

"The Word Became Flesh" – John 1:14

Last night at our Christmas Eve service, I posed this question: Who is this Child? Who is this little boy born in that Bethlehem manger? It is a question every one of us must answer. Without exception. And the consequences of answering wrong are absolutely catastrophic.

The Apostle John wrote his gospel at the end of the First Century specifically so we could get our answers right. His purpose is stated in chapter 20.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31)

At Christmas, we celebrate the Incarnation. John's account of Jesus' birth is quite brief. He doesn't talk about the announcement of Gabriel. He doesn't talk about the trip to Bethlehem. There is no mention of the manger, the angels, the shepherds, the wise men. He simply says in Chapter 1, verse 14:

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. (John 1:14)

This birth is of cosmic importance. Who is this Child?

We need to back up to the opening verses of John's Gospel to begin to answer the question. The answer is simple enough for a little child to understand, but it is so profound that 2,000 years of scholarly work has not begun to mine the depths.

First of all, Jesus is God ... God the Son.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

The Word John refers to is none other than Jesus Christ. The Word; *ho logos* in the Greek. This is much more than a spoken word, much more than a word written on a page. This represents the totality of the Divine expression. He is the revelation of all that is God. The writer of Hebrews says Jesus is

... the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, (Hebrews 1:3)

Jesus is the full embodiment of all that is God. And notice: In the beginning was the Word. Jesus is begotten, not created. There has never been a time when He was not. He is of the very same substance, the very same essence as the Father. There is perfect unity in the Godhead. So, we can state, as does the Hebrew *Shema*:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Jesus is very God of very God. And Jesus is the very Agent of creation.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:3)

John states it twice, in two different ways so we will make no mistake. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way when he says God ...

... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the

brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, ... (Hebrews 1:2-3)

So, Jesus is not only the Agent of creation, He is the Sustainer of all things.

And Jesus is the giver of life:

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

Not just life, but light as well ... that is revelation. Jesus is the overcomer of darkness.

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:5)

Jesus is God, the Agent of Creation, the Sustainer of all that is, the giver of life, the Source of light and the Overcomer of darkness. The Word, *ho logos*, is all these things and more. In summary, Jesus is God just as the Father is God and the Holy Spirit is God.

Jesus has always been God, but He wasn't always man. Look at verse 14 again.

And the Word became flesh (John 1:14a)

Remember, In the beginning was the Word but at a point of time He became flesh.

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (Galatians 4:4)

In order to redeem us, God the Son had to share our common lot. He had to become flesh because in the infinite wisdom of God, Jesus was going to die for our sins and God cannot die. He had to become human. So, *the Word became flesh*. That is what we commemorate, what we celebrate on this day.

Jesus is 100% God, but because He became flesh, He is also 100% human being. I know that adds up to 200%, which is hard for us to understand. It's God math! He was born in the same way every one of us was born. He had to grow and learn, just like we did. Scripture says *He*

... was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

And there lies the only difference between His human life and ours: He never sinned ... not once.

But while Jesus voluntarily set aside some of the attributes of godhood so He could walk among us, He did not cease to be God. That is what John set out to demonstrate in his Gospel. While Luke emphasized our Lord's identity with us as the Son of Man, John emphasized His deity as the Son of God. Both of those concepts are critically important if we are to answer the question: "Who is this Child?"

To emphasize His deity, John picked out seven specific miracles performed by Jesus. And he quoted Jesus as our Lord made explicit claims of deity. Jesus claimed to be God. Jesus isn't a liar.

To fully understand Jesus' claims, you need to know that during the burning bush incident, Moses asked God what His name was ...:

And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' " (Exodus 3:14)

This is the meaning of God's revealed personal name. So, when Jesus used the term "I am", He was in fact claiming to be God. The Pharisees certainly understood what He meant. On one of those occasions, they tried to stone Him to death because of blasphemy, and it would have been blasphemy if Jesus wasn't exactly who He claimed to be.

Let's take a moment to look at those seven "I Am" statements.

And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)

Jesus claims to be the source of all spiritual food and drink. We are nourished by His word. You need to sit down at that particular table! You need to take your fill of that precious bread, to become saturated with His words.

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12)

He is the source of all truth. He is the Truth. He banishes spiritual darkness.

Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. (John 10:7-9)

Jesus gives access to God, because Jesus is God.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

Jesus was willing to lay down His life for those who follow Him. And that is, in fact, exactly what He did.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. (John 11:25)

Jesus is the resurrection. He is the source of eternal life and believing in Him gives us the promise of a resurrected life in a resurrected universe.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

Jesus is exclusive. He is the only pathway to God. There is no other way to be reconciled to our Creator.

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:1-5)

Jesus is the source of all spiritual fruitfulness. By abiding in Him, our lives are changed for the better. By living in Him we produce the fruit of true righteousness.

There you have it, seven "I Am" statements directly from the mouth of our Lord. But I want to share one more and this one is even more explicit, because it isn't connected to anything else. It's in John 8:58.

Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58)

Who is this Child? He is the Son of God who is fully capable of saving you from the death penalty your sins require. He is the Son of Man, who lived a perfect, sinless, human

life so that He could die in your place. The eternal Word became flesh. That is what we should celebrate on this Christmas day. Jesus is the greatest gift you could ever hope to get but a gift is useless if you fail to receive it. If you don't unwrap a gift addressed to you, if you simply ignore it and leave it behind, it will do you no good at all.

Here is how you unwrap the greatest gift of all:

First, admit you are guilty. Admit to yourself and God that you are a sinner. That shouldn't come as a great revelation.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

And the just penalty for the most trivial sin is eternal death, described in Revelation as the Lake of Fire, an eternity of the most excruciating torment.

Secondly, you need to believe God still loves you.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Jesus loves you so much that He was willing to suffer the death penalty in your place. That is the only reason the Word became flesh.

Thirdly, you need to confess that Jesus is your Lord. You need to strive to live according to His will, to listen to Him, to do what He wants you to do.

When Thomas encountered the resurrected Savior,

Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:27-29)

If you want to be truly blessed ... blessed forever ... you must make the same confession, from the heart. "Jesus, you are my Lord and my God!"

Finally, you need to believe God has raised Him from the dead. This Child, born in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago, would die on the cross. He would cry out "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" which is translated, "*MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?*" (Mark 15:34) He would bear ... *our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)* Yes, He would die, but He would rise again, proving that His sacrifice on your behalf was accepted and because He lives, you can have a living relationship with Him.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

I sure hope you have opened your Christmas gift! I hope you thank Jesus every day for the incredible love He lavishes on all who believe. Because it was for you that the Word became flesh.