

The Lord Jesus Christ: A Series of Ten Studies

Study 8: The Incarnate Word – Part 2

taken from
Bible Studies for Enquirers and New Believers
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Reading: John 1:14

Background

- Word – (*logos*) See the previous study on the eternal word.
- Flesh – (*sarx*) This word means 'ordinary human flesh'. Paul used it in the context of human nature in all its weakness and all its liability to sin. In connection with Jesus there is no liability to sin. He was the perfect man. In his case it meant the flesh as the completely responsive vehicle of the spirit. He was not tainted with sin. He was fully open to all the temptation of sin and the devil. Only one who does not give in to temptation knows its full power (Hebrews 4:15). In Muslim cultures we strongly emphasize within the church community the divinity of Christ often without putting adequate stress on his humanity. Many Christians set Jesus apart and do not realize that he as man can fully sympathize with our temptations and help us to overcome them. We do not minimize who he is by stressing his humanity. The Word became flesh – became man – became fully man.
- Dwelt – The Greek word '*skenoo*' means 'to pitch a tent, to tabernacle, to sojourn briefly'. The human frame is a kind of tent or tabernacle – an earthly form for a pilgrim life. God has ordained that man should live in a temporary body.
- Beheld – The Greek word for '*beheld*' is used twenty times in the New Testament. It is always used for visible sight. This is no spiritual vision of the soul or the mind. It is used for physical sight only. One early heresy in the church taught that Jesus did not really come in the flesh he only seemed to appear and be present. The heresy is called Docetism from the Greek word '*docet*' meaning '*it seems*'. This heresy tried to rationalize the incarnation. The apostle in John 1:14 is saying that we have seen with our physical eyes the real human being, who is the Word.
- Grace – (*charis*) Grace is undeserved and unmerited favour. Jesus' messages were full of the undeserved favour of God for the guilty. In his ministry he was often making a costly demonstration of unexpected love e.g. in his encounter with Zachaeus but supremely he did this in his death on the cross.
- Truth – (*aletheia*). Jesus himself is the final reality. After his resurrection he gave the Spirit of Truth to lead us into all truth.
- Glory – (*doxa*) The manifestation of the shekinah glory of God.

This glory dwells in the Word made flesh. The shekinah glory is the visible token of God's presence among men. The visible presence of God in the Old Testament was always seen before or after a miracle. For example, before or after he supplied manna to the children of

Israel in the wilderness God's presence was seen. Before or after sacrifice he manifested his glory (1 Kings 8:11; Isaiah 6:1-7). For the Jew, who had eyes to see, Jesus was the '*shekinah glory*'. God's glory – God's presence – dwelt in him (Colossians 1:19). John writes of "the glory as of an only begotten from a Father". In the original Greek there is no definite article before "only begotten" nor before "father". There is no mention here of the process of begetting but an expression of the uniqueness of the origin.

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Believers

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
 - The Greek word '*naos*' is a dwelling place, an inner sanctuary. There is one sanctuary but many believers. This is not just another word for a sacred enclosure but it is the most holy place – not just the precincts but the sanctuary itself. Believers are indwelt by the presence of God and so become the sanctuary of God.
- 1 Corinthians 6:16-20
 - Paul is here stressing the indwelling of God in his people. The flesh is weak and likely to sin but it is not evil in itself. Paul reminds us that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit of God. "You" in Greek is plural but "temple" is singular. God dwells in the bodies of believers, in their lives and in them individually and collectively. God dwells in the midst of his people through the church.

The Heavenly Jerusalem

In Revelation 21:1-4,22-27 the Greek word for tabernacle is '*skene*'. This is the last stage in the drama of salvation – the climax. Jesus could not always walk on earth neither could his body be in every place so God gave the Holy Spirit to believers. Now something greater has developed. Believers are to dwell with God in his glory. The heavenly Jerusalem is the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10; Revelation 21:22-27). It has no tabernacle nor temple for the Lord God and the Lamb are its temple and the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb. The Lamb is described a little while before as the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). He is the eternal and incarnate Word central to God's plan of salvation.