**The Word Became Flesh**

September 4, 2016

John 1:1–18

Key Verse 1:14 “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Word became flesh, dwelt among us. This is the story of Christmas. John writes his gospel to get the truth that Jesus is God in human flesh. We need to know who Jesus is because our salvation depends on it. John wrote the purpose of his gospel in 20:31, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Muslims honor Jesus as a great prophet. But that is not who Jesus is. It is crucial that Christians know Jesus Christ very well, and can tell the difference between the Christ of the Bible and the Christ which other religions claim to honor.

**First**, the Name of the Word-Became-Flesh on Earth Is Jesus Christ. Look at verse 17. “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” “Jesus” was the name Joseph was told to give the child by the angel of the Lord because it means “savior.” Matthew 1:20-21 says, “An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son; and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’” “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. When Andrew, Peter’s brother, told him that he had met Jesus he said (in John 1:41), “‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ).” So the person we are speaking of 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.

**Second**, the Word-Became-Flesh Existed as God and with God before He Was Born as a Man on Earth. Look at verse 1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This is a phrase taken right out of Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” “In the beginning” is different from “at the beginning.” “In the beginning” has no starting point or ending point. It is before time began. As St. Augustine defines, “in the beginning” is “in eternity.” The Word was there in eternity before the creation. Jesus is not a created being. He existed in eternity. Why is he called the Word? Why not say, “In the Beginning was Christ? Or Jesus? Or the Lord Jesus? Why the Word?” In Greek, “word” is “logos.” In the Greek world of philosophy and religion, the logos was believed to be a title given to the creative force, to the ordering intelligent mind of the universe. It would be very much like what is popular today called intelligent design. What John is saying here is this: The Logos is not an impersonal power. The Logos is a person, and he became a man, a personal God who came into the world in the man Jesus.

To the Jew, the Word had even more meaning. If you read the Old Testament, you will read this many times, “The Word of the Lord came, the Word of the Lord came, the Word of the Lord came to so-and-so.” The Word of the Lord was simply God revealing Himself, His person, His nature, His will, His wisdom, His truth. The Word of the Lord was the expression of the personal God, the true and living God of the Old Testament. By His Word, God had spoken. Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “In the past God spoke and now he has spoken to us by his Son.” God is being revealed in Christ. Jesus then is God in human flesh. He is the Word of the living God.

**Third**, All That Is not God Was Created through the Word. Look at verse 3. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” There are at least two reasons John says this about the Word here. One is that it underscores that he is the Creator God. It solves man’s fundamental problem, namely, “Who am I and why am I here?” If anyone says, “I was born by my parents’ mistake,” his life is absolutely miserable. But when we believe that God created me, we can say clearly, “God created me according his good purpose.” The other reason comes out in verse 10: “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize 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. He comes to us as our Maker, and still the world will not receive him.

**Fourth**, The Word-Became-Flesh Has Life in Himself, and That Life Becomes the Light of Men. Look at verse 4. “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” All life originates in the Word. That is obvious because, as we have seen already, he is the Creator of all things. But here the focus is on spiritual life. In other words, there are two overwhelming problems we humans face: we are spiritually dead and therefore spiritually blind. John is saying here: Jesus is the remedy to both of these problems: He has the life we need, and this life becomes the Light we need. John 5:21 says, “The Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.” In other words, he does for us spiritually what he did for Lazarus when he stood before Lazarus’ tomb and said to the dead man, “Lazarus, come out.” (John 11:43) And how does that life, given by Jesus, relate to light? In two ways. One is that it enables us to see the spiritual world. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” (John 3:3) So first Jesus gives life and then that life becomes light – the ability to see spiritual reality. The spiritual reality is that when we believe in Jesus, God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:6)

The other way that the life Jesus gives relates to the light is not just that it enables you to see, but that Jesus himself is the Light that is seen. What were we blind to when we were unbelievers? We were blind to the truth and beauty and worth – the glory – of Jesus. So when John says, “In him was life and that life was the Light of men,” he means that Jesus Christ, the Word-Made-Flesh, is both the power to see spiritual splendor and the splendor seen. That is what verse 14 says. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son.” And that is what Jesus prayed for in John 17:24, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory.” And that is what he claimed when he said twice, “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.

**Fifth**, Jesus, the eternal Word, became flesh. We call this the incarnation. To come to earth as a man, Jesus gave up his heavenly kingdom where he was worshiped and served as God. Jesus humbled himself and became a man. It was really a big demotion. As we know, everyone wants to be promoted and have a better title, more prestige, more honor, and to make more money. No one is happy when his company is down-sized and he is demoted, or when he drops in his class ranking. But Jesus was demoted from heaven to earth. Jesus took this willingly to obey God and to fulfill God’s purpose to save men from their sins. All people of the world pretend to be somebody though he is nobody. Some even boast of being a champion in drinking beer. Everybody wants to be a master. Nobody wants to be a servant. But God came to this world in a human form and became like nobody. We must come to know the grace of Jesus and practice it in our daily lives. Philippians 2:5-8 says, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death–even death on a cross.” Jesus became the servant of all kinds of sinners. Jesus became our example of obedience as well. Jesus humbly took his position as a man and submitted to the authorities God had placed over him. According to Isaiah, Jesus had no majesty to attract us to him (Isa 53:2). Jesus was born into a poor family in an oppressed nation. Jesus submitted to his parents. Jesus obeyed Jewish law. Jesus paid taxes. In Gethsemane, Jesus struggled to obey his Father God until his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. After his arrest, Jesus submitted to unjust human courts because it was God’s will. At last, Jesus surrendered his life to God for world salvation.

In coming to this world, Jesus, the eternal Spirit, became flesh. He took up the weaknesses and limitations of a human body. He bore all the human agonies that we have to bear. He became tired. He became hungry. He became thirsty. He was tempted through his flesh desires by the devil. On the way to Golgotha, he fell under the weight of his cross, experiencing the failure of his strength as a man. Yet, his humiliation went further than that. Jesus, who is in very nature God, is holy. Yet, this holy Son of God became sin for sinful man. He bore in his own body the shameful, dirty, wretched sins of all mankind. In the sight of God, Jesus became the immorality of the Samaritan woman, the utter selfishness of the tax collector, the arrogance of the religious leader. Why? It was to save us from our sins. It was the expression of God’s love for sinners. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus, the Word, became flesh to save us from our sins. Praise Jesus!

Verse 14 says, “...and made his dwelling among us.” Jesus lived among ordinary people as one of us. People always want to find a better neighborhood to move to. People always want to hang around with those who are a little better than themselves. Young people want to hang out with those who are cool; they never want to hang out with odd people. But Jesus is different. Jesus left the best neighborhood, heaven, and came into this world to live among men. Jesus spent time with all kinds of sick and needy people. He ate with sinners. He shared life together with his disciples, who could be called the “dirty dozen.” As he did so, they were changed. At first, they were slaves of sinful desires. They had a fixed idea that great men are those who exercise authority over others. But Jesus taught them that the truly great man is one who serves. To demonstrate, Jesus washed their smelly feet one by one. Jesus prayed for them to be sanctified by the truth. At last, they became shepherds for God’s children in the world salvation work.

Summing up, what five truths about the Word-Became-Flesh have we seen?

He is Jesus Christ after he became flesh: Savior and God-anointed King.

He is God: He was with God and was God.

He was called the Word: God-in-communication, God-Expressing-Himself.

He is the Creator: all things were made through him, but he himself was not made.

He is life and light: he makes us alive and let us see the spiritual reality.

Finally, then what are the responses you might give to all this revelation about Jesus Christ, the Word-Became-Flesh?

One Response: I Do not Know Him and I Do not Receive Him. One is described in verses 10-11, “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, and his own did not receive him.” You might hear the truth about Jesus Christ and say, "I do not know him and I do not receive him." That is a very frightening thing to say about your Maker and your Life and your Light.

Another Response: I Know Him and I Receive Him. The other response is found in verses 12-13. “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” This is the response I pray for all University of Toronto and Ryerson students have this fall. Receive this great Word-Became-Flesh. Receive him as Savior and King and God and Word and Creator and Life and Light.

I lived in darkness under the power of death. One word to describe my life before I met Jesus is despair. When I was young, I liked stories of famous scientists and I decided to become a great scientist. I learned that all great mathematicians were geniuses and they wrote many papers when they were as young as 15. I despaired because I was not a genius like the men I read about. I thought that I could not do anything important, and so my life had no meaning. I was under the power of death. At the 1990 Easter Bible conference God helped me to deliver the resurrection message from Luke’s gospel. The power of Jesus’ resurrection worked in my heart and drove out all my despair. The living hope in the kingdom of God filled my heart. The hope that I will have a glorious resurrection body freed me from my selfish desire for worldly success. God opened my eyes to see the spiritual reality.

Look at verse 18. “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” Many people say, “I know God, but I don’t know Jesus well.” That is totally nonsense. God revealed himself through Jesus Christ. Do you want to know what God is like? Then look at Jesus. Jesus came to this world to give us grace. Look at verse 16. “Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.” It is like God sending his Son into the world to find all the Bin Ladens of the world, hiding in the caves of darkness and death. Instead of throwing flames into the caves, he first stands at the mouth of the caves and says, “Come out into the light for I have died on the cross for sinners; if you will receive me as your God and your Savior, you will have eternal life.”