



Sunday School Lesson for December 24, 2006
Released on December 20, 2006

"The Word Became Flesh"

Printed Text: John 1:1-18

Background Scripture: John 1:1-34

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:1-6

John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

9 *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Mo'ses, *but* grace and truth came by Je'sus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible teaches that God had a plan for redemption when the first human couple sinned and was expelled from the garden. God planned for this by preparing the nation of Israel to be the people who would receive His redeemer, His Son Jesus. Yet in one of the terrible ironies of human history, this chosen people did not recognize their own promised Messiah. His reception was instead a rejection.

The apostle John begins his Gospel by putting the person and mission of Jesus into the perspective of a panoramic review of human history. This week's lesson looks at the first 18 verses of this great book. There John introduces his themes about Jesus from the broadest possible historical viewpoint.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have four Gospels in the New Testament that tell the story of Jesus. The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are very similar in their general structure. The fourth Gospel, John, is quite different from the other three, and he was well acquainted with their material. For this reason he seems to avoid repeating most of their content. Instead, he chooses to give new information from his wealth of eyewitness recollections (see John 21:24, 25). About 90 percent of John's material is not found in the other three Gospels.

A significant difference among the four Gospels is the way the writers choose to begin their accounts. Mark begins with the ministry of John the Baptist, without any reference to the birth or childhood of Jesus. Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist, without any reference to the birth or childhood of Jesus. Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist and includes the nativity story of Jesus. Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy, thus pushing the story of Jesus back into the Old Testament.

John, for his part, pushes the story back to the very beginning of the Old Testament. Thus John's Gospel is an inclusive account of the entire sweep of human history, beginning before creation itself. Most of this is accomplished in John 1:1-18, often referred to as the prologue of John. Today's lesson explores the issues of the doctrine of the incarnation. We will try to understand how God could assume a human form.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to review the facts of Christ's incarnation.

Principle: to declare that God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Application: to convey to students the profound theological significance of the birth of Christ.

1. What three truths about Christ are found in John 1:1, and why are they so important?

In John 1:1, the three truths found about Christ are as follows: (1) His preexistence, "in the beginning was the Word" (2) His distinction from God, "this Word was with God" (the Word fellowshiped with God) and (3) His deity, "the Word was God". These truths are important because they provide an understanding of who Jesus really is. He is preexistent because He existed before time began; therefore, there was no beginning point for the Word. He is distinct from God because he lived as a separate Person in the presence of His Father as the Son of God and He had the same divine essence or attributes of deity as the Father. Jesus was fully God - (Col 2:9 reads, For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily).

2. How was the term "word" significant to both Jews and Greeks? (v 2)

The Jews used the term "word" to refer to the God of the Old Testament because of the emphasis there on His speaking to them. The term described to them the Agent of Creation and the One from whom came the message of God through the prophets and Mosaic law. The Greeks of John's day thought of logos (word) as reason or rationale behind the universe. To both Jews and Greeks, the idea of beginnings was in the term. John used the term hoping to convince both groups about Jesus.

Note that John immediately established the plurality of the Godhead in this opening statement but at this point did not explain the triune nature of God. The repetition in verse 2 emphasizes this.

3. What did John say about the Creation relative to Christ? (v 3)

John defines the Word's (Christ's) role in creation. The Word was fully involved in the creation and there is no created thing that exists apart from the Word's creative power. In the Genesis 1:1 it says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." God the Father was the Creator, but John explained that He did His creating through His Son, Jesus, making Him Just as much the Creator as God. Colossians 1:16 says, "for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

4. How do we know that Christ's life was not created, and how is His life related to light in verses 4-5?

In reading verse 4, it says in Him was life, meaning life was not created but it already existed in God and His Son. John 5:26 says, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

In classical Greek usage, the word referred to life in general as possessed by all creatures. John, however along with the other New Testament authors, raised the meaning to include eternal, divine life which is available only to those who receive Jesus as their personal Saviour. This life is also the light that shatters the darkness of sin. "Light" in John, as in much of the New Testament, refers to spiritual understanding and moral insight, that which gives people the ability to comprehend God and His ways. The world in general is spiritually dark and displeasing to God. Because Jesus reveals God to us, we can be delivered from the darkness of this world and its lack of understanding and live instead in His kingdom of light (Col. 1:12-13).

5. What did John say about John the Baptist relative to the Light? (v 6-8)

John introduced John the Baptist as a man specifically sent (commissioned) by God to bear testimony to the Person who is now referred to as "the Light". John came to be a witness of Christ. Note: This John (the Baptist) is not the apostle who wrote this Gospel however, he did have a specific function and that was to testify about Jesus and be a reliable witness of His identity. He was sent to announce the appearance of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. John was needed to prepare the groundwork for people to believe in Him (Christ) and find salvation. In verse 8, the apostle John makes it clear that John the Baptist was not the Light but merely the one to introduce the Him. In no way does this diminish his (John the Baptist) significance however, there is a vast difference between John the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus is He who offers spiritual light, or truth, to people.

6. Who does Jesus offer the light to, and who profits from this offer? (v 9)

The Bible teaches us that the light offered through Jesus is available to everyone who responds properly. By responding properly and coming into the knowledge of Christ. We must realize that the Lord will not force himself upon us but stands at the door of our hearts, knocking and waiting for us to be receptive to letting Him in. When we let Him into our hearts, we are no longer in spiritual darkness but are walking in the light. Jesus was the object of belief, and it is the object that determines where people stand in relationship to God.

7. Why is it so amazing that some rejected Jesus when He came? (v 10-11)

In verse 10, John referred to Christ's incarnation, creation, and rejection. Jesus Christ came to live in the very world He created, but the world did not know who He was (this pertains to the world in general. Jesus' incarnation is what enabled Him to live in this world. The phrase "his own" in verse 11 refers to the nation of Israel, which were the people chosen by God to be the receiving nation for His Messiah. It was surprising that not even the "chosen ones" accepted him. Jesus did not meet many people's expectation of Messiah because he was not born in a king's place, but in a stable. His parents were not rich and powerful, but young and poor. It was people's lack of recognition that Jesus was the Son of God that revealed their ignorance of the presence

of the Creator. There were those who could not see him as anything other than just another human being. Their overall reason for the rejection was due to spiritual blindness.

8. What is the incarnation? (v 14)

The incarnation is when the eternal word took on human flesh (humanity). Verse 14 is said to be the most important verse in the Bible for teaching the incarnation. Jesus was given a fleshly body and lived among the people on earth. John wrote that they had seen His glory, he was referring to those times when glimpses of Jesus' divine majesty shone (i.e., the beginning of miracles, healings...).

9. What is so significant about the fact that the Word became flesh?

The significance here is taking the transformation of God into Jesus and viewing it as He who is supernatural had become natural; and while no man has ever seen Him (invisible), He was now visible but it was through the body of His Son Jesus. Jesus has said, if you've seen Him, you have seen His Father also. What's important to note here is that just because the Word had transformed into human flesh, He still was God.

10. How did God use the incarnation to reveal who He is and what He is like? (vs 18)

This verse strengthens the statement in verse 14. The only way mankind could see God was for Jesus to take on human flesh. John wrote that no one had ever seen God, that is, God as He really is. There were those who saw theophanies, meaning special appearances of God in human or angelic form, but no person can look upon God in His essence and live (Exodus 33:20). It is only in Christ that we can see God. God became visible to human eyes when He sent His Son, Jesus, to take on human flesh.

John 1:18 says that Jesus came from "the bosom of the Father." This indicates the intimate, face-to-face closeness that He and His Father have enjoyed through all eternity. This One who has come from the very presence of God now declares Him to mankind, explaining exactly who He is and what He is like.

CONCLUSION

Grace in John

What is the amazing thing we call *grace*? While that word is common in Paul's writings, it is used only a few times *in* the Gospel of John (1:14-17). This word gets tossed around in many ways in the church. Some people seem to equate grace with the Holy Spirit, as supernatural power ("I was overcome by grace"). Others see it as the same as God's presence ("God's grace is in this place"). Still others associate it with a mealtime prayer ("Bow your heads while I say grace").

An old acronym for grace is helpful: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. But this only gives a partial sense of this rich concept. There are two essential components to a biblical concept

of grace. First, it always denotes an element of "gift." It is never something we earn or deserve. Second, grace involves both attitude and action. God's grace means that God determined to do something beneficial; then He did it.

John tells us that everything about God's self-revelation in Jesus is gracious. We didn't deserve Him. He is beautiful in ways we cannot even appreciate. The incarnation is a decisive act of enormous significance. How much did it really cost God to sacrifice His Son? We cannot possibly know. But we can understand that this is not the way things normally work. Fathers (don't usually sacrifice their sons for others. If anything, a father will sacrifice for his son. Yet God sent His Son to become a man and die on a cross to pay the price for sin. That is Grace! (A beautiful undeserved action)

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, maker and creator of all things, we your children thank you for looking down upon a world full of darkness. You saw that we were lost in sin and in need of a Saviour. Thank you for sending your Son down to earth in the form of man to redeem lost, sin sick souls. May we be blessed by Your grace and guided by Your truth in all things. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER:

The gracious truth of God is the promise of eternal life as revealed through Jesus Christ.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Study **Philippians 2 "Humiliation and Exaltation"**

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Have a blessed Christmas! From all of us at Jesus Is All Ministries.