

John 1:1-5,9-14,18
The Word Became Flesh

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...

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 were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. **12** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **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 have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Today I want us to think about one of the most important and marvelous verses in all of Holy Scripture. It is John 1:14: ***14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

Think about this, "***the Word became flesh.***" If you knew nothing about Christianity and picked up the New Testament and began to read in John's Gospel, chapter 1, and your eyes fell on verse 14, you would naturally ask the question, 'What is this "Word" that is being talked about here?' It says the "Word became flesh..." How can a word, or words that we speak, become flesh, or turn into flesh? How can something that flows from the mind of one human to the mind of another human, via the avenue of speech, that is, by human vocal cords, how can a "word" become "flesh?"

First of all, let's consider this word, this designation, which is itself called "the Word." This is a translation of the Greek word "logos," which has the basic meaning of "word," "speech," or "message." "**The logos became flesh.**" But this word, "**Word, logos**" has a special usage in the New Testament; it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The

reason is because he is the “Word of God” in the sense that he in himself, in his person and his work, reveals to humanity the invisible truth about God, about his nature and will, that we would not know otherwise. So just as “a word” from you to me communicates a truth that is in your mind that you want me to hear and understand, so the Lord Jesus communicates to us knowledge about God that we would not know otherwise. Jesus, in addition to the Holy Spirit, is the agent of communication, the means of communication, between God and us. Without the teachings, the words, that Jesus Christ gave us, our knowledge of God would be greatly deprived.

The Word, it says, became flesh, and dwelt or lived among us. If the Word lived among us, the Word must refer to a person. And the verse goes on to say, ***“we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** The text says here “his glory” – the word “his” refers to a person; it doesn’t say “its glory” – like the glory of a star that shines in the night.

So just by looking at the words in verse 14, we would have to conclude that this “Word” is a person because he came to live among people, and he somehow enables “us” to see his glory and this glory is very specific, it is the glory of the only Son. And this Son came from “the Father.” So without a doubt this Word is a person, he is the person of the Son of the Father.

Since the Son came from “the Father,” there was a relationship between the Son and the Father. They were together and the Word came from the Father.

So the remainder of verse 14 describes for us who the Word is. Actually the Word is not a “what”, not an object, but a person. The Word here refers to a person, and it says some pretty amazing things about this person. He is called “the only Son,” and he is called “the only Son from the Father,” and it says of this Son from the Father that he is a marvelous person because he is full of grace and truth.

Now if you were the person reading this verse 14 for the first time and you see that this Word, this Son from the Father, is full of grace and truth, and you were from a pagan background, whether a secular, non-religious person, or a person from another culture that was immersed in a pagan religion, you would note this word “grace.” And if you understood anything about its meaning, you would know that it has the basic idea of a free, undeserved gift – something given to a person who has not earned it and doesn’t deserve it. And probably this would be a hard concept for you to grasp. Because everything you ever got in life you had to work hard for. You had to dig and scrape and fight for. You had to out-think, out-maneuver, and out-perform others to get ahead in life or in your job. Maybe you had to bribe and deceive other people and shove people out of the way who were in your way.

And if you were a religious person, from a Muslim, or Hindu, or Buddhist background, or if you were a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness, or Seventh Day Adventist person, your whole religious mindset was geared to performing the right actions that would be acceptable to your god. And you never knew if you were good enough or had done enough of the correct actions or had avoided sin enough to be acceptable to your god.

So all of a sudden you are confronted with this person, this Son of the Father, who is not asking you to perform, not asking you to do something, but only offering you something as a free gift. As we find out in John's Gospel, he is offering you salvation, forgiveness of sins, resurrection from death, eternal life – all as a gift of grace. This Word, this person, is full of grace – he wants to give you something you didn't earn and don't deserve.

You might think, "very few people have shown me any kindness in my life – people have often taken advantage of me and mistreated me – but this person here in verse 14 is wanting to give me something, he wants to extend to me "grace, gifting, underserved favor." Who is this person?

And if that were not enough, we see that this person, this Son of the Father, is not only full of grace, he is also full of truth. Now if you are a typical human, and have been raised in a non-Christian environment, you have probably experienced being deceived by people, being lied to, being tricked, being led astray into bad or dangerous or rebellious behavior. You may have experienced people manipulating you or using you for their own purposes – not looking out for your welfare but for their own welfare and advantage.

But look at this Son of the Father, he is full of not only grace, but also truth. He doesn't lie to you or anyone else. He only speaks the truth. He himself is the truth of God embodied in a person and he cannot speak anything but the truth because that is his nature. He is pure and holy and righteous, and it is quite impossible for him to go against his nature and tell a lie or sin or deceive people. He is, as the end of verse 14 says, "full of grace and truth."

So, if you were this person reading John 1:14 for the first time, your curiosity would be aroused. In fact, more than that, you may be astounded because you had never heard of or known or met such a person such as this, "full of grace and truth."

So you likely would want to know more about his person. *"Tell me more about him. Who is he?"*

To answer this question, we have to look at the context of John 1:14. What do the verses before and after verse 14 tell us about this Word, this person, who is the only Son of the Father? To properly understand the meaning of a word or phrase we have to look at the context in which it is found. We have to look at the words and concepts leading up to a particular word or phrase and the words, phrases and concepts that follow it. In other words, how does the surrounding context inform us as the meaning of the word or phrase we are looking at.

If we look at the beginning of this whole section, John 1:1-18, the first verse sets the context for enabling us to understand who the Word is.

Let's look at verse 1: ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*** There are three phrases here. Each one is packed full of instruction and truth about the Word, who he is, and what his relationship is to God.

First of all, we see that in the first phrase, ***In the beginning was the Word***, that the word "beginning" is mentioned, the third word in the sentence. So, whenever the "beginning" began the Word was already there. The question now becomes, *what beginning is this?* The beginning of God's existence? Or the beginning of the universe? It cannot be the "beginning of God's existence" because *God did not have a beginning!* He has always existed. There never was a time when he did not exist. He is eternal. We are creatures. We all had a beginning. Before we were born we did not exist. We were not breathing, thinking or living. Not until our mother gave us birth did we exist as a full human being.

But God is not like that. As far back as the human mind could possibly reach into the past, at the creation of the universe, God was already in existence. He was already there. He had been in existence forever. He didn't need a universe to complete his personhood. He was already complete. He was not lonely. The one true and living God had fellowship within himself. God the Father had fellowship with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. There was perfect love and joy between all three persons of the one eternal God.

This is what makes the Christian teaching on God so unique among world religions. In the Christian faith there is only one God, but within himself there is also plurality, a "three-ness." We call these three living eternal realities "persons." There is the person of the Father, and there is the person of the Son, and there is the person of the Holy Spirit. There are three persons here, but there are not three Gods. There is only one God existing in three persons. Each of the three persons is exactly equal to the other persons in power and glory and eternity and everything that makes God to be God. The Father

is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

There is, in other words, within God, *relationship, fellowship*. But each person, we can say, has a unique role to play. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. In all eternity the Father has been the Father and the Son has been the Son, and the Holy Spirit has been the Holy Spirit. Especially in the triune God's relationship to humanity we can see how each person has a special function. The Father is the Sender, he sent the Son into the world to rescue God's people from our sins. The Son is the Redeemer – he came into the world (the Father did not come into the world) and took upon himself our human nature so he could die for our sins and be raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth of the Father and Son to us; he especially glorifies the Son of God, and he awakens dead sinners to their sins and the beauty and glory of the Savior Jesus Christ.

So all three persons of the one God work in concert, in harmony, to bring about salvation for God's people. God spared no effort to rescue us from the deadness and lostness of our sin and separation from him. The mighty God who created the universe by the word of his command does the same thing when he calls a sinner out of death into life. His word of power is creative. Just like Jesus called forth his friend Lazarus from the tomb after he had been dead 4 days, so Jesus by his Spirit calls each of children out of their spiritual death into his spiritual life. He does this according to his grace and purpose and love. We cannot say why he loved sinners like us, but we can be thankful and grateful and serve him with joy and devotion all the days of our lives. And we will do that, by his grace, will we not?!

Let me remind you why we are studying John 1:1. We are continuing to look at the context of John 1:14, ¹⁴ ***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*** in seeking to learn who this "Word" is.

Let's look at the second phrase in John 1:1, ***...and the Word was with God...***

This is a simple phrase, but it has some crucial meaning. It describes the existence of *relationship, fellowship* - between the Word and God. God was not by himself, and the Word was not by himself, but they were with one another. This implies an equality of personhood and authority. R.C. Sproul says that the Greek preposition used here, which is translated "with" in English, literally means "face to face." The Word was "face to face" with God. Now if we are face to face with someone we are equal with them. Usually only friends or family are allowed to be close enough to us to be "face to face" with us. The angels weren't "face to face" with God - they were around him and on their faces before him (Rev. 7:11), but the Word was close to God the Father, at his right hand.

Verse 2 in John 1 removes any doubt about the relationship of the Father and the Son,
² ***He was in the beginning with God.***

This was this relationship between God and the Word that existed at the creation of the universe and had been in existence forever. As long as God has been in existence, so the Word has been with him in fellowship and relationship. And the amazing thing is that the Word, who is Jesus Christ, wants to bring us – yes, you and me - into that fellowship. He says in John 17:21 about his disciples,

²¹ ***that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.***

Isn't this amazing? Jesus wants to bring us, his people, into the same fellowship he has had with God in all eternity past! "Oh, God, would you do such a wonderful thing for us?" Indeed he will...and we can only remain astounded.

John 1:1, "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...***" and now the third phrase in this verse, "***...and the Word was God.***" So here we see one of the greatest verses in the Bible comes to its climax, its grand declaration, this volcanic explosion of truth: this Word who was at the beginning of creation, who has always been with God, is himself none less than God.

Who is this Word, this person? He is none less than God! We may have suspected this if we were just reading the previous two phrases and considering their implications, but now it is crystal clear. This Word is God. He is not an angel. He is not a created being. He is *very God of very God*, as the Nicene Creed states.

The great mystery of the inner nature of the eternal God is now laid out before us in this one verse. And his nature is put forth before us as the eternal existence of God and the Word. The only reason the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God, is not mentioned here is because the writer, John the Apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is focusing on the Son of God – his great person and his great work. He will spend chapters 14-16 telling us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The next few verses in John 1 give substantiation, they give some reasons that we can know that the Word was God himself.

First of all, there was the very Creator himself.

Verse 3: ³ ***All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.***

Genesis 1:1 says that God created the heavens and the earth. John 1:3 says that “all things were made through him,” that is, through the Word. That means the heavens and the earth were made through him. The text says “through” him. In other words, we sometimes say that the Word, Jesus Christ, was the “agent” of creation. He was the second person of God through whom the Father created everything.

Colossians 1:16 says, ¹⁶ ***For by him [Jesus] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.***

Heb. 1:2 says, ² ***but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.***

Secondly, we see that the Word was God because he is the source of all life, as v. 4 says, ⁴ ***In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*** In other words, the Word, the Lord Jesus, was and is the source of all life. Jesus said in John 5:26, ²⁶ ***For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.***

All living things, plants and animals and all humans, even those who don't know him or believe in him, or care about him, get their life from him. Every breath of every human on earth receives their life from Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, we see that the Word was God because he is the light of men..

Jesus said in John 8:12, ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”***

The Word, Jesus Christ, is the source of all enlightenment that humans experience. I think this refers to all knowledge and truth, as in science and biology and cooking and gardening, but especially to spiritual knowledge, knowledge of the one true God and of his Son Jesus Christ, and of the way of salvation through Christ.

So by looking at these first four verses in John, chapter 1, we learn who this Word is who became flesh and dwelt among us. He is the one who:

- 1) Has always existed; he was there before the creation of the universe.
- 2) He was in eternal fellowship with God.
- 3) And He was none less than God.

So we are given an introduction to the beginning of a Trinitarian understanding of the nature of God: He is one God, but with a plurality of persons within himself, - in fact, there is a three-ness within his oneness.

But let's return to verse 14, where we began, ***14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

This is a most amazing statement. Think about what we learn in John 1:1-4:

The Word, that is Jesus Christ, had eternal existence.

He was in eternity in face to face relationship with God.

The Word, in fact, was no less than God himself.

The Word was the Creator of all things that exist.

The Word is the source of life for all living creatures.

The Word is the light, the one who brings truth and knowledge to humanity.

This is the Word. All these things are true of the Word. And look at what verse 14 says, ***“And the Word became flesh...”***

All these truths, these realities about the Word, did not remain aloof in heaven, out of our sight and hearing, but the Word himself came down and “became flesh.” The word “flesh” here refers to human nature. It is bodily nature. It is physical flesh. It's what you can pinch between your fingers and it hurts. It's getting tired after walking all day and needing to sit down at a well and rest awhile, like Jesus did in Samaria in John chapter 4. It's blood that flows from your finger when you cut it while peeling potatoes.

The Word left heaven and took upon himself our full human nature and experienced all these things that we experience. How did this happen? How did the eternal Word of God leave heaven and enter our world. Did God really become man? The answer is “yes,” he did.

How did this happen? Let's go back in history and look at the record. We find it in Luke chapter 1. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a Jewish virgin named Mary and announced to her that she would become pregnant and bear a son who would be “called the Son of the Most High” and whose kingdom would last forever.

34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” Luke 1:34-35

This is how the eternal Word of God became a man. The Holy Spirit impregnated the eternal Word of God in the womb of the virgin Mary. Nine months later she bore a male child. When he was born he cried like all other babies and he pooped and soiled his diapers and cried when he was hungry. He was exactly like every other child born on

planet earth. The neighbors and relatives came and remarked how precious he was, just like they did for all the other babies born in their community.

But, although they could not detect it, this baby was different from all other babies, because he was not only fully human, but he was also fully God. His deity, his divinity, his eternal attributes and divine nature were veiled, they were hidden by his humanity.

We can understand more clearly what happened if we look at Philippians 2:5-8:

...Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

What this text is saying is that Christ Jesus, the Word, although he existed in the "form of God," that is, although he had the exact nature of God, he did not cling to his rights as God, but instead took the form, the nature of a servant. He became fully human to the extent that he would die on the cross for the sins of his people.

This is why John 1:14 says "***the Word became flesh.***" He became human so he could live among us a perfectly sinless life and offer up himself as the sacrifice for the sins of his people.

Now the amazing thing here is that although Christ took upon himself our human nature, he did not give up, he did not lose, not one ounce of his deity. He did not compromise his God-hood to take up humanity. He did veil, or hide his deity, but he did not lay it aside. After all, it is impossible for God to give up being God. He is God forever and is unchangeable forever, so he could in no way give up or lose any of his deity.

If you saw Jesus on the streets of Nazareth back then, you would have noticed nothing unusual about him. If you sat and talked with him or ate a meal with him, you would have noticed nothing un-human about him. You would have had no clue that he was God in the flesh. You may have noticed, however, such things as he had a very keen knowledge of scripture and when he prayed, his prayers were deep and spiritual. But otherwise, you probably wouldn't have thought him to be unusual.

John 1:14 says he "***dwelt among us.***" The actual word in the original Greek language is that he "tabernacled" among us. This is a reference, an allusion, to what happened when the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt. After a special ornate and sturdy tent, known as the "tabernacle" was built according to the instructions given to Moses, God's

presence entered there. The tabernacle was portable so it could be moved when the people of God moved. So God in his personal presence dwelled in this tabernacle in the midst of the 12 tribes of Israel. Later when a permanent temple was built in Jerusalem by King Solomon, Yahweh's presence entered there.

But now, in the coming of Christ, in the incarnation, God came "to dwell among us." The word "incarnation" literally means "in the body, or in the flesh." The Christian doctrine of the incarnation is that the second person of the triune God, the Word came and took upon himself a human body. By taking this body he did not lose or give up any of his deity: Jesus Christ was 100% God and 100% man. He had two natures, divine, and human, in his one person.

John 1:14 goes on to say that **"...we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."** Since the eternal Word, who had always lived in the fellowship with God, and was, in fact, God himself, came to tabernacle among us, we should expect that he would reveal his eternal glory to those among whom he had come.

And this is exactly what we see in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Though his divine nature was usually hidden there were times when it shone through, when it was revealed. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee after Jesus turned the large vats of water into wine, we read in John 2:11, **¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.**

In John 6 Jesus feed 5,000 men along with their families with five barley loaves and two fish – thus graphically illustrating that he was the true Bread from heaven. He said in John 6:35, **"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."**

In John 8, when a woman caught in the act of adultery was thrown down in front of him, he manifested his compassion and forgiveness when he told her, **"Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."**

One of the dramatic revelations of the glory of God in Jesus our Lord was when he was transfigured on the mountain when he had taken Peter, James and John with him. We read in Matt. 17:2-3, **² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.**

Then after his death, burial and resurrection he appeared to his disciples on 10 different occasions over a period of 40 days. When he appeared to Thomas, the disciple who had

doubted his resurrection, and told him to reach out and touch his hands and side, Thomas declared, "My Lord and my God!"

Then after those 40 days of appearances, at his final appearance to them in Jerusalem, they saw him taken up into the cloud. ¹⁰ ***And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,*** ¹¹ ***and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."***

So when John wrote in John 1:14, ***we have seen his glory...*** he used the word "we" because not only he, but all the apostles had witnessed the glory of the Son of God for three years, from his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist, all the way to his death on the cross, his resurrection and his ascension back to heaven from where he had come.

Here is the good news, the great news, this Christmas season in the year 2023. Here is the message to us today from God, ¹⁴ ***...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*** Have you seen his glory? Do you know who he is? He is the eternal Word who became flesh to reveal God to us and to die for our sins.

How do we respond to this greatest of all acts that God has done in human history? Let us worship, let us give thanks. There is no other proper response.