John’s account of the Christmas story seems lacking in many ways. There is no Joseph, no Mary, no angels, no manger, no stable, no shepherds, no wise men, no star, and no baby Jesus. The Christmas story is told in four words: “…the Word became flesh” (1:14a). That is the most profound truth of all. That is the very reason why we celebrate Christmas. It is not because of all the drama that surrounds the Christmas story; the real story of Christmas is “The Word became flesh.”

That is the very theme of John’s gospel. It is to emphasize that Jesus is God in the flesh. Each gospel writer presents a different picture of Jesus.

Matthew’s gospel was written to Jews to show Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah who will one day rule on the throne of David. Mark’s gospel was written to the Romans to show Jesus as God’s servant who came to earth, not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. Luke’s gospel was written to the Greeks to show Jesus as fully human, who experienced in life the trials and the temptations that all of us face. While each gospel shows the supernatural work of Jesus, only John’s gospel sets out to prove that Jesus is God in the flesh. The deity of Jesus in the most significant of all doctrine and is the major aspect that separates true Christianity from the cults and from other religions.

Let’s break down this text which claims “The Word became flesh” that we might better understand all that this means.

The Deity of the Word (1:1–3, 14)

*His designation as the Word… “In the beginning was the Word…”* (1:1a). We will show that Jesus is called “the Word,” but we must first ask, why is He called “the Word” or *Logos*, meaning the spoken word?
There are three reasons: 1) to combat gnosticism, which was permeating the early Church; 2) to challenge Greek philosophers who saw logos as a creative force; 3) to convince the Jews that Jesus is “the Word.”

To combat Gnosticism

Gnosticism was a religious belief that arose out of mingled sources from Persia, Babylon, and Egypt. Gnosticism taught that a very distant god was associated with the evil world of matter through various aeons of gods, that is, one god descending out of another, each less powerful than the one from which it emanated from. It also taught that all flesh is evil and is the creation of the most powerful, but lowest of all gods named Demiurge, the World Architect; to the pagans, this God was the same as YHWH, or the God of the Jews; since all flesh is evil, God would never become flesh, therefore, Jesus cannot be God.

When you see the list of gods that were aeons, you have:

Nous… Reason
Logos… Word or “spoken word” as to differentiate from rema, or “written word.”
Sephos… Wisdom
Dunamis… Power
Aletha… Truth
Zoe… Life
Demiurge… World Architect

John’s prologue is to combat the heresy that Jesus cannot be God in the flesh, so he takes them step by step through his argument:

“In the beginning was the Logos” (Word); they would respond “Yes.”
“The Logos was with God”; they would respond “Yes.”
“He was in the beginning with God”; they would respond “Yes.”
“All things came into being through Him”; they would respond “No.”
“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”; again they would say “No.”
“We saw His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Father full of grace and truth”; again their answer is “No.”

Right at the very beginning, John lays out his premise: Jesus is the God-Man who came to earth to reveal to us the invisible God, our Creator, that we might know Him and be saved from our sins.
How does John make his argument? In using “the Word” (Logos) to speak of Jesus, observe that the second aeon from the top is Logos. John chose that aeon to reveal the purpose of Jesus’ coming. Words are an expression of hidden thoughts. If I would stand before you without a word coming from my mouth, you would be wondering why I am standing in front of you. My hope would be that you would read my mind. Obviously, this would be an exercise in futility. Only when hidden thoughts are put to words are thoughts communicated. God is hidden like the hidden thought; we cannot know what He is like until He communicates with us. This He did in the Person of Jesus Christ. In John 1:18 we read: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” This word translated “declared” is derived from the term “exegesis,” meaning “to interpret.” Jesus interprets and explains who God is and what He does (see John 14:8–10).

Gnosticism is not dead even today in some churches who deny the deity of Christ. They would argue, as did the gnostics, that God would never inhabit evil flesh. To such believers Jesus is nothing more than an angel, or a mere human, like any of the prophets whom God chose to speak through. He is clearly not God in the flesh. Jews and Muslims reject Jesus as God in the flesh as a form of idolatry, for a holy God would never reveal Himself, and certainly not as a human being.

The first reason John speaks of Jesus as the Word is to combat gnosticism.

To Challenge Greek Philosophers that Logos is not a Creative Force

There were Greek philosophers who would understand what John was saying because in the Greek world of philosophy logos was a title given to the creative force behind the universe. They believed there was an ordering, intelligent Mind behind the universe. Greek philosophers thought in abstracts, that is, they saw an impersonal principle of reason and intelligence as creator, a creative force that had knowledge and wisdom, but was not a Divine Person. They called this force “logos.”

To the Greek philosophers, John is acknowledging there is an ordering intelligent Mind behind the universe called Logos, but it is not a force; He is a Person. He has come to earth in the Person of Jesus Christ to reveal to us the true personhood of God.
Even today there are scientists who have to admit there is intelligent design behind the universe. However, they do not want to admit that intelligence is a Person called God. Like the ancient Greeks that give intelligence and design to impersonal laws of nature; it was Einstein who first launched this principle when he said: “Of course there is a god, of course there is a power behind this, but we could never know it. This is cosmic force, cosmic intelligence, cosmic order, certainly not to be identified as the God of the Bible. If you are going to make it into the God of the Bible, then we’ve got to deal with the God of the Bible in the way it is revealed in the Bible. We not only have a Creator, we have a Judge, and a Law-giver and an executioner for those who reject Him.”

To get around a God to whom we must give an account, secularists and atheists depersonalize God and refer to Him as a Force with attributes of creative power.

To convince Jews that Jesus is the Word

To the Jews the phrase, “the word of the LORD came...” was a very familiar idea; it appears frequently in the O.T.; the phrase means that God is speaking through His prophets and in doing so is revealing Himself—His nature, His wisdom, His intelligence, His will, and His truth; the writer of Hebrews remind us: “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 He also made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1–2); John wants his readers to understand the same truth; God in times past spoke through holy men called prophets; but now He is speaking only through His Son Jesus Christ; Jesus is the Word of God become flesh!

John’s gospel is directed to combat religious gnosticism, to challenge Greek philosophers who saw logos as a creative force, and to convince Jews that the true Word is Jesus Christ.

His declaration as God... “... and the Word was God.” (1:1b). The Jehovah’s Witnesses translate these words in their New World Translation, “the Word was a god.” They put the indefinite article “a” before the word god which they spell with a small “g.” The problem is the indefinite article does not exist in the Greek language. It is only added by translators for smoother reading when translated into English; it is never used to change the meaning of the text which the JW’s clearly do. They deny Christ’s deity, so everywhere it is taught in Scripture they rewrite the text.
There is a big difference in saying the Word was “a god” and “the Word was God.” One denies the deity of Christ and the other affirms it. The deity of Christ is a crucial doctrine to Scripture. If Jesus is not the eternal Son of God and the second member of the Trinity, then we have no hope of salvation. No one but God can reveal Himself. No one but God can pay the price for our sins because all sin is against God (Psalm 51:4). Charles Wesley stated it best when he wrote: And Can It Be That I Should Gain? What is the gain but “an interest in the Savior’s blood... He emptied Himself of all but love... Amazing love! How can it be that Thou my God, shouldst die for me?” It is God who went to the cross in the Person of Jesus Christ to die for you and me; there can be no substitute!

Throughout Scripture, Jesus is referred to as God, as in our text. Titus 2:13 speaks of “the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Hebrews 1:8 speaks of the Father saying of the Son, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever... Therefore God, Your God has anointed You...”; 2 Peter 1:1 speaks of those who have attained the precious faith “by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

When Thomas realized that Jesus truly came back from the dead what did he say? “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

The creed of the early Christians in recorded in 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”

The name of God is YHWH or “I AM,” and Jesus claimed that name for Himself several times (John 8:24, 58; 18:4–6). Jesus had the title “Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 1:8), a title given to God (Isaiah 41:4; 48:12; Revelation 1:8). Jesus is to be worshipped (Revelation 5:1–14) yet only God is to be worshipped (Revelation 19:10). If Jesus is to be worshipped then He must be God. We could go on and on with titles that are given to Jesus that belong to God, like Creator, Lord, King, Judge, the One who forgives sins, etc. It is an absolute blasphemy to deny the deity of Jesus!

His dwelling among us as the Word... “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” (1:14). He dwelt among us. Christ’s humanity is not an illusion, not a vision, not an apparition. He took on humanity. He was made in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7). He was made of flesh and blood (Hebrews...
2:14); He lived on this earth 33 years, 30 of those years as a Man among men with no indication He was anyone other than a human being until He began His ministry.

Paul wrote to the Colossians about Christ saying: “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9); Jesus is fully God and fully Man; He dwelt among us so we could see the otherwise invisible God.

**The Declarations about His Deity (1:1, 3–5)**

*His pre-existence...* He was “In the beginning...” (1:1a). What beginning? In the beginning of the beginning. That phrase is taken out of Genesis 1:1. It was in the beginning when God (*Elohim*) created the heavens and the earth. *Elohim* is plural; it could well be translated Gods, yet there is one God, manifested in three Persons. Jesus as the Word was one of those three Persons. The Word was never created, He has always been. He is an eternal Being and He existed before Creation.

The text puts it like this: “In the beginning was the Word”; the word “was” is the imperfect tense of the verb *eimi*, which is the verb “to be”; that is to say, when the beginning began, He already was; He did not come into existence; He already existed!

Cults like The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Jesus was a created Being; Mormons believe He was the product of a sexual union between *Elohim* and his goddess wife on the planet Koloa; Jehovah’s Witnesses teach He was the archangel Michael, a created angel, whom God sent to this earth and adopted as His son.

*His co-existence...* “The Word was with God...” (1:1b); The Word is God and the Word is with God — two personalities that co-exist as God. They share the same divine essence. The Word is as much God as God is God. They have co-existed from all eternity past to all eternity future. They are the One God of heaven and earth.

*His Self-existence...* “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (1:4–5). There are two truths here which speak of His Self-existence: He is Life and He is Light.
He is Life

He is self-existent in that “In Him was life” (1:4). He wasn’t given life; He possesses life as part of His nature. This is the reason Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Again Jesus said, “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26); that is the reason He can create life; He is Life!

You and I were given life. Jesus as the Word is life. There is a simple illustration to help you to distinguish the difference. Look at yourself in the mirror, then get out some old photos, like a picture of you in high school or college. You have changed from those days. You are in the process of becoming older, of becoming different than you once were; it is the result of a maturing process. God, on the other hand, is pure Being; He is not becoming anything other than what He is; He never changes.

The Word that became flesh changed in that the body of Jesus grew from being an infant to manhood. Luke’s gospel says: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). However, the Word, who is God, never changes, for He is an eternal Being! The Word did not increase in wisdom and stature like Jesus did. You can separate Jesus from the Word just as you can separate His humanity from His deity. As humanity, Jesus lived only 33 years. As the Word He is an eternal Being. As such He becomes the source of all life. The miracle of this is, while you can separate the human Jesus from the Divine Word, yet Jesus is the Word—they are One and the same!

He is Light

“In Him was life, and the light was the light of men” (1:3). Jesus came into this world as the eternal life in order to light up the world. Prior to His coming, the world was in darkness. People were living in sin and without hope. Jesus came to show them a way out of their darkness. He said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Jesus came to offer people “the light of life.” What does He mean? There is certainly a distinction between light and life. Here they are fused together. In the text, life is the principle, while light is an analogy. The life is the pre-existent, co-existent, self-existent life of God in human form in the Person of Jesus. When Jesus came, the light went on. His light overcame the darkness of ignorance and
sin. The life and the light have the same construction as the Word and God. Just as the Word is God, so the life is light; they cannot be separated. He came into this world for one purpose: to bring light to a dark and ignorant world.

When God appeared in the O.T., He appeared as light. It was called the Shekinah, a blazing light which demonstrated His glory. When God led the children of Israel through the wilderness, it was by a pillar of cloudy light by day and a pillar of fire by night. When He appeared at the dedications of the tabernacle and the temple it was once again a cloudy light that hovered over those structures. When God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, the glory of His light was so bright it lit up the face of Moses; so it is when you see the living presence of Jesus in the gospels, His presence is always bringing light to a dark world. The life and light of Christ cannot be separated!

Then verse 5 says, “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” The word translated “comprehend” (katalambano) is a compound word meaning “to lay hold of” and could be translated “apprehend.” The world did not immediately seize hold of the Light. It rejected the Light. It loved darkness rather than the Light. In John 3:19–21 Jesus said, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

The world is composed of two kinds of people: those who love darkness and hate the truth and those who love truth and come to the light. People today who hate God and love sinning do not want their lifestyle exposed as evil. Those who love God want to know the truth; they want their sins exposed so they can repent and get right with God and find forgiveness and be saved!

When one chooses to come to the light, the darkness passes away and they experience true life. Jesus said: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10b). The abundant life is found in living in the light of Christ, and that Life is spelled with a capital “L.”

The Demonstration of His Deity (1:3, 12–13)

“All thing were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (1:3).
The evidence that Jesus is the pre-existent, co-existent, self-existent Word is that He is the Creator of the universe. Paul wrote of Christ “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers, or authorities. All things have been created through Him and for Him and He is before all things” (Colossians 1:16). Hebrews says of Christ: “And He made all things, and He upholds all things” (Hebrews 1:2). In John 1:10 we find a real paradox. He writes, “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”

Jesus came into the world that He created and those living in the world did not recognize Him. To put it more bluntly, they did not want to know Him. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (1:11), that is, He came to His own Jewish brethren and they did not want to know Him. The Gentile nations did not want to know Him. The Creator of the universe shows up and people do not want to know Him. Some people can get all excited when some stoned rock star shows up. Some people get so out of breath when a former President of the United States shows up they pass out, but when the Creator of the world shows up, they ultimately have Him crucified!

The first evidence of the deity of Jesus is creation: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (1:3); “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him...” (1:10). Only God can be the creator of heaven and earth. Jesus is God because He is the Creator of all things!

The second evidence of the deity of Jesus is found in verses 12–13: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Jesus not only created mankind, but He can recreate mankind. He alone can give man a second birth— a spiritual birth—where one is born into the family of God so they have the right to be children of God! He alone can destroy man’s own sin nature and give man a new divine nature. He alone can transport a person from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. He alone can deliver man from death to life. There is no better Christmas gift than to know that your sins are forgiven, that you have a new life as a child of God, and that when this life is over, you will live with Him forever and ever. Amen!
John’s story of Christmas is without angels, shepherds, a star, wise men, a manger, Joseph and Mary, and even a baby, but he gives us the real story of Christmas without all the trimmings: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth” (1:1, 14).