

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED **John 1:1-14****WHO?? TOOK UP OUR FLESH AT CHRISTMAS**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became 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.

Have you ever been in a conversation, assuming you knew who it was that the other person was talking about, and then becoming less sure, finally asking, “WHO is it we’re talking about?” Or can you imagine being stranded on the road with a car full of people. Then someone famous stops to help, but you’re not really sure who and what that person really was. Finally you ask, “WHO was it again that just stopped to help us?” We have just celebrated Christmas. We know it was the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. But, just to check, as the holiday is passing away for another year, let’s ask ourselves again and then listen to this text for the answer, WHO was it that was born and took our human flesh at Bethlehem?

John doesn’t say anything about the birth of Jesus other than these words. In fact John’s writing starts out a little mysteriously. It’s not immediately clear that John is even talking about a person. It seems he could be simply talking about the “Word” of God, as in “The Bible.” Or he may simply mean “directives” of God, as in, “The word from headquarters is that we move ahead.” But is he talking about a person?? As one reads these verses it gradually becomes clear that he is indeed talking about a person, calling a person “The Word.” By the end it’s as clear as can be that it is a person, and not just a person, indeed the very Son of God! *And the Word became 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.* It is the eternal Son of God who took up human flesh at Bethlehem, born of the virgin Mary. It is Jesus our Savior. This is John’s account of the birth of Christ.

What does it mean that Jesus who was born is called the “Word”? It’s an unusual name for the Savior and Redeemer--the WORD. However, this term helps us really understand WHO it is that came to save us. In common terms a word is a verbal expression of someone’s inward thoughts. We know what Mr. X is thinking and feeling by listening to Mr. X’s words. However, Mr. X’s thoughts and feeling can also be understood visually by his actions and motions, by his body language. His actions become his words, the method by which his thoughts are communicated. Jesus is indeed the “Word” of God. Christ, in His verbal words and teaching, as well as in his physical deeds and actions, conveys to us the thoughts of God’s heart. God hates sin, God loves the sinner, God through His Son has overpowered sin, death, and the devil. The central message of the Bible, of the Word of God, is salvation in Jesus the “Word” of God. Many times we can interchange those concepts. Example: we are saved by faith in the Word of God—meaning the Bible and it’s message, and also meaning we are saved by faith in Jesus the crucified and risen Son of God. Another example: It is the pastor’s privilege to teach the flock the Word of God—that is, the Bible, or Jesus. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews says. *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son! Hebrews 1:1-2.* Jesus is that Word of God. Therefore, if one teaches the Bible, but does not teach Christ the Savior, one is not teaching the Word of God.

John says that this Word, this Communicator of God’s heart, was present *in the beginning*. It was the beginning of the existence of all physical matter. The beginning of this world’s history. The beginning of time itself. In fact, *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.* He was present and active at creation. When God SAID, Let there be, the Word of God, Jesus, was active and a part of our creation.

Jesus was also the beginning of the unfolding of God's plan of salvation already at the founding of this world. In Titus 1:2 we read that we are saved through Christ *in the hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie promised before time began. Titus 1:2. Revelation 13:8* also tells us that Christ was *slain from the foundation of the world.* At the very outset of this world's existence, Jesus our Redeemer was there. God knew that man would sin, God did not make Adam and Eve sin, God did not want them to sin, but God knew they, and we, would be sinners and already in the beginning knew He would send His Son—the Word who communicates God's heart. *He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

Note that the Word was in the beginning. The Word did not come to be at the beginning. He was! He was before Time. He is eternal. *The Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Jesus made this very clear when He told his enemies, who claimed they were important because they were descendants of Abraham. Jesus said to them, *Before Abraham "came to be," [was], I am (John 8:57).* Jesus is God Himself—God the Son—right there with the Father, at the face of God the Father. He was with God.

WHO is this Jesus who was born at Bethlehem? Eternal God Himself, willing to come down to earth for us. It's as if someone made stick people, and then that person who made them was willing to become a stick person himself, with all the limitations involved, in order to help the helpless stick people. Such love and such care for them! This is the One who came to be born at Bethlehem for us.

Jesus born at Bethlehem is also described as the Light. He who made light is our light and our life. Without Him we are nothing. Without Him we are dead. He is the Light that shines in the Darkness—life giving, life-sustaining Light! He is the Light that cannot be overcome. He cannot be extinguished. He made us. He has come for us. He who died under our sins and curse, rose to life and cannot be thwarted. The Darkness does not “get it” or understand Him of itself. *The world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.* Nor can the darkness of unbelief and Satan ever overpower it. Things will never go back. No one can rescind His creation of all things, His presence among us to save us, His glorious resurrection, and our eternal forgiveness and salvation in the Light of heaven forever! The One that took-up our flesh at Bethlehem is our Light!

This Jesus, born at Bethlehem, was rejected by many of those He came to save. Yet He came anyway. Being rejected is not fun or pleasant. The stick people He made wanted to have nothing to do with Him. Yet He came anyway. He for the world. He came for those who, by God's power and grace, would not despise Him and turn away. *As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* The One who came to Bethlehem still gives us life today. He adopts us into God's family. None of this is by our action, but all by His.

And the Word became 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. Jesus came to dwell—to tent—with us who are but men. Not “men” in the sense of independent, self-directing, strong men. But man in the sense of dependent, needing help, weak man. The eternal Word, the Light, the Life, came to Bethlehem to share our existence, to be a mere man, in order to communicate God's heart of love and forgiveness, by conquering all our foes, for this life and the life to come, through His death and resurrection. This is WHO came to be born at Bethlehem—for us!

Let this WORD—the Written Word, and Jesus the Word Himself!--dwell in you richly. Bask in that Word, the Light of Christmas, all life long!

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---