

# **Majesty and Mystery (part 1)**

**John 1:14**

**Big Idea: The Word was incarnated and lived among us**

**Purpose: to grow in our appreciation of the mystery of the glories of Christ and his incarnation; and to explode our love for God**

**Prayer: Father,**

**It is a staggering thought that Jesus**

**The pre-existent one;**

**The co-existent one;**

**The Trinitarian son;**

**The intellect of creation;**

**The spring of life;**

**And the brilliant light;**

**Embraced our smallness to become a man; rejected and killed on our behalf.**

**This truth is both exhilarating and devastating.**

**That he should live amongst us gives us hope, power, honour, meaning, joy and peace.**

**We pray this Christmas**

**Give us eyes with sight that we may see his glory.**

**Minds of comprehension that we may know his greatness.**

**Hearts of trust that submit our destinies into his loving hands.**

**Souls of worship submissive to his beauty.**

**Lives of adoration that are filled with generosity.**

**And love that explodes into wonder at what you have done.**

**For your glory alone.**

**Amen**

Majesty and Mystery: two words that were coined by philosopher, author and one-time editor of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Mortimer Adler. He said when we are contemplating God we should expect to find Majesty and Mystery. In those moments when our hearts turn towards God we will find him to be bigger than we ever imagined. As we study him, as we get to know him, as we fall in love with him, we will find that there is always **more to him**; more to know; more to understand; more to love, more to trust, more to worship because he is majestic - Majesty.

But as we turn to God we will also find that we will never understand him. There will always be aspects of his character that intrigue us and fascinate us and surprise us and perhaps even puzzle us; there will be actions he takes that will enthrall us and attract us as well as some that will repel us...

because God is so different from us –  
Mystery.

Majesty and Mystery - two words to expect  
when you contemplate God!

Well today we turn our hearts towards  
Christmas. Everybody loves Christmas unless  
of course you are the Grinch of Dr Seuss, or  
Ebenezer Scrooge of Charles Dickens...but  
those grumps aside the rest of us love  
Christmas. Presents and feasting and  
holidays and family. But as we celebrate it is  
easy to flounder under the commercial  
weight of Boney M's little drummer boy or to  
sink under a load of tinsel and turkey; we  
can be overwhelmed by the idolatry of our  
own hearts and the demands of our  
children; we can flounder in the busyness of  
all that needs to be done; and we can  
forget that Christmas is brilliantly **majestic**

and intensely **mysterious**...because Christmas is the God of majesty and the God of mystery at work! And so this year as we rush at breakneck speed towards Christmas Day...let me remind you of **the majesty and the mystery** of Christmas.

Our text this year is from John's gospel. We find it in chapter 1 verse 14...I am pretty sure that you know it. If not – why not learn it this Christmas season. It is a simple statement so laden with meaning that we will stay with it for two weeks; it is this – **the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us...**

The subject of our text is 'the Word'...which is a funny title to give to anyone. You will never find a boxer or a wrestler called 'the Word'. You won't find a soccer player called 'the Word' - the 'king' maybe, or the 'greatest' maybe, or 'Manic Mike'...but 'the Word'? The Logos? At the time that John

wrote the Greek Philosophers were speculating lots about the Logos. We haven't got the time nor the inclination to worry about that stuff...instead let's see what we can discover from John 1 about this one called 'the Word'.

Notice firstly that,

## **1. The Word was in the beginning**

John 1:1 tells us that 'the Word' was there when it all started. So cast your mind back, back, back into deep history, to the moment when it all began...if we could get in our time machine and go back there we would find 'the Word.' He is before time; outside of time; beyond time. 'The Word' is timeless. There was never a time when he was not. Most stories begin "Once upon a time..."

ours begins with 'the Word' who was before time...!

And there before time...

## **2. The Word was with God**

Before the beginning, before time started 'the Word' wasn't alone. The Word was with God, towards God, alongside God, in relationship with God. He is separate from God, distinct from God yet he was in the company of God, face to face with God.

To be 'with' someone is to acknowledge that 'the Word' is a person. You don't say the stone was with me...yet we do say my wife was with me.

Back before anything that is was...the person of the Word was alongside God...

Now how can someone be there in the beginning and be with God? Perhaps then he is another god? Perhaps a lesser god or a companion god, perhaps there are two gods...?

No says John, 'the word' was with God and...

### **3. The Word was God**

Not only was the Word alongside God, he actually is God. He is not a lesser deity, nor a separate deity. In the original Greek the word order in verse 1 puts it the other way around to our English versions it says God was the Word. 'The Word' was with God and God was 'the Word'. 'The Word' we are thinking about is God himself...

We haven't even left verse 1 yet and already we are swimming in majesty and mystery. We are starting to feel the weight of Mortimer Adler's words...as we contemplate God...we are stumbling along - how can 'the Word' be with God and yet be God at the same time? Majesty and Mystery!

Sometimes I hear people say that the word Trinity isn't in the Bible and it is true that you won't find the word Trinity in the Bible...but that said you can't read the Bible without constantly falling over the truth of a God in three persons - a God who is so big that he stretches back into eternity and forward into eternity; A God who is so mysterious that he manages to be both three and one all at the same time.

Well picture yourself lying in your hammock next to your covered waterless pool this holiday; and as you soak up the sun you are joined by a fly. He investigates your ear and then he tiptoes along your back, he hovers over you so that you can't sleep. Eventually in a grump you reach out and grab him. You are the karate kid and so you catch him in your hand and to punish him you say to him, "Now you are going to listen to me. I am going to teach you linear algebra!" As the fly looks at you through his thousands of individual eyes which are called ommatidia he experiences majesty and mystery...just as we do when we contemplate 'the Word'.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the word was God...

Now when you are confronted with the Majesty and Mystery of God you have a

choice; to listen though that listening hurts our ears and stretches our brain and rattles our view of reality; as we listen we will find ourselves kneeling with a sense of wonder. We will find our hearts drawn in worship!

But you can also choose to dismiss what you can't understand, to stop up your ears with your fingers and to live pretending that it can't be true...One person said, "Personally, I'm no better at grasping infinity than I was at 4. But rather than trying to comprehend eternity, now I just avoid the thought altogether."

How sad that is...

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

But there is more! Much, much more! Not only was 'the Word' God...he was the agent of creation...

#### **4. (The Word was the agent of creation)**

1v3

It was through the labour and effort and actions of 'the Word' that everything happened. Without him nothing was made that has been made. 'The Word' is the designing, creative, mastermind behind everything. He brings things into being that were not there before. He paints fish with yellow tails and orange stripes. He sculpts Hammerhead Sharks and Manta Rays. He fashions translucent Sea Horses and crabs to nip your toes. He stretches the neck of the giraffe and makes the mighty elephant eat leaves and grass. He gives the scorpion its

vicious sting and he made the mosquito. Why? Why, oh why did he make the mosquito?

We'll meet "Little foot."



Perhaps in a few thousand years you might be on a preacher's powerpoint. Little Foot was unveiled this week at Wits University. Painstakingly excavated from the Sterkfontein caves over decades, she is thought to be 3,5 million years old...now without getting into the complexities of carbon dating (which I don't understand) and the debate about the age of the

earth...however old 'Little Foot' is, the Bible tells us that 'the Word' made her...

And then 'the Word' gave her life...

## **5. The Word is life**

1v4a

We use the word life in two distinct ways. We use it to mean the opposite of death but we also use it mean purpose and meaning and vitality and joy and enthusiasm...we say "children are full of life." We don't mean that they are not dead we mean that they bubble over with joy and they laugh and they play...

V4 says with masterful ambiguity, in him was life. 'The Word' is life. He is the agent of life. He is the life giver – the opposite of death

and the power over death. But he is also *the way to have life when you have life*. The Word is the reason we are the alive; he is the bringer abouter of life but he is also the answer to the meaning of life.

If I ask you for a moment to think about New Zealand, what comes into your mind? Beautiful nature - fjords, mountains and magnificent landscapes. Perhaps you are thinking of emigrating there because life there is just so perfect. No crime, no pollution, no labour unrest, no political chaos - life seems so idyllic and trouble free on the Islands of New Zealand. Imagine the shock then when a recent Unicef report revealed that New Zealand has by far the highest youth suicide rate in the developed world. And then to discover that this is not the first time that the country has topped that table. The rate of 15.6 suicides per

100,000 people is twice as high as the US rate and almost five times that of Britain.

We need more than idyllic and crime free living to have life. In him was life...you won't find life without 'the Word'

And in him was light...

## **6. (The Word is light)**

1V4

Again we use the word light in two ways. It is the opposite of darkness but we also use the word light to mean understanding – we say, “the lights came on,” meaning we understood something. ‘The Word’ is light for humans. He is the answer to all the existential questions of Philosophy. He is the solution to our angst. ‘The Word’ is the purpose and meaning of life. ‘The Word’ is the key to

understanding your existence and what you are here for...but 'the Word' is also light in a world of darkness and evil. He is light to an empty soul. He is light on the journey of life.

It is interesting that scientists don't really understand light. There is the particle theory and the wave theory...the Wikipedia article on light requires a post-graduate university degree to understand it. Suffice it to say that light is the way in which we see things; light is the opening of our minds; light is the opposite of darkness; light is good rather than evil; light is beauty rather than pain...

In him was life and light...

Majesty and Mystery!!

Now it was 'this Word' that became flesh and made his dwelling among us. It was 'this

Word' that was born in a stable all those years ago. But our time is up and we haven't yet unpacked what happened that day – all we have done is meet him. We have met 'the Word' – Jesus, the one who came that first Christmas.

You will have to come back next week for part 2 when I will unpack for us what happened that day.

If you have never embraced 'the Word'...run towards him today...it will be the greatest adventure of your life. He will give you life and he will give you light because that is who he is! Sadly, tragically the world did not receive him when he came, the world did not recognise him...and that is why the world struggles to know what life is about; that is why the world struggles with light...run towards him today...

But most of us are Christians here for us Christmas is about Christ...this year let's ask 'the Word' to grow our understanding of his majesty. Let's ask him to give us eyes that start to see something of his majesty. As we see his greatness we will start to understand our place in the universe...

This Christmas let's ask 'the Word' to give us minds that start to glimpse the mystery of Christmas. As our minds comprehend ever so faintly ever so faintly who we are dealing with...we start to find the meaning that our hearts desire.

Let's ask 'the Word' to give us hearts that trust his plan in the darkness of our brokenness and pain. Life is so full of pain – a young Westerford girl dies on the school trip of a lifetime this week...in the tragedy of life God has got it. God has got you...and

trusting his plan brings serenity in the middle of the storm.

Let's ask 'the Word' to give us souls that are enthralled by him, that worship him alone, not the tacky tinsel of Christmas.

Let's ask 'the Word' to give us lives of adoration.

And let's ask 'the Word' to fill us with a love that explodes into wonder at him - the God of Majesty and Mystery.