

Jesus, Incarnate God (John 1:14–18)

The marvel of the birth lies in understanding WHO He is and WHY He has come. As John opens his Gospel, he explains that the Word is God and was with God. He is both life and light to men. He gives the right to become children of God to all who receive Him and believe on His name. The Word entered the world of mankind and He did so by becoming flesh. This is called the “incarnation” and John lets us know reasons for its importance in the final verses of his prologue.

1. *By the incarnation the Word entered true humanity.*

- a. *His true human nature is expressed by saying that he became “flesh.”* This emphasizes that he had a true human body, not just an appearance (cf. Luke 24:39), without implying that He took on the sinful character of fallen man.
- b. *His human experience is expressed by saying He “dwelt among us.”* He lived as a true man, with similar experiences, but without sin. Cf. 1 John 1:1–2.

2. *By the incarnation the Word revealed His divine glory.*

- a. *The signs which Jesus did revealed His glory.* John chose only seven signs to report, but by the first and the last it explicitly says they revealed the glory of Jesus (John 2:11; 11:4, 40). From that we infer that all the signs revealed His glory, not only His power but also His compassion, mercy, and grace.
- b. *The glory of Jesus was the glory that came from Him being the One and Only come in the flesh, with full deity.* John will repeat this claim in different words when he explains that Isaiah had seen the glory of Jesus when he saw the LORD in heaven (John 12:37–41; Isaiah 6:1–5).

John the Baptist testifies to both these truths and identified for us that the Word was Jesus (1:15; cf. 1:17, 29–30). Jesus was born after John and began ministry after John, but was none-the-less “first” in pre-eminence and in time, because Jesus pre-existed as the eternal Word.

3. *By the incarnation the Word communicated divine grace to us.*

- a. *From His fulness (cf. v. 14, ‘full of grace and truth’) true believers receive grace.* Even as one manifestation of grace may fade (like the strength to resist a temptation which then passes), further grace is supplied for the next challenge – “grace upon grace.”
- b. *Jesus, the Word, the One and Only from the Father, was/is full of grace and truth (v. 14), and that grace and truth came to mankind through Jesus Christ (v. 17).* The Law was good, but only a picture of what was to come and inadequate for our need. It pointed out our wrong-doing, but could not remove our guilt. The Word became flesh to be the reality to which the Law pointed and to graciously provide what we needed, freedom from sin and eternal life.

4. *By the incarnation, the Word expounded God to us.*

- a. *The desire to know God is frustrated by the fact that no one has ever seen God.* He is Spirit; He is infinite; and He is holy, making it impossible to see Him and live. Manifestations of God in the Old Testament were at best partial; frequently it was the pre-incarnate Son of God who was seen.
- b. *The problem of not seeing God was resolved by the Word, “God the One and Only,” revealing Him.* God the One and Only, i.e., the Word, who existed in eternal, intimate relation to the Father, make the Father known to mankind. He reported in detail about the Father, so that Jesus could say, that to see Him was to see the Father.

The Word becoming flesh was an amazing departure from the Old Testament experience of the glory of God dwelling among them in the tabernacle. It was distant and unapproachable. Without the proper sacrifice, even the priest could be killed. But Jesus, God become flesh, walked among us and could be seen and touched. AND He brought grace to us, gifting eternal life to all who would believe on Him. Celebrate that baby in the manger as the incarnate God and our eternal Savior.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- If you were John and had had his experiences of walking, talking, and being with Jesus, and then came to realize that Jesus was God in the flesh, what would you have felt and thought? How should you feel today that God did become flesh and live among us?
- What divine glory do you see in the miracles which Jesus did? How might they express both truth and grace?
- What could you do to better appreciate the fact that Jesus has revealed God?