

The Word Became Flesh

John 1:1-18

Key Verse: 1:14

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John’s gospel is known for the three “L’s”: Life, Light, and Love. When we look at the world, death, darkness and hatred are prevalent. People are suffering from fear, anger, selfishness, emptiness. People are isolated. Ironically, people feel disconnected, though there are more ways than ever to connect through the Internet, i-phones, i-pads, e-mail and so on. I heard about five people who went to a tea house together. They sat down, ordered their tea, and pulled out their electronic devices. Each one used their electronic device for thirty minutes, drank their tea, and left without saying anything of substance to each other. As technology advances, human relationships seem to become more and more superficial. But we cannot simply blame technology. Our relationship problem has a much deeper root. Ultimately, it stems from our broken relationship with God. Jesus came to solve this problem for us. In doing so, Jesus fills us with life, light and love. Let’s learn how Jesus does this through John’s gospel study.

Today’s passage is the prologue of John's gospel. Each verse is deep and profound and could be a key verse. Among them, we will focus on verse 14. We will study this passage in three parts: who Jesus is (1-9), how we should respond to Jesus (10-13), and what Jesus did (14-18).

First, who Jesus is (1-9). The author John introduces Jesus in four aspects. Jesus is God in eternity, the Creator, the source of life, and the true light.

First of all, Jesus is God in eternity. Verses 1-2 say, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”** This verse echoes Genesis 1:1, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** The phrase **“In the beginning”** marks the starting point of time and space. But here in John 1:1, the phrase **“In the beginning”** is simply used to explain that the Word was there in eternity, before all things began. In Greek, the “Word” is “Logos” which refers to the rational principle that governs all things. Though usually impersonal, the fact that it is capitalized means it refers to a person. So the personal pronoun “He” is used to refer to the Word. As verse 14 clearly tells us, the Word refers to Jesus. Revelation

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19:13 says, “...his name is the Word of God.” Jesus is God who was there in eternity.

The phrase, “**the Word was with God**” tells us that the Word was distinct from the Father God. The phrase “**the Word was God**” shows us that the Word, Jesus, has the same essence as the Father God. The Father and the Son, Jesus, are a fellowship of distinct persons with equal status in an intimate relationship. Just as the Father is eternal, almighty, holy, loving, righteous, wise and all-knowing, so is Jesus, the Word. Paul said, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col 2:9). Jesus is the living, eternal and personal God who speaks and acts according to his will.

Secondly, Jesus is the Creator. Verse 3 says, “**Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.**” This verse tells us that God created the universe through Jesus. The author emphasizes that all things were created through Jesus; without him nothing was made that has been made (Col 1:16). The things that exist did not come into being by a random accident, an impersonal Big Bang or as the descendants of an amoeba. Some seemingly intelligent people have developed sophisticated theories about the origin of the universe which exclude God. But when asked how life began, they say that aliens shot a rocket to the earth with life in it. They are fundamentally irrational. Even more significant, they can find no meaning for existence. To them, life is nothing but an accident or a mistake. They think they have come into the world by chance and will later disappear. They cannot but live in fatalism and despair. But when we accept that Jesus is the Creator of all things, including us, everything is meaningful. We came from God and will go back to God. While on earth, we enjoy God's gift of life as stewards. Paul said in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Thirdly, Jesus is the source of life. Verse 4 says, “**In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.**” The phrase “**In him was life**” is an amazing statement. It declares that Jesus is the origin and source of life and the author of life. Life is very mysterious. We can think and work and love or hate one another. It is possible because we have life in us. Without life we could do nothing. In Greek there are three words that indicate life: bios refers to physical life, psyche refers to mental life, zoe refers to eternal life. In verse 4, "life" is from the word "zoe," eternal life. Eternal life does not simply mean a never-ending life. It is a life of true joy and happiness, both now and forever. This life is in Jesus. Without

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Jesus there is no eternal life. 1 John 5:11-12 say, “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” Even though we gain everything in the world - as much as we want - without eternal life we have nothing. On the other hand, even though we do not possess much in this world, when we have eternal life in Jesus, we have everything.

Jesus is the source of life. He gives his life to each of us. So all life comes from Jesus and belongs to him. He shares his life with us. That is why we should not waste our lives but use them fully to bear much fruit for the glory of God. Many people think that how they use their lives in this world is nobody’s business but their own. But that is not true. Since our lives came from Jesus, there will be an accounting for how we spend our lives. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”**

How does life in Jesus affect people? Verse 4b says **“that life was the light of all mankind.”** What does this mean? Jesus’ life, which is eternal, gives meaning and direction to mankind. Jesus said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life”** (Jn 8:12). Without Jesus, people are like a cut flower in a vase. They have physical life, but have no root in God. They look alive, but suffer from meaninglessness, anxiety, and fear of death. Jesus connects us to God, who is the source of eternal life. His life gives us light. When we follow Jesus our life is filled with meaning and hope. Verse 5 says, **“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”** In this verse **“darkness”** refers to the evil of the world. By its very nature, darkness hates the light and resists the light (Jn 3:19). The power of darkness seems to be so strong that it will extinguish the flames of light in the world. But that is not true. No matter how strong the power of darkness is, it cannot overcome Jesus, who is the light. Jesus wins ultimate victory. This is why those who have his life can walk in the light.

Lastly, Jesus is the true light. The author introduces John the Baptist as a witness to the true light (6). John was the forerunner of the Messiah. He was sent by God to prepare the way for the Lord. During his ministry many people thought that he might be the true light because of his spiritual influence and popularity. However, he himself was not the true light. He was only a witness to testify concerning that light so that through him all might believe (7-8). People were spiritually blind. Even though Jesus came into the world as the true light, they did

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not recognize him. They needed a witness. That is why God sent John as a witness to the light. These days also, many people do not know who Jesus is. They need witnesses. God wants to use us as his witnesses to everyone. Jesus commanded his people, **“You will be my witnesses ...to the ends of the earth”** (Ac 1:8).

Verse 9 says, **“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.”** **“The true light”** means that Jesus is the unique, universal and eternal revelation who can guide mankind. **“The true light”** has power to dispel all the darkness. Jesus not only shows us the way, but empowers us to walk in the light. Throughout history, there have been many small lights who revealed truths to mankind, such as Abraham, Moses, and David, as well as Buddha, Socrates, Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, and Martin Luther King Jr. and many others. These men helped us to understand important truths. But their revelations were only partial. None of them could solve our sin problem or save us from death. Only Jesus can save us from the power of sin and death and bring us back to God. This is why Jesus is the true light.

Second, how we should respond to Jesus (10-13). When Jesus came into the world there were two groups of people. One group did not receive Jesus. The other group received Jesus. Verses 10-11 describe the response of those who did not receive Jesus. They are unreasonable. Jesus, the Creator, came to the world he made. But the world did not recognize him. Dogs recognize their masters. But the world ignored its Creator. God revealed his eternal power and divine nature in his creation (Ro 1:20). So no one can say that they do not know God. Anyone who really wants to know God from his heart can know God (Dt 4:29). But people deliberately suppress the reality of God’s presence (Ro 1:18). As a result, their thinking becomes futile and their foolish hearts are darkened. They become idol worshipers, and slaves of lust, all kinds of evil, and depravity.

Verse 11 tells us the response of Israel, his own people, to Jesus. God chose the Israelites to be for him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God showed his special love for them and sent the Messiah into the world through them. However, they were not thankful to God. They sought to establish their own self-righteousness (Ro 10:3). This became a source of pride, and they rejected the Messiah and God’s purpose for them (Lk 7:30). Many people raise sophisticated theological arguments when they do not want to believe in Jesus. Receiving Jesus is not a matter of knowledge but of the heart. Unbelief is deliberate rejection of God. Unbelief is loving darkness. Unbelief comes from pride. Those who reject Jesus are under God’s condemnation because of their unbelief.

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However, those who receive Jesus are given amazing blessings. Read verse 12. **“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”** In what respect is becoming children of God a blessing? We were enemies of God and objects of his wrath because of our sins. We were under condemnation and without hope. Our destiny after working hard in this world was to go to eternal punishment in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. We were powerless and helpless to change this destiny. However, when we receive Jesus, we cross over from death to life (Jn 5:24). In the past we were living in the realm of death. Whatever we did, we were not happy. Now we are living in the realm of life. We have a relationship with God, who looks on us with favor as his children. We can come to God freely, calling him, **“Abba, Father!”** God accepts us as we are and loves and cares for us. We have a great privilege to ask him whatever we need, and he listens to our prayers. Also we have a living hope in his kingdom, which never perishes, spoils or fades away. Becoming children of God is purely based on God’s grace. We cannot be children of God by natural descent, nor human decision, nor human will (13). This blessing is given directly by God only to those who humbly receive Jesus. There is no other requirement: no qualifying exam, no entrance fee, no prerequisite, no background check, no discrimination. Regardless of nationality, gender, age, education level, or any other human distinctive, anyone who humbly receives Jesus becomes a child of God. This is God’s promise.

Third, what Jesus did (14-18). This part tells us of Jesus’ incarnation, which is the culmination of God’s history, and the beginning of a new era of grace. Jesus showed us grace and truth, and revealed God the Father fully through his life. Out of his fullness, we receive grace upon grace.

Let’s read verse 14. **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** As we see in verse 1, Jesus is almighty God, and the holy and righteous God. Martin Luther said that if he were God he would destroy mankind twice a day. But God is love. God did not abandon mankind. God sent his servants to his people again and again. Finally, God himself came down to this world in a human form to save mankind. We call this "the incarnation." The eternal God became a man who was limited by time and space. The almighty God became subject to the weakness of human flesh. The glorious God came into this world as a mere man. This is beyond our imagination. And, even as a man, he did not come as a powerful and wealthy ruler. Rather, he

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humbled himself and made himself nothing. He was born in a stable and laid in a manger (Lk 2:7). He was born into a poor country that was oppressed by the world power. He became nobody. Why did Jesus do so? It was to unite God with mankind once again. It was to reveal God to us and restore our relationship with him so that we may have life, light and love. This Jesus is full of grace and truth. Before knowing Jesus, I was very proud and selfish. So even though I wanted to be a friend to others, I failed again and again. So I was often lonely and isolated. One day I meditated on this verse and humble Jesus came into my heart. God came into my heart. Life, light and love began to flow within me. Then I could love and serve others and make friends with many people, especially my wife. They are friends with whom I will share eternity. Praise Jesus!

In verse 15 John testified to Jesus' pre-existence. Even though Jesus became flesh, he did not lose his divine character. Jesus became fully man while continuing to be fully God. That is why Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1 Ti 2:5). Verses 16-17 tell us that out of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The law was a blessing because it helps us to recognize sin as sin, but the law cannot save us. It brings only guilt feelings and condemnation. But Jesus brought grace into the world - the grace of God's unconditional forgiveness for sinners. Jesus' forgiving love sets us free from guilty feelings and the power of sin and enables us to serve God freely. This is really grace upon grace.

Jesus reveals God the Father to us. Verse 18 says, **“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship to the Father, has made him known.”** God is Spirit and Light. No one can see God with his physical eyes, or he will die. However, we can see God through Jesus. This is why we study John's gospel: to know God personally through Jesus, and to be filled with life, light and love.