

The Word Became Flesh and Lived Among Us

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning everyone. I'm going to preach from up here. I hope you appreciate that instead of over there. I think Sean's actually going to be finishing the service from there and he's going to be using puppets as he does it.
- So we'll see how he goes. We are on page 91 in the second parts of your Bibles. It's the New Testament book of John. We are right at the beginning of the book of John. That's page 91. Back by popular demand, it is Christmas time.
- Christmas is tomorrow. I think that Christmas is a lot of different things. One of the things that Christmas is is a time of memories. Now we remember Christmas from last year. We remember Christmases from years ago.
- We probably remember Christmases from when we were children. Does that make sense to anybody when we come to Christmas time? I'm going to tell you a little bit. This is memories of Christmas past, if you want to call it that. I'm going to tell you a few memories I have of Christmases when I grew up in Hamilton, Ontario.
- Yes, I am from Ontario. Don't hold it against me. I know there's other people out there also from Ontario. Hamilton, Ontario has a local television station called CHCH Television. Now they've got a special thing that they used to do when I was a kid, when I was four or five years old.
- [1 : 0 5] It was called the Santa Claus Reports. And from about five o'clock in the afternoon to 7.30 at night, every 20 minutes there would be this news flash that would come on the television station. And it would first be like a newscaster would come on and he'd look really worried.
- And he'd say something like, We've just detected an unidentified flying object over the North Pole. We don't know what it is. We're going to investigate. We'll keep you up to date. And then 20 minutes later, he'd come on again and there'd be a big map of Canada behind him.
- And he'd say that NORAD, the North American Air Defense Command, has been scrambled because they don't know what the UFO is and they're worried about what it's going to be. And then there'd be a map with arrows on it from the North Pole and there'd be arrows going all the way towards Hamilton, right?
- 20 minutes later, they'd be like, We've scrambled our jets and we've gone up and we've looked at it and we can't get close to it. All we see is this shining red light and we don't know what it is. And 20 minutes later, they'd be like, We've gone up to it, we've got our jets and we've looked at what it is.
- And it's actually this guy in a red suit and he's in a sleigh and he's got all these reindeers. And all the time, these arrows would be coming closer and closer to Hamilton, Ontario. Now, when you're four years old, do you think I was excited?
- [2 : 1 0] Do you think I was terrified? I was terrified. That's my memory. I was absolutely terrified. And I had this vision of this Santa Claus, this intercontinental ballistic Santa Claus, coming down our chimney and reindeer all over our living room.

And I think that my parents made me stop watching it when I was a kid. That's one of my memories that I have of growing up in Hamilton, Ontario as a kid at Christmastime. I want you to imagine for a moment that you lived 2,000 years ago, at the time of Jesus Christ, and that you knew Jesus, you knew him personally.

And a few years after his death and his resurrection and his ascension, you sit down to write an account of his life. Now, what would you actually start with? What would you actually start with?

This is kind of memories of the first Christmas ever, the birth of Jesus. What would you start with if you were going to write an account of the life of Jesus Christ? Well, of course, we've got that in the Bible, don't we?

We've got four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, written by, you know, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who were friends of Jesus Christ. They were close friends of him. They knew him in his life.

[3 : 21] They saw his death. They saw his resurrection and his ascension. And they knew what happened after. And by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, years later, they sat down to write the account of the life of Jesus Christ, the most important human being who has ever lived.

Now, as we look at each one of those books, they each start in a different way. So we look at the book of Matthew, and it starts with the genealogy with a whole bunch of different names, tracing Jesus back.

Mark jumps right into the story of John the Baptist. And the book of Luke starts with the story of the birth of John the Baptist, and it connects it to the birth of Jesus. And John, which we've just read, starts like this.

I'll read it for us, the first two verses of the book of John. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. Now, why would John start his account of the life of Jesus like that?

[4 : 27] What do you think? Why would he start it like that? The first 18 verses of the book of John is called John's Prologue. That's kind of like the Bible name for it. John's Prologue.

And it is a huge part of the Bible. The depths of understanding of theology, which are in these 18 verses, is amazing. You could do 10 sermons on these 18 verses.

People have written whole books on these 18 verses. And this morning, we've got about 20 minutes on it. So, we're just going to look at three things, just three things, which I think these 18 verses are saying.

And here they are. Very simple. Jesus is God. Jesus became man. And Jesus became man to rescue us. Just those three things.

That's what we're going to look at this morning. Three simple statements. Three very simple statements, but with massive implications for the whole world and for each one of us. So, here's the first one.

[5 : 24] Jesus is God. I'm going to read again for us the first three verses. So, if you can read with me, that might help. We are on page 91, second part of your Bible. So, this is the first three verses of the book of John.

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 came into being through him, and without him, not one thing came into being, but has come into being. Now, here's a bit of a quiz for you, especially if you're a regular here, if you're one of the people who come along regularly to our church.

What does these three words remind you of? In the beginning. Okay, I hope you got it. Okay, because we have been doing, we've done a whole, since September, we've done months and months on the book of Genesis, right?

It is the first three words of the first book of the Bible. The book of Genesis. And as John writes that, he wants us to think back to the book of Genesis. He is drawing the book of John right back to the book of Genesis.

[6 : 30] The first picture in God's Word, the Bible, the first picture of God we get, is God as creator. God as creator of all things. And John is saying, Jesus is this God.

Jesus is the creator God. That is who this man is. He is the creator God. But John wants us to understand Jesus by anchoring him in the book of Genesis.

And when we get in the beginning, in the book of Genesis, it is in the beginning. It is way back, before there was anything except God. And John is saying, at that time, when there was only God, there was also Jesus.

Right? They are the same things. God the creator is Jesus. Now you probably picked up a strange thing. I'm already talking about Jesus. We haven't actually mentioned Jesus in the beginning of the book of John. One of the strange things as we read this is John actually uses the term word.

Right? He uses the term word. I'm just going to, we don't have a lot of time to go into this, but what I think this is talking about is tied back to an Old Testament word, which is similar, which means God's prophetic word.

[7 : 36] Right? So, word means an expression of God's will. Right? It's a prophetic word. It's God's working within the universe. So, in Genesis, God speaks, and creation happens.

And in John 1, all things are created through the word. Through Jesus. So, when Jesus is the word, what John is saying is, Jesus is the perfect, final expression of God's will.

And God's plan for all things. I think that's, I think that's what it's talking about. Now, come with me. Think back. Think back to the other gospels we've talked about. In the book of Matthew, Matthew traces Jesus all the way back to Abraham.

And what I think he's saying is, Jesus is tied to all Jewish people. Right? In the book of Luke, we get another genealogy that's tied all the way back to, do you know who? To Adam. Right?

To Adam. And I think Luke is saying, Jesus is tied to all humanity. And in the book of John, Jesus is tied all the way back to creation. Creation.

[8 : 40] And what I think John is doing is he's projecting the dominion and the mission of Jesus Christ on a worldwide cosmic background. That's what he does right at the beginning of the book of John.

So how big is the dominion of Jesus Christ? What is his? What has he created? All things. All things. Who and what is pulled up in the mission of Jesus Christ?

All things. All things. All people. Of every age. Everywhere. Universal. That is the scope of Christ's mission and his dominion.

It's universal. In the early church, they were trying to understand this and they had problems with it until they could see God's spirit working itself within the early church. So originally they thought Jesus Christ is for the Palestinian Jews.

That's who he's for. And then they realized that God is working bigger than that. It's not only for the Palestinian Jews, he's for the Greek Jews. He's not only for the Palestinian Jews and the Greek Jews. He's for the Gentiles. He's for the Romans. He's for the Scythians.

[9 : 42] He's for the barbarians. And over many years and over many miles, Jesus Christ is for the Canadians. And even, and even the Australians.

Now, our head minister is Australian. That's why I made that joke. So you tell him I said that. So even for him. Even for the Australians. There are no boundaries to the mission of Jesus Christ.

No boundaries. No geographic boundaries. No ethnic boundaries. No cultural boundaries. No social boundaries. No economic boundaries. No educational boundaries. There are no boundaries to the reach of Jesus Christ and his mission and his authority.

Absolutely none. Now, why am I saying that? Well, I think that's what John's telling us. Jesus is tied back to creation. But I've been thinking about it this week before Christmas.

The scope of the mission of Jesus Christ. I'm going to say something which is politically incorrect. And what is worse, I'm going to say it the day before Christmas. Okay?

[10 : 41] This is what it is. This is what it is. Very simple. There is not one person in Canada who has not been created by Jesus and that Christ didn't come to save.

Not one. Not one. Now, I'm saying that because in Canada you're not supposed to say stuff like that, are you? Especially not at Christmas time. Because Christmas can be about anything else but we don't want it to be about Jesus in our society, do we?

Which is kind of strange when you think about it. As long as we stay in our Christian box and we don't tell others about it, well, everything will be fine. No one will get upset. I can think over the last, well, I'm 40 years old, over the last 40 years of my life, how you used to have a nativity scene in your shopping center.

That used to be almost the center of what Christmas was about. Now, now if you go to the shopping centers where you have Santa Claus, a big Santa Claus thing and lots of presents and maybe, just maybe, if you go down a side entrance somewhere you might find a little nativity scene.

But those days may be numbered, aren't they? Now, I think that sometime during these holidays with your friends, with your relatives, me and my wife have already had this experience within our kids' schools, you will feel an incredible pressure to just gently accept that Christmas is just a holiday.

[12 : 01] And we all enjoy it and there's nothing more. And whatever you do, don't complicate it by talking about Jesus. Right, now, I want to encourage you to not do that. To be politically incorrect, if you may.

To look for the chance to say what it's really about. To look for the chance to say what it's really about. Jesus, who is God, became man to rescue us.

That's what it's about. I hope you get the chance this Christmas. That's the first point. Jesus is God. Here's the second point. Jesus became man. Read with me from verse 10.

He came in the world and the world came into being through him. Yet the world did not know him. And we're also going to go down to verse 14. So we're at verse 14.

And the word became flesh and lived among us. And we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

[13 : 15] In that first verse we read, verse 10, he was in the world. That's Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was in the world, in our world. He was here with us. He became man.

The term, he became flesh, uses a word from Greek called sarx. And sarx is our flesh. It is our being. It is our corporeal body, if you want to put it that way.

It is human. It is human. Sarx is human. And what he's saying is, Jesus became fully human. And what's the final thing we read? He dwelt among us.

I think that's a great way of saying that Jesus came and not only lived here, but lived just like we did. Right? He dwelt among us. He was just like us. Fully human.

Now, Jesus being fully God and fully man, both at once, at the same time, that is a hard thing to get our minds around. I can understand that.

[14 : 11] That's a hard thing for us to grasp, isn't it? Over time, people's opposition to that idea has changed. In the early church, they could accept that Jesus Christ was fully God, but they had a problem with him being fully human.

Right? Now, today, I think it's flipped around, hasn't it? Most people can accept that Jesus Christ was fully man, but it's a fully God thing, which people stumble over and don't accept. So it's fine for Jesus to be a good man, or to be a philosopher, or to be a religious revolutionary, or to be a misunderstood social reformer, but not God.

But not God. And I think the real issue, the real issue, is not a problem with accepting the possibility that Jesus could be God and man. I don't think that's a problem. I think the problem is accepting the implications of that.

What that would mean if Jesus really was God. Because I'll tell you, if this Jewish man who lived 2,000 years ago is really God, everything changes.

Everything changes. If he really became, if the word really became flesh, in the real historical person of Jesus Christ, what do you do with him?

[15 : 28] What do you do with him? Well, you must follow him. That's the only conclusion. You must follow him. He has universal authority in all that he says and all that he does.

Because you can't follow anyone else. And we can't do what we want to do. Now, I'm a Christian. I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. But this is something I have to keep reminding of myself every day.

We've called to follow him. And that's uncomfortable, isn't it? It's the real, particular nature of Christ the man which is confronting.

We can talk about Jesus Christ as a vague spiritual power. And people are okay with that. It doesn't bother people. But a real man calling each of us to obey, to follow him, and pointing out that there is real sin in our real lives is confronting.

Isn't it? When God becomes man, it's offensive. And it's offensive because it completely destroys any of our attempts for us to become God.

[16 : 32] That's gone. We can't do that once God becomes man. We can't do what we want to do. It destroys our attempts to put ourselves at the center of the universe to call the shots in our lives because this one Jewish man requires us to do what he says, period.

It's offensive because when God becomes man, man is no longer the measure of all things. Jesus is. Excuse me.

The Declaration of Independence written by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is torn up and destroyed. It's gone. Now, I'm going to show you something very, very interesting. I don't know if you've gotten Time Magazine.

This is the most recent issue of Time Magazine. It's a January 1st, 2007 issue. Every year, the first issue of the year, they say, who is the man of the year? Last year, it was Bill and Melinda Gates and it was Bono and a few years ago, it was actually Jesus Christ.

Who do you think it is today? Who do you think it is this year? Surprise. It's you. You are the man and the woman of the year. There's a mirror there.

[17 : 43] It's a mirror. Did you know that? Do you know how important you are? There we go. Well, it's a great illustration. I got it this morning as a present.

I'm thinking, well, this is fantastic. Listen, the real problem with accepting that God became man and Jesus is not a logical problem. It's a spiritual problem. It's a problem with our hearts.

It's a problem with my heart. It is the I am master of my destiny problem. It is the I will bend my knee to no one problem. Denying God has become man is a spiritual problem.

And I think that that's one of the reasons why John, the man who wrote this book, has put the incarnation right at the center of his theology and as a measure of the orthodoxy and the authenticity of believers.

This is what he writes in 1 John. It's another letter that he wrote. 1 John chapter 4. By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.

[18 : 43] And every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. It's the second thing. Jesus became man. Here's the third thing from the prologue.

Jesus became man to rescue us. Jesus became man to rescue us. Was verse 14 that we just read, was that the perfect Christmas verse?

Pretty close, but I think we have to look at the whole prologue to really put it all together, what Christmas is all about. I'm going to read a bit more from the prologue. So come with me. We're at verse 10. Verse 10. He came in the world and the world came into being through him yet the world did not know him.

He came to what was his own and his own people did not accept him. That passage, that passage, that talks about a critical emergency.

There is something deadly wrong in the world today. If we look back at the book of Genesis and John is tied to the book of Genesis, in Genesis 1 and 2, God creates all things.

[19 : 53] He creates the planets and the skies and the seas and the mountains and at the pinnacle of his creation is humanity. It's each one of us. And everything is in a perfect relationship with each other.

We're in a perfect relationship with one another and also us with God. Perfect relationship. It was fantastic. In Genesis 3, we read how humanity turns their back on God's loving rule and says to God, I'm going to rule my life.

I don't want you to be any part of it anymore and I will not listen to you. I am in charge. That rebellion, the Bible talks about that rebellion as being sin. That's what sin is, turning your back on God.

Now listen, the world that we live in and each of us, we're so in rebellion to God that when God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, we didn't know who it was.

Isn't that startling? When God came to earth in a human form, in Jesus Christ, we didn't know who it was. We didn't recognize it. That's how bad things have become 2,000 years ago and also today.

[20 : 58] We don't even recognize him when he's there. Now, the Bible talks about how we enjoy things that God has given us.

We enjoy lots of things that God has given us whether we're Christians or not, but we still ignore where they come from. I want you to imagine for a moment that it's Christmas morning.

It's tomorrow morning and your kids or your grandkids are all opening up their presents. Right? And they're having a great time and you see them opening up all your presents, all the stuff which you put thought and care and money into and they're loving it.

They're having a great time as they open up all your presents. There's only one problem. The problem is they don't thank you. In fact, they don't even acknowledge you're there. They don't even talk to you.

They turn their back on you. Now, that's not acceptable, is it? No. They might be very nice people.

[21 : 58] They might be very nice people. They might be polite. They might be caring. The little kids might even wait their turns for other little kids to open their presents. I said this was fictional, right? So, okay. So they might even wait their turns for other kids.

They might even clean up after. Fictional, fictional. So they even clean up all the stuff after. They might be the nicest kids in the world. Right? But they still ignore you as your parents.

They don't acknowledge you. They don't want to be in a relationship with you. Well, I think all of us would say, that's not right, is it? That's just not right. It's kind of the way we can be with God and with Jesus sometimes.

We take all the good stuff but we never actually say, I want to be in a relationship with the Creator, with the place it's come from. The heart of sin is ignoring God and ignoring Jesus.

That's where it is. That's the heart of it. To turn our back on Him. And the Bible talks about each of us deserving judgment for that and the judgment is we are guilty and the punishment is death.

[22 : 59] Spiritual death. That's what the punishment is. But the great news about Christmas and the great news that John tells us is that Jesus became man to rescue us so that it doesn't have to be that way.

And Jesus, the baby, grew up to be a man and at the age of about 33 He died on a hillside outside the city of Jerusalem and that death is our rescue because that death is a death that goes in our place.

He dies in our place and takes a punishment we deserve. That's the rescue. His life not ours. A Christian is someone who accepts that death for them.

It's not being a nice person. It's not going to church. It's accepting that death on your behalf and the new life that comes with it. A new life with a real personal relationship with God the way it was always meant to be.

And what are we told? Verse 12. But to all who received Him who believed in His name He gave power to become children of God who were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man but of God.

[24 : 23] of all the things of all the things we need to recognize about Jesus Christ become man His rescue is the most important thing. That's it.

That's the most important thing. Now I was thinking about John's prologue this week and it reminded me of an Australian beach. Right. I'll tell you why.

It's not because it's been raining and stuff and I'd love to be on an Australian beach although I would probably. About 10 years ago I was at a beach in Sydney, Australia and I was swimming and the waves were really rough.

They were about two, two and a half meters swells but I'm a pretty good swimmer especially 10 years ago I was and I thought I'll be alright I can go out in these waves and what happened is I actually got caught in something called a rip which is a rip current.

It's a current that comes in from powerful waves and it goes back out to the ocean and if you get caught in a rip you're in trouble. You can't swim out of a rip and I got caught in a rip and I went way out like I was half a kilometer out and I'm a pretty good swimmer and I was thinking oh it's not a problem I won't panic I think I can get back into shore and the waves were breaking over my head and stuff by the grace of God one of the lifeguards on the beach had seen me and he jumped in a little Zodiac you know what a Zodiac is one of those little rubber things with a motor on the back and he put it out to me and he came up to me I'll try to do my best Australian accent now he came up to me and said goodnight mate how do you like a lift back to shore and you know what I said no thanks I'm fine I'm a good swimmer I'll get back to shore right and he putt putt putt it away putt putt putt putt rightio putt putt putt putt putt putt about ten minutes later the waves were breaking over my head and I thought I'm in serious trouble here

[26 : 09] I'm not I cannot swim back to shore I'm almost exhausted and I need real help now the lifeguard was an experienced lifeguard he hadn't gone all the way into shore he'd just gone about 40 meters away and he was sitting there looking at me right right so he waited and I was gulping water and he he came over to me again putt putt putt putt putt goodnight mate how would you like to lift back to shore right yes I'll take it pulled me in pulled me back to shore right terrifying instant I was so dumb I was a goose I didn't recognize my rescuer I completely missed it I thought I can do it myself and John is saying Jesus has become man to rescue us and we don't recognize it we miss it isn't that tragic Jesus is God Jesus became man

Jesus became man to rescue us finally this Christmas if you're not a Christian you are created by Christ he died in your place accept the rescue right accept the rescue we've talked about memories of Christmas past wouldn't it be great to look back at Christmas 2006 and think that was a Christmas my life changed forever when I accepted the rescue of Jesus Christ if you are a Christian it is certainly time to rejoice isn't it for the word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth we have beheld his glory glory as of as of the only son from the father let's pray this afternoon he is burdened of Christ and John in God and when he lives he died he résist he■