

The Word Became Flesh

John 1:1, 14 (12/24/17)

Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

John 1:1, 14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

There are many things I just don't understand. Take this smart phone. I don't have a clue how it works, how so many millions of phone messages can fly through the air, bouncing off poles, and yet someone can call my ten digit number from thousands of miles away and my phone rings. Or how I can watch a high definition video on this little device. Or how the whole GPS thing really works, even tracking the movement of my car. Some of you understand these things, but I don't. I don't understand how the complexity of one cell works and keeps me living and yet I've got 30 some trillion of them working right now in my body. Or take your brain. How do you have a physical brain and yet it carries an immaterial mind. These are just a few of many things somebody somewhere understands, but I don't.

Now, take that new born baby lying in that feeding trough in Bethlehem. That baby born through Mary is both God and man. As God He always existed, yet as human He began nine months earlier when He was miraculously conceived in Mary's womb. He is one Person, but has two natures, one God, the other human. They call this the hypostatic union: two natures subsisting together but distinct, and yet one Person. I don't understand that and neither do you or anyone else. The early church took over 400 years to finally settle this issue when the Council of Chalcedon in 451 declared that Jesus had two natures, God and man, unmixed, unseparated, undivided, and each nature unchanged in one Person. It is the great Mystery and Miracle of Christianity. Bruce Ware in his book *Big Truths for Young Hearts* wrote, "The greatest miracle ever done in all of history is the joining together of God and man." J. I. Packer insists, "Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation."

My prayer for this message is that God would open our eyes and hearts to see something of the awesomeness of the very center of our faith. We've heard it all before, but have we really grasped it? Has it gripped our hearts? If all we're going to say this morning is true, we can't walk outside in God's world with the same eyes. We can't think about Jesus or God the same way. Let's go to John 1. I want to give you ten blow-you-away truths about that baby in Bethlehem, ten truths that could not be said of any other man in human history - none. We'll start in verse 1.

#1 "In the beginning was the Word." (v1) John calls Him the Word; Calvin translates *logos* as "Speech." He is the Communicating God, the Alpha and Omega. When the beginning of time began in Genesis 1:1, the Word was already there. He didn't begin at the beginning when God created time and space and matter. This personal Being, the Word, was there before time began. The God nature in Mary's baby never had a beginning.

#2 "And the Word was with God." (v1) For all eternity the Word was with God or, as the Greek word for "with" (*pros*) indicates, face to face with God, in personal, loving, completely

satisfying relationship with God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in all eternity past had complete joy and loving satisfaction in one another.

#3 “And the Word was God.” (v1) The Word was not a god like the Jehovah’s Witnesses try to tell us. No, everything you know of God you can pour into that title Word. He is infinite, eternal, and unchanging in His being, wisdom, power, justice, holiness, goodness, and truth. He was never created; He never began. R. C. Sproul said chills run up his spine whenever he thinks of the aseity or self-existence of God. Aseity means “from self,” contrary to the cults and much false teaching about Christ. The baby we’re worshipping and adoring today is and always was fully and truly God. He was fully something else, but He was fully God.

#4 “All things were made by Him.” (v3) I wanted to be sure to get this in. He made everything on day one...time, matter, and space, out of nothing, ex nihilo. And He made everything that filled the heavens and earth, giving life to all living creatures. He made Adam and Eve in His own image.

Colossians 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Contrary to what nearly the entire academic and scientific world and even parts of the religious world try to say, that somehow something came from nothing and everything has evolved over millions of years, not only did God create the entire universe and everything in it in six days as Genesis 1 teaches, but that newborn child we worship as our Lord and Savior Himself created it all and to this very moment holds it all together. Think about that! What a mystery is the incarnation.

#5 “And the Word became flesh.” (v14) Now here’s the grand Miracle and Mystery. This very same Word, the eternal Creator God, at a moment in time, became “flesh.” John probably used “flesh” here instead of man to emphasize that the eternal Word really became fully human, just like us, physical and spiritual, apart from a sin nature. Some Gnostics tried to say that since all matter is evil, the Messiah couldn’t have really come in flesh but only seemed to be here. John is saying very bluntly, no, the Word became flesh just like the rest of us. He was physically conceived and gestated nine months in Mary’s womb as a human being with all the parts of flesh we have. He lived off Mary’s placenta in that dark place where babies are nurtured before they are born. Then He came into a world as a full, true, complete human being. He never stopped being God, but now He began to be a human being and continues to this day as the God-Man. Can you get your head around that?

He was born under the law and under the effects of sin, so He experienced everything we experience in all our weakness and suffering and troubles of being a human under the curse of sin, except for one very important thing. He never sinned! But He endured the ravages of sin. He knows now what it’s like to be rejected, scorned, tired, weary, hungry and thirsty, to be spit on, punched, including the torturous pain of death. He was God and He was man. He was flesh, blood, bones, cells burning oxygen and food. Every one of His thirty-five trillion cells was

packed with one those six foot strands of unique DNA. He has his unique finger prints and voice print. Through the miracle of the virgin conception the eternal, self-existing God united to man in that moment when the power of the Most High came upon Mary. God united with man in One Person. Listen to this:

Philippians 2:6-8 Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Stand back a minute. All this happened under the invisible hand and plan of divine providence. Within the loving fellowship of the eternal trinity, the Son agreed to come into a world of sin and save sinners, to come through the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of Judah, the seed of David, as the suffering servant of Isaiah and the everlasting God to be born in Bethlehem according to Micah 5:2. Finally, as the centuries rolled on, announcements began flying out of heaven on angels wings – to Zechariah, to the young Jewess Mary who said, “How can this be since I know not a man?” The angel assured her that the power of the Most High would come upon her and she would conceive this holy child. An angel assured her engaged husband this child would be called Jesus.

At just the right time and completely unknown to him, Caesar Augustus sitting on the throne in Rome issued a decree for a census of the Roman Empire. Joseph and Mary had to make their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. With no room in the Inn and Mary about to give birth, they went somewhere with a manger or feeding trough and this eternal Word now united to our humanity came squeezing through Mary’s birth canal and began to breathe in the oxygen His human cells needed and feed on Mary’s milk.

More angels came hyperspeed out of heaven to certain poor shepherds to announce the good news, “To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.” They were sore afraid but ran lickety split to see this great thing that the Lord had made known to them. They said more than they knew. This was nothing less than the eternal God appearing on earth as man, two natures, one Person! Mystery of mysteries!

#6 “And dwelt among us.” (v14) The God-Man lived among those people of that first century for about thirty-three years. They saw Him, they touched Him, they heard Him talk, when they got close enough they could even feel His breath and the warmth of His body. He was really there. If you lived back then you could have seen Him just like you see your friend across the table while you have lunch or coffee.

But there’s something else in the word “dwelt” or “skeno.” It literally means He tabernacled among us. The temporary tabernacle Israel constructed in the wilderness filled with the Shekinah glory, representing God’s presence with them. Now God was tabernacling in a human body. He was truly Emmanuel, God with us! And this would not be a temporary dwelling. When the Word became flesh, He never lost his human nature. He carried it to the cross, out of the grave, and up into the heavens, where He is right now as the God-Man, our Savior, still two natures and one Person.

#7 “And we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten (unique One) from the Father.”

(v14) His disciples slowly came to realize He was man, but more than man. When He turned water to wine, they saw this glory of God. They saw sparks of divine glory in every miracle. They were astounded by Him as He walked on water and quieted storms, asking “What kind of man is this, that even the winds and waves obey Him?” He healed many, many people throughout Galilee and even in Samaria. Often it says, “He healed many” or “He healed them all,” the lame, crippled, blind, deaf, even raising the dead. Who was this Man? Jesus asked Peter, “Who do you say that I am?” “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” and this is the Rock on which the church is built. The Rock was not Peter himself, but Peter’s confession.

Jesus’ disciples were treated to a full display of glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was like He pulled back his human nature for a few moments and let His divine nature burst forth. Glory flashed from His face and clothing like the sun because He is the unique Son of God – co-equal, co-eternal, co-essential with the Father. Yet a man. This is the Grand Mystery of Christmas.

#8 “Full of grace and truth.” (v14) Ah, this is why He came. He came filled full of God’s grace and truth. All the grace and truth we need He brought to us, and we desperately need this grace and truth. We are guilty and need forgiveness. There is no grace outside of Him. He is God’s grace for sinners. Every single speck of grace from God comes to you through Him. There is no true forgiveness apart from Him. This is why you need him. This is the only God there is and He offers Himself freely to you.

And every bit of truth comes from Him. We are ignorant and need this truth. The only way you know God or the truth about life, death, eternity, is through Him. He came into this dark, deceived, utterly confused world as a brilliant light speaking only truth, scattering the darkness and telling us what life is all about. Everything He said and did was absolute truth. Christ came full of truth, with not one lie or falsehood or misrepresentation or corruption in Him. He said if you receive His Word, you’ll know the truth and the truth will set you free.

#9 “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known” (ESV). (v18) Now watch this. Jesus came to make the invisible God visible for us to see. “If there’s a God, where is He? Why doesn’t He show Himself? Why does He hide Himself from us?” That’s what Philip asked Jesus.

John 14:8-9 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

This is why Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You think you know God, but you don’t. You can’t possibly know God apart from Me. The only way for you to know God is to know and believe in Me. I and the Father are one. To know Me is to know the Father.” (John 8:42) Here is the glorious depth of the gospel: The Word was God revealing Himself to us through His humanity.

#10 He joined Himself to us so He could join us to Him by His Spirit forever. He came as our representative head to bring us to God. When you believe in Christ, you are joined with Christ, or brought into union with Christ. Adam is no longer your head; Christ is your head. And everything He did while here on earth He did to bring us to heaven. He lived a perfect life for you. He is your righteousness. He took your sins and died a sacrificial death for you.

2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

His perfect life is yours. His death was in your place. His resurrection is your resurrection and His ascension is yours. Wherever Christ is, you are. Colossians 3:2 says, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God!" This is the glory of the incarnation and the resulting union with Christ. No wonder the angel announced, "I bring you good news of great joy! Today a Savior has been born for you in the city of David, Christ the Lord!" And that host of angels praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."