now declared very good.  
***Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them... 31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.*
  
6. Creation was not brought into a vacuum, but was birthed into what already was – “in the beginning, God.” The creation that came to be is entirely and completely defined and upheld by the God that always was.  
***John 1:4** In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*  
Existence itself was only given to us for the sake of an even earlier and even more inconceivable purpose of God “before the foundation of the world”; indeed, our existence as a whole is immersed in a far deeper sea, the bottomless ocean of the love of the Father who creates nature and laws as a foil for his miracles. This is something we must be vividly aware of as we pray, contemplating the word of God: that the whole compact solidity of our creaturely being and essence, and of the everyday world in which we find ourselves and find our bearings, is afloat like a ship above the immense depths of an entirely different element (which alone is absolute and decisive), namely, the unfathomable love of the Father. ~ **Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Prayer**
  
7. The already existing joyous family of God is what we have been brought into – that overflowing, abundant love through which we were created. That was God's intent for us and what Christ has redeemed for us.  
***Ephesians 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*  
***John 17:3** And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent... 13 ...these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves... 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*
  
8. The light that is in Him cannot be overcome by any level of darkness. The depths of our sin and the rage of the world is no match for the abundance of love and joy that has always and will always be in the heart of God.  
***John 1:4** In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*  
***Proverbs 10:12** Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.*
  
9. God joyously labors to bring forth love for the One that He loves.  
***John 16:14** [The Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*  
***John 17:1** ...Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You*  
***John 17:26** And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*

10. He rejoices in Himself at His handiwork in bringing forth love from the hearts of the weak.  
*Luke 10:21* At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

11. Even to the bitter end, God's joy cannot be disturbed by the rage of men – He laughs at their rage, looking to a coming day when He will hand His beloved Son the nations of the earth.  
*Psalm 2:1* Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed... 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh... 6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." 7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession."

#### IV. The good theme

*Psalm 45:1* My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

1. Our highest calling is to love God, and our chief means of doing so is God's love. He pours out His love for Himself into us that we might love in the same way.  
*Hebrews 2:12 [quoting Psalm 22:22]* "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."
2. *Psalm 45* is yet one more instance of God relating to God, and a perfect picture of this flow of love. It is a Messianic Psalm (it's quoted in *Hebrews 1* in reference to Jesus). It's a wedding song about the beauty of Jesus (2-9) and then it turns to address His bride (10-15).  
*Psalm 45:2* You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You forever... 6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. 7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions... 10 Listen, O daughter, Consider and incline your ear; Forget your own people also, and your father's house; 11 So the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him.
3. Besides being about Jesus though, there is something else that distinguishes this Psalm. It becomes clear by verse 16 that it is the Father singing it.  
*Psalm 45:16* Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, Whom You shall make princes in all the earth. 17 I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.
4. How much of the Psalm is sung directly as the words of the Father is not totally clear, but the Psalmist at the very beginning notes something about His song – He is not creating it, but rather recording what he hears as he sings.  
*Psalm 45:1* My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer [literally scribe].
5. We live deliberately in the posture of 'ready writers' – ready to repeat God's song of love for Himself as He fills our hearts with praises. As we live declaring the song in our hearts as it currently exists, Jesus joins in the praises and adds to our song. If we lives of worship with ears tuned to hear God's song, He will overflow our hearts with the good theme that is in His.