

AM John 1:1-18 God and Man

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[0 : 00] If you could come with me then back to John's Gospel chapter 1 and we're going to focus this morning on verse 14.

! John chapter 1 verse 14 where we read these words 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.

Now, most of the great truths of Christianity are shrouded in mystery.

The Orthodox churches, the Eastern Orthodox churches as opposed to the Western churches seem a lot more aware of what I've just said.

[1 : 17] But if you think about it for a moment, you know, Judaism and the Jewish faith at the time of Jesus were fiercely believing in the one God.

That God was one. Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one. But we Christians, we also believe that. We believe there is only one true God and that that God is one being.

And yet, we also believe that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh. And we also believe that the being of God, part of its makeup, if we could put it like that, is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And if you look at the Creeds, these are statements of historic Christianity, you will see that they use the phrase three persons, one God.

Which sounds like a contradiction in terms, let's be honest. Similarly, Jesus is known as the Son of God.

[3 : 02] Look at that last bit of that verse that we read. And yet, he's introduced by John in chapter one, as in the words of the carol we've just been singing.

God of God, very God, begotten, not created. Because, let me remind you of that verse again. In the beginning, in the beginning, not so much of time, but of the existence of God.

In the beginning was, that is already existed, the Word. And the Word was with God from all eternity.

And the Word was God. And then, fast forward to verse 14. And the Word became flesh.

Now, this is the most profound statement in the faith of Christianity. This is the most mysterious statement in the faith of Christianity.

[4 : 17] One of the great early Christians, a figure called Augustine, said this. We speak not because we understand, but because we cannot remain silent.

So, you've got the Trinity, great mystery. You've got the being of Jesus Christ, the God-man, as he's called among Christians. And you've got, even our day-to-day Christianity is full of mystery.

Let me just point this out to you. Paul says in one of his letters, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Now, that's in one of Paul's letters later in the New Testament. You think, alright, well, that sounds pretty clear, doesn't it? Work out your own salvation.

Don't just be lackadaisical about your Christianity. But then he goes on to say, in the same breath, We hear this. For it is God that works in you, Wait to hear it.

[5 : 30] Both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Another hymn writer begins his hymn with this line, Tis mystery all.

Immense and free, And oh my God, It found out me. Now, perhaps you've heard of C.S. Lewis. He's the one that is famous for the children's books and the film as well.

C.S. Lewis called the incarnation. That word means the enfleshment of God. The grand miracle.

In its profundity and mystery, the incarnation, said Lewis, surpasses by far every single miracle and all the miracles of Jesus put together.

Here in this single verse, we have the most profound statement about God and Jesus Christ, I believe, in the entire Bible.

[6 : 43] And partly the reason for that is this. Remember this. God is the God that changes, not. But we've just read a verb from that verse.

Became. And the word became suggests something that has changed from one thing to another.

He changes not. By the way, I'm not worried that I can't understand it. And I hope you're not. I would be worried if I did.

What we have in this verse, the word became flesh and dwelt among us, is not any kind of armchair theology.

Somebody in some building trying to study books of theology. This is the theology of wonder. wonder. And aghastness and amazement.

[7 : 59] For John, this is the summit. It begins with the summit of this person, Jesus Christ. It begins at the top.

We can state the truth of the incarnation, but we cannot comprehend it.

I read somebody who tried to comprehend it in this way. I'm not sure how successful it is. While God cannot change internally in the internalness of his being and character, he can bring about a change externally.

Somebody has called it rather than a subtraction of God, the incarnation is an addition. Remember this, that he who is the work from all eternity is in heaven with a body.

who became flesh?

[9 : 21] Let's ask this question. Who became flesh? It tells us, doesn't it? And the world became flesh.

flesh. That world that existed from all eternity in exquisite and unspeakable love and fellowship with the Father within the being of God, that very world became flesh.

And it's interesting that the word that John uses, sarx, is the Greek word, flesh. But John has been using the word anthropos right up until verse 14.

That's the word, you know, we get our own word anthropology, the study of human beings. But John does not want to use the word anthropos to talk about the enfleshment of the eternal world.

He uses the word sarx, he uses the word flesh, which literally means soft tissue. In other words, John wants to leave people in no doubt whatsoever.

[10 : 57] This is not a phantom. This is not an avatar. This is not a hologram. This is Jesus Christ in flesh of our flesh. The eternal world.

Why did the word become flesh? Because humanity had alienated itself from God through its own will of wanting to live its life without God.

And every single human being considered in and of themselves is guilty of this, hear it.

Love God with all your being and love your neighbour. And every single human being that's put in the dock, if I could put it that way, will be found guilty.

So what does God do? God becomes a human being that he might be the one that represents us and is for us and can be put in the dock and take that guilt himself and free you and me from that guilt.

[12 : 56] Yes, Jesus had to be, if God was to so love the world that he gave his only begotten son, he had to give him to be a human being.

Paul is very daring.

Paul says in one of his letters that he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh yet without sin because if he had a single sin he could not be the saviour.

but here's the thing, he lived that life from birth to his death on the cross without a single sin. what can we draw from these facts that we should never lose our wonder at what God has done for us.

We should never lose it and we should never allow our faith or our Christianity or our religion to be divested of wonder.

[14 : 27] Christ died for our sins my sins and your sins the shepherds and the angels were in a rapture at the coming of this one who came for us and our salvation who came to give us poor and weary and weak and sinful human beings hope and forgiveness and life eternal.

so I've asked to use the word and I want to move on now to ask a wee bit more about the point of his becoming flesh because if you read that in verse 14 there's these wonderful words the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

I want you to ponder these words and think about them. Yeah? This eternal word that was with the Father and that exquisite love of relationship which God wants to draw us into he made his dwelling among us but he didn't descend as an angel he didn't make his dwelling as some sort of spiritual entity in that sense among us truly among us by becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh by having the same molecules the same DNA the same chromosomes the same weakness Jesus was tired Jesus got angry

Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus Jesus got frustrated when people called him a blasphemer because he healed people on the Sabbath Jesus said that he didn't even know when the coming of the Son of Man would be Jesus grew in wisdom and we must divest ourselves I believe of any kind of idea that it was okay for Jesus because he always had the ace carved in his sleeve his divinity wrong yes he did because the world never lost one iota of its divinity even in its space time through Jesus Christ but Jesus

Christ lived truly as a human being for you and me and everything he said and everything they did was looking to the father he says my words are not mine they're the father's my actions are not mine they're the father's I could have called ten thousand angels but I didn't he dwelt among us Hebrews tells us that he was tested or tempted because the word that's used has the double meaning it can be looked upon as testing or temptation depending on the context well of course remember the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 and remember his great testing in the garden of Gethsemane he being in an agony said to

[18 : 51] God I know why I'm here Lord but you know something if possible remove this come from me Jesus was born the birth of Jesus Jesus Jesus was a baby Jesus was suckled Jesus was a toddler Jesus was an adolescent Jesus was a young man Jesus remember never started his ministry until he was 30 years of age Jesus was a particular man man we must be careful that we're not just thinking that somehow or other Jesus wasn't really fully man and he can adorn a human nature and it was that sort of unreal human nature that was linked to him in some way no behold the man man this particular man with a date of birth and a death certificate this man who felt the antagonism of his society this man who experienced persecution this man who was beaten and tortured this man who was the subject of an illegal trial this man who suffered shame the shame of being hung up on a cross and mocked while he was hanging there now

John before I leave this point where John says and dwelt among us if you look at the original language it literally says this tabernacled among us tabernacled tabernacled what's that it's a word used in the bible for a tent a temporary accommodation either a small tent or a better tent a kind of cloth better cloth and larger and all this sort of stuff there was two tabernacles there was the smaller tent and the larger but both of them in general pointed to their temporality tent and yet in both those tents God came and his presence was there in that tent and it's as if

John is using what I call illusion here and he's saying you know remember the tabernacle guys he's speaking to his readers in the old testament because remember the new testament doesn't exist when he is not all of it anyway when he's saying those things well God is in this tent of humanity the human Jesus Christ and of course in Colossians Paul's letter to the Colossians it tells us that the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily as we finish I come to my third and final point and it's what the writer says remember this is not Jesus this is the evangelist the writer if you like the representative of the community of Christians of the church if you like notice the plural we have seen his glory have you we have seen his glory and mount

Sinai before God revealed himself to the wandering nomadic Israelites the children of Jacob there was great consternations of the mountain like volcanic eruptions and all sorts of things!

here comes Jesus in great almost incognito hiddenness born as a helpless baby and yet if we ask who is this on yonder stall at whose feet we humbly fall we cry great is the Lord the King of glory have you seen his glory have you seen the glory of his willingness to walk our walk have you seen the glory of his willingness to go to the cross bearing my sin and guilt and bearing yours have you seen the glory of his exultation have you seen the glory of his life lived for God and of course the writer here would no doubt be also thinking of something called signs that we find in

[25 : 53] John so for example if I go to the next chapter chapter 2 we read this verse 11 of this chapter and let me just tell you the context it's very easy Jesus is at a wedding and they run out of wine and Jesus tells a servant to fill six massive water jars together making up volume of 180 gallons to fill those jars with water draw some of the water and take it to the master of ceremonies or the host and when they take it and the master of the ceremonies taste it not only do they taste not water but wine but the most brilliant wine and John says this in verse 11 this the first of his signs did Jesus at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him there are seven of those signs in John's gospel and indeed at the very end of

John's gospel in chapter 20 you will read you will read this I think it's at verse 30 now Jesus did many this is chapter 20 of John's gospel verse 30 now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and by believing you might have life in his name so here you discover part of the structure of John's gospel that he is narrating and telling people about those signs because they manifest the glory of Jesus Christ the eternal word have you seen his glory have you seen the utter uniqueness at this

Christmas time and all the nonsense that's around it but have you seen the utter glory of Jesus Christ and let me say this as well another lesson for us is this Jesus Christ and his birth and his coming represent the mission of God and when we're thinking of incarnation and we're thinking of it particularly at this time we should be thinking what's our mission where is our incarnational Christianity does it exist for we are to be little Christ's of light and salt to the darkness around us

Jesus has shown us a God that will stop at nothing to redeem us or to make or remake us into Christ like human beings I'm nearly finished we'll go back to verse 14 again and I want you to see something there we have seen his glory the glory as of the only son I want you to fix in these words the only son from the father the only son from the father what do I want to say to you Christianity is unique that's what I want to say there is no other prophet there is no other religion there is no other faith where it can be said that they are the eternal only son of the eternal

God except Jesus Christ my friends he's the only redeemer and the only mediator between God and man if you have him you have life and if you don't have him have him even although you have biological life spiritual death we have seen his glory have you the sixty four thousand dollar sixty four thousand dollar question is this Jesus once said to us and I do finish with this Jesus once said to his disciples who do people say that you're I am what's the word in the street and they said some of them are saying you're a prophet some of them are saying you're

[31 : 43] Elijah in fact I even heard somebody saying they thought you were John the Baptist brought back for the dead whose head was chopped off by Herod and Jesus said who do you see I am and Peter representing the disciples said you're the Christ the son of the living God and Jesus confronts every man woman boy and girl with that question in our own day and age who do you say that I am what's your answer the answer of John in our sermon is we have seen his glory and may the Lord bless these thoughts to each one of the of of the do