

2. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us

September 13, 2015

Who is Jesus? I typed this phrase in Google, and I got 300 million results. From personal mumbo jumbos to many right-on theological answers. No, I didn't go through all 300 million of them. I have better things to do than reading all the results in Google.

Secular media, skeptics, cult leaders, and liberal Bible scholars all insist that either Jesus was a mere man with good morals; a good teacher, or altogether something else, not even close to what we believe, but not God, the Savior of the world, and the Messiah.

But here are a couple of interesting articles about Jesus:

John Allegro, a Semitic scholar, wrote a book called, "The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross." And he said, "Jesus Christ was not a historical man at all, but Jesus was a code name for a sacred hallucinogenic mushroom allegedly used by the first Christians." That puts a whole new spin on, "Hey dude, do you want Jesus?"

A French-Canadian cult said, "Jesus' resurrection was a cloning performed by aliens who made humans in laboratory a DNA experiment 25,000 years ago." I think these people had one too many of those hallucinating mushrooms in their dinner.

Here is one more: The Jewish Talmud, which is the collection of Jewish law and tradition consisting of the Mishnah, says, "Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary." It also says that Jesus was called Panthera and He learned magical arts in Egypt and then came to Israel to instigate a rebellion.

So, who is Jesus? Is He what the Bible claims to be, or is this a gigantic hoax that some church leaders pulled the wool over the eyes of the entire human race for last 2000 years as it says in Dan Brown's novel, Da Vinci Code?

The Bible, especially the New Testament is constantly under attack and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. But, if the critics want to disregard the NT, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle and Homer.

There are presently 5,686 Greek manuscripts in existence today for the NT. If we were to compare the number of NT manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the NT manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity and accuracy.

Here are a few comparisons:

- The write of Plato was written in 427-347 B.C. Its earliest copy was done 900 A.D. The approximate time span between the original and the first copy is 1,200 years and there are 7 copies found.
- The write of Aristotle was written in 384-322 B.C. Its earliest copy was done 1100 A.D. The approximate time span between the original and the first copy is 1,400 years and there are 49 copies found.
- The write of Homer was written in 900 B.C. Its earliest copy was done 400 B.C. The approximate time span between the original and the first copy is 500 years and there are 643 copies found. The accuracy is 95%. That is very good.

• New Testament was written in 50-100 A.D. Its earliest copy was done A.D. 130. The approximate time span between the original and the first copy is less than 100 years and there are 5,686 copies found. In addition, there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000. The accuracy is 99.5%.

In other words, the Bible you have on your lap has the same content as the original manuscripts 2,000 years ago. Try to beat that.

So then, what kind of proof is the Muslim, Mormon, or Dan Brown able to offer to prove that the Bible has been changed or corrupted down through generations and centuries? NONE, ZIP, NADA, NOTHING!!!

A. THE TRUE LIGHT FROM GOD THE FATHER

John 1:6-10 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

Since we are going to study about John the Baptist next time, we are going to skip his ministry description in v6 through 8.

Of course, the apostle John is using a metaphor for Jesus as the True Light. The apostle John didn't mean that Jesus was a literal light. It was not that Mary and Joseph didn't use a night light because they had a glowing baby Jesus like some Nativity scene models. If Jesus was a person with glowing light on Him, Judas didn't even have to kiss Him to identify him. If so, he would have told the high priest, "Look for the One with glow."

God's light reveals His unbending truth to people and their darkest sins to themselves and the others who are around them. Generally, God's light speaks of the glory and the truth of God. That is the reason the Medieval artists used a halo around Jesus' head to show His glory in their paintings.

Listen, God's light is not to hurt us. His light invites us to get out of our moral and spiritual darkness into His truth. Jesus, God's eternal light of the truth, is inviting you to His safe place through His Word.

B. REJECTED BY HIS OWN, BUT RECEIVED BY OTHERS

John 1:11-13 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The Jewish leaders during Jesus' time hated Him so intensely that the murderous hearts of the Roman soldiers were pale in comparison. These Jewish people were so shackled by their religious tradition and the greedy selfishness of their own hearts that they chose not to understand the spiritual truth from Jesus. The very nation which the Lord chose, the very people whom He selected and called them, "His," rejected Him, spat in His face, and crucified Him, not like a common criminal, but worse. All because He revealed their sins with His light.

Though the Jews rejected Him, later, the Gentiles received Him as the Savior and Lord. Please note the word 'receive'. In Greek, it is "paralambano". Among the several definitions, there is not one concept of "achieve or earn." It is God's sovereign gift to man, not man's achievement, so that we cannot boast.

Apostle Paul talks about this very rejection by the Jews in the Book of Romans.

Romans 11:11-12 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?

Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

Paul's desire isn't only that these riches would be enjoyed by the Gentiles, but that the Jews would be provoked to a good kind of jealousy, motivating them to receive some of the blessings the Gentiles enjoyed. It was God's plan all along by His foreknowledge.

If the truth be known, the Jews long for the intimate relationship Christians have with God as the Father and the children of the Living God even though they don't believe in Christ.

A good example of that is Lieutenant Colonel Ronny Simon of Israel Defense Forces Reserve. He was our Israel tour guide. He has an absolutely incredible knowledge of the Old Testament, world history, geography, the current geo-political situations, as well as the New Testament, yet he does not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What a loss! If the Lord spares him so that he can survive through the Great Tribulation time, he will realize that Jesus is the real Messiah.

Today, Israel has fallen spiritually, but when Christ returns, the nation will rise again. Today, Israel is cast away from God, but one day they shall be received again. God will never break His covenant with His people, and He has promised to restore them.

C. GOD DWELT AMONG US

John 1:14 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.

Like no other religion in the world, our God came down and dwelt among sinful men and women. History is filled with the people who thought they were gods. But only one God of Christianity would be a Man to lead humankind back to Himself.

I asked you to underline the word 'dwelt'. This word in Greek is 'skenoō'. It literally means "have one's tabernacle, abide (or live) in a tabernacle (or tent), tabernacle". If you were with us when we studied the Book of Hebrew, you might remember the Tabernacle in the wilderness while the Israelites were wandering throughout the Sinai Peninsula.

The outer material of the Tabernacle was made out of badger skins which means it looked like any other average humble tent from a distance. But once you look inside of the Tabernacle, it was ornated with pure gold and beautiful tapestries. It is such a great representation of Jesus – He was an ordinary looking man in a human body from outside like any other Jew in the first century, but He was fully God inside without a question.

Until king Solomon built a temple for the Lord, the tabernacle was a temporary place where man could meet with God. Since we couldn't go to God because of our sinful nature from birth, He came to us. If you are a born-again Christian, we are more privileged to have a Person of the Triune God, the Holy Spirit within us than the OT Hebrews who just had the Tabernacle in their camp.

Let's go back to v14 again. Did you notice the word 'became'? The apostle John was careful to use this word instead of "was born" or "was created". John wants us to know that God did not create Jesus out of nothing, like everything else He did including us.

The Word who is Jesus became a man. This is a very simple statement, yet it is the most profound one in all of history. Think about it. Infinity became finite; the invisible now is visible; eternity is now squeezed into time; the supernatural is confined by the natural; deity funneled Himself into humanity. A.T. Robertson, the greatest Greek scholar of the 20th Century said, "This is beyond the power of interpretation."

Apostle Paul elaborated on it for us:

1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

Back to v14 again. Some of you are thinking, "Are you planning to finish all four Gospels at this speed?" We are not in a hurry, are we?

The word 'beheld' in Greek is 'theaomai' from which we get an English word 'theater'. It means "view attentively, contemplate". It is more than casually watching or looking at someone or something. John and the rest of the disciples intensively watched Him, studied His move, His words, and the way He lived while He was with them for three years.

The greatest gift from God was God Himself wrapped in human skin. "The Word became flesh." As I said it before, He did that because we couldn't go to Him because of our sins and unholiness. At the same time, He couldn't lower His standard of holiness and righteousness. So, Jesus became a man without a sin to be sacrificed on our behalf that we may have eternal life at the cost of His holiness and righteousness.

At the beginning of this teaching, I mentioned about some people's opinions about Jesus. Depending on what your firm conviction about Jesus is, your eternal destination will be designated by your own choice. Some will ask, "Why would a loving God send people to hell?" My question to those who ask is, "Why would anyone choose hell over a loving God?"

D. APPLICATIONS

1) When the Lord reveals the darkness of our sins, it is the right and wise thing to confess them to the Lord and walk away from them and never to return.

2) We should never think that our salvation has anything to do with ourselves, nor anything we've done.

3) The pathway to heaven begins at the foot of the cross. No other place.