

**AND THE WORD WAS GOD!**  
**Christmas Day – December 25, 2017 (s739.doc)**  
**55 – 41 – 35 – 707 – 65 – 61 – 63 – 62 – 56/366/60 – 64**  
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*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. –John 1:1*

The words flow easily. We know them all by heart. We sing:

**Joy to the world, the Lord is come!**  
**Let earth receive her king.**

And we sing:

**Word of the father, now in flesh appearing.**  
**Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come, let us adore him,**  
**Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

We love to sing the old Christmas carols and hymns. And yet, packed within these words is a depth of meaning I'm afraid we don't often think about.

**Of the Father's love begotten ere the worlds began to be,**  
**He is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending he...**

What are we singing about? What are we celebrating today? It's simply this: that God became man; that he took on human flesh; that he humbled himself and lived for a while among us. Today we celebrate the fact that at the birth of Jesus, God became our **brother**.

The apostle Paul wrote of this astonishing fact: *"Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory"* (1 Timothy 3:16).

Yes, *"beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great."* On this day, we celebrate more than the birth of a special baby—more than the virtue of a young virgin mother or the simple beauty of a still, silent night. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). On this day, Christ was born, the Word became flesh...

***"And the Word Was God!"***

That's what Christmas is all about.

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The world doesn't seem to understand...or care. Who is this Child whose birth we sing about today? In the Apostles' Creed we confess that he "was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." John says, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory he glory of the One and only, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14).

The "Word" became flesh. What does that mean?

- It means that **the Almighty God** took on flesh and blood.
- It means that **the Creator of the universe** became human.
- It means that **Jesus was just like us**.

John the Baptist said of him, *"He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me"* (John 1:15).

- He is without beginning or end...yet he was born of a woman.
- He is the One who gives food to all...yet had to be fed by his mother.
- He is God...yet was carried about on Joseph's arm.
- He knows all things...yet grew in wisdom. The "Word of God incarnate" needed to learn Bible passages as a boy.

When Jesus was born, God became one with us. That's the kind of Savior we needed—One who would be both God **and** man.

You see, God demanded perfect obedience...but he never got it from **us**. We were headed for **hell**—eternity apart from God. And we were helpless to do anything about it. **Someone had to pay the price**. And it had to be **Someone whose life would be valuable enough** to make the payment God's justice demanded. But who could it be?

God had a plan. *"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons"* (Galatians 4:4,5). So **Jesus came**. He came **as a man**.

- He came **to live under the Law** so that he could obey God's commandments. He did it **perfectly**.
- Yet **he remained God**, so that **the price he paid**—his own blood—was precious enough to pay for the sins of the world.

Do you understand that? **It was God who died** for us! **What we couldn't do for ourselves**...what nobody else could do for us—**that** Jesus did!

Why do we sing? We sing because on Christmas, **God became one of us**. He became **our brother**. *"The one and only, who came from the father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14).

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That baby in the manger is a real human being. That's easy to see. But when it comes to recognizing that he's also **God**—well, that's a different story. Lots of people are willing to think of Jesus as a great teacher but can't bring themselves to acknowledge him as God. It's one thing to accept him as a **human**. In today's world, it's much harder to see him as **God**.

The truth is that all the Bible calls Jesus "God." Jesus made that claim throughout his ministry. When people heard it, they knew what he meant. Even his enemies understood that that's who he claimed to be.

- When he told a paralyzed man, *"Friend, your sins are forgiven,"* his enemies began to think, *"Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"* (Luke 5:21).
- When he told the religious leaders among the Jews, *"I and the Father are one"* (John 10:30), they picked up stones to stone him.
- When Pilate, the governor, demanded, *"Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God"* (Matthew 26:64), Jesus answered, *"Yes, it is as you say."* Then they charged him with blasphemy, and led him out to be **crucified!**

Today, nobody accuses Jesus of blasphemy. They accuse his disciples of making him to be more than he was; they portray him as a martyr for some misunderstood cause. To them:

- He's a carpenter who taught us to love our neighbors...
- He's all about tolerance and love...

But Christ didn't come to **tolerate** sin—to ignore its eternal consequences. He came to **forgive** it. *"The kingdom of heaven is near,"* he said. *"Repent and believe the good news!"* (Mark 1:15).

We need to listen to his voice. We need to understand who it is who is speaking to us from the pages of his Word. We need to understand that **God** is talking to us. And if he is God, then we'd better pay attention!

- We need to heed his call to **repent**—to humble ourselves, confess our sins, and seek his forgiveness.
- We need to live as **he** wills, and let our wants and desires come in second to his.

But more than that, we need to know that **when he became man**, he came to bring our hearts **peace**.

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The angel who announced his birth to Joseph called him **Immanuel**—"God with us." **God is with us!**

That brings us the **peace** we sang about earlier:

**Peace came to earth at last that chosen night**  
**When angels clove [split] the sky with song and light**

**And God embodied love and sheathed [concealed] his might—  
Who could but gasp: Immanuel! Who could but sing: Immanuel!**

I wonder what the shepherds thought and felt as they looked upon that special Child. I wonder if they asked, “Can I hold him?” I wonder what emotions welled up inside the hearts of Joseph and Mary...

**And who could be the same for having held  
The infant in their arms and later felt  
The wounded hands and side, all doubts dispelled—  
Who could but sigh: Immanuel! Who could but shout: Immanuel!**

Don't you wish you could have held that Child—touched him? You can. You do! Each time you receive the Lord's Supper, you do...

**You show the Father none has ever seen,  
In flesh and blood you bore our griefs and pain,  
In bread and wine you visit us again—  
Who could but see: Immanuel! Who could but thrill: Immanuel!**

Here we see the beauty of God's plan. It's a plan none of us would ever have dreamed up.

- He doesn't thunder at us from above.
- He doesn't come in a display of raw power.
- No. He comes meekly. He becomes one of us—a little Child.

He lives among us, suffers among us, and dies in our place...that we might be his forever. And in this way, he reveals the depth of his love!

**How else could I have known you, O my God!  
How else could I have loved you, O my God!  
How else could I embrace you, O my God!  
Who could but pray: Immanuel! Who could but praise: Immanuel!**

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Today, we marvel with the hymn writers at the miracle in the manger. We confess with Luther: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity...and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary...*is my Lord.*”

With the eyes of faith, we can see what the rest of the world cannot. And with hearts moved by God's love, we can sing about it with joy!

AMEN.