

The Word Became Flesh

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[0 : 0 0] came to his own and his own people did not receive him but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood not of the will of the flesh not of the will of man but of God now 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 you'll often find that john's gospel is given out free as i guess that it's a way of introducing people who have never come into contact with the gospel before to part of the bible and it's given out on the understanding that if there is one book of the bible that you would give to someone who has no idea of what the bible is all about then it is john's gospel and there are various reasons why that is the case it's not because it's better than any other book of the bible it's perhaps just more suitable for someone who for whom this is their first introduction to the christian faith and this happens for various reasons for one thing as you go through the gospel john just doesn't just tell you the facts of what happened in the life of jesus but he explains them he tells us he's always giving a commentary on who jesus was why he was doing certain things and what all these things mean in terms of us and he makes no apology for the reason why he writes his gospel he says in chapter 21 he says these things are written so that you may believe that jesus is the christ the son of the living god and that by believing you may have life in his name he doesn't hold anything back he's not being pc he's saying this is what i am about i believe with all my heart that this jesus of nazareth who i am writing about is none other than god himself in the flesh and that the way for us to be saved and have life is to believe in him now believing in jesus is not just believing that he existed neither is it just believing that he was the son of god neither is it just believing that his death on the cross is the payment for our sins believing in jesus is when we receive that to be our own it's when you take jesus to be your lord and your savior and that's the day that you begin to follow him just like zacchaeus when he met with jesus or rather when jesus met with him when jesus found him and when from that moment onwards when jesus said today i must stay at your house that meant that from from then on that jesus would be the lord of zacchaeus's life that's what it means to be a christian and that's what it means to believe it means that from now on everything i am belongs to jesus it means that jesus is everything to me that his death on the cross was the sacrifice for my sin and it's what i trust in to bring me to god and to give me everlasting life that's what it means to believe

in Jesus for him to be my personal savior and Lord so John is in your face he's the in your face apostle it's not that the rest of them were any less so but John is particularly concerned to explain the gospel that's why he's very often called John the evangelist because his concern is to preach the gospel and to share the gospel with everyone with Jews and with Greeks and with Romans and with them just as it was for everyone in the early church at that time and just as it is for ourselves our concern over everything else is to share the gospel that's the command that Jesus gave his disciples to go into all the world to make disciples of all nations we must be as passionate and as concerned to make disciples and we mustn't be put off by the kind of day and age in which we live when there is so much opposition and unbelief and where there's so much indifference don't be put off by that because the power that we rely on is the same God is the same Jesus hasn't changed his mercy hasn't changed his message hasn't changed and he is just as much today the power of God to salvation as he ever was but I very often wonder what I would think if I got this gospel and if I've never read the Bible before and if somebody gave me this gospel perhaps there's someone here very few of us have this experience because we've most of us if I'm right have been brought up in Sunday school or in Christian homes and we have been brought up to know the whole Bible and so the Christian faith is something that we are all we've all been familiar with from the time we're very young but just supposing I was I'd never heard Jesus before and I was given a gospel of John and I sat down with my cup of coffee to read it what would I think as I open the pages and as I read these very first words in the beginning was the word well that means nothing by itself but I carry on and the word was with God and the word was God well now I'm beginning to understand I'm it doesn't give me much light but something to do with God and something to do with the word whatever that is and that word is not just a thing it is it is God should I be thinking of it or He or or what is He talking about but I persist I'm going to read on I'm not going to stop at the first verse because I'm told that this is the most important book and the most important message in the whole world I have to persist with it I hope that that's the way you are if you're in that position I really hope that you take the gospel seriously it's one thing to read the Bible and to think about it with an open mind and then to come to your conclusion it's another thing altogether to just dismiss it altogether too many people dismiss the gospel so they don't know what they're missing they don't know what they're not believing in because they've dismissed it they haven't come with an open mind but anyway I've got an open mind and I'm going to continue to read he was in the beginning with God so now it's a He He we're talking about a person you see it's as you read the gospel that everything comes together you can't just stop at the beginning you've got to read the whole thing and you've got to go on past the middle of the first chapter on into chapter two and chapter three because then everything comes down to earth it starts off in heaven with with ideas that we find difficult to understand but it's only as you work your way through the gospel of John and see how it

unfolds this word who was with god and who was god and who was in the beginning with god and who through him all things were made and in him was life and the life was the light of men and the light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it that it's only as you read the gospel through the life of this word of god this second person of the trinity who came into the world and who was one of us and who died on the cross then when you come back i can think i can pretty much guarantee that if you read the gospel of john then reread it it'll make much more sense to you than the first time it's the same is true with many a book was when you reread it that all that you see things that you never saw before that's the way we've got to read the bible you've read it again and again and again and every time you read it you see more things and god reveals more things to you but it becomes very clear that we're reading about someone who is nothing who is nothing less than god himself he's both identified as god and yet there is a distinction he was with god and he is god this is the life of which is the light of men and so on we're dealing with god himself and that's why verse 14 marks the turning point at which god himself takes on our nature and i want us to think of three things in verse 14 very briefly i want us to think of how it tells us about the incarnation of jesus the word became flesh and i want us to think secondly of the habitation of jesus the word dwelt among us or lived among us dwelt among us and then i want us to think thirdly of the revelation of jesus so in this verse 14 this pivotal moment in history when the word when god himself came into our world i want us to think of it as the incarnation the habitation and the revelation of jesus three things the incarnation that's a word that you very often hear round about this time of year at christmas time people talk about the incarnation what do we mean by the incarnate god incarnate well it simply means this the inflect anything to do with carnivore or carn this or it means flesh something which is to do with flesh something to do with the body and the incarnation is simply this the enfleshment of the son of god it's when god actually became a human being a human being and we know that he did that not by transforming himself somehow not by suddenly phasing himself into this world as a human being and so that all of a sudden he appeared that's not the way he did it at all when god became man when god became a human he he entered into as a conception he entered into the womb of the virgin mary the other gospels tell us about that matthew tells us about it luke tells us about it when the angel came to mary and announced to her that she was going to have a son by the power of the holy spirit she hadn't a clue what was going on it was a startling to her as as you can imagine it could be to a young girl of that age suddenly being told by an

angel that god is going to going she is going to carry the son of god in her womb that he would be miraculously conceived you can just imagine how awkward that that would have been for us for her in that time when it would have been she would have been ostracized and spoken about and gossiped about but that's what happened but the more you think about it the more utterly marvelous it becomes how can god the maker of the universe become a baby how can god who is all knowledge and who has no beginning and no end who is eternal who defies our knowledge he doesn't obey our logic or our understanding or our science or our philosophy or our the way in which our brain operates he's way above that and yet he there's a moment in history when god takes that decision and in a split second he becomes an invisible cell in the womb of the virgin mary that's what it means normally a conception happens naturally but this was a supernatural one by the power of the holy spirit all of a sudden from being not pregnant she is now pregnant by the power of the holy spirit and she is carrying the son of god the invisible god god is invisible that's why we can't see him he is spirit and now he becomes visible god doesn't have a face but now he's going to have a face he's going to have eyes he's going to have a nose and a mouth and he's going to hear eventually when he grows and when he when he develops it within the woman when he is born at bethlehem and when he cries and when his nappies have to be changed i'm not being irreverent that's actually what happened this is god when he learns to walk and he falls and he trips and he cries again and again when he has to learn to feed and when he goes on to solace and when his mother has to and when he has a bad night and keeps his parents up this is god the word became flesh and he grew in a home where he had to learn everything from scratch to learn to talk he had to learn to read he had to learn his earthly father's trade he became a carpenter

I was thinking the other day perhaps I've said this before it must have been really awkward when Jesus was growing up can you imagine somebody in your house a brother or a sister who is perfect absolutely perfect can you imagine how awkward that would be can you imagine how much it would show you up certainly show me up I remember I remember in my street when I was growing up there was a guy called Ronald there was a whole bunch of us who played together in our street and we sometimes did things that we shouldn't have done but Ronald never did anything he shouldn't have done he always obeyed his parents he always spoke right he was so polite to everybody and I have to say I didn't like him because he always showed me up no I wasn't very bad but

[16 : 27] Ronald seemed to be perfect and nobody wanted to play with him for that reason because he just kept showing everybody up because he was a constant reminder of what I should be like and Jesus how much more so would Jesus it's interesting isn't it that later on in John chapter 7 his brothers his brothers tried to wind him up his brothers didn't believe in him and they said why are you why are you keeping everything a secret why don't you go into the world and show everybody if you're so special then why don't you show everybody how special you are you see his brothers we read in John chapter 7 they didn't believe in him strange isn't it that the very people who were closest to Jesus growing up actually turned out not to believe well we believe we believe that James one of his brothers he followed him and who knows what happened later on after the resurrection we don't know what happened to his family but we know at that stage

John chapter 7 when Jesus was teaching that his brothers didn't believe in him the very people who were next to Jesus who grew up with Jesus and who should have known who he was their mother would have told them how he came to be then they didn't believe in him they chose not to believe in him they hated him because the light what did we read John chapter 1 light has come into the world and he came to his own he came to his own his own family his own people his own neighborhood and his own did not receive him they rejected him they eventually crucified him on a cross he came to his own and his own received him not now I could go on because to me the incarnation is one of the most mind-blowing if not the most mind-blowing teachings of the Bible and it really takes my breath away and it requires all the faith because either it's true or it's not

I truly believe today that this is true that God came into the world to be one of us as one of us not just watching us not just looking at us from afar but he came he entered into this world to be one of us but he also lived among us which required him to settle and to be with us it's one thing visiting a particular place we all know what it's like to go somewhere on holiday and you go there you enjoy the benefits and then you come home again but that wasn't Jesus he actually came into this world to live a whole life a whole human life this wasn't just a taste of what it was to be a human this was a lifetime of what it was to be a human being and he took upon himself all the the miseries of this life we know that he didn't sin we know that he was perfect and yet he still suffered incredibly he would have suffered the abuse growing up as I as I have just said constantly reminding his friends and his family of what it was to live a perfect life and having to suffer the abuse of that but that was only the beginning it was when he started his teaching at the age of 30 he was anointed by the Holy Spirit he began to teach and do miracles that he began to see and began to experience the opposition the real hatred that there was amongst those who should have believed in him the religious men and women of the day who ought to have recognized this Jesus he was a real man he learned to learn his trade and became

I guess a carpenter we know that he was a carpenter he worked under the tutelage of his earthly father Joseph and he I guess was engaged in all kinds of construction and repair and same kind of thing as a carpenter would do today for 30 years he did that until that moment that he became a teacher and he went about revealing the kingdom of God but when we read in this verse that he dwelt among us it means actually more than that he lived a lifetime as a human being there's actually a very special meaning to this word dwelt among us if you go back to the original language it actually means tabernacle or tent it means that when it says he dwelt among us he pitched his tent among us if you can imagine a campsite that is full of tents and a new person comes and they're given a spot a space and they pitched their tent but it's not just a campsite it's going back to the Old Testament remember when the children of Israel were going through the wilderness in the book of Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and they all lived in tents but there was one particular special tent right in the middle of Israel and it was called the tabernacle it was a place that Moses had to build as a place of worship and it was the place where God literally came down and dwelt and he stayed and he revealed himself in all his holiness in the middle of Israel and that was where

God was that was the place to which they took sacrifices lambs and goats and bulls that was God tabernacling in the middle of his people now Jesus is coming into this world and he is tabernacling once again he's dwelling as one of us so it's no it's no surprise then when we read that we beheld his glory the glory as of the only son from the father because that's essentially what God did when when he came down in the desert and when the glory of the Lord filled the holy place you remember the place in the tabernacle that nobody could ever go into nobody everyone was forbidden to go into why?

[23 : 06] because the glory of God was there but now now that John says we have seen this that's the very thing that the children of Israel were not allowed to see and the reason is because no one can see God and live you and I cannot see the glory of God and yet this is what John has said we have seen his glory the question is the question that really gets to me is why rather when did John see the glory of Jesus I put that to you this morning when was it what is John talking about at which point in the life and the ministry of Jesus was did John see the glory of God in Jesus Christ it's an interesting question isn't it I'll put that to you

I'm just going to I'll give you some suggestions but it's for you to take it away and think about it for yourself it's a great way to spend the Lord's day into thinking about a question that rises out of the Bible and here's a brilliant question at what point did John see that's what he says we beheld we saw with our own eyes we saw the glory of God in Jesus Christ the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth was it for example that occasion when Jesus took Peter and James and John up on the mountain and when his appearance changed and he began to radiate light something that is impossible to do when his face became like the sun that's what we read it was as bright as the sun that they couldn't look at him it was impossible to look at

Jesus it was so dazzlingly white and bright that was glory that is the glory of God or at least as much as it's possible to see without dying here in this world was that what John was talking about or it could have been his miracles what else can we say about the miracles of Jesus these extraordinary occasions in Jesus ministry when he was able to touch someone and that person who was ill was made well again in a moment of time someone who was blind someone who was deaf someone who was lame in the very next chapter if you read the gospel of John chapter two he goes to a wedding and again I'm digressing here I'm just going to spend ten seconds isn't it amazing the contrast between the way John begins his gospel in the beginning was the word he's in heaven and he's able to say things that he doesn't really understand about God in heaven and the next chapter he's at a wedding the very same word who is with the father and who is the light of life and he's at a wedding celebrating the marriage of two individuals and there he changes water into wine when the wine ran out and when his mother brought it to his attention he miraculously changed the water into wine but I don't know if you've noticed this

I'm sure you have at the very end of that miracle we read this and his disciples saw his glory he revealed his glory to them when he changed the water into wine and they put their faith in him so was that do you think where the occasion when Jesus showed them his glory and when they saw his glory or it could have been the other miracles that Jesus did how can you not see the glory of God when you're in a boat and when you're trying to get to the other side of the boat and you can't because there's a massive storm and you see this figure coming towards you walking on the water and when you realize that this is not a dream it's not a vision this is a reality this man Jesus Christ who we have come to know and have come to wonder about and to worship and to follow and there he is he's coming towards us and he's walking on the water how can this not be the most glorious event how can this be anything else except God in the flesh or that time when just just before that same day when

Jesus when there were 5000 people and when they were hungry and to send them home would have been foolish because they were too weak the shops are all closed and when the disciples said well there's a boy here with five loaves and two fishes and they took five loaves and two fishes Jesus blessed them and he made them stretch not make them stretch he created enough food for 5000 people how can that be anything else but the glory of God but perhaps John means even more than that when he says we saw his glory perhaps when he says he saw perhaps he's speaking about more than what he saw with his eyes perhaps he's speaking about what his understanding because he also saw things which were horrific and it was only afterwards that it all came together again and it spelled out why Jesus had come into this world to die on the cross could it be that

[28 : 51] John means that that's when he saw the glory of God in Jesus Christ when he was arrested and when he was tried and when he was accused and condemned and taken away and when the nails were hammered into his hands and when the cross was erected at Calvary and when he heard Jesus saying my God my God why have you forsaken me you say to me how can that be the glory of God that's the very opposite of the glory of God I would expect the opposite I would expect that Jesus would come and take over the world that's what he had authority to do that's perhaps in the eyes of many people what he should have done but that's not what he did he came into the world to do the very opposite to lay down his life you might say well even so how can you possibly describe that as the glory of God these are not my words these are the words of Jesus himself just before he was arrested when he was in the upper room when Judas left just after the last supper he said this now is the son of man glorified and God is glorified in him and he was talking about his death now he said what's going to happen now you watch what's going to happen now because this is the moment when

God in the flesh will lay down his life for the lost you and I who need him more than we imagine this morning it was for us that he died it was for us that this glory of God became manifest and was revealed to us when the son of God himself laid willingly voluntarily gave himself on the cross with all the pain that that involved so that you and I could be new people so that our sins would be forgiven and so that God could give us everlasting life have you seen the glory of God today I say well I haven't I wasn't there how can I possibly say that John was such a privilege I wish I wish I'd been around to see Jesus perhaps some of you are saying well if

I'd been around I'd be a Christian today how do you know that how do you how can you possibly say that because there was plenty of people in Jesus day who saw exactly the same as the disciples did and they the more they saw actually the less they wanted to follow him strange isn't it sometimes the more we see the less we want the less we want Jesus we have exactly what the disciples had today right in front of us in the pages of the Bible the same information it's God speaking to us and he says it for a reason these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of the living God and that by believing you may have life in his name let's pray father in heaven we we ask lord that you will fill us with awe a sense of awe as we stand back and as we watch the glory of God being revealed to us in the person of

Jesus Christ in the very opposite in a way which is the very opposite to what perhaps we would expect but it is in that cross on that cross that God's love becomes manifest to us for God commends his love towards us he displays his love towards us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us and so father we ask that we too today may behold we may gaze upon the greatness and the awesomeness of God there are many ways in which we do that already in creation in this world and the universe and yet lord it is in Christ and his death on the cross that his glory is revealed more than anywhere else so lord we pray to look to taste and see that God is good to gaze upon the beauty and the greatness of God in Jesus name amen