

The Word Became Flesh – *John 1:14*

Introduction – John 1:14 is the stuff used to build Creeds. This verse, more than any other in the New Testament, provided the foundation for the doctrine of the person of Christ in two natures and one Person, fully man, and fully God (Nicene Creed and Definition of Chalcedon). The doctrine of the Incarnation sets Christianity completely apart from any other religion, and its implications are manifold and to our great benefit. They are doctrinal and deeply pastoral. They are “*grace and truth*”, and they reveal the gracious glory of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is declared to you in this verse, once again an offer for your soul.

Nicene and Chalcedon – Because of our disobedience in the Garden, we became estranged from God. And from that moment, God promised to do something about that because we could not. In His mercy, He determined to come to us in human form and He would be called Emmanuel, God with us. The Word took on a body so that He could sacrifice Himself on a bloody cross. As the church developed and matured, questions developed which took centuries to settle. The Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) declared correctly that the Lord Jesus was fully God and fully Man, and that from the time of Incarnation on He remains fully God and fully Man. Jesus, the Word, was with God, and is God (John 1:1-2) and always was God with God. This stood against the false teaching of Arius who said Jesus was the firstborn of all creation but there was a time that He did not exist, and therefore not fully God.

The Definition of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) more fully described the relationship between the two natures. Jesus is one person with two natures. There is both true *union* and true *distinction* between the two natures. There is true *union*, “*without division, without separation.*” Jesus is never just a man, nor only God. Both natures reside in the one Person. At the same time there is true *distinction*, “*without confusion, without change.*” His divinity never absorbs or overtakes His humanity, and His humanity never reduces or overshadows His divinity. Because of salvation from Jesus offered in the true *union* of His natures, He is salvation in a way that no other man can be. Tyrants and statism (utopian philosophies and the government systems that are derived from them) are in principle anti-Christian. And because of salvation procured by Jesus in the true *distinction* of His natures, there is no confusion, no mingling, of the work His salvation wrought. A man, fully man, died for us – and it had to be the blood of a true man. And God, true God, had power over death and so the resurrection of Jesus brought forth new life, something only God can do.

Romans 1:3-4 helps: “*concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*” As the hymn says, “*true man yet very God.*”

The Word Became Flesh: Fully Man – Christ participated in all the limitations of human nature. He knew what it was like to be hungry (Matt 4:2), thirsty (John 19:28), and tired (Matt 8:24) because there were times that He was really hungry and thirsty and tired. He wasn’t pretending. He had to walk to get to places (Mark 10:32). John tells us personally that He had seen and heard and touched Jesus (1 John 1:1). The only part that He did not participate in our humanity was our sinning, but even that He took on at the Cross (2 Cor 5:21). This means He experienced our sinfulness without ever sinning.

The Word Became Flesh: Fully God – The Word was God (John 1:1-2) and Thomas confessed rightly (John 20:28). We know God created all things (Gen 1:1) and Jesus is the Creator (John 1:3). He is the One who created and then sustains all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). Our confession of faith is that “Jesus is Lord” (Rom 10:9-10). The Greek word for lord is “*kurios*” and can be used of someone in authority, a lord over others. But Paul is quoting Joel 2:32 which, in the Hebrew is saying that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved. This means that Paul is saying that we must confess that Jesus is Yahweh; He is God.

Jesus Tabernacled Among Us – First of all, not only for the three years of his ministry, but for the previous 30 years, Jesus “*dwelt among us.*” He lived in a common family with a father and mother, sisters and brothers. He was a baby and then a young child. He was the son of a carpenter in Nazareth. Human life was truly His which again made Him able to sympathize with all He ministered to. Secondly, He was a true human and friend interacting with others. John was the “*disciple whom Jesus loved*” and spoke of their human fellowship in his epistle (1 John 1:1-4). Finally though, he chose the word better translated “*tabernacled*” to bring forth a particular image for his readers who were readers of the OT. The tabernacle was also called “*the tent of meeting*” and was the place where the LORD “*spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*” (Ex 33:11).

Beholding the Glory of the Only Begotten of the Father – “*the glory of the one and only Son*” (NIV) is not a literal translation but helps in emphasizing the uniqueness of the Son (Jesus) to His Father, “*who is in the bosom of the Father*” (v18). In theological terms, the Son is the only Person who proceeds from the Father, and this is an eternal state. This perfectly close (bosom-like) fellowship between Father and Son is unique to Jesus, but Jesus offers that fellowship to us (John 14:6, 19-21). To behold the glory of Jesus is to be in fellowship with His Father through Jesus and that fellowship is the Person of the Holy Spirit indwelling believers.

A Glory Full of Grace and Truth – Verses 16-17 explain this: “*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” This grace for grace, or grace upon grace, blessing after blessing, is referring to the unending giving of the Father. Through Moses the law was given, its Preamble declaring the freedom brought forth by God (Ex 20:1-2). The moral law was holy, just and good. But it could not justify. It worked wrath as it revealed our sinfulness (Rom 4:15, 7:7-8). The ceremonial law was full of examples of our need for a substitutionary atonement for those sins, but it was a schoolmaster only – to lead us to Christ. In this way, Moses, like John the Baptist, was a witness (testimony) through the law pointing all who would believe to Jesus (Heb 3:5-6). In this way “*grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” in a way that Moses and the law could not (Rom 5:6-8, 10:9-10). The covenant of law is seen as a gracious gift from God, yet it is replaced by a further gracious gift, the “*grace and truth*” embodied in Jesus Christ.

The Word Became Flesh – and provided the only Way to the Father. How does a creature have a close relationship with the Creator? Jesus, fully man, shows us. He walked with God. He prayed to His God. He gladly obeyed His God. He delighted in His God.

The Word Became Flesh – and is able to sympathize with us in our temptations (Heb 2:18, 4:14-16). Jesus taught us to pray, “*Lead us not into temptation*” and these verses instruct us that He is able to lead us into victory over those temptations. Although He had no sinful nature, He still can show us the way to victory as a man. To say that is not fair, He had it easy, is to blur the natures. We do so as we abide in Christ who abides in the Father which is the work of the person of the Holy Spirit in us.

The Word Became Flesh – and His perfect sacrifice atoning for our sins means that the Accuser can be silenced (Heb 2:14-17) and that Jesus as High Priest intercedes for us (Rom 8:34, Heb 7:25).

The Word Became Flesh – and we are to behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Behold.