THE WORD BECAME FLESH

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Introduction

Who is the Word? How and when did He become flesh? Why did He become flesh? These are obvious questions as one considers the above title. Accordingly, let us consider two questions: (1) What does the phrase mean and (2) Why does it matter?

What Does It Mean?

Who is the Word? “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1). We learn that the Word was present at the beginning, and that He was with the Godhead, and that He Himself possessed the nature of being God. Furthermore, the Word also possessed human nature for “the Word was made 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 (Jn. 1:14).”

This, of course, has reference to Jesus of Nazareth, and means that before He ever became known as Jesus of Nazareth, He was known as the Word. Before He ever existed on earth as Jesus, He had a pre-earthly existence as the Word. The Gospel of John has no genealogy at the beginning because John begins with the Eternal Word, who had no genealogy. When John wrote that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1), he employed the imperfect tense in Greek. Thus the meaning is that the Word was continuing to be with God and was continuing to be God. There never was a time when the Word did not exist. But there was a time when the Word was not flesh. The Word did not have to become God, for He already was, and always had been, and always would possess the Divine nature. However, the Word did have to become flesh because He did not already possess human nature.

How and When Did The Word Become Flesh? The One who came and dwelt among men was Emmanuel, God with us, Jesus of Nazareth (Mt. 1:21-25). Thus, the Word became Jesus. How and when did this happen? The angel explained to Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35). Mary was a virgin when the Holy Spirit miraculously conceived Jesus within her, and she was still a virgin when Jesus was born. He came into the world in a fleshly body but still retained His Divine identity as well. He was “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Why Does It Matter?

Does it really matter whether one believes that “the Word became flesh”? Because of a mistaken notion that all flesh is inherently contaminated and evil, some taught that the Word only appeared to become flesh; He was really only a ghostly apparition. The inspired reaction to such teachers shows just how much this doctrine matters. Those who denied that the Word became flesh were labeled as antichrists, liars, and deniers of both the Father and the Son (1 Jn. 2:18, 22). John’s inspired pen viewed it as so consequential that anyone who taught otherwise was a “false prophet” (1 Jn. 4:1) and “not of God” (1 Jn. 4:2-3). Faithful Christians were charged not to bid Godspeed to such deceivers (2 Jn. 7-10). What made this doctrine so consequential?
1. **The Word became flesh so He could identify with man.** Jesus knew what it was like to be weary (Jn. 4:6) and thirsty (Jn. 4:7). He experienced groaning (Jn. 11:33) and weeping (Jn. 11:35). As a partaker of flesh and blood, He is able to be a merciful and faithful high priest, and to come to the aid of those in need (Heb. 2:14-18).

2. **The Word became flesh so He could show man how to live as a man.** Man could not have a better role model of how to always do those things that please the Father (Jn. 8:29).

3. **The Word became flesh so He could die as God in the flesh for mankind.** On the cross, He thirsted (Jn. 19:28), died (Jn. 19:30), and bled (Jn. 19:34). He suffered for us in the flesh, and then rose again, so that we might live with Him someday (1 Pet. 2:21; 3:18; 4:1). How grateful we should be that the Word became flesh!