**The Word Became Flesh**

John 1:1-4, 14 2019 GTA Christmas

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.”

Merry Christmas! When you think about Christmas, what kind of images come to your mind? Christmas gifts, baby Jesus in a manger, his mother Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, and Magi. If you are told to describe Christmas without these images, what would you say? “Immanuel”? John’s version of Christmas message is “The Word Became Flesh.” How can “the Word” becomes Flesh? It sounds like a magical performance. But it has a deep meaning of Christmas, Jesus’ coming into the world.

Mark’s gospel begins with John the Baptist. Matthew’s gospel begins with the genealogy from Abraham. Luke’s gospel goes up to Adam the first man. John’s gospel goes all the way to the beginning. Verse 1 says, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**” Who is “the Word”? We know from verse 14 that “the Word” refers to Jesus, the Messiah. Some may wonder why this gospel talks about “the Word” in the introduction. It is the author’s effort to introduce the gospel to us. One missionary to central Africa said to the natives, “Your sins will be **forgiven as white as snow**.” Then a native asked him, “What is snow?” The missionary explained, “Snow is like white flour powder that can be melted and becomes water.” Here, the author uses the term “the Word” to explain the gospel to us.

The Word in Greek is “Logos”. The term “Logos” was familiar to the people in the first century. Today, the terms like “Virtual Reality or Artificial Intelligence” are familiar to us. But people in the first century would have no idea of these terms. To the ancient Greek philosophers, Logos meant “logic, rational principle” or “the intermediary between God and the cosmos”. Hellenistic Jewish scholars understood “Logos” as “divine principles that were revealed, declared, and spoken to human beings”. That’s why this term is translated as “**the Word**” in English.

But the term “Logos” in this Gospel contains deeper meanings. The term “Logos” is personified as verse 2 indicates with “He”. He was with God and was God himself. He was the Creator of all things. From this, we would like to think about two points.

**Firstly, the Word was with God and the Word was God Himself.**

How can the Word be with God and God himself **simultaneously**? This does not logically make sense and a computer system would return with an error message. But this indicates **the Holy Trinity**: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One God with three persons **co-existent** in perfect unity. The Triune God had perfect loving fellowship among Godself. When God created us in his own image, he lavished his love on us. God expects us to build godly community and have loving fellowship in him as his image bearers. That’s what Jesus prayed for us, “...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (Jn 17:21).

**Secondly, in him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.**

The life in him was **not created**. The life in him was **self-existent** from eternity to eternity. That’s why Jesus introduced himself as “**I am...”** “**I am** the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). “Before Abraham was, **I am**” (Jn 8:52).

**The life in him was the light of all mankind**. In other words, without this life, all mankind is in darkness. It’s not easy to admit this among people in our generation. We have bright lights everywhere. We can brighten our rooms all night. These days, Christmas decorations brighten homes, churches, and shopping malls. Despite this hilarious mood, however, lonely people become lonelier and suicidal attempts are highest during this season. It is because of darkness in our hearts. During the modernization period, people believed that the world was getting better and better, moving toward utopia. But now in this postmodern world, skepticism is everywhere and we are groping in darkness. We cannot generate light by ourselves. How can the darkness be dispelled? **The only solution is light**. As soon as light comes, darkness will be driven away.

**How can the life in him become light for us?** Life becomes light? That sounds like a mysterious transformation. Metaphorically, it is possible. For example, when I was in primary school, I was so inspired by Admiral Lee’ biography and his life story was a light for me. Admiral Lee was one of the most renowned Navy Generals in Korean history. When someone asked me, “What is your future dream?” My answer was “Admiral Lee.” For some people, Nelson Mandela’s life story may be a light for them. Let us go back to the question: **How can the life in Jesus become light for us?** We are all destined to die, but the life in Jesus is the eternal life. He came to the world to give this eternal life to whoever believes in him. 1 John 5:11-12a tells us, “**And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** **Whoever has the Son has life...**” The eternal life in Jesus brightens our hearts, and gives us life direction and eternal hope. Jesus declares, “**I am the light of the world**” (Jn 8:12). The life in Jesus is truly light for all of us.

Let us now think about **why we celebrate Christmas today?** It is because **the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** Let us read verse 14 together. “**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.”**

**What does it mean that the Word became flesh?** The infinite God who is from eternity to eternity entered into the **finite world of time and space**. The one who created the universe entered into the **created world as one of creatures**.

Philip Yancey describes this from the angels’ perspective in his book “The Jesus I never knew.” One day a senior angel was showing a young angel around **the splendors of the universe**. They entered galaxy milky way and finally reached the solar system. The senior angel pointed to a sphere known as the **renowned Visited Planet**. To the junior angel, it looked like **a dirty tennis-ball.** The little angel asked, “What’s special about that one?” After hearing from the senior angel, the young said, “Do you mean that our **great and glorious Prince**. . . **went down in Person to this fifth-rate little ball?** Why should He do a thing like that? He stooped so low as **to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures of that floating ball**?” From heaven’s perspective, we human beings are creeping, crawling creatures on this fifth-rate dirty tennis ball.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” We call this **the incarnation of Jesus Christ**. What does it mean to us? I would like to think about **the** **redemption through his incarnation**.

When I visited Germany last year, I saw castles on the top of mountains. Those castles used to protect towns and villages below them. We went to one of the castles called **Cochem Castle**. One thing that really impressed me was a well from the top of the mountain. The well used to supply water during emergency situation. The well was so deep like a bottomless chasm. I thought “If I fell into this well, it would be impossible for me to get out.” Help should come from outside. In this case, a long rope might work to rescue me. But a rope would not work for the fallen mankind in the world. What can be done for the fallen mankind? Shouting from heaven, “Hey, I love you! I care for you!” would work? No. The one who is able to rescue us had to come down.

**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** It was not about quick visit as God had visited Abraham’s home in Genesis. It was not about pretending to be like a human or wearing a mask. God became fully human just like us. That means the infinite God became a finite creature. His entry into time and space meant that **death was inevitable for him**. His death would be not a natural one, but a cruel crucifixion for the sin of the world.

There is a saying, “**Birds of a feather flock together.**” People of similar interests, backgrounds, or ideas will stick together or hang out together. We cannot live alone. We are created to love and to be loved as social beings. When you visit the Meetup website that accommodates different meetings and clubs, you will see thousands of clubs waiting for people to join. For example, Chocolate Lover, Hiking for Introverts, Snowboarding, JavaScript Meetup, Vintage Fashion and Style, and Try Something New. My wife once asked me to join **Salsa Dance Club**. I told her that “I am too shy for Salsa dance. Go ahead by yourself.”

The purpose for these clubs is to meet people with similar “feathers” in terms of cultures, colours, interests, and social status. We would like to stay in the comfort zone. Coming out of this comfort zone and reaching out to someone with different “feathers” requires denial of my own self-centeredness, and involves sacrifice.

**Jesus’ original club was the Trinity in heaven**: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. But God became flesh. **God became one of us** so that he could eat with us, walk with us, sleep with us, and hang out with us. For this, he put aside all his glory and honor in his kingdom. He had most humble birth in a manger, and a humble lifestyle in a carpenter’s home. He experienced hunger, thirst, tiredness, rejections and betrayal.

**How was his incarnation revealed in his ministry?** Jesus showed his care by touching the leper with his hand and healing him. He understood the Samaritan woman’s thirst for love and quenched her with the living water. Jesus crossed the stormy lake to meet a demon-possessed man and heal him. Jesus knew Levi the tax collector’s loneliness. At that time, tax collectors were treated like sinners and prostitutes. Jesus invited Levi to be his disciple. This would tarnish Jesus’ own reputation. As long as he could restore Levi’s life, Jesus did not mind spending time with him day and night.

See what titles Jesus was adorned while on earth. They gossiped about Jesus, “**Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners**” (Mt 11:19). The nicknames, a glutton and a drunkard, are groundlessly unfair to Jesus. But his nickname “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” is proper one for Jesus. Jesus would be happy to hear that. The incarnate Jesus is indeed “a friend of tax collectors and sinners”.

**Why do you think Jesus became “a friend of sinners”?** Jesus said, “**I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners**” (Mk 2:17). Jesus did not call self-righteous people. Rather, he called those who acknowledged their sins. **Jesus has a genuine purpose** in his friendship with sinners: That is to **lead us to his kingdom**. The gap between holy God and sinful mankind is too big. No human beings can approach the holy presence of God. **Jesus took our sins and his righteousness became ours.** His righteousness is bestowed on us by his grace alone and by faith. Hebrews 4:16 says, “**Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need**.” The Incarnation of Jesus Christ opened “**the new and living way**” for us to the kingdom of God.

The author then testifies to the **glory of Jesus. He saw in Jesus the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father. May God bless us to see this glory in Jesus.** “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

Charles Kim

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