



John 1:1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Special Music: "In the Beginning" Tommy Walker

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-eMdbbKsM4>

Filippo Brunelleschi, also known as Pippo, was born in 1377. You have probably never heard of him, but truth be told, you should know who he is. Many people consider him to be the father of Renaissance architecture. He designed many European churches, banks, community buildings and basilicas. He had close ties to the Medici family. His vision and engineering skills were rivaled by few. He also did sculpture, mathematics, and innovative ship design.

On a lessor note, I want to talk about another part of Pippo's life that does not get talked about a lot outside of certain circles. He was also an inventor of stage machinery for use in the church. The Medicis loved to show off for foreign dignitaries and did not think twice about involving Pippo in their desires and plans for spectacle. He was very adept at creating engineering marvels that captured the hearts and minds of an audience.

The early Greeks developed the practice of building elaborate staging devices for use in plays. After they were conquered by Rome, the term used to describe such devices came to be known as Deus Ex Machina, or machine of the gods. Pippo grabbed onto this concept and took it to new heights. He would have angels drop in from the ceiling, cherubs revolving around a nativity, and spectacular demonstrations of interconnected and moving scenery. It was also extremely dangerous for the actors. Young boys would be strapped to the end of long poles that were integrated into revolving mechanical mobiles, turned and moved with winches and gears, presenting different scenes out of the bible. The boys might be dressed as angels, cherubs, devils, or any number of other imaginative elements that expanded the vision of the scene. They would whirl

around the interior of the church, sometimes at high speeds while the poles moved up and down much like a modern carrousel. It was not for the faint of heart. It was probably somewhat comforting for both the actors and their mothers that Pippo was excellent at not letting his vision outpace his engineering skills. But he was able to accomplish what seemed to be miracles in a day and age that could rival anything we are able to put on a stage today.

Filippo Brunelleschi died in 1446 and much of his art and architecture can still be found in Florence Italy today. His skills in stagecraft and design are still taught to theatre students in universities and colleges.

To have a vision, you must first have a visionary. The visionary must be able to see the nuts and bolts of the vision so that the vision can be constructed properly and becomes a reality. To move from vision to reality, one needs to follow a common path, and although some of the skillsets may overlap, they are all needed to complete the vision

1. You need to have someone capable of having the vision
2. You need to have a designer or architect that can translate that vision into schematics and blueprints.
3. You need to have a contractor who can understand the original vision as well as the schematics and blueprints so that he or she can keep the project on track.

4. You need to have skilled craftsmen to assemble the nuts and bolts found in the schematics and blueprints in the proper order to complete the project.

Pippo was visionary but he was also dependent on the skills of other to bring his vision fruition.

God is the GREAT VISIONARY. He developed a plan for the creation of the universe, and he did it specifically for us. God did not need a universe. His desire was to create creatures that could understand who He was and join in a relationship with Him. But to create such creatures, He had to have an environment for those creatures to not only survive but thrive. He built the universe as well as the solar system and the earth so that we would have a place to grow, thrive and find way way into the fullness of a relationship with the creator.

And unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke, John chooses to start his gospel story with at the visionary level, with God as the creator of the vision. And the purpose of that vision is not the creations of stars, planets, nebulas, quasars, quarks, moons, oceans, land, plants, and animals, but a vision of purpose where mankind is the reason for the creation. In other words, the vision of creation was not for the creation of the universe, but the creation of the universe was to provide a habitat for humanity. It was a habitat that was not only physical in nature but

groomed to provide a responsive environment where the Human Race could grow mentally and spiritually as well as they found themselves ever seeking a closer relationship with their Creator.

And Jesus was always a part of that growth plan.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

God always knew that mankind was going to need a savior, a Messiah. And God the Father and God the son were there from the very beginning.

There are times when our own limited ability to understand the nature of God gets in our way as we try to express verbally the magnificence of the Creator and the relationship with His son. We are forced by nature to think in the limited confines of our own minds and perceptions. We say that Jesus is the son of God and try to equate that relationship with how we see a human father and son. But I think that is intentional on God's part. He wants us to be able to relate to Him at that level. But as we grown in knowledge and understanding, it is not beyond our capacity to see that God created the laws of the universe for man's benefit and

that things like time and space are pretty much meaningless for the Creator of such things. God always was, is and will be. Jesus always was, is and will be. And though we do not talk about it much, I believe that Holy Spirit always was, is and will be.

And yes, that is a lot to wrap our heads around. But then God told us through Isaiah **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, “** For whatever reason, we are constantly trying to stick God in a box of our own creation. It seems to bring us comfort when we believe that God needs to follow His own rules or meet our perceived connotations of who He is. I know that it must cause him to laugh when He sees that. We think we can bargain with God, that we can get Him to submit to our will by making promises to Him. But it just does not work that way. We are not in a position to bargain with God. Our limited perception is based on tunnel vision and we simply cannot grasp the really big picture of who God is and that He is always in control. Which is another reason that He sent Jesus into this world as a man. It was a way to teach us that God is so much bigger than anything that we can ever imagine and that there is nothing outside of His control, even death.

So, when John starts his gospel before creation, it is his way of getting us out of our own heads as he attempts to show us a glimpse of the bigger picture. He does not want us to get so focused on the nativity that we forget that God's plan is so

much bigger than that. It does not diminish the story of the virgin birth, the shepherds, the angels and the wise men. It is an attempt to put all of those stories into the perspective of a much larger plan.

What makes this an even greater lesson is shown to us in John 19. Jesus is dying on the cross. We know that John is there with Jesus' mother, Mary. Verses 26 & 27 give us insight into how John thinks.

26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son,"

27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

John always referred to himself as "the disciple that Jesus loved" and I am sure that raised a few hackles among the other disciples. But we know that Jesus' relationship with John had to be special because Jesus is asking John to take care of Mary. Now why is that so important?

Think through it logically here. Yes, I am asking for you to reach for some truth. Mary goes to stay with John and John takes care her. All the events that we read about concerning the nativity in Matthew and Luke are treasured in Mary's heart. She was there. She was an extremely important part of the story. And the container for all these stories is living in John's house where John has access to

first-hand knowledge of the events through Mary. I believe that Mary shared these things with John. The subject of the nativity, the birth of the Christ child, the star, the shepherds, the angels and wisemen must have come up at some point. But when John writes his gospel, he doesn't even mention the nativity. He jumps from the creation of the universe to John the Baptist.

I do not believe this to be negligence on the part of John, but rather an intentional attempt to open our eyes to a much bigger understanding of God. The only mention he makes to the birth of our Lord is: **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** While Matthew and Luke are focusing on the humanity of Christ, John is focusing on the deity of Christ. This does not put them at odds. These stories actually complement each other. By weaving them all together we receive a more complete understanding of who Jesus is and that all of these events were necessary to accomplish the will of God and bring the birth of Christ into a better perspective of this portion of God's overall plan. By doing so, we come to a better understanding that Jesus was both the “Son of God” as well as the “Son of Man.”

The stories surrounding the nativity are wonderful and create a sense of awe in all of us. But when we add the perspective of the deity of Christ, it enlarges our view of Him to encompass the creation story as well, to better embrace an

understanding who He was, is, and always will be. That awe that we experience at Christmas is magnified to the point of giving us a glimpse into the complex nature of God's plan and how very much He loves us. To think that He would send a piece of Himself into this world as a human baby to rescue us from our own transgressions and egos, to show us how to live, and to take us by the hand and bring us to the feet of our living God and Father, that is mind blowing.

Let us stand joyfully in worship in the presence of our Creator with the full understanding that He has created a universe that cannot be reduced to nuts and bolts, that the vision is far more expansive than anything we can perceive. Let us stand in awe that the Great Architect has all things under control and is guiding His workers towards the completion of the blueprints established before the creation of the universe.

AMEN

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