

## **Word of God**

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Right now our culture is obsessed with origin stories.

So many of the popular movies of the past decade have been a means of revisiting a familiar character, or story, by looking back before the story we know, to see how this person came to be who they are.

Joker tells us how this famous batman villain made his way from being a party-clown and aspiring comedian to becoming the villainous agent of chaos we know.

Rogue One tells us the story of how those famous plans to the death star made into Princess Leia's hands in the first place.

And Wonder Woman shows us how child Diana came to be in our world, with her other-worldly powers.

Origin stories are not just exercises in curiosity. They are explorations of identity. By thinking about where someone comes from, or how they got where they are, we seek to understand who they are more deeply.

The Christmas story we know and love is a sort of mash-up of the stories of Jesus birth found in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew.

Luke gives us the angel appearing to Mary, shepherds, and the fact that there was no room in the inn.

Matthew gives us the Joseph's dream, the wisemen, and King Herod.

The gospel of Mark contains no stories about Jesus before his thirties. No origin story. Just jumps right in with the beginning of his public ministry.

And then there is the gospel of John. Often kind of the outlier among the four. John gives us an origin story about Jesus, but it is not earthly. It is not about how a baby was born, or who visited him, or what gifts they brought.

This is cosmic Christmas.

John takes us back, eons before the decree from emperor Augustus, before Bethlehem was on the map, before —in fact— the very creation of the world.

In the beginning... John writes... a clear homage to the first words of the Old Testament.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Its no wonder we stick with Matthew and Luke for the Christmas Pageant. We would need some pretty high budget CGI to even try to represent this...

So what is this “word.” This essence of Christ before he was every born as Jesus that was there with God at the very foundation of the world?

Well, if you remember from the story of creation in Genesis. Words are how God creates.

God said: “let there be light” and there was. God’s words become the reality of creation.

God said: “let the waters be gathered into on place.” and the dry land appeared.

God said: “let the earth bring for plants.” and they begin to grow.

In the imagery of the genesis creation story, the words of God are what bear the power of creation. God speaks. Things come into being.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

This is a very philosophical origin story.

But what this story says in essence is that this creative power of God. These words that flow from God and become the world we know. This force, this power, this ‘word.’

Became flesh. And lived with us.

This creative, mysterious, mighty word.

Became a human. And lived in this world.

And that is Jesus.

The Christmas story we tell each year in our pageant, is sort of filmed from Earth, looking heavenward, showing us what it looks like and feels like on the ground of our lives when the child of God is born in our world.

John's Christmas. Cosmic Christmas. Is filmed from heaven, trying to describe what it means for the almighty and everlasting God, to empty God-self into a single human life.

And this origin story is not just an exercise in philosophical or theological curiosity. It is an attempt to understand more deeply, and describe more fully, who Jesus is, and who God is.

To me, this story is telling us that intimacy is at the heart of who God is.

Closeness matters to God.

God was not content merely to set the universe in motion through the words of creation. God needed to draw nearer to us. God needed to be closer to us. To dwell with us.

Of course God could have in that case come crashing into creation in some unmistakable thundering cloud of glory and majesty. But no, because God did not only want to be close to us. God wanted us to feel close to God.

And so God came as a child. As something as frail and fickle as flesh. So that not only would God meet our world and know it in a body. But, perhaps even more importantly, that this impossibly remote God of the heaven and all creation, whom we could never fully comprehend or know, is now here in a way that we too can draw close to.

God comes into the world in such a way that we can have a relationship.

That we can have a connection.

That we can eat together.

That we can speak to one another.

So this whole complex origin story. These philosophical twists and turns. It is all meant to tell us, that God's great hope is to be closer to you.

That God's great incarnation project was for the purpose of getting closer to you.

A few weeks ago, Emma and I arrived to church on Sunday morning and there was a bird in our offices.

So we spent quite a bit of time before the service trying to help this poor frightened little thing find its way to safety.

I am sure you can picture what a comedic scene unfolded.

We opened a window, and were waving our arms trying to get it to fly out, we were gently brushing it along with a magazine, trying to usher it toward what we knew beyond doubt would be this bird's best chance.

But no matter how hard we tried to get it to fly through that window, it would peck around trying to tunnel through the ceiling tiles or cower in the corner on a floor.

Don't worry, the story has a happy ending. We ultimately succeeded in getting it to fly out the window. But I think a lot of it was just luck, on all our parts.

But it would have been so much easier if I could have sung a song that bird would understand. To tell it how simple it would be to find its salvation.

Or better yet, if I could have spread my own wings to fly out that window and show the way.

If only I could have become a bird.