



The Word became flesh

John 1:1-14

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH

We are coming into a season of the church named Advent. It covers 4 Sundays in the Christian year leading up to Christmas and we often confuse it with Christmas. I can remember in times gone by that we rarely celebrated Advent in church but these days it is as common in Baptist Churches as in others who follow the Christian calendar.

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT? Here are three news items from Wednesday 25th November.
THE SUN, THE BBC, THE DAILY MAIL

There is a sense in which each story is important to someone, but the story about the banks has much greater implications for many people than either of the other two stories. Coverage gives us some indication of how important something is.

To be fair to the people that thought up the Christian year, they have considered the balance of events.

ADVENT, CHRISTMAS EPIPHANY. In the next two months the church celebrates three seasons. The first is Advent which starts today. It is about how the eternal Word got to become a human being. It goes on for 4 weeks or just a bit over. It's followed by Christmas, which celebrates the birth of Jesus and His circumcision and it's a 12 day feast. That is followed by Epiphany on 6th January which celebrates the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt and then a series of events in the first 30 years of the life of Jesus.

When we then get to look at the Bible, we see that the balance follows the significance of the event. There's quite a few things written about the way God became a human being, not just in the gospels but in the letters and in the OT in terms of prophecy. The recall of the birth and circumcision covers part of two chapters. The events put in Epiphany cover quite a few chapters over the 4 gospels although there are other seasons in the year where other events are covered too.

As an aside, there is one season that has more time spent on it and more space in the Bible than all the rest put together. You know what it is: EASTER. What that tells us is that THIS IS IMPORTANT.

Our almost merging of Christmas and Advent takes away so much of the meaning of Advent. It doesn't have the importance of Easter, both the calendar space, and more importantly, the Bible space that is taken up on it shows that it still has importance. So WHY ADVENT IMPORTANT?

Because it tells us something about the nature and actions of God THE WORD BECAME FLESH. God became a human being. Let's read these words again: *14 The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.* Why is this so important? INCARNATION Because it describes what theologians call the Incarnation and understanding it is central to how we understand the central theme of the NT – the Easter story.

The Word became a human being. IN THE BEGINNING then WHO IS THE WORD (the Logos)? It isn't rocket science to work out who John is referring to but for the benefit of anyone who didn't know, John spells it out: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This description is unique to John's Gospel. The Word obviously gets to become a human being but who was He before

- HE'S ETERNAL He was there at the beginning – He's eternal. 2 From the very beginning the Word was with God.
- HE'S THE CREATOR He was with God – has the same authority as God. 3 Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him.
- HE'S GOD God was the Word.
- HE IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE He is light - In him was life, and that life was the light of men - life – creator life, spiritual life. But in Him was life AND THAT LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN.

What's so interesting about light? We need light to live. Without light we can't see. Without light we can't grow food. The Logos, the Word is the source of life and without Him, it's like turning the light off – no-one can function spiritually. The Bible gives us two essential pieces of information about life and light – *Col 2:13 – we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Matt 4:15 16 The people who live in darkness will see a great light. On those who live in the dark land of death the light will shine.* Although He is life and that life is the light of men – human beings are dead and walk in sin by nature, We weren't created like that but that's what we have become as a race.

- HE BECAME A HUMAN BEING and then the Word becomes human. In the NT we have introduced the truth of the Trinity and here it is – we have a God who is complex in nature who was able to become human and we know that He started as a fertilised egg, became a foetus and was eventually born. How can God do that? Amazing. I don't know how He did it but we see from His nature and His deeds that He was the Son of God.

WHY DID HE BECOME A HUMAN BEING? Why on earth would the One who was eternal, the creator, the given of life and light – God become human? Why would He come here? This is the wonder of advent.

WHY DID HE COME?

- TO BE LIGHT We were created with life and He lit our way. In our sin we are by nature dead spiritually and we don't walk in light. The Word came to be light. When we were dead in our sins we walked in darkness, but the life of the Word has lit our way, shown things as they are.
In World War II, one of the boldest and most dramatic decisions in all naval warfare was made by Admiral Marc Mitscher in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Late in the afternoon of June 20, 1944, Mitscher had dispatched a late afternoon bombing mission against the fleeing Japanese fleet. It was pitch dark when the first of the flyers began returning to their carriers. But with the fleet under strict wartime blackout regulations and the pilots' fuel supplies running dangerously low, many of the flyers would never find their way back to their carriers. Admiral Mitscher took a calculated risk. He turned on the lights. One returning flyer described the scene as a "Hollywood premier, Chinese New Year's, and Fourth of July all rolled into one." For two hours the planes landed. Some 80 pilots, weary and out of gas, ditched in the sea but relatively few were lost.
When Jesus died on the cross He opened a way by which we can find forgiveness and eternal life – to be made alive again. *John 8:12 "I am the light of the world," "Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness."*
- HE CAME TO HIS OWN PEOPLE – He started with the Jews, who we know didn't receive Him.
- HE CAME TO MAKE PEOPLE CHILDREN OF GOD
He was the eternal Son who became a human being in order to make a way for human beings to become God's sons for eternity. The message we have this morning is for everyone.
- TO SHOW PEOPLE WHAT GOD IS LIKE *14 The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son. Jesus, as the Revealer of God, is like that. He communicates to us the thoughts, feelings, and desires of God. Yet, he doesn't just talk about what goes on inside God -- he is God. His life reveals God. In order to know God, one needs to look to Jesus, to listen to Jesus, to try and understand Jesus.*
- SLIDE *He is the eternal Son who became a human being in order to make a way for human beings to become God's sons for eternity.*

HIS MISSION IS OUR MISSION

John's writings are full of memorable verses and we have considered a few of them this morning. The most memorable sentence in John's writings are the words of Jesus "For God so loved the world". God so loved the world, he didn't shout out "I love you" - although He spoke to many people in many places. He didn't send a letter saying "I love you" although He did give us a book that says that. No when God wanted to speak, the Word became flesh. He loved and did something about it, because that's the nature of God's love. God became a missionary. The eternal Son, the logos, spoke most eloquently by becoming human, spending 9 months of his life as a foetus! Why – to share in our humanity so that in His death and resurrection we can share His eternal life. But to do that we need to listen to the Word, accept His offer of forgiveness, of relationship with God and follow Him.

Most of us do that this morning. For us the Word becoming flesh also means something extra. John puts this well in his first letter.

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life I John 1:1-3

Challenge as we come towards Christmas – let's be His witnesses.

*Preached by Mark Reid 29/11/09
MRBC Felixstowe
© Mark Reid 2009*