

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

John 1:14-18

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, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

We only thank God for giving us John’s gospel, which leads us to Jesus. In the last lesson we learned that Jesus is God. Jesus is the eternal God. Jesus is the Creator God. Jesus is the author of life. Jesus is the true light that gives light to every man. Before knowing Jesus, people walk in the darkness without God. They think their lives came from their parents or from impersonal matter. Then their lives are nothing but an accident. They have no meaning. They are miserable. Many live destructive lives in moral anarchy with suicide as an option. However, through the word of John’s gospel, we can know Jesus, the author of life. Jesus gives spiritual life to men; this is eternal life. This life is the light of our souls. This light gives us absolute meaning and purpose; it gives us life direction; it is the joy of living. Young people who are walking in darkness need Jesus, the true light. May Jesus’ light shine upon them this fall semester through one-to-one Bible study.

Today’s passage is the last part of the prologue of John’s gospel. We learn one clear truth. Jesus, the eternal Word, became flesh. We call this the incarnation. It was to save us from our sins and bring us back to his kingdom. May the Lord bless this study through his Spirit.

First, the Word is the eternal, Creator God (14).

Verse 14 begins, “The Word became flesh.” The Word is Jesus. Verse 1 says, “In the beginning was the Word.” Jesus was there in the beginning, before anything was made. Jesus is the eternal God. Jesus existed by himself. Existential philosophers have tried to develop their idea by beginning with the existence of man. They say, “I think, therefore I am.” From there, they want to explain the phenomena of the whole universe. Of course, they fail. Man is a dependent creature who cannot exist without a proper environment, including air, light, food, water, etc. Man depends totally on God for his existence. Jesus is not like mortal man. Jesus is the self-existent God. Jesus is the source of life and the Creator of heaven and earth (3). These days, pictures from the Hubble telescope reveal the vastness of the universe. It is amazing. Jesus, the Creator God, made all this. We also see through DNA research how amazing is God’s gift of life. It reminds us of Psalm 139:13-14, which say, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Not only are we amazed at man’s physiology, but even more so by the spirit with which God made man. Recently, through a new movie called “Miracle,” many Americans relived the 1980 Winter Olympics when America upset the Soviet Union in hockey. At the time, it seemed impossible for young American college students to defeat the professional Soviet team. But with a tremendous national spirit, they won the game and the gold medal. This universe, marvelous mankind, and even all the heavenly creatures and realms were made by Jesus, the eternal Creator God. This Jesus is the Word.

Second, the Word became flesh (14).

Look at verse 14a. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” These simple words, “The Word became flesh,” describe the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the eternal God, became a human being. There is a mystery in Jesus’ incarnation that we human beings can never fully understand. Still, there is profound meaning in this. It is the truth of God that gives life to our souls. Let’s think about what was involved for Jesus, the Word, to become flesh.

To come to earth as a man, Jesus gave up his heavenly kingdom where he was worshiped and served as God. Jesus humbled himself and became a man. It was really a big demotion. As we know, everyone wants to be promoted and have a better title, more prestige, more honor, and to make more money. No one is happy when his company is down-sized and he is demoted, or when he drops in his class ranking. But Jesus was demoted from heaven to earth. Jesus took this willingly to obey God and to fulfill God’s purpose to save men from their sins.

While on earth, Jesus did not become powerless, nor did he lose all his authority. In John 5:27, Jesus said that God had given him authority to judge all people. Indeed, the day will come when every knee will bow before Jesus and every tongue confess that Jesus is God. At that time, Jesus' one finger motion will determine the eternal destiny of all mankind, one by one. In John 10:18, Jesus said that he had authority over his own life. No one else can say this. But Jesus could decide whether he would die or not. His decision to lay down his life for sinners was freely made by his own choice. In John 17:2, Jesus says that God gave him authority over all people so that he might give eternal life to those God had given him. Indeed, Jesus had great power and authority. Yet Jesus did not use this power and authority to crush sinners. Jesus came in a humble form as a man to serve all kinds of sinners with the love of God. Jesus came to give life to people.

Most human beings love to exercise power and authority over others to gratify their giant egos. Once, Alexander Haig served as Secretary of State in the USA. When President Reagan was wounded, and Vice President Bush was flying somewhere, Haig boldly announced, "I am in charge now," ignoring the rules of succession in the Constitution. Shortly after that, he was dismissed. His spontaneous claim to power revealed the weakness of sinful man. The devil makes use of this to cause men to fall into temptation. However, our Lord Jesus was different from fallen man. Jesus did not try to grab power, but relinquished it to obey the will of God. Jesus humbled himself to the maximum degree. Philippians 2:5-8 says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross." Jesus became the servant of all kinds of sinners. Jesus became our example of obedience as well.

Jesus humbly took his position as a man and submitted to the authorities God had placed over him. According to Isaiah, Jesus had no majesty to attract us to him (Isa 53:2). Jesus was born into a poor family in an oppressed nation. Jesus submitted to his parents. Jesus obeyed Jewish law. Jesus paid taxes. Most of all, Jesus learned to obey the will of God in heaven. In Gethsemane, Jesus struggled to obey his Father God until his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. After his arrest, Jesus submitted to unjust human courts because it was God's will. At last, Jesus surrendered his life to God for world salvation.

In coming to this world, Jesus, the eternal Spirit, became flesh. He took up the weaknesses and limitations of a human body. He bore all the human agonies that we have to bear. He became tired. He became hungry. He became thirsty. He was tempted through his flesh desires by the devil. On the way to Golgotha, he fell under the weight of his cross, experiencing the failure of his strength as a man. Yet, his humiliation went further than that. Jesus, who is in very nature God, is holy. Yet, this holy Son of God became sin for sinful man. He bore in his own body the shameful, dirty, wretched sins of all mankind. In the sight of God, Jesus became the immorality of the Samaritan woman, the utter selfishness of the tax collector, the arrogance of the religious leader. Why? Why? It was to save us from our sins. It was the expression of God's love for sinners. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Jesus, the Word, became flesh to save us from our sins. Praise Jesus!

Verse 14 says, "...and made his dwelling among us." Jesus lived among ordinary people as one of us. People always want to find a better neighborhood to move to. People always want to hang around with those who are a little better than themselves. Young people want to hang out with those who are cool; they never want to hang out with odd people. But Jesus is different. Jesus left the best neighborhood, heaven, and came into this world to live among men. Jesus spent time with all kinds of sick and needy people. He ate with sinners. He shared life together with his disciples, who could be called the "dirty dozen." As he did so, they were changed. At first, they were slaves of sinful desires. They had a fixed idea that great men are those who exercise authority over others. But Jesus taught them that the truly great man is one who serves. To demonstrate, Jesus washed their smelly feet one by one. Jesus prayed for them to be sanctified by the truth. At last, they became shepherds for God's children in the world salvation work.

Apostle John, the writer, confessed, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus revealed his glory on earth, the glory of the One and Only. His glory is the glory of God. It was not just the glory of a prophet, or of a great spiritual leader, but the glory of the One and Only

Son of God. Jesus revealed this glory when he turned ordinary water into choice wine. Jesus revealed this glory when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus revealed this glory on the cross when he showed God's love to the world. Through living together with Jesus, his disciples understood who Jesus really was. Finally, on the last night of his earthly life, the disciples confessed that Jesus came from God and that he knew all things. This is what Jesus really wanted them to believe and know.

Through Jesus, God has come to dwell among us. God is with us, living with us. In the Old Testament, God came to dwell with his people through the tabernacle. In our time, Jesus lives in the hearts of his people as we study the word of God and repent of our sins. Jesus saves us from the temptation to grab power and exalt our sinful selves. Jesus clothes us with humility and grace. Jesus enables us to serve others with the love of God. Humble Jesus makes us truly happy. May Jesus rule each of our hearts as Lord and King. Amen. Come Lord Jesus.

Third, Jesus lives among us today.

Jesus came from heaven to earth as the first missionary. Down through the generations, innumerable people have received Jesus and imitated his missionary life. Mary Slessor (1848-1915) was a Scottish lady from a rather poor family. Because her father was known to be a drunkard, her family was shamed publicly. So, although Mary had an outgoing personality, she dreaded making a public speech. As a very young lady, she accepted Jesus as her personal Savior. Then she began to admire the great missionary to Africa, David Livingstone, and wanted to follow in his footsteps. She and her mother prayed sincerely for mission work in Calabar in the southeast corner of Nigeria. One day, the door opened and Mary Slessor went there as a single woman missionary. Not content to dwell in a missionary compound, she went farther and farther into the heart of Africa to meet headhunters and cannibals who had never heard the gospel before. She abandoned Scottish clothing and wore plain dress to blend in with native people. She often went barefoot in the jungle to the dismay of her elders. She cut her beautiful red hair until it was nearly as short as a man's hair. She learned to eat any kind of African food. She learned the language of the native people better than they themselves. She came to be known as "White Ma" among them. She confessed that it was Jesus living in her who gave her the courage and love to serve native people. She taught the word of God and helped them live by it. For example, native people believed that any woman having twins had been consorting with the devil. Thinking it would keep the devil away, the natives killed both babies at birth. If the mother resisted, she would also be killed. Mary taught them that God gave life. She personally took care of some abandoned twins and raised them as wonderful human beings. She also healed the sick with modern medicine and prayer. In these and many other ways, her life among the natives revealed the living Jesus. Many African people accepted Jesus as God and began a new life.

In UBF there are so many examples of those who imitated the incarnation of Jesus as missionaries. Dr. Samuel Yoo could live a comfortable life in America as a medical doctor. However, he went to Uganda, known as one of the poorest countries with many deadly diseases and the HIV virus. Dr. Yoo lived among native people to preach the gospel and heal the sick. His family suffered unbearably in that situation. Once, Dr. Yoo accidentally stuck himself with a needle that had been contaminated with the HIV virus. He expected to contract AIDS. As he struggled in prayer, he realized that he was suffering as the people of Uganda suffer. He was one with them. He accepted John 1:14, "The Word became flesh," and decided to give his life in Uganda for the glory of God and the salvation of Ugandan people. Later, he was found to be okay. He has remained there until now. Recently, Dr. Luke Lim became the director of Uganda UBF ministry. He delivers the Sunday message every week. Twelve Ugandan disciples are growing. Among them, four have taken turns delivering the Sunday message in the last few weeks, including two shepherdesses. Disciples of Jesus are growing in Uganda. Many sick people are being healed in Uganda. It is the fruit of God's work through the Word in his servants.

We are preparing the start of a new fall semester in our colleges and high schools. Students living in this post-modern culture have become rash, driven by sinful feelings. They suffer under the power of sin. May God use us as missionaries to them on each campus.

Fourth, Jesus is full of grace and truth (15-18).

To the Apostle John, it was so amazing and wonderful that Jesus became flesh and lived among us. He realized that to some, it may seem too good to be true. So he introduces John the Baptist as a witness that Jesus is God. John the Baptist testified that Jesus, who came after him chronologically, was actually before him in existence. It is because Jesus is God. Indeed, Jesus' coming to live among us is nothing but the one-sided grace of God. Sinful men did nothing to deserve this marvelous gift. Jesus came down to us because he is full of grace and truth.

Look at verses 16-17. "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The law of Moses revealed the holy God to his people. The law also revealed the problem of sin to his people. No one could solve his own sin problem. So God sent Jesus. Jesus shed his blood for our sins. Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin. Jesus restores our love relationship with God. When we know God, we know where we came from and where we are going. This is the truth. We can live by the truth. We can finally go back to the glorious kingdom of God with our Lord Jesus Christ.