

The Word Made Flesh

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[0 : 00] of the Lord Jesus, verse 14, 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.

For over 50 years, and dare I say almost 60, next year a significant event, almost 60 years I've either learned history, or taught history, or certainly lived through history, walked in the footsteps of history, and perhaps even made history.

All of you have done the same, all of you have lived through some of the great events of history, certainly in the more recent decades, whether it's for the young folks in the past decade, or even much earlier, you're all the very least indirect witnesses, maybe some of you even direct witnesses to some of the most iconic episodes in the history of our time.

We all remember where you were when these key events happened. The assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon.

I remember clearly in the grannies in Lockerbie, watching that in 1969. Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989. The death of Princess Diana, 1997.

[1 : 28] Barack Obama, the first Afro-American president, 2008. And we could go on and on and on. But there's one event that's utterly unique.

The most amazing event in all of history. And of course, that is the eternal, all-knowing, all-present, infinitely holy Son of God.

The Lord Jesus took upon Himself human nature and lived among humanity and lived among humanity as God and man.

The infinite Son of God. The Son of God through whom the world was created. The world created by His Word. That Word became flesh and as we're told and dwelt and lived among us.

Now, John was writing these words that we were reading there in John's Gospel. He wrote them possibly maybe 70 years after the birth of Jesus. Almost 40 years after the death of Jesus.

[2 : 31] The Apostle John, led by the Holy Spirit, writing these words of, you might say, holy wonder, holy joy, joy, praise.

Expressing that true beauty of the Savior, the Savior of the world, who became what He was not. So that you, so that we might become what we don't deserve to be.

To become sons of the living God. Jesus became, as we're told here, He became flesh. He became a human being. He came to resent us.

He came to take our place before the justice of God against sin. So that all who are His might know salvation eternally.

That's eternal blessing. Because of what Jesus did. He did for you, what He did for all who are His. In becoming flesh. And it's that doctrine that we celebrate at this time of year.

[3 : 31] And of course we remember at all times of the year. But the opportunities that we're given this time of year to celebrate, to remember, and to give praise for the incarnation, the enfleshing, if you like, of the Lord Jesus.

And so, again, we're going to consider and look at this great, yes, great mystery. The mystery of Christ incarnate.

And as we do so, we continue to worship God. And to think on who Jesus is. To think on why Jesus did come into the world. What did Jesus reveal of His glory?

Like that glory that we read here as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And so, we will again engage with the Word of God as we have it here.

And engage so that we apply that Word to our hearts. So that you engage with the Word. And having engaged with the Word, seek to honour God by living out the truth that we find here in Scripture of our Lord Jesus.

[4 : 38] So that we glorify Him. Because He is the greatest gift of all. He has come in that greatest of events of history.

So that you might know the greatest of blessings and been found in Christ. Been found in Him through faith in Him. So, with that knowledge here that we have here of the One who became flesh, who became flesh for us, then we do seek to glorify Him.

We'll explore that more fully as we come to that particular part of verse 14. But remember, our purpose is to follow the Lord Jesus. To know Him more and in that growing knowledge of Him. To follow Him the more. To worship Him the more. To live for Him the more. And to cry out, as Thomas cried out to Jesus. To Jesus. There isn't Jesus.

To cry out, My Lord and my God. He is the Saviour who dwelt among us. And still dwells among us. By His Spirit.

[5 : 44] And so we consider what these words are before us. In order, yes, to glorify Him in our hearts. To glorify Him in our actions.

This is the divine inspired Word of God. This is the Word of truth. And the Word became flesh. And made His dwelling with us. So, let's look first of all at what we see here in the enfleshment of the Word.

Now, John who wrote this Gospel. Of course, John who was a disciple and then an apostle. This author, John the author of this Gospel. He met with Jesus.

He saw Jesus. He followed Jesus. He followed the Saviour. John was one of the closest of the twelve disciples. After Jesus' death, John, well, he became a leading apostle.

He witnessed as an apostle. He wrote scripture. As an apostle. I mean, his closeness to Jesus certainly equipped him to write one Gospel.

[6 : 48] Three letters. And then the book of Revelation. And John suffered. John suffered as a follower of Jesus. And yet, when he comes to write this Gospel.

Certainly in his old age. In his very old age. He's lost nothing of that attachment. Of that faith. That walk that he had and that he continued to have with his Lord and Saviour.

And you see that even in these first 18 verses. What we might call the prologue. The prologue to this great Gospel. This prologue. This introduction.

As John introduces us to the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. And you see the way that he begins this Gospel. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This is good news. The good news we were thinking of this morning. But as he expresses this good news. The good news the Gospel of Jesus.

[7 : 48] Notice he doesn't even mention the name of Jesus until quite well through this chapter. He's focusing on Jesus as the Word. As the Word through whom the creation came to be.

So you read in Genesis 1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And then in Genesis 1 we're told God said God spoke creation through this speech act of God. The Word. The Word. The Word. The heavens and earth created. And so John's keeping to this expression of Jesus as the Word.

Because he wants to tell us that the Son of God is eternal. He's eternal. He's within the Trinity. He's the one through whom the world was created.

In the beginning God created. And here we have in the beginning was the Word. This is the Lord Jesus. We call the second person of the Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

[8 : 50] The Word. Eternal Word. Eternal God. One God. And of course, three persons. As you learned, I'm sure many of you in your younger days in your shorter catechism.

Right? What is God? God. Three persons. One God. The same in substance. Equal in power and glory. This is the Word. This is the Lord Jesus. And this eternal second person of the Godhead. The Word of God. The Son of God. The one who's equal in power with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We're told here in verse 14. That He was made flesh.

He became part of His creation. And this is the Son of God. This is the eternal Son of God. The one who knew eternal glory in heaven. This is the Son of God who knew that eternal perfection.

And the purity and the goodness of heaven. And that pure relationship within the Godhead. This is the same Son of God who knew eternal praise from the created angels.

[9 : 58] This is the Word who became flesh. The Word who took the form of a human being. The Word who now became part of creation.

He became what He was not. He became flesh. He was incarnate in flesh. Like us. Sin of course accepted.

And try as you might. And I've tried it before and it doesn't work. But try and sort of compare with an illustration, an analogy. Even from the world of creation. To somehow point to the incarnation of Jesus.

It doesn't work. When we come to think of the self-humbling of Jesus. In Jesus. In the Word being made flesh. Suppose there are maybe some sort of loose analogies that we might consider.

I mean, you know, we see in the world of human beings, ordinary human beings. We might occasionally see very rich individuals. People who humble themselves in some kind of self-giving. [11:02] Some kind of charitable work. Some kind of donation. Some kind of, you know, working amongst the poor and underprivileged. And we admire that humbling of themselves. Again, that's as nothing.

As nothing. Compared to the self-humbling of the Word of God. The Son of God. Because it's only, really only Scripture. It's only the words of Scripture that can truly present to us the reality of the humbling of Jesus.

It's the Word being made flesh. Think of what Paul writes in Philippians 2, 6-8. When he writes of Jesus emptying himself.

Taking the form of a servant. And being found in human form. Humbled himself. Humbled himself through obedience to his Father. And that obedience that took him from Bethlehem to Calvary. And, you know, just pause for a moment. Just as we've been thinking in these truths. You know, we're in our midst of the time of Advent.

[12:09] The Christmas story. And, you know, the Christmas story can be so dumbed down. If you remove from it the true wonder. The true joy. Of the birth of the eternal Son of God.

Made flesh for us. And I certainly don't, and I know you don't want, any kind of watered down version of the story of the birth of Jesus. You don't want to hear, you know, just some kind of nice sounding word that takes away the truth.

That the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Because Scripture affirms that truth. The Word, the eternal Word. The Word who is with God and is God.

The Word became light as fully human. And at the same time fully divine. That's the mystery of the incarnation. That we praise God for now.

And we'll praise Him for eternally. We mentioned a few weeks ago, I think it was a morning service, we mentioned the scene in Edinburgh's Princess Street that certainly reminds many of us of what you read in the Pilgrim's Progress.

[13:16] The darkness of vanity fear, you know, the emptiness of pleasure that's really light years away from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus that's proclaimed certainly at this time of year. But aren't we all, each one of us, me, you, aren't we all guilty to some extent anyway of harbouring vanity fear in our hearts when we take our minds of Jesus and onto the trivia of life that's got no value at all, that's got absolutely no worth compared to the glory of the Lord Jesus, the Word of God.

You know, we're thinking this morning of Mary and her meditating, her treasuring, all that had happened through her in the birth of Jesus. And she treasured in her heart all that had been told to her, all that had happened through her.

And isn't that such, again, a timely reminder that, you know, we do take time, even through the busyness of life, to think, to use our minds to think on the Son of God in flesh.

And, you know, as the psalm goes, truly that we do turn our eyes upon Jesus and look on His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. And it's that turning our eyes to Jesus and thinking of Him, seeing Him as He's revealed to us in His Word and in our hearts, that turning our eyes to Jesus that gives you that motivation, that incentive to praise God for that truth that Jesus was made flesh for us and that He lived, that He dwelt among us.

[15:00] Again, you know, again, just think, use your mind to think about what we're saying here. That the Word, the One who was in the beginning, the One who was there before creation itself, before time was created, that He was with God and was God and is God.

That one that you knew that eternal bliss of the paradise of heaven and the Word dwelt among who? Among us. Who are they?

Us. Sinners. Sin polluted sinners. Us. He with us. One, as we said, who knew that eternal perfection in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

He came from heaven to earth to dwell amongst rebels, against all who are sinners against God. Sinners like me.

Yes, and sinners like you. And, you know, there's John as he's writing these words and he's writing in adoration and in joy that the Word, the Son of God, the One who knew no sin, dwelt among us.

[16:13] And it's a very particular way that John writes this verse here, that he dwelt among us. The way that John does it, again, brings out the depth and the true wonder of Jesus coming from heaven to earth.

John's using a particular word here for dwelt, for living. It's a word that literally means, if there's such a word in English, tainted, tabernacled, with us.

Because John's taking us right back to the book of Exodus, the time when God dwelt with His people in the wilderness. When God dwelt in that particularly special way in the tabernacle, in the tent, the portable tent that went as the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness, the tent that was taken.

And in a particularly special way, God dwelt, He tabernacled with His people there in the wilderness. In Exodus 25, God commands Moses, make the tabernacle, make that tabernacle. Verse 8, let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst. And God chose to dwell in that particular way, in that tent, in that tabernacle.

[17:28] Which would later be in the more permanent temple. But God's presence went with His people. As the tent moved, as the tabernacle moved, so God, as it were, moved with the people.

So, that tent that was that physical reminder of God with us, of God with His people. And so, when Jesus came, John uses this particular word, He tabernacled with His people.

In other words, Jesus came in order to dwell, to dwell with His people and did so through His being made flesh through His incarnation.

I mean, Jesus came to dwell with sinful man. Jesus dwelt among sinners. But He came to dwell among sinners in order to release sinners.

In order to set sinners free, to set you free, to set you free from the power and oppression of sin. And Jesus did that by His perfect life of obedience and did it on the cross of Calvary when He took our sins, the sins of His people on Himself.

[18:41] But then, the question's always asked and it should be asked. Why did Jesus have to be in flesh? Why did He have to leave heaven? Why did He have to leave the perfect bliss of the glory of heaven and come and dwell amongst sinful man?

And the answer's clear. The answer's before us in Scripture. He came in order to bear our sins. He came to bring salvation for His people. This is Jesus who came fully human, fully divine, the one who was and is fully divine.

He was with God and was God. The one who was fully human in every way. He was fully human in His human nature, in His human body, in His human psychology, in His human physiology, in His mind, in His emotions.

He was like us. As we said, He became what He was not. He became a human being. And in every aspect of humanity, sin, of course, accepted.

And we're told He became flesh, He became a man, He became a man because only a sinless man could take the sinner's place before a holy God.

[20:00] We go right back to the Old Testament to explain that. Adam had sinned. Adam had brought sin into the world. He brought sin into the human race. Sin separated man from God.

Every human being condemned. Every human being deserving God's punishment. God's justice demanded that a penalty be paid. A penalty for sin.

That penalty being a sacrifice. And you read in the Old Testament all the many animal sacrifices that took place. The substitutes that were the animals. The substitute for those who presented the animals on their behalf to take the punishment that their sins deserved.

But as you know, these sacrifices, they couldn't fully take away sin. The penalty remained.

Sacrifices would continually be offered, constantly offered, until the one sacrifice took place.

And that, of course, being the Lord Jesus. The sinless, spotless sacrifice for sin. Our representative man. Him for us.

[21 : 09] Adam represented the human race. And he sinned. All sinned. Jesus, the second Adam. Jesus represented and represents all for whom he came to give his life.

All for whom he died for. Jesus came in flesh for sinners so that sinner man might not face that eternal punishment for sin that we deserve.

Only someone with a human nature could be qualified to be our substitute. Only a divine person could do what he did to save us.

Only the Lord Jesus and his divine human nature could do what he did to rescue lost sinners, to rescue us from the eternal wrath of God.

And that's why we read here that the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The divine Son of God fleshed for sinners on behalf of sinners to save sinners such as ourselves, to save sinners in his perfect life of obedience and obedience even unto death.

[22 : 24] Jesus, the once for all sacrifice for sin. And so, when we read these words, these few words that have so much power and meaning, he came and dwelt among us.

You see, why he came to dwell among us, why he came to tabernacle among us, he came to save his people from their sins. He came to take our place as our representative, him for us.

He became flesh so that God's justice be fully satisfied. Sin paid for once and for all by the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God.

And Jesus was made sin for us. So the Lord Jesus, and we keep repeating this phrase because we have to emphasize that Jesus became what he was not in order that we, that you might become what you were not.

I mean, Jesus became flesh, he dwelt among us so that you might become right with God. Made possible only through Jesus, the substitute's death for us.

[23 : 33] And again, just pause and reflect on what we've been saying here about Jesus coming to earth as fully human, fully divine. Just dwell in that truth because that gives you, that truth gives you that full assurance that you who have committed your life to the Lord Jesus, your salvation is safe, sure, you're not condemned because he was condemned in your place.

He dwelt with us. Why? So that he might bear the wrath of God for you and die in your place. And again, you know, that should cause you, it should cause each one of us to bow before the Lord Jesus and give thanks that he did come from heaven to earth, that he came in human flesh, he came for you, he came for us.

And that should certainly take away any kind of triviality that this time of year so often brings.

Remember what he did for us, for you, and is being made flesh and dwelling among us.

So be humbled, be humbled through that knowledge that Jesus came in human flesh for us. Be humbled with that knowledge that who Jesus is in his glory.

John was humbled, John was humbled as he wrote these words, and we have seen his glory, glorious of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. This is a great affirmation, this is a great confirmation of the Lord Jesus in his glory, the glorious Son of God, Jesus in his majesty, in his greatness, in his power, in his authority, in his grace, in his truth.

[25 : 18] That the glorious Son of God should come from heaven to earth for us. John, again, is expressing this truth in utter admiration and utter adoration, because as he says, we have seen, we have seen, he was an eyewitness of glory.

You know, if you're ever trying to assess reliability, reliability of a reporting, of an action, or of an event, one of the first things that we have to do is to find out if there's an eyewitness, if somebody was there and can corroborate the evidence, say, well, there was someone else who also saw what I saw and the two match.

We do it a lot in the teaching of history, for example, how reliable is this report of such and such an event? Well, one of the first things we do is, was that person actually there at the time to see what he saw, what she saw?

And here's John. John declaring that we saw, not just he saw, but we saw, I and others saw with our own eyes, the glory of Jesus.

What we saw substantiates the truth of the gospel, confirms the truth, yes, that Jesus truly did live, that he truly was the Son of God, and he truly did display the glory of God, that he was and is the Son of God who came to earth in human form.

[26 : 49] John saw Jesus. From scripture, John met with Jesus. He was a disciple for three years of Jesus. He witnessed Jesus' glory, the glory of the Word made flesh.

Peter, and a lot of the disciples, of course, Peter also wrote of that truth. We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. They were eyewitnesses face to face, the glorious Lord Jesus.

And again, when John's using this idea of glory, he's going back to the Old Testament. Because when you go back to the Old Testament, you read there of God's presence, presence before His people.

That presence of God with His people was described in terms of glory. glory, that radiant splendor of God, that shining, God's presence shining upon His people.

God compared to a consuming fire. And that expression of glory, the glory of God, telling of God's holiness and His purity and His power and His mercy and His goodness.

[28 : 03] The glorious presence of God expressed in the Old Testament and now we see in the New. John saw the glory of God in Jesus.

John witnessed Jesus' purity. He witnessed His power. He witnessed His holiness. He witnessed His splendor, His radiant splendor.

Jesus revealed the presence of God that man could see and look at. The glory as of the only, the one and only Son of God.

John, Peter, the other disciples, they had that privilege of knowing Jesus and seeing Jesus face to face. Jesus literally dwelt among them.

Jesus was there to teach them, to show the reliability of His Word, to show that yes, He truly is the promised Christ, the Messiah.

[29 : 02] them, but the great reality for the Christian, for you who know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are an eyewitness of the glory of the only Son of God.

You have seen Jesus by faith. You see the glory of Jesus by faith. How do you see Him? You see Him in His Word. You see Him by faith as you walk with Him.

You know, in ordinary human life, if you, you know, if you see somebody famous, you get excited. If you're an eyewitness of somebody who's achieved so much in life, you know, you do, it does make you excited.

But again, that's as nothing compared to the eyewitness of Jesus, the glorious one, Jesus, the Son of God. There's no other comparable in Jesus' greatness, in His majesty, in His glory.

So you who know Jesus by faith, you know Him, you see Him. You can still say, I am an eyewitness of His majesty. By faith, you say, but we see Jesus.

[30 : 14] He dwells, He continues to dwell with His people by His Spirit. But there's a reality that we have to say, and we have to mention, we can't avoid this.

Because not all, see the glory of Jesus. Whether it was in John's day, whether it's in our own day. Because when Jesus preached, when Jesus performed miracles, the miracles that were signs of His glory, not everybody put their faith in Him.

Not everybody saw the glory of God and Jesus. I mean, it's even to this day when we preach, when the Word of God is preached, not all, not everyone sees Jesus by faith.

This Christmas time when the name of Jesus is going to be mentioned probably more times than any other time of the year. We're singing His name in carols. But not all will see the glory of Jesus. Yes, a baby in a manger will be seen, and figures of Mary and Joseph will be seen peering into that manger. wise men with treasures, they'll be seen giving gifts to the infant child.

[31 : 27] But the glory of Jesus will be hidden apart from to those who see the Lord Jesus by faith. Do you see Jesus?

Do you see His glory? Do you see the glorious Son of God, the glorious Savior, and love Him and serve Him? Or is Jesus to you simply a good person, maybe a famous religious leader, and that's it?

You come to Him by faith, and you be an eyewitness of His glory. John and all who knew Jesus by faith, they were eyewitnesses of His glory. And as eyewitnesses, they declared, as John declares here, of Jesus, that He was full of grace and truth.

The fullness of the Word. We've seen His glory, glorious of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. What was the glory that they saw in Jesus?

It was a glory, as we see here, of grace and truth, a glory of, we might say, a glory of goodness, seen in the Lord Jesus. Again, you've got to go back to the Old Testament, to the way that God was described, when His glory was described, in terms of His goodness, of His, if you like, His innate goodness.

[32 : 49] That goodness that, yes, was expressed in many ways, but certainly His goodness that was expressed in terms of God's steadfast love and His faithfulness. God's love of God, that love of God, that faithfulness of God that was seen in His, well, in His gracious dealings with His people, and the grace that God showed to His people, and the truth of who He is and was and was and is.

God expressing that He is utterly reliable, utterly true, and it's seen in the way that God dealt with His people. So, God's goodness expressed in His grace, grace to others, undeserved grace to others, that grace that came from the God of all truth.

So, when John here speaks of Jesus' glory being full of grace and truth, John's saying that the glory of God that was seen in Jesus, he says, no, make a mistake about it, this is the divine Son of God, this is the one who truly has come from heaven to earth, he truly has come to show the glory of God's grace to lost sinners.

Jesus came to reveal that grace of God to sinners, he came to reveal the truth of God's love, that's seen in God's faithfulness, all the promises that he's made to undeserving sinners.

And this Christmas time, see the glory of Jesus, see his glory, the one who came to earth to show forth the grace of God to you.

[34 : 29] You know it's that undeserved favour, but it's yours because Jesus came to save sinners such as me and sinners such as you. All the promises of God towards lost sinners met in Jesus.

Of course Jesus will later speak of himself as the way, the truth and the life. This is the only truth. That truth that tells of Jesus' absolute faithfulness, his promise, the promise of eternal life to all who come to him by faith.

That is true. And so we praise God for his grace and truth. That grace and truth that reached out from heaven and came to earth to save sinners through Jesus' work.

Give praise then. Yes, give praise as we will do so because Jesus was born for us. He lived for us. He died for us. And has risen again for us.

And see that line then from Bethlehem to Calvary and from Calvary to the empty tomb and then from the empty tomb to heaven to where Jesus is in the fullness of his glory.

[35 : 45] He's there as the risen Savior. As we were singing in one of the earlier Psalms, Psalm 96, Ascribe to him all the glory.

That is what we are to do, to ascribe to him all the glory that's due to his name because of who he is, because of what he did in becoming flesh and dwelling among us and continuing to dwell among us by his spirit.

Well, may God, that is blessing to the preaching of his word and may he bless us. Let's pray. Lord, our God, our Heavenly Father, we bow in humility before you.

For Lord, we know that we are utterly undeserving of your grace, of knowing you as the one who is the truth. We bow before you, Lord, knowing that we are utterly undeserving of the least of your mercies.

and yet, Lord, we are assured of your eternal love through the Lord Jesus. So, Lord, be with any even this evening who have been doubting their faith, who have been lacking even assurance of salvation.

[36 : 58] May they know that the Lord Jesus became flesh for them and lived for them and died for them. And may they know that peace, that peace that passes understanding.

May they know that peace in their hearts through the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Hear us, Lord, as we continue in praise before you now. And we ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, let's close in Psalm 57. Psalm 57, page 75.

I'm going to sing the last three verses from verse 9 down to verse 11. Among the nations, Lord, to you I will give praise.

Among the peoples of the earth, my songs of you I'll raise. 9 to 11, Psalm 57, to God's praise.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[37 : 57] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

Amen. Amen.

And now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you, both now and forevermore. Amen.

[39 : 42] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.