

And the Word took on human flesh.

First Sunday after Christmas

December 28, 2025

On Christmas Christians around the world celebrate the great mystery of God taking on human flesh in the form of a baby in Bethlehem. It is an amazing and profound mystery. But what practical difference does this make for your life and mine as we live our lives each day as we wake up and brew our coffee and brush our teeth and go about our errands? Well, maybe today the meaning of the divine incarnation might become just a little clearer.

I will begin by speaking in the first person as the writer of John's Gospel.

Good morning. Let me introduce myself. I am the author of the letter attributed to the apostle John, written to the Christian churches. John is not my given name, it is the name of my great teacher, the apostle John. You would know him as the brother of James and one of Jesus' first twelve disciples. He was most recognized as the beloved disciple who reclined next to Jesus at that last Supper so long ago. Although I am no longer a young man, I am not old enough to have ever met Jesus in person. But long ago I heard the stories that were told of his parables and his miracles. About twenty years ago Mark and Matthew and Luke wrote down these stories. And I have taken these parchments written in Greek and read and reread them many times.

It has now been over sixty years since Jesus' death and resurrection. And the Christian community has expanded greatly as his stories have been told and retold and read and reread, and as the small gatherings of Jesus followers have spread throughout the Mediterranean world. There continues to be much discussion about who Jesus was as he walked this earth, and who he still is to us today as his disciples.

Jesus is the greatest of all mysteries. And God has given me the task of trying to explore the depths of these mysteries. I suppose you could say that I am one of the earliest Christian theologians, a teacher and scholar. I am knowledgeable in the Tanakh – the Jewish Bible, in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And the letters that the apostle Paul wrote to the churches. And of course, much like all scholars of my day, I am steeped in Greek philosophy. All of this, are the tools of my writing trade as I explore the mysteries of God and of Jesus.

Well, as you just heard, the author of John's Gospel was a man immersed in the Jewish and Christian scriptures and faith traditions. He spoke and wrote Greek and knew his Greek philosophy. From the scriptures he would have been familiar with the various theophanies, the examples in the Bible when God made an appearance, where divinity entered materiality, where God became visible, audible, or tangible. There was the time when God appeared to Moses in a burning bush, and in the thunder and smoke on Mount Sinai, and in the prophetic visions of Ezekiel and Daniel.

But as John combed the Jewish scriptures and the Christian letters, he knew that what had occurred with Jesus was something radically different than just one more audible or visible revelation of God. As he wrestled with this mystery, he came to a clear understanding that Jesus was indeed fully human, but also fully divine. But how could he ever attempt to describe it to others?

He found his answer in a Greek word logos, and in the first book of the Jewish Tanakh, the Book of Genesis. It was there he read: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” There it was in the beginning of creation, both matter and Spirit present in the story of creation. And both were present as well in a new way in Jesus the Nazarene.

John began taking ink to parchment as his Gospel began: “In the beginning was the logos, the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it... But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” Yes, logos was a good choice in describing that eternal reality who existed with

God in that time before all space and time when God already existed. Logos, the Word, the active, speaking voice of God.

But the Word could be better described as the “living Word.” The living divine Word took on human flesh two thousand years ago in the body of Jesus of Nazareth. And it was in his very being, that authentic, vibrant, glorious, life eternal were found in Jesus, and are to be found for all those who believe in his name and are given power to become Children of God who are the light that enlightens all people.

There have been many in history, both within, and outside of our Christian tradition, who believe in this divine living Word. Sufism spoke of the living Word as a presence within us that can be known consciously; the living Word within us that is meant to purify our hearts; the living Word that forms divine attributes within us – like love, life, and truth; the living Word as a passionate, transforming love that burns away the ego and leads us towards unity and Oneness with God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. And that living Word continues to become flesh, and life, and light, in all those who believe and are given power to become children of God.

Galatians tells us: “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ – the living Word – who lives in me. And the life I now

live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."