

The Word Made Flesh

John 1:14

Pastor John Miller

John 1:14, let's read it together, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Do you know we have four gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It's interesting that each one of those gospels has its own emphasis or its own focus. Matthew's gospel, when presenting the life of Christ, basically says, "Behold the King." It's a great summary of Matthew's gospel, "Behold the King." It's written with the Jewish individual in mind. In Mark's gospel it says, "Behold the Servant," and that's a summary of Mark's gospel, Jesus Christ the Servant. It's written with the Roman mind in view. In Luke, it's actually, "Behold the Man," Ecce Homo, "Behold, the Man." It's written with the Greek philosophy kind of focus or Greek focus because in the Greek culture they were trying to develop the perfect man, so Jesus Christ is presented as the Son of Man in the gospel.

But we come to the gospel of John for which we find our text, and John's gospel takes flight and says, "Behold your God." It is a universal gospel. He's presenting Jesus Christ as the divine Son who became flesh and dwelt among us at Christmas. We all know John's gospel, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John's writing about the Son of God who came to bring us the life of God. In verse 14, John's description of the incarnation, when the infinite became finite and the Creator entered into creation and the invisible became visible, and the Word became flesh. This is the Christmas story according to John's gospel.

There are three questions that I want to ask about this text. I want to ask the question, who is the Word made flesh? I want to secondly ask the question, how was the Word made flesh? And, thirdly, why was the Word made flesh? Again, simple, but not simplistic. This is one of the deepest theological passages in the whole Bible, I believe. It's just so profound. John 1:1-18 is the prologue of the introduction to this gospel of belief.

The first question we want to ask is, who is the Word made flesh? The simple answer is Jesus Christ. Amen? Jesus is the Word that was made flesh. Go back to verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." You say, "Well, how do you know He's the Word?" Well, we can't go into all the verses, but back up in your Bible to John 1:1. It reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This is a statement about who the Word is and His essence. The Word is God.

There are three things I want to point out about who Jesus is from John 1:1. He is first of all the eternal Word, "In the beginning was the Word." In the beginning of what? In the beginning of creation when God spoke with divine fiat and He created the whole cosmos, the whole universe by the word of His power. In John's gospel it says nothing was made but what He was the One who made it. It actually says Jesus Christ was the One who spoke the whole world into existence. If you go on to read that first chapter, it's quite amazing. In the beginning when the

world was created, He was there already in existence. At the beginning of the world, He was there, the Word was there.

Write down Micah 5:2 where the Prophet Micah said, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Jesus Christ is God because He is the eternal God. There was never a time when Jesus did not exist. Jesus is eternal. In John 17:5, Jesus is praying to His Father and says, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Just before the world was created, Jesus was already there. He is the eternal God.

Secondly, John 1:1 tells us He's the personal Word. This kind of goes unnoticed quite often when you read that first verse. Notice in verse 1, ". . . and the Word was with God . . ." Notice the word "with" there. It's the word that means face to face. If you're with someone, there's two people there, at least -right?- hopefully. You're with someone. So, the Word was with God. It literally means face to face. This is why we believe in the triune nature of God. You can't understand Christmas, if you don't understand the trinity—God the Father sent God the Son, and that Jesus is the second Person of the Godhead. He was with the Father from all eternity and with the Holy Spirit face to face. God is also personal. He's not a force, He's a personal being—loving, gracious, merciful, and kind.

Here's the third in John 1:1, He's the divine Word. So, He is the eternal Word; He's the personal Word; and He's the divine Word. Notice in verse 1, ". . . and the Word was God." It's even stronger in the Greek text. It's actually, "And God was the Word." Jesus is divine. He is God, and God was the Word.

Here's a couple verses for you to note: Matthew 1:23, when the angel was revealing that Christ was going to come. He said, ". . . and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." When Jesus came from heaven, it was actually God coming to earth. Christmas is the miracle of God leaving heaven to come to us on earth. Did you know that God cannot be known apart from revelation? That means you can't by seeking, find God. God has to reveal Himself to you because God is transcendent and we are finite. God is beyond us and above us, and we can't find God by religion or by human effort, God must come to us. That's what Christmas is all about—God coming to us at Christmas in the person of Jesus Christ.

Write down Isaiah 9:6, ". . . and his name shall be called . . . The mighty God . . ." In that text, it actually refers to Him as ". . . Wonderful, Counsellor . . . The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," but He's called in that verse, ". . . The mighty God . . ." In Hebrews 1:8, the writer of Hebrews says, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness," so God calls Him God. Who is the Word made flesh that is eternal, is personal, and divine? It's none other than Jesus Christ.

Here's the second question we want to ask and seek to answer; that is, how was the Word

made flesh? And, we understand what he means by flesh and we find out how. The simple answer is the virgin birth. I believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, do you? It's not just a made up fairy tale. It's not just a story. It's not myth. It's actually the truth—a virgin conceived, by the work of the Holy Spirit in her womb, God the Son taking on flesh, taking on humanity. This is the essence of Christmas. We call it the incarnation. God became a Man in the womb of a virgin named Mary.

Now, let me read it to you. If you want to turn quickly in your Bibles, in Luke 1:30-35, “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.” “Jesus” is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament “Joshua,” and the name originally meant God saves. The angel says, “You’re going to name Him ‘God saves.’” Verse 32, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy [Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Amen? That’s the essence of Christmas, Christ was born of a virgin.

Now, Joseph, in Matthew 1, had a dilemma when he found out that Mary, whom he had been espoused to, legally bound together, was pregnant and expecting a Child. He was going to put her away privately. He didn’t want her to be punished. He didn’t want to shame her. He went to bed that night and had a dream. It was an angel of the Lord came to him. That’s the kind of dreams you want to have—you want angels, not demons in your dreams, right? The angel came to Joseph and said, “Don’t be afraid to take unto thee Mary thy wife,” because they were espoused, legally bound together. They had not consummated the marriage yet. “Don’t be afraid to take Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her womb is the work of the Holy Spirit.” So, Joseph arose the next day and took Mary to be his wife, and what a marvelous, marvelous thing that God would send an angel to help Joseph through the dilemma of what to do.

Now, in Luke 2, “. . . there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed,”—this is the Christmas story according to Luke, and Mary and Joseph were all the way north of Bethlehem, their hometown, in Nazareth. They had to journey about 80 miles, and she’s in the last stages of pregnancy. I’ve always said, “If you want to induce labor, when you’re about ready to start labor, get on a donkey and go for an 80-mile donkey ride. That’ll induce labor.” God sent them from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Why? Because the prophets of old spoke that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. This man Caesar Augustus, sitting on the throne in Rome thinking that he’s ruling the world, is just a puppet in the hand of the Almighty God. The Bible says that God turns the heart of the king in whatever way He wants to, so He put it in his mind to put out a decree, “Everyone has to be taxed. You have to enroll for your taxation at your ancestral place of birth,” so they had to go back to Bethlehem, “. . . (because he was of the house and lineage of David.)”

When they got there with everybody to enroll for taxation, there was no room in the inn, so they found a place to bed down for the night. There was probably a cave grotto or just a stable where they kept the animals. In Luke 2:7, it says, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." A manger is an animal feeding trough—the humility of His marvelous birth, how God would come from heaven. You know, if I were God and my Son was going to be born, I would actually have a hospital built just for Him, and I would have all the nurses and the doctors ready to go. But He came not only humbly from heaven to earth, but He was born in humble surroundings—in a stable, laid in a manger. "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." The text indicates that she was all alone. In a time when a woman needs prayer and support and help and people gathered around her, it was just her and Joseph and the animals and the hay and the feeding trough, "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger . . ."

The shepherds of Bethlehem were out in the fields, and that's one of our favorite stories -right?-episodes. The heavens filled with the glory of the angels, and they said to the shepherds, ". . . I bring you good tidings of great joy . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of David"—Bethlehem—"a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And . . . Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And, there was this whole host of angels in heaven, so I mean what marvelous miracles—the angel coming to Mary, the conception in her womb by the Holy Spirit, the angel coming to Joseph, God turning the heart of the king of Rome, Caesar Augustus, all that was going on, the manger scene pictured there as she brought forth her firstborn Son. Then, the angels showing up to the shepherds—lowly, humble shepherds. They were the outcasts, the despised of society.

The shepherds said, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they hurried to Bethlehem, and what did they find? The Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger, and they worshipped there. They were in awe. They were the first to see the Son of God. Jesus actually is the eternal Word; He's the personal Word; He's the divine Word; He's the now incarnate Word. The second Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, God the Son, who's eternal and He predates Bethlehem, who is the Creator of all the world, the whole universe, He's now contracted to a span incomprehensibly made Man, a little baby.

Christmas was not just a manifestation of God to earth, it was an incarnation. The baby born in Bethlehem was God in the flesh—Jesus, truly God; Jesus, truly Man in one Person. Deity and humanity were fused together in Christ for all of eternity. We sing at Christmas, "veiled in flesh the Godhead see / hail th'incarnate Deity / pleased with us in flesh to dwell / Jesus, our Immanuel." How wonderful.

This Christmas, don't forget with all your eggnog...don't OD on eggnog, by the way. We're going to have a healing service next week for all of you that drank too much eggnog—which I do not drink, my wife loves, I think it's terrible. I don't know what eggnog is. What's the "nog" of an egg? I don't know. You're opening your gifts...we had some grandkids show up last night,

and they're staying with us for the weekend. They're so excited. They're so amped. They're so eager to open their presents tomorrow, to see the joy in their faces. Don't forget that Christmas is all about God, the Word made flesh coming to dwell and tabernacle among us.

Verse 14 says, “. . . and dwelt among us,” in our text. The word “dwelt,” a peculiar word used there, literally means to pitch his tent or pitch a tent among us. In the Old Testament this reminds us of the tabernacle where they had a tent where they had the presence of God, the Shekinah glory dwelling in that tent, and that's where God's presence represented there. Jesus now pitched His tent among us. He was God with us, Immanuel. He came in a body that was very similar to ours, only without sin.

Here's my third and last question to go back to verse 14, why was the Word made flesh? It's one thing to know who the “Word was made flesh,” it's another thing to know how the Word was made flesh, but it's so important that we ask the question, why? What was the reason? What's the purpose of the Word being made flesh? Let me give you some reasons the Word is made flesh, and this is by no means exhaustive. First, He was made flesh to sanctify the value of human life. This kind of goes under the radar at Christmas. We don't think about that, but did you realize because God became a Man, that was God putting His stamp of approval upon mankind? Man is made in the image and likeness of God. There are no other creatures, no other animals...I know you love your dogs, but they're dogs, and I'll stop right here. Don't get me started. When God came to earth, He didn't become an animal, He became a Man, made in the image of God, sanctified. This sanctified human life.

Wherever you go and there is a lack of Christian influence, there's a lack of value of human life. One of the reasons why we have a lack of value of human life in America today is because of the decline and the departure from Christian standards from the Judeo-Christian foundation found in God's Word, that we were made in the image and likeness of God and that we are of greater value than any other creation. We were made in God's image. It really put the stamp of approval on the value of human life.

Secondly, the incarnation, God becoming a Man and made flesh, actually came to show us how to live. Surely He taught us to love one another. Look at verse 14 in our text of John 1. He says, “. . . (and we beheld his glory,)—He was glorious, and it was—“the glory as of the only begotten”—that phrase ‘begotten’ means unique. It was the glory of the only unique Son—“of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” How glorious it must've been to look at Jesus Christ, to realize who He was. Can you imagine looking at Him thinking, This is God with us. When He performed the miracles, He walked on water. I was reading with one of my grandsons the story in a Bible storybook this afternoon about Jesus walking on the water. I said, “Can you walk on water?” He goes, “No.” Jesus can walk on water. Jesus can open the eyes of the blind. Jesus can raise the dead. Jesus can heal the leper. Jesus can calm the stormy seas and say, “Peace, be still.” Jesus can take a few pieces of bread and a couple fish, bless it, break it, and multiply it and feed a multitude. How marvelous. The glory that they saw watching Christ as He was in His incarnate state.

Then, notice also, He was, “. . . full of grace and truth.” This conveys how we should live—like Jesus. We should be living our lives to the glory of God the Father. Every one of us as believers, and if you're not a believer, you should be a believer. You should want to glorify God your Creator, and you should be praying, “Lord, in my life be glorified. Let me glorify You as Jesus came to glorify His Father.” Also, the grace and truth, we should be showing grace to others, and we should also live in the truth of God's Word and be “truthing” it in all we say and all we do. Christ must be living in our hearts, if He's going to live through our lives. So, He came to show us how to live—to forgive one another, to love one another, to love those that are unlovely, to reach out in the grace and truth of Christ.

Here's the third reason why God became a Man at Christmas, to sympathize with our suffering and our sorrow. Jesus Christ became in the incarnation at Christmas a sympathetic and compassionate High Priest. It says that He was “. . . tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” He had times of weakness. In John 4 He said He was weary and sat on Jacob's well. He was thirsty and asked for a drink of water. Here's God in flesh weary, tired, thirsty. If you've ever been weary, tired, thirsty, God knows. God understands. Jesus also was hungry as well. Jesus also experienced sorrow when He was at the grave of His friend Lazarus, and it says that Jesus wept. I've mentioned it many times before, but you know in the Greek that phrase means literally that His eyes moistened and a tear trickled down His face. He didn't sob. He didn't wail. He didn't scream, but His eyes moistened with tears and God in flesh cried. He wept, and a tear just went down His face.

I can't tell you how many times I've been in a cemetery standing by a casket looking at the people who are weeping over the loss of a loved one, and I can't help but realize God understands, God cares. Someone said, “In every pang that rends the heart the Man of Sorrows had a part,” and that's because He came from heaven to earth and was a Man. He knows what it's like to lose someone that you love. Maybe this Christmas, maybe it's the first Christmas, I know several people in our church are celebrating Christmas this year without a loved one that they lost this past year and how difficult that is, and we need to pray for them. But Jesus knows, Jesus cares, Jesus understands, and Jesus said, “I'll never leave you or forsake you,” and then Jesus went to the cross.

I would have a hard time believing in a God of all power and a God of love if it wasn't for the cross of Jesus Christ, so you can't celebrate Christmas without saying from the cradle to the cross to the crown. Jesus went to the cross and there He suffered voluntarily and died for our sins on the cross of Calvary so He can sympathize with us.

Here's the fourth reason why God became a Man, to show us the Father. Look at John 1:18, if you have a Bible. In verse 18 it says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The reason no one has seen God at any time is because God is invisible. He's not material, so we can't see God. God came to the world so we could see Him, so we could hear Him speak, so we could touch Him, so we could experience Him. That word “declared” in verse 18 means that He explained Him. He exegeted Him. He explained Christ. I love that idea that Jesus actually reveals to us the

Father.

In John's gospel, chapter 14, Jesus was talking about going home to heaven to His Father, and Philip, one of the apostles, said, "Lord, if You show us the Father, we'd be satisfied." And, what did Jesus say? He said, "Philip, have I been with you for so long and you've never seen Me? He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Not that He's the Father, but again, that He reveals the Father to us—a God of love, a God of grace, a God of mercy, and a God of compassion.

Here's the fifth, write it down. He came and became a Man, "And the Word was made flesh," to save us from sin and Satan. He came to save us from sin and from Satan. The Bible says that God made man in the Garden, man rebelled against God and sinned, man fell and is now separated from God, so man has to be brought back to God. This is why God came into the world as a Man, to die as the substitute for our sin, to be the Redeemer, to bring us back, to buy us by His blood and to bring us back to God. Jesus was born to die so that He could save us from sin and Satan's power and deliver us from the penalty and the power and one day the very presence of sin altogether. When the angels told the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem that Christ was born, I love it, they said, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,"—not a politician, praise God, but a Saviour. We needed saving, and He came to be the Saviour. How marvelous!

Here's the sixth, and my last point, why did the Word become flesh? To sit on David's throne, to sit on the throne of David. In the angel's words to Mary again, Gabriel said, I'm reading Luke 1:32-33, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." This is why we believe that God has a plan for the nation of Israel, that they're back in the land not by accident. They're there in unbelief, they need to be restored, they'll go through the tribulation, they'll see the Second Coming, many of them will turn to the Lord, and Paul says in Romans 11 that then all Israel will be saved. They will recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and the promise all the way back in the Old Testament that God made to King David, that through his lineage, through his seed, the Messiah would sit on his throne, and He would reign forever and ever and ever. The first is the thousand-year Millennium, then there's the new heavens and the new earth, and forever and ever Christ will reign on earth as it's wed together with heaven.

Here's my wrap up. Who is the Word made flesh? Jesus Christ, God Himself. God the Son made flesh. How did He become flesh? Through the work of the Holy Spirit in the virgin birth, in the womb of Mary. The incarnation was God fusing humanity with deity for all eternity. He's the God-Man perfectly suited to redeem man back to God. And, thirdly, why was the Word made flesh? Well, simply stated, to save us from our sins. Amen?

Have you been saved from your sin? Have you trusted Jesus Christ the God-Man who came to earth through the womb of the virgin, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, and then three days later rose from the dead, conquered sin, conquered death, conquered the grave, conquered Satan and lives right now in heaven to ever save those who call on the name of the

Lord? This is why John 3:16 says that if you believe on Him, you'll never perish but that you'll have everlasting life.

My prayer for you this Christmas, if you want to have the best Christmas you've ever had, is that you open your heart to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, that Christ would be born in you this Christmas, and that your sins will be forgiven, that you'll surrender your life to Him and have then a hope in heaven. Amen? Let's pray.