



COME
Emmanuel



"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"
John 1:14

A Christmas Devotion – 2013

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If you ask most people which of the four Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - mention the birth of Jesus, the Christ, the answer would be: Matthew and Luke. Matthew tells of the angel visiting Joseph and of the visit of the Wise Men some time later, while Luke goes into greater detail, including the visit of the angel to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, the visit of Gabriel to Mary, the trip of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus, and finally, the visit of the angels to the shepherds and their worship of the baby in the manger. Yet, it is in the Gospel of John that you will find what is perhaps the clearest explanation of the birth of Jesus:

"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us."

We call this the "incarnation," which means, "in bodily form" or "in the flesh." As human beings we exist naturally in bodily form, but the eternal Son of God, prior to His physical birth, did not exist in the flesh. The writer of Hebrews explains that God created all things through the "Son" (Hebrews 1:2), and in verse 3 he goes on to write, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being." And in his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul explains further the truth of the Son of God taking upon Himself a human nature: "Who, being in very nature God, ... made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:6-7).

At one point in His ministry, Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” (Matthew 16:15-16). Jesus knew that if the disciples were going to believe in Him and follow Him and be His witnesses after He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, they were going to have to know who He was! It is clear that when they had received the Holy Spirit, they understood these things, for John writes in the first two verses of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” It is THIS “Word” that became flesh and lived among us.

While some ask which is more important: the birth of Jesus or the death and resurrection of Jesus ... the reality is that you cannot separate the two. Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). Jesus was born to die. If you are celebrating Christmas without thinking of Jesus’ death on the cross or His resurrection from the dead, then you are just worshiping a baby in a manger who lived a long time ago. Even if you believe the stories of the angels and the shepherds and the wise men, what does that have to do with YOU? It is just a time of the year and it passes by quickly and everything returns to “normal.”

But, the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is so much more!! If you want to know who Jesus said He was and is, and who the disciples finally became convinced He was, read the entire Gospel of John. Listen to Jesus’ words and see, through the eyes of John, the works of this One who came to be our Savior. Hear Him speak of His sheep (Chapter 10) and witness His compassion and love as He raises His friend, Lazarus, from the dead (Chapter 11). Sit with the disciples as Jesus tells them what is about to happen and how His Spirit will empower them for the mission He is entrusting to them (Chapters 13-17). Then watch as Jesus goes to the cross to pay the penalty for your sin and mine and how He conquers death and the grave, rising in victory to return to heaven as King!

Some friends visited Israel recently and shared how meaningful it was to walk where Jesus walked and to look at some of the things that Jesus Himself may have looked at or even touched. You may never travel to Israel before Jesus returns, but you can know today that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, became flesh and walked this earth as a man to be your Savior and your Lord. You can know that because HE lives, He has the power to give YOU eternal life. John wrote, “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son; that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Make it a point to take some time over the next week, or to begin the new year, by reading the entire Gospel of John. If you want to assure yourself of God’s presence and blessing in the new year, you need to believe

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

From Lighthouse Community Church