

PART 2

The Preparation for Christ's Ministry

CHAPTER 6

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

JOHN 1:1-18

Study Questions

1. Why does John call Jesus "the Word"?
2. What is the most important teaching of John 1:1-18?
3. What were the reactions of men to the coming of Christ?

The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the Son of God. John begins his book by taking us back, past the beginning of history, into eternity. There he shows us the glory of Christ and reveals that God has entered the world in the form of man.

The Divine Christ

John presents Christ by referring to Him as "the Word." That title suggests a means of communication. We use words when we want to convey our ideas to someone. It is probably with this in mind that J. B. Phillips translates the "Word" as the "Personal Expression." The Word is the expression of God in personal form.

John gives us some details about the Word. We read that He did not begin to live in the beginning when the world was made. He

was already in existence then. He has always been in existence. In other words, He is eternal. In the beginning He was with God; that is, He and God lived in intimate fellowship with one another. Even more than that must be said. Not only was He with God; He *was* God. The Word, who became Jesus Christ, is eternal God.

In addition to identifying the Word as God, John tells us that the Word was the One through whom all things were made. When man was created, he was given mental and spiritual light, which made him capable of worshiping and serving God. This light came to him from the Word, the divine Creator. And because the darkness of sin sought to extinguish this light, the Word came into the world as the Light of the World. The divine Creator also became the Saviour.

The Incarnate Christ

The climax of the introduction to John's Gospel is found in John 1:14, "the Word became flesh." This means that God became a man exactly like us, except that He had no sin.

But the human nature that He took did not hide His divinity. John, who saw the Word when He was flesh, says that "we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John 1:14). Christ was a man, yet He was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), and the goodness and glory of God was seen in Him.

The Preparation for the Incarnation

The coming of the Incarnate Word did not occur without ample preparation. God sent John the Baptist to tell the world of the coming of the Word. John proclaimed Jesus as the One who was the Light of the World.

But that was not the only preparation that God had made for the incarnation of His Son. For centuries He had given promises that Christ would come. The prophets of the Old Testament had spoken about Him. And these promises and prophecies had come to a people whom God had chosen and prepared, so that they would be able to receive Christ when He came. He came to a people who had heard the announcement of His coming.

The Reception of the Incarnate Christ

Although Israel was prepared for Christ's coming, when He came He was not accepted by men. He came into the world that He had made, but the world did not recognize its Creator. He came to the people who had been prepared for His coming, but His people did

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not receive their Christ. "He was despised, and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3).

He was rejected, but not by all. There were those who recognized and received Him. They met the Christ, and they believed in Him. And to those who believed in Him, Christ gave the right to become the children of God.

Chapter Checkup

1. What idea is suggested by the use of the title "the Word"?
2. List the facts about the Word which are found in John 1:1-5.
3. Use John 1:6-15 to help you describe the work of John the Baptist.
4. What does "the Word became flesh" mean?
5. Learn the meaning of the word "incarnation." Write out a verse from John 1:1-18 which includes this idea.

For Further Study

1. How does the introduction of John's Gospel differ from the beginnings of the other Gospels?
2. How does the introduction to John's Gospel fit the purpose of this Gospel?
3. Give three Old Testament prophecies about the coming of Christ.