

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word became flesh. God's Simple and Glorious Word to the World.

The Word became flesh. God became one of us. Here is the heart and soul of Christmas. That is why we are here - not just to think about a God somewhere up there in the heavens that we've never seen; but to praise a God who actually came down here and decided to enter this sin stained world to save us. The Word became flesh; someone we could see and touch and hold; and ultimately crucify.

In one sense or another God's Words have always "taken on flesh" to a point. Long before the Word became flesh John 1:1 says, "**In the beginning was the Word.**" These words take us back to Genesis 1:1 and remind us of how we got here in the first place; by the Word. "**And God said, let there be.**" The very first chapter of the Bible has God speaking the Universe into existence; the flames of the stars and the lights of the sky; the waters of the earth; from the powerful whales to the tiniest gnat; God spoke it all; and it came to be with simple Words that took on fire and water and skin and bones.

This creative power of the Word is why we insist on listening to the Word in worship and we contemplate on the Word again this Christmas; for it is God's Word; and it still creates a different type of life within our souls; an eternal life; breathing hope and joy within the very fabric of our being by showing us who Jesus is and what He did for us.

God's Word stands in contrast to human words; promises such as "I will" or "I'm sorry" or "I'll never do it again." Even with the best of intentions these words often fall flat and remain only that; mere words or mere sinful humans that have no power to keep them whether they want to or not. But God's Word is different. When He says it He means it and He does it. That's something I enjoy about God's Word so much. When we speak it and proclaim it; God works through it. And we are not here just to share what we THINK about God; or exchange IDEAS about who we IMAGINE God to be or what He might be like. God's Word needs no speculation to make it special or powerful like the movie makers seem to think. It is what it is and it does what it says.

How much more so especially at Christmas! For here God is not speaking something else into being; something greater than the sun, moon and stars; greater than humanity itself. At this Christmas time He is not only promising to work in something or through someone; He is speaking HIMSELF into our world; through the height of His creation; becoming flesh. This is what He said He would do 700 years before Jesus ever came. In Isaiah 63 God predicted,

**I looked, but there was no one to help,
I was appalled that no one gave support;**

**so my own arm achieved salvation for me,
and my own wrath sustained me.**

Listen again to how John says it. **The Word became flesh.** John could have used the word “human.” But he didn’t. He used the Word “flesh.” There’s something tender and seemingly weak about that word. Paul associated the flesh with his own inability to do the good he wanted to. Jesus spoke of how flesh and blood cannot come to a spiritual knowledge that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus also said, “**the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**” So when John says that the Word became flesh; this is not a merely physical explanation of what Jesus became; as in 2 plus 2 equals 4. He is telling us why Jesus took on flesh; because of our sinfulness and because of our weakness; to take on our sinfulness and become weak on behalf of us.

This is a great and mighty wonder - it is what separates Jesus from the man-made gods; He is beyond the imagination. Think of all of the far eastern religions; where the goal of every spiritual exercise is to transcend beyond the body and transport your mind and soul to the heavens. Think of how as you grow older; how you can’t wait to rid yourself of the aches and pains of your body and the weaknesses of your flesh. You long for the day you won’t have trouble walking to rest at Jesus’ side. You can’t wait to escape the desires of your flesh. The more you suffer the more you pray for the Lord to take you because of the weakness of your flesh. You want to fly away. The curse of death makes you eagerly await the great escape. But what does the Word do? He who was free from any limitations and who had all the power in the world and absolutely no limitations or weaknesses, He **CHOSE** to take on flesh! And that’s not all!

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The word for “made his dwelling” literally means that God “tented” among us - which makes us think of how God did just that as they traveled through the wilderness. God chose to put His special presence between the angels in the ark of the covenant. The high priest could only go to “see God” in the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement. Even on that Day God’s presence was clouded by the smoke from the altar of incense. Nonetheless, God was there dwelling in the middle of their camp - in a hidden way.

But here God’s dwelling would be so much more visible and personable. He would walk and talk among us! What a contrast to the monks and kings who choose to live far away from humanity and dwell on hills and in castles. He chose to dwell among us - to live right in the middle of our filthy world! Think of the story of Corrie Ten Boom. Her sister was arrested during World War II and put in a concentration camp. Even there she tried to be loving to her fellow prisoners. Some of them were so sick they couldn’t even get up and empty their own bed pans from their beds. They would cry and cry for someone to come and help them. Corrie’s sister did so, and one day when she went to help a fellow prisoner, for whatever reason her fellow prisoner decided to throw her filth directly on Corrie’s sister. What an awful thing to go through - to have someone’s filth maliciously thrown all over you! Yet how does that compare to what Jesus came to do for us? Not only did He choose to take on our flesh and dwell with us and hang out with us from time to time; He came here to be bathed in the filthiness of our

flesh; in each and every one of our sins! He, the holy one - chose to live in our filthy world and allow our sinful hands to lay hold of Him; whip Him; beat Him and crucify Him. Yet He was never grossed out by us; He never ran away from the leper or the sick in disgust. He chose to come here and get His hands dirty; His body crucified; for us!

I remember back when Magic Johnson was first diagnosed with AIDS. If I remember right, nobody wanted to guard him on the basketball court. They were afraid of catching his disease. Think of how you respond when you know someone has the flu. You don't want to go near that person. That's the way it was with the lepers in Jesus' day. But Jesus wasn't afraid of our sin. He knew what He was heading into; and He came to live here and die under it; in order to conquer it!

So John says, "**we have seen his glory.**" This isn't the glory of the angels in the heavens singing praises on high. This is the glory of humility; the glory of the very fact that God put Himself in the flesh of an infant. The word "glory" in the Hebrew literally means to regard as "heavy." How heavy is He; that within the flesh of this infant is God Himself! What a heavy and glorious to think of what God's Son would do; not only to take on flesh; but the way in which He did it! Being born to a virgin in a lowly cattle stall; to allow Himself to be placed in a manger; to then go on to use that very flesh as the means through which God would punish the sins of the world.

John saw this glory, **the glory of the One and Only**. It is a one of a kind glory; one that you can't find anywhere else. This is again what makes Christmas so unique and so "glorious." We stare at the baby in the infant; recreate the scenes; by statues that depict it; because of the hidden glory behind the manger scene.

When you send someone a Christmas card; many parents will leave out the pictures of themselves and only send pictures of their children. They talk about the achievements of their children; they are glad and proud of their accomplishments. Usually they tend to gloss over the bad things or the failures and not mention them at all. When their children do things to embarrass them - they might be quick to say, "he takes after his father," or "she's just like her mother."

Even though Jesus was born in a lowly manger, the Holy Spirit was not embarrassed to tell us this at all. This Son is God's Son, and He is glad for us to see Him and every part of this weakness. This Christmas, don't forget about who sent this Christmas card of Jesus to us. He **came from the Father, full of grace and truth**. The Father is not embarrassed of the this little baby. "Jesus" is what the Father has been longing to say to the world. He is what grace and truth are.

Every Christmas we sing, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." The first verse says of Jesus, "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." Everything that that God threatened against humanity and everything that God promised for humanity is met in this one Man, Jesus Christ. He is the One the Father was wanting to send to us; to save us from all our sins. He would be where we would find the full amount of God's grace; He would be the One through which all truth would come true. In Jesus

we see how serious our sins really are and how gracious God really is. If our sins were not that serious, Jesus would not have had to die such a horrendous death. Were the Father not really that gracious, He never would have sent His only Son. But when we look at Jesus the Father says to us, “Here is my eternal Christmas gift to you. Here in my Son you have every ounce of forgiveness and grace that I have to give you; all wrapped up in this one package called Jesus. Look at Him, and believe!” The Son is the Father’s gift to us; veiled in flesh; the Godhead see; hail the incarnate deity.

Words are defined by their usage in context. When I say “cake” it simply defines that which is already made. The Word only defines what is already there. When you look at the “cake” then you see exactly what the word defines. You think of the frosting and the texture of a cake. Your mouth begins to water. All over that one simple word, “Cake.”

So it is with the Word; the ultimate and only Word that took on flesh. It defines what God has wanted to say to the world and what He wanted to do for the world. It is Jesus Christ, God’s Son; our Savior. This simple and gloriously gracious Word is what God wants to fill our hearts with joy this Christmas.

One of the things they tell you when writing a sermon is to eliminate the useless sentences and to keep it simple. Say more with less. Sometimes I struggle with that, as most preachers do. In reality, it is so simple it is profound; able to be defined in God taking on flesh to live and die for the world; born in a simple crib and died on a wooden cross. The Word Became Flesh. God’s simple and yet Gloriously Gracious Word to the World. Amen.