

The Word Became Flesh

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[0:00] Amen. You may be seated. Kids, you've got to be seated too. You're in with us this morning. Was that a baby crying? Or was that an adult crying?

Would you open up your Bibles to John chapter 1? It's on page 1053 of your Pew Bible. I'm going to read John 1, 1 through 18 once more. May God bless the reading and the hearing of His holy Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life.

In the light, life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through Him.

He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.

[1:17] He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. And we have seen, we have beheld His glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness about Him and cried out, This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me. For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side.

He has made Him known. May God bless the reading and hearing of God's Word. The greatest gift I have ever received underneath a Christmas tree, important qualification, was when I was eight years old.

[2:30] I was living in Connecticut. I unwrapped, I'm going to do this in a Howard Cosell voice, an ABC Wide World of Sports mobile broadcasting semi-tractor trailer.

It was awesome. Two worlds, my favorite two worlds coming together. ABC, Wide World of Sports, The Thrill of Victory and the Agony of Defeat, and semi-tractor trailers.

I loved both of them. And I put, I logged in a ton of hours with this metal truck. But now I suspect that that metal truck is, if not fully rusted and gone, close.

I was underneath tons of refuse in a landfill somewhere in Connecticut, where I grew up. Has anybody else noticed that the gifts that we give, now don't get me wrong, I love giving gifts on Christmas.

It's a wonderful tradition. It points to the greatest gift ever. But have you ever noticed that the gifts we give, they have a limited shelf life? Sports equipment, electronics, clothes, limited shelf life.

[3:48] You give cash, but cash don't last. The greatest gift ever given wasn't found under a Christmas tree.

The greatest gift ever given wasn't found in a stocking hung on the mantle with care. The greatest gift ever given was given by God.

A baby boy, Emmanuel, the Word become flesh, lying in a feeding trough in a first century animal shelter in the little town of Bethlehem.

An angel gave him a name. Jesus. Because he would rescue his people from their sins. He was also called Emmanuel, which literally means God with us.

He had a bunch of titles. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. And when he put it all together, it's quite a collection of names and titles for a baby that was born 2,000 years ago.

[5:01] In the feeding trough is the Word become flesh. In the feeding trough, in that manger, in the little town of Bethlehem, is the light of the world.

The ultimate self-revelation of God and His salvation. He's the greatest gift ever given.

And He was given 2,000 years ago. But you can receive Him today as the greatest gift ever. So for a few minutes here, I want to point you in this passage in verses 14 through 18, primarily in verse 14, I want you first to be amazed by Him, His person.

Second, I want you to behold His glory. And third, I want to help you believe in Him. Be amazed, behold, believe.

The greatest gift ever given is the Word who became flesh, the light, shining life into the darkness. Be amazed by Him, this person.

[6:20] And the Word became flesh. You know, those four words, the Word became flesh, they pack a theological punch.

because what they're saying is that in the one person of Jesus are two natures. Fully God, fully man.

Totally God, totally man. And it is something to be amazed by. The Word we're introduced to in John 1, 1 and 2, He, a person, we see that in verse 3, He, in Him was life, verse 4, this person was in the beginning before there was anything created and the Word was with God.

He was a person distinct from God and the Word was God. He was a person distinct from God but fully God at the same time. And we learn that He was in the beginning.

He existed before anything that was created. In verse 3, it's the Word who created everything. And so, the Word is the eternally existent, uncreated creator of all things, the second person of the Trinity, the Divine Son.

[7:48] And in Him was life. And that life shines in the darkness. So, on the one hand, the Word that became flesh is totally God. and on the other hand, He became flesh.

Totally man. That word flesh is getting at how He became a real human being. He had a real physical body.

He had a real range of emotions that He experienced 33 years of His living. He had real thoughts. He had real kind of exercises of His will that He would do.

The uncreated creator learned. He learned how to eat solid food. He learned how to speak.

The Word learned how to speak. He learned how to walk. He learned how to play with others. He went through puberty without sin.

[9:06] He learned a trade. He had calluses form on His hands. He sweat from His brow.

He gave a hard day's work. work. He enjoyed good food. He experienced the fullness of our humanity because He was fully human with one big exception.

He never sinned. For 33 years He sinned not once. He was God holiness incarnate.

The Word became flesh. Totally God. Totally man. How did that happen?

What's in that Word became? How did the eternally existent uncreated creator become a living breathing human being?

[10:19] Because it's not like the rest of us. There are 8 billion people living on the planet right now and all 8 billion of us came into existence in the same way. A physical union between one man and one woman.

not Jesus. In Luke chapter 1 we are told that there is this angel named Gabriel who shows up and has a conversation with a young lady named Mary who was a virgin which means she wasn't married.

She hasn't had a physical relationship with a man. She was engaged to Joseph. But this angel tells Mary that the Holy Spirit will miraculously powerfully conceive a son in her virgin womb. The way he became is a miracle of God. His incarnation is a triune event. It's amazing. So the second person of the Trinity became a living breathing human being by miracle of God. God begat God.

[11:34] Maybe you're familiar with the original version of O come all ye faithful. The second verse goes like this. True God of true God.

Light from light eternal. Lo he shuns not the virgin's womb. Son of the Father begotten not created. Jesus has a birthday yes but the second person of the Trinity is from everlasting to everlasting because he's God. For those of you in the room who may be hearing this for the first time or maybe you grew up in the church you've deconstructed a little bit here's the basic question is it true? Did this really happen? If it didn't happen throw it in the trash can. It's just use Christmas paper. But if it did happen be amazed. The greatest gift ever given was fully God and fully man in one person.

[12:55] And you know what's even more amazing? He remains incarnate today. So be amazed.

But now let's behold. Behold his glory. We read in verse 14 and the word became flesh. Be amazed and dwelt among us.

And we've seen his glory. Glory is of the only son from the father full of grace and truth. That word dwelt and he dwelt among us literally means to pitch a tent.

To set up a tent. For those who heard the gospel of John for the first time and had a Jewish background, do you know what they would have heard? They would have heard a reference, a very clear allusion to the tent God pitched among his people when they came out of Egypt and wandered into eventually into the promised land, the tabernacle.

This elaborate tent set up, designed by God, commanded by God to be set up wherever Israel would go. When they would come to a stay, the tent would be set up and then God would descend in a cloud and the scripture reads that he would interact with Moses face to face.

[14:25] You could translate it and the word became flesh and tabernacled among us. Did you know the story of the Bible is actually the story of God dwelling with his people?

Think about it. Adam and Eve in the garden, God walking with them in the cool of the day, God with his people. The tabernacle, God dwelling with his people en route to the promised land.

Eventually the temple of Solomon is built and God comes and occupies that temple. God with his people in his land. And then when Jesus shows up, God dwells with his people in a tent made of flesh, Emmanuel.

Now Jesus has ascended, seated at the right hand of God. Do you know who has become the dwelling place of God now? We have become the dwelling place of God.

The church. It's the place where God dwells. We are his dwelling place, so we need to be holy as he is holy. And eventually when Jesus returns and he judges all and he recreates the heavens and the earth, we will dwell with him, Emmanuel, incarnate, in a full, final, and forever way.

[15:58] It's God with his people lighting up the place. Dwell, God dwelling with his people is a big theme throughout your whole Bible.

And here we're seeing God dwelling with his people in the person of Jesus. Which means this, if God dwelt with his people in the man Jesus, he was beheld, he was seen, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen, beheld his glory.

The we and us are the original eyewitnesses who walked with Jesus, who talked with him face to face. It's the writer of the gospel of John, it's John the son of Zebedee, and Matthew, and so many other eyewitnesses.

They beheld him face to face, and they saw his glory, glory as of the only son, the only begotten of the father.

That word only begotten, it's a very unusual word in your new testament. It means it's unique one of a kind.

[17:17] And we see it not just here in verse 14, and the word became flesh. We see in his glory, glories of the only son from the father. It shows up in verse 18. No one has ever seen God, the only God, the unique

God, speaking of Jesus.

And it also shows up, if you're wondering, in John 3. 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, one unique son, God in the flesh. And what's being said here is that the original eyewitnesses to Jesus, they beheld God in his glory, full of grace and truth.

That's the New Testament version of steadfast love and faithfulness. They beheld his unique glory, full of steadfast love and faithfulness, grace and truth.

Those were descriptions used of God in the Old Testament. And they're being attributed to Jesus and he being full of steadfast love and faithfulness because he's God in the flesh and he was beheld, seen by these eyewitnesses.

He is the ultimate self-revelation of God. Do you know where you can behold his glory?

[18:45] Through the eyewitnesses of the New Testament. You can behold this incarnate Emmanuel. You can behold him healing the sick and the lame.

You can behold him speaking the truth in love. You can behold him raising the dead. You can behold him feeding 5,000 then feeding 4,000 and walking on water and being transfigured within feet of the guy that wrote this gospel.

You can behold him tenderly engaging the humble and you can behold him confronting and confounding the arrogant. We behold his glory through the pages of the New Testament.

We get to see him, his steadfast love and faithfulness on clear display and we get to say that is amazing. We get to behold his glory this way.

But you know what? Jesus says something interesting in John chapter 17. Let me just read it to you. It's in verse 1. He's praying. He's just hours away from his crucifixion and he says father the hour has come.

[20:03] Glorify your son that the son may glorify you. You see according to Jesus the light of the world the brightest display of his glory took place when he was dying on the cross.

The greatest display of the steadfast love and faithfulness in full display for those to see was when he died as a sacrifice and substitute for sinners.

The very ones he created on the cross. The brightest place of God's glory shining in the gospel of John is Jesus' death on the cross.

God's grace. He dwelt among us so that we can see and we could behold his glorious light shining into the darkness.

His life and death on display. glory. So be amazed. Behold his glory.

[21:22] By the way. His birthday is just not a glory day. His death day is not just a glory day. His resurrection day is not just a glory day.

This present day he's reigning on high bringing his glory to the nations. There's a day when he comes back and it's going to be glorious for all who believe in him and he's going to exercise a judgment day in which he will be glorified and then he's going to recreate the heavens on the earth and on that day we're going to glorify him fully finally and forever because we'll be in his presence. We'll behold him. We'll see him face to face. I can't wait. Be amazed. Behold.

Behold and believe. Believe in him. A couple verses up in verse 12 we read but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God.

The last couple Sundays I've been trying to help you understand what biblical belief is and what it's not. Remember the illustration? It's mid-February.

[22:39] I'm like hey let's go for a walk around Lincoln Park Lagoon. It's kind of freezing cold for days and so that lagoon has this eight inches of ice on it.

And I turn to you and I say hey do you believe that can hold your weight? To which you say of course I believe that. But are you actually exercising biblical belief?

belief? You're just agreeing that it will hold your weight. But if I ask you hey let's go step out on the ice of the lagoon together. It's when you step out onto the ice that now we're talking biblical belief.

It's where you're actually actively trusting in Jesus. this one who sent by God to save sinners in this dark world.

And when you believe in Jesus you receive Jesus. You welcome him. In all that he is you say hey mi casa es su casa I am yours.

[23:47] I will now base my life around you. You are my one consuming passion my all governing reality now because of who you are and what you've done and what you will do.

And last week we saw that when you believe when you receive Jesus he gives you the right to become children of God. He causes you to be born again.

You've got a completely new status before God. But you know what? That's not the greatest thing he gave. It's wonderful but it's not the greatest thing.

In verse 16 we read for from him for from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace for the law was given through Moses grace and truth steadfast love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.

I mean us receiving God's word is wonderful but it's not the greatest thing. Do you know the greatest thing is?

[24:53] Better than your status. Even better than the Bible itself. It's God himself.

Because this baby given to us who's grown he's crucified he's risen and reigning on high the greatest gift ever given is God giving himself to us and when we receive him we receive the fullness of who he is his steadfast love and faithfulness being poured out upon us.

When you believe in him and you receive him the word shine shines upon you the light of life shines into your darkness and gives you life causes you to be born again.

Is it true? To believe in Jesus is to welcome him in all of his fullness into your life as the center of your life.

Do you see that the greatest gift ever given is God giving himself to us? That's the glory of Christmas. Jesus said it this way and this is eternal life that they know you have a relationship with you the only God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent to believe in Jesus is to receive Jesus and to enter into a life giving relationship with the living God.

[26:44] And now we live for his glory not our own. It brings us the greatest joy to live for him. So you may agree that Jesus is God in the flesh that you may even agree that he's the greatest gift ever given but the question really is have you stepped out onto him and put your trust in him have you welcomed him for all that he is if you haven't you can welcome him in today he gave himself to you and how you responded saying mi casa esu casa welcome in incarnate king but if you have already welcomed him in is he your one consuming passion your all governing reality to receive the fullness of him is to live in light of all that he is and experience fullness of joy believe in him receive him be amazed behold believe is it true and if it's true

Jesus is God's greatest gift ever given it's not like he will end up in a landfill with a limited shelf life he is life and he gives eternal life he's the gift that keeps on giving he became flesh and dwelt among us he's the light shining in the darkness in Jesus God gives us himself so this morning this day before Christmas are you amazed by his person totally God totally man in one person have you beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the father and have you believed and when you believe you get to say things like this and mean it joy to the world the

Lord is come let all of the earth receive her king amen merry christmas let me pray lord jesus we acknowledge you as our crucified risen and reigning incarnate king thank you for humbling yourself taking on flesh in order to die for us in our place so that we can live with you and for you forever would you be honored and glorified today on the 24th of December tomorrow on the 25th of December and on Tuesday the 26th of December and day in and day out from there on all to your glory in jesus name amen