

FROM THE BEGINNING Sunday School- March 11, 2012

Unifying Topic: THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Lesson Text

I. In The Beginning (John 1:1-5)

II. The Witness To The Word (John 1:6-8)

III. The Word Became Flesh (John 1:9-14)

The Main Thought: 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. (John 1:14, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People are often curious about how things began. How are we to answer our questions about the origins of faith? Jesus, who was fully human and fully involved in human society, was also personally divine from the beginning and was God's agent in the world from the beginning.

Lesson Aim: To review Christ's presence with the Father during creation.

Life aim: To examine the impact that Christ's incarnation had on all of humanity.

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

1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

1:7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

1:8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

1:14 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.

HISTORY:

The fourth Book of the Gospels in the New Testament is written by the Apostle John, not John the Baptist. He is the son of Zebedee and brother of James (called a "*Son of Thunder*"). He was an eyewitness to the events he describes. John makes it clear that Jesus is not just a man; He is the eternal "*Son of God*." He gives the true meaning of who God really is. John knew this Man intimately. He ate in His presence, slept out in the open as one of His disciples, had opportunity to touch and handled the Son of God; he heard Him speak and followed Him.

The first three Gospels majored on describing events in the life of Christ:

- ¹Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus.
- Mark began with the ministry of John the Baptist.
- Luke starts with the story of Jesus' birth.

But John emphasized the meaning of these things (*His existence*). In his first two verses John transports us to eternity past—before creation, before man—before the existence of time itself.

LESSON:

In The Beginning (John 1:1-5)

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, — John starts his book in the same way the Bible starts and says, "In the BEGINNING..." (Gen.1:1). When time began the "**Word**" was already in existence. How was John going to present Christ so that a Gentile could understand? The answer lay in the idea of the Word, for the Word was understood by both Gentile and Jew.

- The Jews saw the word as something more than a mere sound. It was power—it possessed the power to express something, to do something. This is seen in the many Old Testament references where the Word of God was seen as the creative power of God, the power that made the world and gave light and life to every man (Gen.1:3, 6, 11; Ps.33:6; 107:20; 147:15; Is.55:11).

¹ <http://www.redlandbaptist.org/sermons/sermon20100606.php>

- The Gentiles or Greeks saw the word more philosophically. Therefore, they said that behind the world was a mind, a reason, a power that made and kept things in their proper place. This creative and sustaining mind, this supreme reason, this unlimited power was said to be the "*Word*." The "*Word*" was also seen as the power that enabled men to think and reason.
1. The first thing John wants us to understand is that **in the beginning the Word was here**, therefore, Eternal—Preexistent—to exist before something else; before Creation. When time began, the "*Word*" had always existed. This is "*Word's*" relation to time. I need to not get ahead of myself, but we will come to see that the Word is Jesus. Well, maybe I need to make that clear now!
 - The "*Word*" is a Person and the "*Word*" also means the Message of the Gospel He gives. John wrote about the life this Person gives and what He produces through the Good News.
 - The "*Word*", always existed. He was alive before time and the world began. The "*Word*" and the message of life came from God. This was God's purpose from before Creation that the "*Word*" would come into the world to achieve the purpose of Creation for the world and man.

1:1b ...and the Word was with God —

2. Second, *The Word was with God*, therefore, He Coexistent—exist together or at the same time; having the idea of both being with and acting toward...—This is the "*Word's*" relation to the Godhead.

The words "**with God**" could be rendered "*face to face with God*."²The name "*God*" is common to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, whereas "*the Father*" is the special title of the first Person only. John writes about Jesus in the hopes of convincing both Jews and Gentiles who had not yet decided what to believe about Jesus of Nazareth. He wanted to convince them that Jesus was the Son of God—the Savior of the World, not just a mere man.

1:1c ...and the Word was God —

3. Third, *the Word was God*, therefore the Revealer—This is Christ's relation to the Holy Trinity.

John concludes the verse with an emphatic statement that the "*Word*" was completely God. This shows the Deity of God. Jesus Himself said, "*The Father and I are ONE; he that has seen ME has seen THE FATHER.*" (John 10:20; 14:9). He is from the beginning. In His glory He was "*with God*." In His nature He "*was God*."

1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. — Christ existed in the beginning, was long before being born of Mary. He was Self-existent— Christ was, eternally, "with God existing in the beginning and owing His existence to no one.

1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

- 1) Christ is the Creator — This verse establishes Christ as the subject of Creation and not the object of Creation. He was the Creator not the created.

"**All things**" (*panta*) mean every detail of Creation. Each element and thing, each being and person—whether, angelic or human—has come into being by Christ. The words "**were made**" (*egeneto*) means, *came into being or became*. Note what this is saying, Nothing was existing—no substance, no matter whatsoever. God did not take something outside of Himself; something less than perfect (evil) and create the world. He took nothing; created every single thing out of "*nothing*" (*ex nihilo*) and spoke it into existence. Christ was the active Agent; the Person who became what was spoken by the Spirit's power. The words "**not anything**" (*oude hen*) mean not even one thing, not a single thing, not even a detail was made apart from Him. Therefore, *without Him nothing was made*.

1:4 In him was life; —

- 2) Christ is Life — In Him was life— He is the power to exist. Life is in Him, within His very being. All things exist and have their being (life) in Him.
 - a. Life is the quality and essence and principle of being.
 - b. Life is purpose, meaning significance of being.
 - c. Life is perfection; all that man must be and possess in order to live perfectly. The distinct thing about life is that it is eternal; it lasts forever. It manifests and illuminates.

1:4b ...and the life was the light of men.

- 3) Jesus Christ is the light of men — This light gives everything the power to be. If a person receives this Light, it gives them the power to receive eternal life. He is their "*light*" both physical and spiritual. This relation pertains to man being in Christ. He is the way to life; He is the truth of life; and He is the very substance of life!

1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.—Since man had brought darkness into the world (by sin), the life of Christ was the light of man, the beam that showed man the way, the truth, and the life. Christ is the answer to darkness. The verb "*shineth*" (*Gr phainō*) is the Greek present tense. Christ, who was the

² http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/John/john_02.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

Light, continues to shine as the Light. The darkness referred to here is the unbelief and sin of mankind. The darkness could not grasp, comprehend, put out or seize with hostile intent. Darkness was not able to put out the Light.

The Witness To The Word (John 1:6-8)

1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.— This was no ordinary man. This was the man that was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb when Elizabeth greeted Mary. This was the man that would become a very special witness, the forerunner for the Savior of the world. His name was already ordained by God before he was born. His name means "*gracious*." The word "*sent*" (*apestalmenos*) means to send out; to commission as a representative, an ambassador, and messenger. Now he is the one "**sent from God**." He was a man sent forth with a name to match his message: God's 'grace' is now to enter the scene of world history.

1:7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, — God was always sending someone to announce Jesus' coming. The angels heralded His birth. Now John was sent to "*bear witness*" of Jesus Christ, coming to bring Light to all mankind. The first thing God applied to the earth was Light. The servant of God is not left on his own to think of a message. He was not dependent upon his own reason, thoughts, and ideas. His message is Christ, the "*Light of the world*." He is not to testify of himself, nor about himself, but he is to be the witness of Christ's coming; the light of men. **1:7b ...that all men through him might believe.** — The purpose of John's witness is clearly stated. His purpose was to lead men to believe in the Light. He was not to organize, to administer, to oversee, or to manage, but His true purpose was to testify and proclaim of the Light, thereby, causing men to believe—trust in, adhere to, and rely on. He came to prepare the minds of the people to receive Him (the Light). His focus was on the people and they were to see the Light of whom he witnessed about.

1:8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. From Isaiah until Malachi the prophets had been prophesying the coming of the Light (Jesus Christ). John comes on the scene and he was extraordinary, but he was not the Light. John's one job was to make ready for the Light. His function was that of a 'herald' who went ahead of a king to announce his coming and to prepare the popular mind to receive Him.

The Word Became Flesh (John 1:9-14)

1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. — Christ is the true Light. Other men may claim to be lights and may claim that they can lead men to the truth. Some may even claim they can show the future, guide a man out of the darkness of sin or hell. However, such men were false lights. Their claims are only ideas in their minds, counterfeit claims which lead to failure. This is what light does. Light...

- Is clear and pure
- penetrates
- enlightens
- reveals
- guides
- exposes
- Routs the chaos
- discriminates between right way & wrong way
- protects and so does Christ!

The mission of Christ was to give light to men. The Jews were content with the "*copies*." They had Moses and the law, the temple and the sacrifices, but they did not comprehend that these lights pointed to the true Light who was the fulfillment, the completion of the Old Testament religion.

1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.— Christ, the "*Word*" and the "*Light*" was in the world; the world He created; He being incarnate, but was tragically rejected by the world—His people. He was working to help them even from the very beginning of Creation but their eyes were not opened to Him. The world did not love or approve Him. This verse gives some raw true facts:

- The supreme fact of history—He was in the world!
- The supreme truth about the world—The world was made by Him!
- The supreme tragedy of humanity—The world knew Him not!

WHO OR WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW, YOU WON'T RECEIVE!

1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. — The words "*unto his own*" (*eis ta idia*) literally mean "*to His own home; to His own people*". There are two meanings here:

1. The world is His home, and all the people are His by creation. He came to all the people of the world, but they did not receive Him. They rejected Him.
2. The nation of Israel was His peculiar home, the people whom He had chosen to be the messengers of God to the world. They, of all people, should have known better because of the special privileges, and prophecies, but they too rejected Him; didn't acknowledge Him to be the Messiah. They rejected Him and put Him to death, agreeably to the prophecy, Isaiah 53:3, 4.

WHO OR WHAT YOU WON'T RECEIVE, YOU WON'T KNOW!

1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that

believe on his name: — Not everyone rejected Christ; most did, but a few received Him. Note three points:

1. How men receive Christ—They believe on His name (Jh.2:24).
2. The results of receiving Christ—A person is given the power to become a son of God.
 - a. The word "**power**" (*exousian*) means both power and right or authority.
 - b. The word "**sons**" (*tekna Theou*) means children of God.
 - i. ³Because they are adopted by Him.
 - ii. Because they are like Him; resemble Him and have His spirit.
 - iii. They are united to the Lord Jesus, the Son of God; regarded by Him as His brethren (Matt. 25:40).
 - c. The words "**to become**" (*genesthai*) mean to become something a person is not.

When a person receives Christ into his life (as LORD), Christ gives that person the power and right to become something he is not—a child of God!

1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. — Our "*natural birth*" introduces us to life. The "*new birth*" is the beginning of our spiritual life. Before the new birth, the sinner is dead in sins (Ephesians 2:1); now he begins truly to live.

1. The new birth is not of man.
 - a. It is "**not by blood.**" The idea is that heritage (being born of a particular family, race, nation or people) is of no value in becoming a child of God. Human blood is not what caused the new birth.
 - b. It is "**not by the will of the flesh**" (*ek thelematos sarkos*): sexual desire. The idea is that a person is not spiritually born again by wanting and willing to become a child of God just like a person wills to have an earthly child.
 - c. It is "**not by the will of man**" (*ek thelematos andros, husband*). The idea is that even man (the husband, the stronger member, the one who is usually the leader) cannot bring about the spiritual birth of others. No man, no matter who he is—husband or world leader—can cause or make a person a child of God.
2. The new birth is of God.
 - a. God produces the change, and confers the privilege of being called His children.
 - b. The heart is changed by His power.
 - c. ⁴To be a part of God's kingdom, one must be born again.
 - i. John 3:5—"Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."
 - ii. John 3:6—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

You see, then to be sons of God we must be born of His Spirit, The Holy Spirit of God. If we are never reborn of the Spirit, then we remain flesh; and flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

1:14 And the Word was made flesh— Simply, the "*Word*" was made man. ⁵This is commonly expressed by saying that He became "*Incarnate*." When we say that a being becomes incarnate, we mean that one of a higher order than man, and of a different nature, assumes the appearance of man or becomes a man (God embodied in flesh). It is not simply affirmed that He was flesh, but that He was "**made flesh**", implying that He had pre-existence.

1:14b ...and dwelt among us...— The word "**dwelt**" signifies "*tabernacled*" or "*lived in a tent*." The "*tabernacle*" was God's dwelling place, yet the man Jesus abode in this same tabernacle. The "*Word*" (Jesus Christ) took on the form of flesh and dwelt here on this earth with us. By the miracle of the virgin Birth, the "*Word became flesh*." He is called "*Emmanuel*" (God with us) in Matthew. Jesus associated Himself by living, conversing, eating, and drinking with those around Him. He was here for a temporary time in which He abode in the world with His disciples and those needing Him. He was not an illusion but the "*Word made flesh*" going through the same needs as man lived here. The first proof of the Incarnation is that Jesus Christ dwelt visibly among us.

1:14c ...(and we beheld his glory—

1. God's glory was seen.
 - a. Christ's was the "*Shekinah glory*" of God. The word "*Shekinah*" means that which dwells or dwelling. It refers to the bright cloud that God used to guide Israel out of Egypt and that rested upon the tabernacle and above the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place (Exo.40:34-38). The cloud symbolized God's presence, and that is just what John was saying. "**We beheld**", actually saw the "*Shekinah glory*", God's very presence "*dwelling among us*."

³ http://www.studyight.org/com/bnn/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=001&verse=001#Joh1_1

⁴ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/john/02.html>

⁵ http://www.studyight.org/com/bnn/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=001&verse=001#Joh1_1

- b. Christ was the very embodiment of God, all that God is and does. John said we beheld, looked at Him, and could tell He was God; all that Jesus was in His person and being, character, and behavior.
2. **1:14d** "...the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."
- a. ⁶This glory was seen eminently on the "*Mount of Transfiguration*." It was also seen in His miracles, His doctrine, His resurrection, His ascension; all of which were such as to illustrate the perfections, and manifest the glory that belongs only to the Son of God.
- b. ⁷That is, the only person born of a woman, whose human nature never came by the ordinary way of generation; it is a mere creation in the womb of a virgin, by the energy of the Holy Ghost.
3. **1:14e** Jesus Christ was "**full of grace and truth**."
- a. He was the very embodiment of grace.
- b. He was the very embodiment of truth.

⁸Others had been messengers of gracious tidings, but He came to bring grace. Others teach us truth, but Jesus is the "*Truth*." He is that grace and truth whereof others spoke. Jesus is not merely a teacher, an exhorter, a worker of grace and truth; but these heavenly things are in Him: He is full of grace and truth. He brings in Him the embodiment (the incarnation) of grace (the gift of God's mercy that saves sinners) and truth (the Son of God who saves sinners).

⁹(1) "*In the beginning was the word:*"

(a) "*And the word became flesh*" tells of the beginning of His human life.

(2) "*And the word was with God*"

(b) "*And tabernacled among us*" shows Him with men.

(3) "*And the word was God*"

(c) "*Full of grace and truth*," and this tells what God is.

SUMMARY:

¹⁰**John 1:1-5**— The plainest reason why the Son of God is called the Word, seems to be, that as our words explain our minds to others, so was the Son of God sent in order to reveal his Father's mind to the world. What the evangelist says of Christ proves that he is God. He asserts, His existence in the beginning; His coexistence with the Father. The Word was with God. All things were made by him, and not as an instrument. Without him was not any thing made that was made, from the highest angel to the meanest worm. This shows how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation. This eternal Word, this true Light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not.

John 1:6-14— John the Baptist came to bear witness concerning Jesus. Nothing more fully shows the darkness of men's minds, than that when the Light had appeared, there needed a witness to call attention to it. Christ was the true Light; that great "*Light*" which deserves to be called so. By his Spirit and grace He enlightens all that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by Him, perish in darkness. Christ was in the world when He took our nature upon Him, and dwelt among us. The Son of the Highest was here in this lower world. He was in the world, but not of it. He came to save a lost world, because it was a world of His own making. Yet the world knew Him not. When He comes as a Judge, the world shall know Him. Many say that they are Christ's own, yet do not receive Him, because they will not part with their sins, nor have Him to reign over them. All the children of God are born again. This new birth is through the word of God as the means, 1 Peter 1:23, and by the Spirit of God as the Author. By his Divine presence Christ always was in the world. But now that the fulness of time was come, He was, after another manner, God manifested in the flesh. But observe the beams of His Divine glory, which darted through this veil of flesh. Men discover their weaknesses to those most familiar with them, but it was not so with Christ; those most intimate with Him saw most of His glory. Although He was in the form of a servant, as to outward circumstances, yet, in respect of graces, His form was like the Son of God His Divine glory appeared in the holiness of His doctrine, and in His miracles. He was full of grace, fully acceptable to His Father, therefore qualified to plead for us; and full of truth, fully aware of the things He was to reveal.

APPLICATION:

Jesus Christ's incarnation has had a great impact on all of humanity. Has the Word made flesh had an impact in your life?

⁶ http://www.studylight.org/com/bnn/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=001&verse=001#Joh1_1

⁷ http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=001&verse=001#Joh1_1

⁸ <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/1862.htm>

⁹ http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/John/john_03.htm

¹⁰ <http://www.christnotes.org/commentary.php?b=43&c=1&com=mhc>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>