

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Jn 1:14; Jn 3:13; Jn 6:41-58; I Jn 1:1-3, 4:2-3

- I. THE WORD (*logos*) BECAME (*egeneto*) FLESH (*sarx*)**—i.e. fully God (eternally-begotten Son) and fully man (body & soul); cf. I Jn 4:2-3—“Jesus Christ is *come in the flesh*”
 - A. William Barclay: “Here we come to the sentence for the sake of which John wrote the Fourth Gospel” (*The Gospel of John*, v. 1).
 - B. Augustine: “As our word becomes the bodily voice, by its assumption of that voice, as a means of developing itself externally, so the Word of God was made flesh, by assuming flesh, as a means of manifesting Itself to the world.”
 - C. Radical, unique Revelation—neither Jewish nor Greek thinkers ever envisioned
 - 1. Devout monotheism of Jews forbade any co-mingling of supernatural and natural
 - 2. Greek contempt for flesh (pronounced in Plato) forbade any fusion of spiritual and material
 - D. Heretical (unending) denials of perfect God/man balance—Gnostics; Docetists; Ebionites; Arians; Nestorians; Unitarians; Jehovah’s Witnesses; Liberals/Modernists; et al.
 - E. Nicene Creed (325 A.D.) declares: “for us men and our salvation, he came down from heaven and by the power of the Holy Spirit became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.” In 451 A.D., the Calcedon Council declared: “We all unanimously teach . . . one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ perfect in deity and perfect in humanity . . . in two natures, without being mixed, transmuted, divided, or separated. The distinction of the two natures is by no means done away with through the union, but rather the identity of each nature is preserved and comes together into one person and being.”
 - 1. Gregory of Nazianzus: “What he was, he continued to be. What he was not, he took to himself.”
 - 2. Athanasius: “The Word was not degraded by receiving a body . . . Rather he deified what he put on; and more than that, he bestowed this gift on the human race.”
- II. AND DWELT (*eskenosen*) AMONG (*en*) US**
 - A. Greek *eskenosen* literally means “tabernacled” or “tented”—evoking OT tabernacle (aglow but temporary) as well as the phenomenon of Jesus’ earthly years
 - B. St Alcuin: “*dwelt among us* means lived amongst men”
 - 1. Gospels record Jesus lived, in many ways, an ordinary life—eating, sleeping, etc.
 - 2. Inasmuch as He was fully man, injunctions to “imitate” Him (“What Would Jesus Do?”) legitimate—thus devotional classics such as Thomas a Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ*; Oswald Chambers’s *My Utmost for His Highest*; Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *The Cost of Discipleship*; Dallas Willard’s *The Spirit of the Disciplines*
- III. AND WE BEHELD (*etheasthai*) HIS GLORY (*doxa*), THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN (*monogenes*, i.e. “the only one of its kind”) SON OF THE FATHER (*patras*)**
 - A. Word “beheld” always means actual seeing, physical sight
 - B. Glory (*doxa*) resonate with meaning (e.g. singing “doxology”)
 - 1. OT *Shekinah*—oft discerned in the cloud in the wilderness, shining on Sinai, illuminating tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple & then departing in Ezekiel’s vision; Isaiah’s vision;
In Sum: The Presence of God
 - 2. Crucial NT incidents—especially Transfiguration (cf. Mt 17:1-9), Resurrection, Ascension
 - a. N.B.: “high mountain”—quite often transcendental events occur in mountains!
 - b. 2 Peter 1:16-18—“when we were with Him on the holy mountain”
 - c. Ascribing glory to God and Christ encouraged in John’s Revelation—4:11; 5:12; 7:12
 - 3. C.S. Lewis’s “The Weight of Glory” re deep, holy desire to share, radiate “glory”
- IV. FULL OF GRACE (*charis*) AND TRUTH (*alethia*)**
 - A. Grace
 - 1. *Sola Gratia* (basic Christian theological fundamental—all that is comes from God)
 - 2. In Jesus we find all facets of salvation: predestination, calling, redemption, justification, reconciliation, sanctification, glorification
 - B. Truth
 - 1. Embodied in, articulated by Jesus
 - 2. Sustained by Spirit’s on-going inspiration (Jn 14:17; 15:26)
 - 3. Liberating us from Satan, sin, sickness, death, hell (Jn 8:32)

“By the Power of the Holy Spirit He Became Incarnate from the Virgin Mary”

Gal 4:4; Col 1:19-20; Jn 1:1-4, 12-14; 6:42

“The Son of God took to himself human flesh without sin, and was made man, without ceasing to be God.”
—*The Russian Catechism*

“God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that he might kill sin, deprive death of its power and vivify man.” —St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*

“The Son of God became man in order that He might again grace man as He had when He made him. For He had made him to His own image, understanding and free, and to His own likeness, that is to say, as perfect in virtues as it was possible for human nature to be, for these virtues are, as it were characteristics of the divine nature—freedom from care and annoyance, integrity, goodness, wisdom, justice, freedom from all vice. Thus, He put man in communion with Himself. . . . But, since by transgressing the commandment we obscured and canceled out the characteristics of the divine image, we were given over to evil and stripped of the divine communion. . . . But, since He had shared with us what was better and we had not kept it, He now takes His share of what is worse, of our nature I mean to say, that through Himself and in Himself He may restore what was to His image and what was to His likeness.”

--St John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*

“That men might be born of God, God was first born of them” —Augustine, *Homilies on John*

“In short, since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit to the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us.”
--John Calvin, *Institutes*

“Mary is female, Jesus is male. God’s way of coming involves both genders in a particular way fitting to those genders: female for the birthing of the God-man without human father, and male, for the mission of the anointed messianic servant, according to the Jewish expectation of a male of Davidic descent.”
--Thomas Oden, *The Word of Life*

“He did not despise the male, for he assumed the nature of a man, nor the female, for he was born of a woman.”
--St Augustine, *Letters*

“Those who deny the birth of the God-man of the Virgin Mary will always question also the pre-existence and deity of Christ in General.” --E.W. Sartorius, *The Doctrine of Divine Love*

“The virgin birth helps make sense out of a whole series of doctrines. The correspondence of this teaching with other key points of doctrine may be summed up as follows: it is consistent with the witness to the preexistent Logos. It is consistent with the witness to the humanity of Christ. It is consistent with the witness to the deity of Christ. It is consistent with the teaching of the one and only divine-human Person. It is consistent with the teaching of the sinlessness of Christ. It is consistent with the teaching of the new birth. Hence it is thought be an apt way of understanding the beginning of God’s saving act.” --Thomas Oden, *Word of Life*; cf. John Calvin, *Institutes*