

John 1:1-14
Christmas Day
December 25, 2022

While believers frequently complain about the distractions from the true meaning of Christmas that traditions of the season cause, several of them have their roots in Christian thought. So recall that meaning and enjoy it rather than railing against everything. As we exchange gifts we celebrate God's greatest gift and also reflect the gifts of the Wise Men. We decorate our homes and churches with lights and candles that remind us Jesus is the light of the world. We sing carols like the angel choir did in the birth announcement to the shepherds. I once saw a card that said, "Tis the season to believe in miracles." It is true. Today we observe the great miracle anticipated by all our preparations of the past weeks. What else could we use as our theme but

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

- I. Eternal as the Word
- II. Bright as the Light
- III. Glorious in his tent

John's use of the Word in reference to Jesus may seem unusual but it is fitting. Words express our thoughts and reveal what's on our minds. Jesus reveals the Father to us. When we see the Son on earth in human form we come to know God and especially his love for us.

That Word was there in the beginning. The first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, starts out the same way, "In the beginning, God..." Notice that God was already there. He is eternal. Eternity is a difficult concept for us. Our minds are attached to the clock and the calendar. Everything about us has a beginning. Not God. Nor the one here called the Word.

For yes, the Word was present in the beginning. He was with God, turned toward him, with a closer relationship than a human picture of closeness. They are fully united and work in complete harmony. What is credited to or spoken of the one also applies to the other.

Especially mentioned is the work of creation. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." We can see where the Word was involved. Remember that God spoke and it came to be is a regular report during the six days of the Lord's creative work.

What does the eternity of God and the Word communicate to us? He has always been there; he is tried and true. Some people like change. They desire new and improved products. In some cases it is both needed and beneficial. Other items hyped as new and improved turn out to be a bust. Remember when Coke tried to replace Classic Coke? Or when M&M's changed their colors? Sometimes it is better to stick with what is familiar, and that is definitely the case with God. He has always been there for us. He always will be. He is eternal as the Word.

II.

The Apostle leads us to behold the miracle of Christmas from another angle. He is bright as the Light. The one John places before us is the source of life. "In him was life." He is talking about more than breathing and moving. We have real life in connection with Christ. All life centers in Christ and in God. Apart from them we are merely existing. The Lord brings meaning and fullness.

John continued, "That life was the light of men." Light enables seeing. It dispels darkness. Even a small light like a match or the flashlight on your phone will do that. Imagine, then, what a bright light can do. We were in darkness, the spiritual darkness of sin and unbelief. Try walking in the dark and you easily stumble. You stub your toe on a chair or the dresser if you get up in the night and don't want to turn on a light. Bumps and bruises result. Worse results come from spiritual darkness. We wander aimlessly through our years without genuine meaning or purpose. We don't know or love God. We cannot do so. Damnation is the ultimate end.

But we don't always realize how bad it is. We may think we are advanced, sophisticated and self-reliant. We can handle life on our own. Religion is viewed as a crutch. As someone has responded, "But who isn't limping?" We need God. The Bible says it is the fool who says there is no God, and that God's foolishness is wiser than man's so-called wisdom. Be thankful the light exposes our need and the solution to that need.

Another John, whom we know as John the Baptist, drew attention to the light. "He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him all men might believe." His goal was faith in the hearts of his hearers. He preached repentance for sins and offered baptism that forgave those sins as he prepared hearts for the ministry of Jesus.

Did you ever search high and low for something, yet not see that it was right in front of you? Maybe it was glasses that were perched on your head or keys that were in your pocket. Jan's mother had a saying, "If it was a snake it would have bitten you." The world was like that with Jesus: the world did not recognize him or receive him, the text reported. People worshiped creatures and trusted stars. They looked to their own abilities, remaining in darkness, in spiritual blindness and poverty, a tragedy when the solution was at hand.

Not all were that way, as John noted, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." It happened by the power of the Holy Spirit. He overcame their natural resistance through the gospel message and planted faith in their hearts. They trust in Jesus, the Word. That spiritual rebirth is also a miracle to celebrate every time it occurs.

The bright light shines still, in your heart and in mine. It produces joy and optimism just like sunny days. Lots of things get us down: sickness, gray skies, too much shoveling. There are personal situations that may be stressful. We experience disappointments, failings and hurt relationships. Christmas brings the joy that God takes us from hopelessness and grants faith in the source of hope, the light and giver of life. His light is so bright it overcomes all else. Dance in the light.

III.

On Christmas the Word became flesh. Jesus came in the tent of human flesh and was glorious in his tent. That identity becomes clear in the closing verse. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." It is Jesus' birthday but it was not his beginning as the Son. He did not stop being God but he now added the human nature. He is the God-man, true God and true man in one being, a miracle indeed.

The text said he made his dwelling among us. Literally it says he tented among us. That terminology reminds us of the temporary nature of his visible presence on this planet. The Bible speaks of our earthly bodies in the same way, as a tent, for we are only passing through this life with a better existence to come in eternity.

Another tent was important in the history of God's people and that was the tabernacle. It was the tent-like structure that served as the place of worship for the Israelites during their journey through the desert to the Promised Land of Canaan. They didn't replace it until the time of Solomon when he built the temple. It was a sign of God's presence among them. That was certainly true of Jesus: he was God living among his people. His time here was also temporary as he would die on the cross. The grave could not hold the Son of God and so he rose with a glorified body and a few weeks later returned to heaven, his mission of redeeming the world from sin accomplished.

John noted, "We have seen his glory." He was a personal eyewitness of that glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. At that amazing event the divine glory of Jesus as the Son of God shone through his human nature in a dazzling appearance, serving as a reassurance for those disciples present when they would later view the suffering and death of their Master. At other times during his public ministry glimpses of his deity were evident, such as his miracles.

The text called Jesus "the One and Only." It is expressing his unique nature. There is no one else like him. Many of us may remember the translation "only begotten." He is one of a kind in his relationship with the Father. You and I are children of God, but not in the sense of the Son's and the Father's eternal existence in the Godhead. He "came from the Father." He was the one sent on the mission to redeem the world from sin. We see God's love in action as Jesus laid down his life for our sins. While it was a horror for John to behold from a physical standpoint as he was at the scene of the crucifixion, there was glory in that humiliating event. Jesus said as he looked to it that he was glorified and his Father was glorified, for who else had love like that?

Our Savior was "full of grace and truth." Grace is God's attitude of undeserved love for us. He treats us kindly despite our sins. Jesus won forgiveness for every one of our misdeeds. He brings the absolute, objective truth in his Word. It is totally reliable as it reveals the teachings and actions of our Savior. Using the statements here you could say the Word brings the Word. The Bible (the Word of God) teaches us of Jesus (the eternal Word made flesh).

We see his glory through that truth. It brings the light to our hearts. Its gospel message saves us. None of our earthly woes can diminish or remove the glory and the hope we have in Christ the Word. Our faith fastens on to the work of Christ for us. We realize we are tenting here also, with only a temporary existence while we await our permanent home in the glory of heaven, ours by the work of Jesus and where we will be with him forever.

That is something worth celebrating, isn't it? It is all a miracle. That Jesus, true God, the eternal Word became flesh. He lived among us, died for us and rose again in victory for us. He loves you and made you his own. It is a miracle for believing, not explaining. Rejoice this happy morn. A Savior unto us is born. Rejoice and sing it out to the world.