

# The Word Became Flesh

by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle



"Christ Child"

## Prayer of Illumination

God of light, you have revealed your very self to us  
in your son Jesus Christ, your one Word made flesh,  
who lived among us, full of grace and truth.

Open us to your revelation once again,  
that in the words of your holy scripture  
we might know your presence and  
follow in your light always.

Amen.

## Scripture: John 1:1-5, 14 (NRSVue)

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, <sup>5</sup> and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, <sup>14</sup> full of grace and truth.

*The grass withers and the flower fades,  
but the Word of God endures forever.*

## SERMON – The Word Became Flesh

Did you know that in religious paintings not all halos are round, gold, and beaming?



Circular halos are reserved exclusively for Jesus, Mary, angels, and saints. There are triangular halos. Sometimes in art God the Father is depicted as having a three-pointed halo—to emphasize the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are even occasional hexagonal shaped halos.

But for the regular people who loved God, they were often given square halos that were black. Sometimes they are even a little crooked and askew. The circle represents perfection and heaven. But the square halo communicated that the person was very much of the earth. That they were human, earthy, regular folk. The Christmas story wonderfully speaks of the Christ child of two halos. The round, gold halo speaks of his divinity. The square halo speaks of his humanity.

Our Scripture reading from John 1 begins with these words—

*"In the beginning was the Word."*

Is there another book of the Bible you can think of that begins with *"In the beginning?"*  
Yes, Genesis.

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*

So John pushes the account of Jesus back—not to his birth, but back to the very beginning of time, before anything else had been created.

*"The Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."*

In Christ, the human and the divine are perfectly united—God with us, here on earth. Near to us. This little baby, the Word made flesh, is life, the very life of God and it brings light to the darkness. The light is stronger than the darkness—the darkness will not overcome it. This is the candle light we have been anticipating in Advent—the Christ Candle. The square black halo speaks of his humanity and humility. Jesus faced struggles and challenges. He knows what we’re going through. He has suffered anguish, both physical and mental. He knows our struggles. He gets it. He had humble beginnings. He was born in Bethlehem—a small town, but its significance was huge. Bethlehem was the hometown of King David—the Jewish people’s greatest king. Centuries earlier, David was promised by God that the Messiah would come from his lineage. But here’s the irony in the Christmas story. This royal child was placed not in a fancy decked out nursery from Pottery Barn. Rather, Mary laid him in an animal feedbox . . . in a barn. *Jesus was wrapped in bands of cloth, and laid in an animal trough.*

Flip a number of pages forward in Luke’s gospel and he writes: After Jesus’ crucifixion and death, they *wrapped Jesus’ body in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb.* The swaddling cloths are a foreshadowing of Jesus’ burial cloths . . .

Jesus came not only for a cradle, but for the cross. He was not only placed in a stone feeding trough, but he was placed in a tomb sealed with a stone on Good Friday. It’s this Jesus, the Christ, child of two halos: human and divine, that we celebrate. We need both of Christ’s halos.

Jesus—our Savior, Messiah, and Lord—is strong enough to deliver us and humble enough to relate with us. He is the Prince of Peace, bringing tidings of comfort and joy to the world. Divinity and humanity perfectly united—all for us, all for the world, for our salvation and life.

Amen.

Sermon Art: “*Christ Child*” born in Bethlehem; “*Archangel Gabriel*” by Ronnie Cruwys, 2014

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