

# The Word Became Flesh

Christmas Messages Part 22  
John 1:14 12-24-2015

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Summary: Jesus is called the Word, which says more than “the deed” or “the power” because deeds and power are ambiguous. Thoughts reside in the mind but words are for communication. God wanted to communicate and reveal himself to us. The silent treatment is painful, but only if you love the person. Communication matters in love relationships.

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**John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. 6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. 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. 15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ” 16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.**

One of the most Christmassy passages you will ever find in the Bible is John 1:14.

## **John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.**

You might not think of that as a traditional Christmas verse, because we tend to focus on the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke, but it may be the Christmassiest verse in the whole Bible. I say that because it not only describes *what happened* (the birth of Jesus), but so much more importantly it tells us the meaning and significance of what happened. The significance of Christmas is not that a baby was born and laid in a manger. The significance of Christmas is that the baby that was laid in that manger was Almighty God taking on human flesh.

## **Jesus’ Pre-existence**

We don’t talk that way about anyone else’s birth. Someone might ask you, “When were you born?” but no one ever asks you, “When did you take on human flesh?” The ways that Jesus’ entrance into this world are spoken of are absolutely unique. This week I spent some time in 1 Timothy 3:16. That verse is another example.

**1 Timothy 3:16 Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.**

That's another Christmas verse. The very first phrase: **He appeared in a body** - that's Christmas. It is right at the center of what Christmas is – the Son of God appeared in a body. And again, you don't talk that way about a normal human being.

"Tell me about your life."

"Well, I appeared in a body in 1967."

It's technically true – I did appear in a body back in 1967, but we don't talk like that because prior to me having a body I didn't exist at all. But this is a very appropriate way to talk about Jesus because he pre-existed before he ever took on human flesh.

**John 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”**  
**57 “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”**

(Abraham had been dead for 2000 years.)

**58 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”**

Jesus is the only person ever to pre-exist before he was conceived in his mother's womb. So 1967 – the year I was born – that year is significant for me because it's the year I first came into existence. The time of Jesus' being conceived was significant only because that is the point at which an eternally existent person finally took on human flesh.

## The Word

The Word became flesh. But why is he called the Word? Why not say “Jesus became flesh” or “the Son of God became flesh”? That's kind of a strange way to talk about a person – to refer to him as the Word. Is this even talking about Jesus? Yes, we know for sure it's talking about Jesus, because John identifies him by name and in verse 17 – Jesus Christ. And in verse 15 he says it is the one John the Baptist pointed to, which we know was Jesus. So why refer to him as the Word? What's the significance of describing God the Son that way? Why not, “In the beginning was the power ... and the power became flesh”? Or, “In the beginning was the deed ... and the deed was with God and the deed was God ... and the deed became flesh and dwelt among us”? That would certainly be an accurate way of representing God. God is always active – always working.

**John 5:17 Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work”**

God is always powerful, always active, always working – why not say, “In the beginning was the deed”? That would be accurate, but it wouldn't say as much as the term word and here's why: Deeds and actions are by nature ambiguous. Deeds happen, but you can't tell just by watching them why they happen. If you're late for church, I have no idea what that means. It could be you're lazy and overslept. It could be you stopped to help someone who was in trouble. Or a hundred other possible reasons. It could be a bad thing; it could be a good thing. How do I find out the meaning of your lateness? I find out when you tell me – with words.

How about this one: “In the beginning was the thought... And the thought became flesh”? Same problem – The thought is something that sits in your mind. It's invisible and unknowable until it's communicated.

And you could go down through the list. In the beginning was the love... What would be wrong with that? The Bible says that God is love. And that's true, but what the Holy Spirit wanted to emphasize here wasn't just how God feels, but that God is communicative. He is a God who reveals himself and communicates his thoughts to us.

If you talk to someone who is agnostic (people who say you can't know for sure if there's a God), very often they will use the argument of humility. They will say, “I'm too humble to presume to know

whether or not there's a God." And they will say that it is prideful and arrogant for a person to come along and claim that they could know about God. We are tiny little specks of dust on a speck of dust in the universe – how could we presume to be able to figure out ultimate things? That objection is half right. It is true – we are way too limited in our intellect to ever be able to figure out anything about God. However, if God really is all-knowing and all-powerful, certainly he would be capable of revealing true things about himself even to creatures such as us. What would prevent God from communicating information about himself that's true? Our little brains aren't big enough to hold all of it, so we couldn't ever know everything that's true about God, but certainly we could know some things that are true about him if he graciously revealed those things to us.

The opening section of the book of John is making the point that God did exactly that. He was pleased to reveal himself to us. He was pleased to communicate thoughts from his mind to us in ways that we could understand. The child that was laid in that Manger 2000 years ago was the ultimate and perfect communication from God about himself.

**Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ... 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...**

## Communication and Relationship

So let's think through the significance of that - the significance of willingness to communicate. Raise your hand if you have ever had someone give you the silent treatment. We all know what it's like to get the silent treatment. The silent treatment is actually one of the most common forms of revenge that exists. It is so much easier and more subtle than punching someone in the nose. It doesn't even really seem like hostility. You can claim innocence – "What? I didn't say anything." It's not overtly hostile, but it can really hurt. When you really want to punish someone, the silent treatment will do it. You can make their life miserable for however long you decide to stay quiet.

But here is the really interesting thing about the silent treatment – it only works if the person loves you. If you don't have a love relationship with someone, the silent treatment won't bother them a bit. If I walk past some random person in Wal Mart without saying anything, they don't go home sobbing, "That guy just gave me the silent treatment." Nobody gets their feelings hurt if they get the silent treatment from a stranger in an elevator. We generally don't expect or especially desire communication from people we don't have a relationship with. If they have a piece of information we need, we want them to tell us that, but we don't expect them to expose their hearts to us. Revealing your heart – your desires and feelings and affections and all that – that's only for people you have a close relationship with. In fact, that's how you develop a close relationship – by sharing those things.

When someone extends an invitation to communicate with you, that is an invitation to a relationship. And the more the communication, the deeper the relationship they want. If someone important sends you a message, "Call me," or "Come to my office." That might just mean they have a piece of information for you. If they invite you to join them for coffee, that's something more. If they invite you to their house for dinner, that shows even more desire for a relationship – especially if they are really open and transparent and forthcoming about what is in their heart when they talk to you.

So what does that say about God? He revealed his heart to us in the most thorough and profound way possible – by becoming one of us, taking on flesh and bone, becoming human, and living among us. He wants us to know him personally. Not just to memorize a bunch of religious facts, but to know him in the biblical sense – with an intimate, personal, love relationship. A relationship that is so close, that it is described most often in Scripture with the word "in." Those who are followers of Jesus Christ are said to be *in Christ*. You see that phrase countless times throughout the New Testament – we are so closely associated with him, and our relationship with him is so close that we are described as being *in* him. That's unique. You won't see that in any other religion. You will never hear of a Muslim talking about being in Mohammad. Or a Buddhist being in Buddah, or a Mormon being in Joseph Smith, or a Hindu being in any one of their millions of gods. Christianity is not a religion where some prophet came along

and said, “Hey, let me give you some religious philosophies to live by...” Christianity is a religion where a man came and said, “I am the eternal God, and I can prove that. I can do any kind of miracle at will, and I will die and rise from the dead on the third day. I have come down from heaven to form a bridge between man and God so that sinful human beings could be forgiven and actually know God personally.”

**Jeremiah 9:23 This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.**

Far more important than power, money, strength, influence, or education is knowing God. If your children got straight A’s last semester but didn’t make any progress towards knowing God, that’s worthless. Nothing in life is more important than personal knowledge of God.

And something deep down inside us knows that intuitively. We know that knowledge of God is what matters. People who are atheists or agnostics have to work constantly to try to justify living a life that ignores the creator. They might finally get to a point where their intellect and conscience is so numbed that they don’t have to consciously think about it anymore, but if they give it very much thought at all they will realize that this is not just a universe where there are objects way bigger than us – things that are greater than us; there must also be someone who is greater than us. And the meaning of life is to know him.

## How to Know God

But how is that done? How do you get to know someone you can’t see or hear or touch? Is it possible to develop a relationship with someone who is not physically present with you? Sure. We all know there are such things as long distance relationships. How is that possible? How do people have long distance relationships? Communication, right? They can’t see or touch each other, but they can still communicate, and that is the chief thing that’s needed for a relationship to deepen.

And that’s great news, because we can have that with the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though he is not physically present with us, he exists everywhere, and is available to have two way communication with anyone who has an open, receptive heart to what he wants to communicate.

**John 7:17 If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.**

Before a person can really understand communication from God, there has to be an open, willing heart. That’s true of any communication with anyone. You can’t even accurately understand another human being if you have a closed heart toward them. True communication requires receptivity.

But if you are receptive, you will understand. And when you understand, you will believe. You will then repent of your sins – give up the old life of living for yourself – and become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ because you will see his way as better than the way of selfishness and sin. And when that happens, you will, for the first time, be able to have a real, intimate, love relationship with Almighty God.

**John 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.**

God will make his home with you, and you will be in Christ. At that moment, all your sins will be forgiven, and he will make you a new person. Your eyes will be opened to see and appreciate and enjoy the magnificence of God, and daily fellowship with him – which is a far greater treasure, far more satisfying and joy-producing, than any sin or anything in this world. If you want to know more about how to do that, please come talk to me at the end tonight. This could be your first Christmas that you actually know Christ himself!

And for those of us who already do know him and love him, take some time this Christmas to contemplate the significance of the fact that the Creator of the universe has communicated clearly to you.

He didn't just leave vague clues about his existence, like Easter eggs hidden around the creation. He gave full disclosure, and opened his heart to you. He gave us 66 books jammed full of loving communication that reveals his passions, his desires, his will, what he is like, what he has done, what he intends to do in the future, how he acts, how he feels about you and about all the most important issues of life. It is the most precious love letter ever written, and he even sends his spirit to enable your heart to understand and receive the message. I realize we all struggle to understand the difficult things in the Bible, but every time you do understand something, realize what is happening. The Word himself is communicating to you, because he loves you and is inviting you to closer intimacy with him.