

The Baby that Changed Everything

John 1:14

If you would have been a visitor in Bethlehem that night some 2,000 years ago when Christ was born there is little doubt your attention would have been drawn to the impressive sights around you. Looking to the north you would have seen the holy city of Jerusalem with its magnificent Jewish temple. Requiring some 10,000 laborers to build the temple stood like a golden crown above Jerusalem. Looking to the south and east you would have seen Herod's palatial palace in the distance. Called the Herodium, this man made mountain which rose over 2,400 feet above sea level was a monument to the power, wealth, and ego of King Herod the Great. Every conceivable luxury was incorporated into its design, including swimming pools, baths, gardens, and a 700 seat theater. In between the holy city and the Herodium was the little village of Bethlehem. Nothing significant ever took place in Bethlehem. Holy men offered sacrifices to God in the temple in Jerusalem. Powerful kings entertained influential guests in the towering Herodium. On that holy night so long ago when Christ Jesus was born hardly anyone noticed what was taking place in a stable on the outskirts of Bethlehem. In a cave used to shelter livestock a baby who would change history itself was born. Within seventy years of the birth of Christ the beautiful temple in Jerusalem and the colossal Herodium were conquered and destroyed by the Romans. The pious priests and mighty kings who served in those monumental buildings are long gone. But that baby born in Bethlehem still lives and reigns.

Turn with me to John 1:14. This wonderful portion of God's Word reminds how the birth of a baby 2,000 years ago changed everything.

First of all, when Christ was born...

1. God became one of us.

Verse 14 begins "*And the Word became flesh.*" It is hard to imagine a more profound statement than that. The living Word, the eternal God, became a man. Think about that for a moment.

The God who fashioned the universe, a universe so vast that it cannot be measured, who formed the sun, moon, and stars and hung them in space, who created every living thing on the face of the earth, confined Himself to a single cell in the womb of a young Jewish girl named Mary and nine months later was born a baby in Bethlehem. What a miracle!

The theological term for this miraculous event is the incarnation. Jesus was born fully man and yet fully God. On His mother's side Jesus life began at Bethlehem – on His Father's side He is the Ancient of Days; on His mother's side He was the first born son of Mary – on His Father's side He is the only begotten Son of God; on His mother's side He was the son of David – on His Father's side He is the One whom David called "my Lord;" on His mother's side He was a son of Abraham – on His Father's side He was the God of Abraham. He was born the Son of man and the Son of God, completely human and yet perfectly divine.

You say, "Well, Pastor Bob, how could Jesus be both man and God?" I don't know! Concerning the miracle of the incarnation Martin Luther said, "The mystery of the humanity of Christ that He sunk Himself into our flesh is beyond all human understanding."

If I could explain the incarnation to you, then I would be God. But I know this, when Mary's baby boy was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago God became a man. And that changed everything!

The birth of Jesus was a miracle, not only because He was born completely human and yet perfectly divine, but also because He was born of a virgin.

Now every baby is a miracle. Our youngest daughter Angela is expecting her second child and our fifth grandchild next June. We're all pretty excited. I missed the birth of our last grandchild. I was in Israel when little Micah made his grand entrance, but I don't intend to miss the next one. I want to be there so I can hold that little miracle in my arms just as soon as he or she is born.

Every birth is a miracle. But the birth of Jesus was a miracle like no other because he was born of a virgin. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*" (Is 7:14).

When Mary conceived she had never known a man. From a human perspective, a virgin birth is impossible. It would take a miracle for something like that to happen, and that's exactly what God did. He worked a miracle in the womb of Mary so that His Son would be virgin born.

Some people say that it really doesn't matter whether Jesus was born of a virgin or not. But folks, I'm here to tell you that it does matter. You see, only a perfect, sinless sacrifice could atone for our sins. Jesus could not have lived a perfect life and offered himself as a sinless sacrifice without a virgin birth. God touched Mary in a supernatural way so that her baby boy was miraculously conceived and never tainted with human sin.

Although Jesus was born in the likeness of sinful flesh, He was not sinful flesh. Though He came to this world as a man, He was a sinless man. And that, dear friends changed everything!

Secondly, when Christ was born...

2. God revealed Himself to us.

Look again at verse 14. John writes "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*"

The word "*dwelt*" is from the Greek **skenoō**, (*skay-no'-o*) which means to pitch one's tent or tabernacle in the presence of. Two-thousand years ago the God of eternity pitched His tent down here among us. Holy God clothed himself with humanity and lived among sinful men.

Why did He do that? Look again at our text. "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.*" Everything God does, He does for His glory. In our own foolish, self-centered, arrogant way we have a tendency to believe that God exists for our benefit. It's all about us. But the truth is; it's all about God. Dear Christian, you need to get this straight in your mind and in your heart. The most important thing to God is His glory!

The Bible tells us that God's glory dwelt in the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple in Jerusalem, but the ultimate revelation of the glory of God is seen in the person of His Son.

God wants us to know Him; to know who He really is. That is why He sent His Son into this world. Jesus came to reveal God to man. He is the living revelation of Almighty God. In Christ, God became a man, so that man could see the glory of God. And that changed everything!

Because God became one of us and revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, you and I have the opportunity to experience a personal relationship with Him. When Christ was born and laid in a manger in Bethlehem He became God with us, but when we repent of our sins and by faith receive Christ as our Savior and Lord He becomes God within us. Hallelujah!

Finally, the birth of Christ means that...

3. God came to save us.

Verse 14 goes on to say *“And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

There are two words I want to draw your attention to. The first word is grace. Dear folks, the greatest need that we have is to be saved from our sins. The problem is we cannot save ourselves. There is nothing we could ever do to merit God’s forgiveness. We are all guilty sinners who deserve the wrath and judgment of God. That’s where grace comes in. Salvation is a gift of God’s grace. The bible tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

The second word I want to draw your attention to is truth. Jesus is the embodiment of truth. He said: *“I am the truth.”* He told his disciples that if they continued in His word they would *“know the truth.”* Jesus told Pontius Pilate that He came into this world to *“bear witness to the truth.”*

But what is the truth? The truth is that God so loved the world; that God so loved you and me, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for our sins so that we could receive God’s gracious gift of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ.

One more thought and then I will close. Look at verse 14 one more time. Notice, John says that when God became one of us and revealed himself to us in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, He was *“full of grace and truth.”* The word *“full”* means complete. Jesus brought the fullness of God’s grace and truth to lost mankind. Let me tell you what that means for you and me today. That means that everything we need to be saved is found in Christ.

The whole message of Christmas is that you and I are sinners who need a Savior. The bible says in First Timothy 1:15, *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”* I love to sing those beautiful old Christmas hymns about the birth of Jesus, don’t you? There are so many wonderful songs and so little time to sing them. But beloved singing *O Little Town of Bethlehem* as we did a few minutes ago wouldn’t mean a thing if we didn’t also sing *The Old Rugged Cross*. If we don’t remember the cross as we look at the cradle, we’ve missed the whole point of Christmas.

“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.” The birth of Jesus changed everything.

Did you wonder what if Jesus had never come? What if a virgin had never conceived of the Holy Spirit? What if there had never been a baby named Jesus lying in a manger in Bethlehem? What if there had never been angels announcing the birth of the Son of God to shepherds watching over their sheep? What if Jesus had never come? If Jesus had not come we would still have our sins, but we wouldn't have a Savior. There would be no hope for the forgiveness of our sin, no hope for the salvation of our soul, no hope for a home in heaven someday.

There story is told about a man who was driving his car in an unfamiliar city and having trouble finding a certain address. So he stopped at a filling station to ask for directions. After explaining where it was he was trying to get to the station attendant said "Well let's see. Go two blocks north, turn left, drive six blocks west, and---no wait; go four blocks south to the first light, turn right and stay on---no, no, that won't work either. I tell you what you need to do. Get back on the expressway and look for exit 18. Then turn right on North Washington and you'll go about a quarter mile to a---no, come to think of it, that won't work either. Mr., I'm afraid you just can't get there from here!"

Folks I'm going tell you something, when it comes to heaven, you can't get there from here without Jesus!

Let me ask you something. Do you know Jesus? Is the baby in Bethlehem just a character in a familiar story or is He your Savior? Listen, knowing Jesus changes everything! Why don't you come to Christ today?