

The Word Became Flesh
John 1:14
Key Verse: 1:14

by Kevin Albright

John 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."

What do you think about when you hear the word "Christmas"? Some might think about Christmas trees, colorful lights, gifts, shopping, Santa Claus. There's a song, "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas," but I'm not sure what snow has to do with Christmas. There's another song that Christmas is, "the most wonderful time of the year."

However, Christmas is not wonderful for all people. It is for many a hectic and busy time. It can be a depressing time, for those who've lost family members by death or by separation. I was so sorry to hear that one friend's husband left her in the past year. It makes some feel confused or empty inside. Someone said, "Christmas is a time when people become kind and friendly for a short time and then go back to their normal lives." Even Charlie Brown cries out in his television special, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"

Then what is Christmas all about? Wikipedia says (don't use Wikipedia for your term papers!): "Christmas is an annual commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ, celebrated by billions of people around the world, [including] an increasing number of non-Christians." Thus Christmas is a birthday celebration. This is the celebration of God's intervention in the world in a most personal and powerful way.

Matthew and Luke's Christmas accounts are quite familiar: the virgin birth of Jesus, the manger, the angels' announcement to shepherds: good news of great joy, Christ the Lord is born, Glory to God, peace to people, Immanuel: God with us, the Wise Men bearing gifts for newborn Jesus.

John's gospel does not record Jesus' birth story. Then what is his Christmas message? We find it in John 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." This verse gives us 3 truths about Christmas.

First, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Who is the Word? John 1:1 tells us. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "In the beginning" refers to Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The Word was with God the Creator. The Word was God the Creator. The Word was the eternal God who made all things. John 1:3 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." The infinite, eternal God, who created all things, became a human being.

3000 years ago God spoke to people through prophets like Moses. But 2000 years ago God the Word spoke directly to people by coming into the world as a human being. This is the profound message of John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us..." We call this The Incarnation. God became human in the person of Jesus Christ. He came and lived in our world.

It is hard to conceive that the infinite God became human. How could the Maker of all things enter his own creation? In the movie Tron, a video-game creator enters his own video game and struggles to survive. But this is not a video game or a movie. This is human history.

He made his dwelling among us. He pitched his tent among us. He lived next door as our neighbor. We might expect that if God came and lived among us he would live in a grandiose palace with limited access and many guards, like a Chinese emperor living in the Forbidden City. But Jesus did not come as a wealthy, powerful king. He was born into a common family. He had no room to be born in, and was placed in a manger at birth.

Why did God come in this way? It was to show us true humbleness. To humble oneself is to lower one's own condition or importance. Because of inborn pride we think, "I'm better than others." When I have a problem with someone, I find it hard to say, "I'm wrong. You're right. I'm sorry, please forgive me," even when I'm wrong. How much more difficult when I think I'm right! Any problem between God and man is always our fault. Yet God took

the initiative to come to us in loving confrontation. Jesus, though he is God, humbled himself to become human! Not only that, Jesus became the servant of all, humbly serving all kinds of needy and demanding people.

The Incarnation shows us God's sacrifice. Naturally, we work for a higher position and a more honorable life. We all like promotion, not demotion, a higher place, not a lower one. But Jesus gave up the glory, majesty and honor of heaven to come down to live in our fallen, cursed world with all its imperfections and death. It might be like a human being choosing to be born as a rat or an insect.

Along with being proud, we human beings are quite rebellious. When someone orders us to do something, our natural response is to say, "No," or, "You do it yourself!" But look at Jesus! Philippians 2:6-8 describes the extent of Jesus' humility: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death--even death on a cross!"

Above all, the Incarnation shows us God's amazing love. We all want and need to be loved, both by people and by God. People often feel that God does not love them when they see all the problems in their lives and in the world. How do we know that God loves us? The Incarnation is God's best proof that he loves us. Jesus is the Incarnation of God's love. "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." (John 3:16) "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him." (1 John 4:9)

True love involves suffering on behalf of another, to help them. Job had 3 friends who tried to comfort him in his trials and losses. But they failed to comfort him since they did not enter his sufferings. Instead, they tried to analyze and judge what he was doing wrong to make him suffer. Jesus did not come to pass judgment on us, by pointing out all our sins, mistakes, failures and flaws. Rather, in amazing love, Jesus left the glory and comfort of heaven and entered into our suffering. This is love: not that we loved, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

The year was 1955, 56 years ago. Eisenhower was President of the USA. Rose Park and Martin Luther King demonstrated for black civil rights. Disneyland, KFC and McDonald's opened. Elvis Presley was a rising rock-n-roll star. At that time, five American men averaging age 30 with young families and young children attempted to make friendly contact with a savage tribe in Ecuador. They seemed to be having success when suddenly they were speared to death, attempting to bring the message of God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ. Later, through faithful missionary efforts, two of the killers became Christians and baptized two of one of the martyr's children. The incarnational love of the missionaries was living proof of Jesus' love to them. Through their loving sacrifice, many in Ecuador and the USA saw God's incarnational love and believed in Jesus and many volunteered themselves for Christ's mission of love.

We all need humble love. Successful human relationships--whether marriage or friendship--require humble, forgiving, serving love. Jesus' shows us true love. Jesus gives us this love through the Holy Spirit when we love and obey him.

Second, we have seen his glory. John 1:14 says, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son..." It means that they recognized God in Jesus. What did they see in Jesus that revealed his glory?

They saw his glory, through his love and wisdom. One day Jesus sat down by a well in Samaria. An immoral local woman came to draw water. Jesus asked her, "Will you give me a drink?" She answered rudely, "How can you ask me for a drink?" since Jews and Samaritans did not associate with each other. Jesus lovingly replied, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (John 4:10) Jesus knew her life history. Still, he patiently loved her, telling her about worshipping God in spirit and in truth. She had many questions that she knew only the Messiah could one day explain. Jesus then said to her, "I am he." Then in joy she ran to tell her townspeople, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Jesus' love for sinners and wisdom from God revealed God's glory.

They saw Jesus' glory, through his miracles. Once Jesus was at a wedding and the wine ran out. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." Then he said, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." The banquet master tasted the water and said, "Why have you saved the best wine until now?" Jesus turned water into wine! This was Jesus' first miraculous sign. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. A royal official's son was dying. So he came to Jesus for help. Jesus said to him, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. He then learned that his son was healed at the very moment Jesus said, "Your son will live." So the royal official and all his household believed. Jesus enabled a crippled man to walk and a blind man to see. Jesus fed over 5000 hungry people with just 5 loaves and 2 fish. Jesus walked on the water. Jesus even called a dead man out of his tomb saying, "Lazarus, come out!" Through these miracles, Jesus revealed the glory of God.

They saw Jesus' glory, through his death on the cross. John was there at the cross, along with Jesus' mother Mary. John saw that Jesus on the cross was not angry or sorrowful, but full of mercy and love. From the cross, Jesus said to Mary his mother, "Dear woman here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, John took care of Mary. (John 19:26,27) Jesus died as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, completing his mission from God. (John 1:29) So John records as Jesus' last words, "It is finished." (John 19:30) The death of Jesus revealed the glory of the One and Only Son.

Finally, the resurrection of Jesus Christ revealed the glory of God. If Jesus' story had ended with his death, it would be more sorrowful and tragic than the saddest tragedy play, Romeo and Juliet. If his story ended with his death, no one would have the courage or motivation to follow Jesus or believe in him. The glorious message of Jesus Christ is that he did not remain dead. Jesus Christ rose to life again! The Incarnation and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ are the two greatest miracles in human history. We all have an appointment with death some day. Because of Jesus Christ, we can face death with hope and joy. Jesus promised: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." (John 11:25-26) Seeing the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the disciples testified, "We have seen his glory." Those who look to Jesus in faith can see his glory.

Third, Jesus came full of grace and truth. What is grace? Grace is an undeserved free gift. It is the forgiveness of sin. Through Jesus Christ, God has given us the grace of forgiveness of sins. Living in this world, we often carry the heavy burden of our sins, feeling ashamed, guilty, and regretful. Our consciences condemn us: "Why did I say that? Why do I keep doing that?" But through faith in Jesus' blood, we are given confidence that our sins are forgiven and our consciences are cleansed so that we may serve the living God (Heb 9:14).

In addition, the world is often not a very graceful place. One friend in Florida was agonizing this week over his threatening landlord and asked for prayer support. The world is often like a war zone of criticism, condemnation and judgment. But by the grace of Jesus, we can forgive others and be reconciled in our relationships. This week I was convicted by my sin against a Christian brother. I felt helpless and hypocritical to write this message. Through forgiveness and prayer and God's grace, we were reconciled in Jesus' grace. Jesus' grace restores our relationship with God and with others.

Jesus also came full of truth. The world is filled with lies, hypocrisy and deceit. What then is truth? One of Jesus' common sayings was, "I tell you the truth." Jesus prayed, "Your word is truth." So God's word is the truth. Jesus came speaking the words of truth from God. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6) So he himself is the truth. We need the word of God and the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32) Why did Jesus spend so much time and energy teaching the truth of God's word? It is because God's word gives life to those who hear and believe. Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24)

These days movies, books and facebook are so popular, but the truth of God's word is largely despised and ignored. People are quite interested in what makes them feel good, instead of pursuing the truth. The truth of God's word is not always what we want to hear. But it is what our soul needs. We need the grace of forgiveness of sin and the truth of God's word. Jesus came to show us and to give to us the grace and truth of God.

Once a woman was caught in adultery and brought to Jesus. Moses' law condemned adultery by stoning. So they pressed Jesus, "What do you say?" Jesus replied to her accusers, "Whoever among you is without sin, throw the first stone." They all walked away one by one. Jesus then asked the woman, "Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she replied. "Neither do I condemn you," Jesus said to her. "Go now and leave your life of sin." Jesus' words, "Neither do I condemn you," revealed his grace, the grace of forgiveness of sin. But his words, "Go now and leave your life of sin," called her to a new and better life in him. Jesus says to us, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." Jesus calls us, to live daily in his grace and truth.

From the first man in the garden of Eden, God sought to make his dwelling with us. But because of sin we could not dwell with God and left paradise. God provided the temple sacrifices to dwell in glory with his people. But it ended in conquest and exile. Finally, through Jesus Christ, God became man and made his dwelling among us. Through Jesus Christ, the dwelling of God is with man. Revelation 21:3 says, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

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. Jesus Christ has revealed God's love and glory to us. To all who receive Jesus, to those who believe in his name, he gives the right to become a child of God. Jesus became flesh and made his dwelling among us to give us the blessings of joy, peace, salvation and eternal life. This is the message of Christmas. May you have a merry Christmas in Jesus Christ our Lord!