

The Word Was Made Flesh

Marveling at the Truth about Jesus

December 20 2015

John 1:1-18

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

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

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

7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.

8 He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light.

9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,

13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

To the Glory of God

Well, what the world calls the "Christmas Season of 2015" is in full swing this morning and shoppers are busy gathering gifts and trees are being decorated and parties are going on and families are gathering in and people are missing church and there is laughter and joy in the air.

But we have gathered here this morning in humble obedience to this Man who was born 2,000 years ago, and we have come to bring honor to Him today, and we have gathered so that we may actually worship Him Who is born King of the Jews.

Now the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you is one of the deepest and one of the most profound passages in all of the Bible. What this verse says and what this verse means is *the* central issue of Christianity and of the Church of Jesus Christ.

This Passage makes the claim that there was a day when God Almighty became a Man. Which on its face- is an unbelievably profound statement- and one that is rejected by every other religion and every other philosophy on earth. Christianity alone and singularly makes the clear confession that the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you is true and that six things are absolute:

1. The very Word of God became flesh and dwelt among men.
2. Jesus of Nazareth is the literal and actual *incarnation* of Almighty God- the Creator and Owner of the Universe.
3. Immanuel has come.
4. All of the Old Testament Promises have been or will be fulfilled in this one single Man.
5. Jesus alone bore our sins.
6. Salvation is in Jesus' Name and in His Name alone.

And as we have discovered- even that word- "Incarnation" had to be *invented* because God had never become a Man before. And so the Latin verb "Incarno", or its English transliteration "Incarnation", had to be *created* to describe this glorious moment in time when God took on

flesh and became a Man. So the Latin rendering of the first part of **John 1:14** is:

Et Verbum caro factum est...

And the Word became flesh...

Now I believe that as redeemed folk- we need to dwell on this Passage often. This Passage in the opening remarks from the Apostle John as he was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to pen these Words down- should be a part of our ongoing walk with God- so that we don't lose the impact of this moment in time and our minds become dull and worldly. I actually believe that we could spend the rest of our lives on this Passage and still not drink in all of its greatness and grandeur.

So it is with great fear and trembling that I attempt, in my weakness and frailty, to try to preach this one sermon on this text- which I pray does justice to this verse and gives God all the honor that He so richly deserves.

Now I choose this particular text for two reasons:

1. It is a great Christmas Passage. The key verse that shows this Christmas orientation is verse 14: "**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**" And that is the meaning of what we are supposed to be celebrating during this time of year. God has come into the world- born of virgin- in the Person of Jesus Christ.
2. The second reason I have chosen this text is because it is so full of particular Truths about Jesus Christ that we so desperately need to know and embrace.

And this is *especially* important for us today because even the major non-Christian religions of the world are speaking these days as though they esteem and honor and, in some sense, believe in Jesus. You hear this especially, these days, from Muslim leaders who want us to believe that they *honor* Jesus- even more than we do- even though they categorically *reject* what the Scriptures clearly and repeatedly say about Who Jesus is, and they reject that God would allow Jesus to suffer the insulting Death of a criminal on the Cross.

So by denying Who Jesus is and the very reason why Jesus came to this earth- Muslims think that we will value what they say. But *nobody* honors Jesus who will deny His very Person and why He was born. That isn't honor- it is disbelief. And if *anything* is true about Jesus- it is that Salvation comes from belief- *not* disbelief. So honoring Jesus would be to believe Who He is, and it would be to trust in what He has done. *That* is honoring. And based on that- neither the rejecting Muslim nor the worldly nominal Christian honors Jesus.

So I believe that it is crucial today that Christians know Jesus Christ very well- and that they enjoy what they know. Because it is vital in our day to be able to tell the difference between the Jesus of the Bible and the Jesus which other religions and philosophies claim to honor.

And this goes back to the main objective of what the Christian Church is all about. Church is not about Man. Church, real Church, biblical Church is not a group therapy session in which we all learn neat and clever tricks about how to have smarter children and how to make more money and how our teeth can be whiter and brighter.

No, Church is all about Jesus Christ. It is about learning Who Jesus is so that you and I are not like the pagans in Ephesus who worshipped "the unknown God". Because it is true that unless you know God- you cannot worship God in the manner in which He deserves to be worshipped, and unless you love God- your devotion to Him will not be what it should be- seeing that after all- He is God.

And Church is all about knowing what Jesus has done- so that we may believe that and place our hope and trust in His completed Work- so that all of our sins may be forgiven and that we may spend eternity with God in Heaven- praising Him for His great Mercy and Grace.

So God has become flesh precisely so that sinners will come to know Him. And in really knowing Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done- we will be gifted with love for Him. And this great gift of love for Jesus Christ will empower us and compel us to follow Him and to worship Him and to devote ourselves to Him which the Bible teaches will cause us to enjoy Him forever.

So Church is about learning Who Jesus is and what Jesus did and How important Jesus is and how beautiful Jesus is and how glorious Jesus is and how marvelous Jesus is, and how worthy Jesus is of our love and our devotion and our obedience and our service. And when we

learn about His Character and His Nature, and when we learn about what He loves and what He hates, and when we learn what He said and what He meant by what He said- only then are we able to give Jesus, and thus to God- what He is *entitled* to receive- unfiltered love, unadulterated love, complete love, total love- which I would suggest to you will bring about the greatest degree of joy and satisfaction in us.

Now I have said this many times- but it bears saying again here. If Jesus is not worthy of your *service*- then why would you think He is worthy of your love. In other words- if your love for Jesus does not compel you to *obey* Jesus and follow Jesus- why would that kind of love be thought to be valuable at all? I say, that kind of love is ridiculous and not worth anything.

As human beings- the only way we have to prove our love for Jesus is through our desires and actions. And whereas neither one of these are without fault- they are transformed by Salvation into being focused on the One Who lived and died and Who rose again and Who is coming back. Please look at what the Apostle Paul said about this by turning with me to **Ephesians 3:14-21**.

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,
16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,
17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.
20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,
21 to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

So what I would like to do with this great opening paragraph about Jesus Christ, written by the one who knew him on earth more intimately than anyone else- the Apostle John- is to point out and

explain and exult over five Truths concerning the Word made flesh, and then contrast two starkly different responses that you might give to Him this morning.

And my goal is that you might see Jesus today for Who He really is, and to be moved to receive Him as your Lord and your God and your all-surpassing Treasure. And if you have already received Him- I pray that you will embrace Him, and treasure Him, and delight yourself in Him, and follow Him fully and obey Him from the heart more than you ever have.

So let's begin with five Truths about the "Word-Made-Flesh" in this passage.

1. The Name of the Word-Made-Flesh on Earth Is Jesus Christ

John 1:17

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

"Jesus" was the name Joseph was told to give the child by the angel of the Lord because this name means "Savior." And from the very moment when the Baptist cried out,

John 1:29b

... Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

... it was no longer enough for a Jew to believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. No, from that moment on- Salvation was in Jesus alone, and everyone who would spend eternity in Heaven must come to Jesus or they don't go at all.

From that moment until now- it was not enough for the Jew to faithfully obey Moses and worship in Jerusalem in the Temple. Every saved soul must worship Jesus Christ or they blaspheme God. And from the moment that John Baptist made this statement- every animal sacrifice offered in adherence to the Old Covenant was an abomination to God. We have to understand that when the Word became flesh- *everything* changed!

Matthew 1:20-21

20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Now "Christ" was the title that referred to the long-awaited King of the Jews- Who would give victory to the people and bear the Government of the world on his shoulders in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy in **Isaiah 9:6-7:**

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

So marvel with me at the seven Names that the Prophet Isaiah says this Savior will hold:

- 1. Child**
- 2. Son**
- 3. Wonderful**
- 4. Counselor**
- 5. Mighty God**
- 6. Eternal Father**
- 7. Prince of Peace**

... and look at the two Truths about Him:

- 1. the government will rest on His shoulders**
- 2. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore**

When Andrew, Peter's brother, told Peter that he had met Jesus- this is what he said in **John 1:41**:

...We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ).

So the Person we are speaking about in these verses is known in the Bible and throughout the world as "Jesus Christ." And each name carries tremendous meaning: He is Savior and King.

The Apostle Paul said this about Jesus in **Philippians 2:6-11**

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus *EVERY KNEE WILL BOW*, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

2. The Word-Made-Flesh Existed as God from Eternity Past and with God before He Was Born as a Man on Earth

John 1:1

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

Now this one single verse makes three powerful statements:

1. The Word was in the *beginning*
2. The Word was *with* God
3. The Word *was* God

Now most all the people who live on earth right now or who have ever lived on earth categorically *reject* the great Mystery implied in

these three statements. And yet they would tell you that they love and honor Jesus Christ. They don't. Now I'm not suggesting that this is not profound- because most of all the controversy about Jesus over the last 2,000 years has centered around the second and third claim made in this verse- namely:

- ✓ **The Word was *with* God**
- ✓ **The Word was God**

... so yes, it is deep and it is profound and it is a mystery. But it is also true. Now many say, in their bondage to human reasoning, that we can't have it both ways. They say that either Jesus *was* God, or Jesus was *with* God- but it is physically impossible for Jesus to be both. Ah, but in the darkness of their minds- they do not understand that *nothing* about God is physically possible. God is fully and totally *supernatural*. Which means he is above the natural. And so *everything* that God is and everything that God does is above the natural and is not possible for Man.

For example- the Scriptures declare that God made everything out of nothing (ex-nihilo). And that from the sea and earth that He made out of nothing- God made fish and animals and finally Man. And then God made the Woman out of the rib of the Man. But initially, God made the Heavens and the Earth and Light and Darkness out of nothing. He spoke them into existence. And that is a profound statement and one that cause us to wonder after this great God.

But the lost pagan world insists on wrestling and fighting against God. And they *wrongly* reason, in their darkened minds, that if Jesus was *with* God- then that automatically means that Jesus was *not* God. Because if Jesus *was* God- then He couldn't have been *with* God. You *are* you. But you are not *with* you. And since Jesus was with God- He *couldn't* be God.

Now it has always fascinated me that unbelievers will use parts of the Bible to justify their unbelief while categorically rejecting other parts of the Bible that would bring them into belief. The only reason why anybody would think that Jesus was *with* God is because the Bible says that He was. But that same Bible *also* says that Jesus *was* God. And so to believe that Jesus was *with* God *forces* you to also believe that Jesus is God- or be inconsistent on a fundamental level.

So to escape the Truth of these two sentences- they try to change the meaning of the words (as the Jehovah's Witnesses do) so that this verse reads:

"The Word was with God, and the Word was a god."

... and besides the theological destruction that statement would make- it is simply *impossible* to use the Greek language properly and come to that conclusion. That is *not* what John said. And beside the language issue- there are very serious contextual reasons from other parts of the Gospel of John and from other books of the Bible as to why the Christian Church has never accepted such teaching as true and orthodox.

What that one verse teaches- is that the Person that we know as Jesus Christ- that *before* He was made flesh- was God. And it also teaches that the Father was also God. So there are two Persons here and yet only one God. And then you add the Holy Spirit – Who is also fully God- and you have the Biblical Truth which we know as the Doctrine of the Trinity. And this is also a very deep and profound Mystery- but one which the Scriptures clearly and repeatedly teach:

God is “one” in His Essence and is eternally manifested in three distinct Persons of God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit

And it is this Truth that says that it is not only proper to worship Jesus Christ- but it is sin not to. Which is why we can agree with Thomas in **John 20:28** and say about Jesus,

My Lord and my God.

3. Before Jesus Became Flesh- John Called Him "The Word"

John 1:1

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

Now *why* was Jesus called "the Word"? One way to answer this is to ponder what else Jesus *might* have been called, and why whatever

else He would have been called would have been *inadequate* in relationship to "the Word." For example, Jesus *might* been called "the Deed". And if Jesus was called the "Deed"- then **John 1:1** would read:

"In beginning was the Deed and the Deed was with God and the Deed was God."

But one of the main differences between a Deed and a Word is that a Deed is much harder to grasp than a Word. If we think our *words* are sometimes unclear and subject to various interpretations- our *deeds* are far more unclear and much more ambiguous. Which is why we so often explain our deeds- with words.

You see, words capture the meaning of what we do much more clearly than the deeds themselves. And although God did many mighty deeds in history- He gave a priority to the Word. And that is one of the reasons why God puts such a high value on clarity and communication.

And this is why I place such great emphasis on God's Word- the Holy Bible. Because words mean certain and specific things. So when God's Word is taken out of context- we get a completely different meaning than what God actually said. And that different and wrong meaning produces different and wrong beliefs and that leads to different and wrong actions.

So, I believe with all my heart that it is vital for the believer to read and study and then rightly *interpret* what God's Word says and what God's Word *means* by what it says so that we may correctly apply God's Word to our lives- so that God may be glorified in and through us.

Now another possibility is that John might have called Jesus "the Thought." And if he did- then **John 1:1** would read:

"In the beginning was the Thought, and the Thought was with God and the Thought was God."

But one of the main differences between a Thought and a Word is that a Word is generally pictured as moving outward from the thinker for the sake of establishing communication. And John wanted us to conceive of the Son of God as existing both for the sake of communication between Him and the Father, and for the sake of appearing in history as God's Communication to us.

A third possibility is that John might have called Jesus "the Feeling." And then **John 1:1** would say,

"In the beginning was the Feeling, and the Feeling was with God and the Feeling was God."

But again, I would say, that our feelings do not carry any clear conception or intention or meaning. Feelings, like deeds, are very unclear and very unreliable and unpredictable, and almost *always* need to be explained – with words. So calling Jesus "the Word" is John's way of emphasizing that the very existence of the Son of God is for the sake of communication.

So first, and foremost, John says that Jesus exists. And then John says that Jesus has *always* existed- from all eternity- for the sake of communication with the Father. And then secondarily, but infinitely important for us, the Son of God became Divine Communication *to* us. So calling Jesus "the Word" implies that Jesus is "God-Expressing-Himself." So if you want to hear from God- listen to Jesus. If you want to see God- look at Jesus. So we no longer need to go to human prophets- we can listen to God through Jesus Christ or as the writer of Hebrews put it in **Hebrews 1:1-4**

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

4. All That Is *Not* God- Was Created through the Word

John 1:3

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Now there are at least two reasons John says this about the Word here. One is that it underscores that Jesus is, in fact, God. Now when we normally think of God- we usually think of the Creator. Because God is the Origin and Explanation of all that exists- except Himself. So when John says here,

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

... John means that Jesus is God and that Jesus Himself was *not* created. So part of what we must believe if we are to be saved is that Jesus is *not* a created Being. God did *not* create Jesus at some point before, during, or after Creation. God did not make Jesus any more than God made Himself. God always was and always will be. God is- and since Jesus is God – there was never a moment in time when Jesus was not.

And the other reason comes out in verse 10:

John 1:10

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

The point here seems to underline the seriousness of the world's guilty blindness, and the greatness of the world's evil in rejecting Jesus. So Jesus comes to us as our *Maker*, and *still* the world will not receive Him.

Now so far- what have we seen about the Word-Made-Flesh?

1. He is Jesus Christ, Savior and anointed King.
2. He is God, the second person of the Trinity.
3. He is the Word – God-in-Communication, God-Expressing-Himself.
4. He is the Creator of all things.

5. The Word-Made-Flesh Has Life in Himself, and That Life Becomes the Light of Men

John 1:4

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

All true Life *originates* in the Word. And that is obvious because, as we have seen already, Jesus is the Creator of all things. But here the focus of John is probably only on *spiritual* life. In other words, there are two overwhelming problems we humans face:

- ✓ We are spiritually dead
- ✓ We are spiritually blind

And John is saying here:

Jesus is the remedy to both of these problems: Jesus has the Life we need, and this Life becomes the Light we need.

John 5:21b says:

... the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

In other words, Jesus does for us *spiritually* what He did for Lazarus *physically* when He stood before Lazarus' tomb in **John 11:43** and said to the dead man, "**Lazarus, come forth**".

But how does the Life given by Jesus relate to Light? In two ways:

1. This Light enables us to see. When dead people are given life- they see. Or, to change the image, when you are born- you see. So this is spiritual. Jesus said to Nicodemus:

John 3:3

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

So first Jesus gives *Life*, and then that Life becomes *Light* – the ability to “see” spiritual Truth.

2. The other way that the Life Jesus gives relates to the Light is not only that it enables you to see- but that **Jesus Himself is the Light that is seen.** After all- what are we really blind to, when we are unbelievers? We are blind to the Truth and the Beauty and the Worth and the Value and the Glory of Jesus. So when John says:

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

... he means that Jesus Christ- the Word-Made-Flesh- is both the Power to see spiritual Splendor, *and* that Jesus *is* the Splendor that is seen. So Salvation is the Power to see Jesus for Who He really is and to enjoy what you see. And that's what verse 14 says,

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And that is what Jesus prayed for in **John 17:24a**,

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me...

And that's what Jesus claimed when two different times He said:

"I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5).

So the Word-Made-Flesh has Life in Himself, and that Life becomes the Light of men. So Jesus is both the Power to see *and* the Splendor that is seen.

Now summing up- what five Truths about the Word-Made-Flesh have we seen?

1. He is Jesus Christ after He is made flesh: Savior and God-anointed King of all.
2. He is God: He was with God and was God.
3. He was called the Word: God-in-communication, God-Expressing-Himself.
4. He is the Creator: all things were made through him, but he himself was not made.
5. He is life and Light: the living power to see and the all-satisfying splendor to be seen.

So since all of this is true about Jesus- then what are the only two reasonable responses that we might give to all this Revelation about

Jesus Christ, the Word-Made-Flesh?

Response #1: I Do *Not* Know Him and I Do *Not* Receive Him

This response is described in **John 1:10-11**:

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

So, it is possible that you can hear everything that I have said today about Jesus and yet say, "*I do not know Him and I do not receive Him.*" And that is a very frightening thing to say about your Maker and your Life and your Light.

Response #2: I Know Him and I Receive Him

The other response is found in verses 12-13:

John 1:12-13

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,

13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And *this* is the response I pray for this morning. *Receive* this great Word-Made-Flesh. *Receive* him as Savior and King and God and Word and Creator and Life and Light. And all that God is for you in Him! So what we are doing this time of year is remembering that God sent His Son into the world to find all the rebels of the world, hiding in the caves of darkness and death. But instead of throwing flames into the caves to slaughter us- Jesus stands at the mouth of the caves and says,

"Come out into the Light for I have died on the Cross for sinners. And if you will receive me as your God and your Substitute and your Treasure, My Death will substitute for your death and My Righteousness will replace your unrighteousness- and you will have eternal life."

And *that* is what we are celebrating this time of year.

Amen. Let's pray,

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.