JOHN, GENESIS AND THE ABSENCE OF CHRISTMAS

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Category: Observations

Today, I was struck (again) by the way in which the opening verses of John's Gospel reflect the start of Genesis.

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

> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)*

John starts off by clearly echoing the opening words of Genesis; "In the begining". But after introducing the 'Word' he then goes on to pick up the theme of creation from Genesis 1 by saying that it was the 'Word' who actually did the creating. Essentially, John is repeating the opening of Genesis, but drawing Jesus into the story. But there is more.

> *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Â And God said, â€œLet there be light,â€ and there was light. (Genesis 1:2,3)*

> *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:4,5)*

At creation the earth was dark until God spoke and said "Let there be light". John expands on this by showing that Jesus is the source of light and that he has completely overcome the darkness.

I believe that John is actually doing two things here; firstly he is drawing Jesus into the creation story, stressing the pre-existance and creative power of the second person of the Trinity. But John is not just talking about the original creation, he is depicting the incarnation of Jesus as a new creation, of the start of a process wherebye the world would be made new. In chapter 20, John describes the dramatic meeting between Mary and Jesus: a meeting in a garden. You can't escape the echoes of the garden of Eden.

When God became man, born to Mary and Joseph in Bethelehem, the whole world changed. The Christmas story isn't really about angels, shepherds, wise men, little donkeys or any of the other paraphenalia of Christmas, it is about the recreation of the whole world and a resetting of the fundamental relationship between the creator God and his creation. Could this by why John didn't relate Christmas story in his Gospel? Perhaps he felt that if he retold the Bethelehem story (which Matthew and Luke had already covered) people would be distracted from the deep reality of Jesus birth. Looking at modern society and our approach to Christmas, John was spot-on if this was his reasoning!

The photograph is nothing to do with the post, but I like it.