

#1691

Cf. #510 #511 #922; #1103; #1517; #1688

John 1:1-3&14¹
Jesus, the Word made flesh,
dwells among us.
Christmas Day
Supplementary Lectionary Series "B,"
Gospels, adapted

Pastor A. J. Kunde
Grace WELS Durand MI
10:00 a.m. Christmas Day
Sunday, December 25, 2011

^{1:1} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.

³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

¹⁴ 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.

WHO IS THIS WHO IN A MANGER LIES?
I. THE CREATOR
II. THE WORD WHO HAS BECOME FLESH
III. THE ONE FULL OF GRACE & TRUTH

In the Name of Jesus, our Newborn LORD and King, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

An angel of the LORD announced to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the LORD" (Luke 2:11). This Baby is born. Yet, contained in the angelic announcement is the fact that this Baby is the LORD. This Baby is God the LORD. How can the LORD be born?

God the LORD is Eternal; he is from Everlasting to Everlasting; he is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last. There never was a time when this Child was not. There never will be a time when this Child is not. This Child, God the LORD, "was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever." How can this be? How can this Child be God the LORD – the Eternal and Everlasting God? We must ask: WHO IS THIS WHO IN A MANGER LIES? WHO IS THIS WHO IN A MANGER LIES ... he is ... I. THE CREATOR; II. THE WORD WHO HAS BECOME FLESH; III. THE ONE FULL OF GRACE & TRUTH.

WHO IS THIS WHO IN A MANGER LIES?
I. THE CREATOR

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

The Apostle John writes in our text, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (1:3). Through this Baby born in a barn in Bethlehem, all things were made. Everything that exists was made through him. This points to the truth that not only is this Baby the Creator, he is also Eternal.

To create something means that the one who creates it must exist before he creates it. A carpenter or electrician has to exist and be alive before he builds a house or wires the electricity. John testifies to this fact when he writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (1:1,2). Note how carefully John constructs this statement. "In the beginning was the Word" John does not say, "In the beginning is the Word." He uses the past tense, "In the beginning WAS the Word" The Word already existed before the beginning took place. The Word is Eternal. The Word is Everlasting. John is talking about Jesus as this Word.

Jesus himself refers to himself as Eternal and Everlasting. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus says about himself, "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" (Revelation 1:17b,18). The writer to the Hebrews similarly refers to Jesus as eternal. He writes, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus is Eternal. Jesus is the Creator.

As the Creator, the One "through [whom] all things were made," Jesus is also Almighty, Omnipotent, All-Powerful. When one thinks about the men who are carpenters, bricklayers or cement workers, one has to say that none of these men are puny wimps. They are all strong. Think of how strong Jesus is to be the Creator of all things. Jesus is Almighty. In addition, Jesus is Wise.

Once again, those in the construction industry have to have a good measure of wisdom to construct a house or building. Think of the Wisdom that Jesus, the Creator, has, for he put together the entire universe. Jesus is All-Wise; Jesus is Omniscient. Jesus is also Kind.

How unkind it would be, if the men constructing your home did not plumb the walls, did not nail joists down securely, wired the electrical incorrectly, or installed the plumbing so that it did not work right. Jesus, the Creator, is Kind, for all that he has created works well together. Planets do not run into each other. Seasons come and go in an orderly fashion. Jesus also provides for his creation – for his creatures.

The Psalmist writes, O LORD ...

**¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.**

**¹⁶ You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing**

(Psalm 145:15,16).

This Kindness of Jesus the Creator of all things reveals also his Grace – his undeserved loving-kindness toward his creation.

Jesus is the Creator. Jesus is Eternal.

APPROPRIATION

In his Epistle to the Colossians, St. Paul also points to Jesus as the Creator and as being Eternal. St. Paul writes,

¹⁵ He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17).

Jesus as “the firstborn over all creation” does not mean that he did not exist before creation, for as other Scriptures testify, Jesus is Eternal. Once again, as all things were created by him, Jesus had to exist before creation ever came into being. Jesus is before all things, therefore, Jesus is Eternal. In addition, St. Paul states that in Jesus “all things hold together.” Without Jesus, things would fall apart. But Jesus protects, preserves and provides for his creation. Jesus does this because in addition to being born – Jesus is true man – Jesus is also true God.

St. Paul continues to write to the Colossians, “In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). Everything that is true about God the Father and God the Holy Spirit is true of Christ Jesus in bodily form. The Father and the Holy Spirit are Eternal; so is Jesus. The Father and the Holy Spirit are Almighty, Omnipotent; so is Jesus. The Father and the Holy Spirit are All-Knowing, Wise, Omniscient; so is Jesus. The Father and the Holy Spirit are Eternal and Everlasting; so is Jesus. Thus, the writer to the Hebrews states concerning Jesus that he “is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:3a). Who is this who in the manger lies?

Who is this who in the manger lies? This Christ Jesus, true God, Eternal Creator, Provider, Protector, Preserver. Before this Baby born in Bethlehem, we must react with humble awe. We must react in worship and wonder. This is true God in the manger, who has now become true man.

WHO IS THIS WHO IN A MANGER LIES? II. THE WORD WHO HAS BECOME FLESH

Once again, we listen to the announcement of the angel of the LORD to the shepherds, “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you ...” (Luke 2:11b). This Savior is born. That means he is a human being. This Savior takes on human nature.

John states in the last verse of our text, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (1:14a). Oh, the significance that is in that word “flesh.”

The term “flesh” is usually reserved in the Bible to describe some aspect of sinful mankind. As we look into the manger, we might assume that this Baby is like all others – a sinful human being. Even during his life, if we did not look and listen carefully, we might assume that the Man that this Child grows up to be, is a sinful man like all others. He is not. The Apostle Peter testifies about him, “He committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22). The writer to the Hebrews states about Jesus, he was “tempted in every way, just as we are— yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15b). No one was ever able to convict Jesus of sin (cf. John 8:46a). Yet Jesus becomes sin!

Jesus becomes sin. St. Paul writes in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21a). Isaiah foretold this, when he said, “The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6c). This was the purpose of the Word becoming flesh and living among us, that he, Jesus, the Word made flesh, would take our sins and the sins of the world upon himself, and suffer God’s anger, wrath and punishment for those sins, in our place, as our substitute.

APPROPRIATION

Jesus had to be a human being in order to substitute himself for human beings. Think of the importance of substitution in sports.

A football halfback is not substituted for a baseball catcher. An offensive guard is not substituted for a pitcher. A tight-end is not substituted for a shortstop. Substitutions are made within the same kind of sport. So also, Jesus had to be of human-kind – a human being – in order to be the substitute for human beings. But there also had to be a difference.

Psalm 49 reveals the difference there had to be in Jesus. The psalmist writes,

**⁷ No man can redeem the life of another
or give to God a ransom for him—
⁸ the ransom for a life is costly,
no payment is ever enough—
⁹ that he should live on forever
and not see decay** (Psalm 49:7-9).

If Jesus were only a man, he would be a sinner like all other men. If Jesus were only a man, he could not redeem the life or soul of another. If Jesus were only a man, he could not redeem himself. Jesus had to be more than a human being.

Jesus had to be more than a human being. Thus, John tells us, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (1:14a). The Word, the Eternal Word, does not cease being the Word, when he takes on human flesh. Jesus is the God-man and the only One who can take away the sins of the world.

Jesus had to be a man in order to substitute himself for mankind. Jesus had to be true God – the Eternal Word – so that he would be without sin. Jesus had to be true God, so that his substituting himself for all mankind would be payment enough for the sins of all. Thus, Jesus, the God-man, redeems mankind from sin, death and hell, “with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.” This is what it took to redeem mankind.

This is what it took to redeem you. You dare not trust your own righteousness, good works, merit or character. You cannot try hard enough for God to take away your sins. Only Jesus has taken away your sins. Trust in him. Believe in him. For Jesus is the One who is full of grace and truth.

WHO IS THIS WHO IN A MANGER LIES? III. THE ONE FULL OF GRACE & TRUTH

The Apostle John states, “We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14b). John’s perspective takes us beyond Christmas and Jesus’ birth.

At Jesus’ birth, the shepherds were surrounded by the glory of the LORD, and they saw and heard the angels in glory who sang, “Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14). But John saw more of Jesus’ glory than that.

John testifies to the glory revealed at Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptizer, when the Father’s voice spoke from heaven and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Matthew and Luke, testify to Jesus’ successful resisting of the temptations of the devil, while Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. John and the others saw the glory of Jesus’ earthly public ministry: His announcement of the forgiveness of sins and his miracles, which verified that his preaching and teaching were true. James, Peter and John witnessed the glory of Jesus’ transfiguration. John and the others saw the glory of Jesus’ cross.

Yes! Jesus’ cross and crucifixion are glorious. For Jesus’ proclamation, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), signals that by his cross, Jesus has successfully taken away the sins of the world by his suffering and death on the cross. Then, John and the others testify to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection proves that he is God’s Son (cf. Romans 1:4), proves that the sins of the world have been forgiven (cf. Romans 4:25), and proves that those who believe in him will also rise from the dead and live forever with him in heaven (cf. John 14:19b). The glory of Jesus’ ascension into heaven also proves that Jesus is God’s Son and that he is at the right hand of God and governs, rules, directs and controls all things for those who believe in him (cf. Mark 16:19; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:18-23). Finally, John and the other believers who have gone before us, look forward to Jesus’ glorious return to judge all mankind (cf. Matthew 24:30b,31). Jesus’ glory is also seen in the fact that he is “full of grace and truth” (1:14c).

Jesus is full of grace. Grace is God's undeserved love for mankind. Grace is God's love for mankind, who really deserve to be punished by God for their sin. This grace is seen in Jesus, who takes away the sin of the world; who takes upon himself the punishment for the sins of the world. Jesus is also full of truth.

Jesus is full of truth. Jesus is the Truth. Jesus' Word, which is truth, exposes mankind's sinfulness and the fact that mankind is doomed without a Savior – without Jesus. Jesus Word reveals the truth that he is the One who delivers from sin, death and the grave, from hell and from the devil and his power. Jesus destroyed the devil's power (cf. Hebrews 2:14). Jesus destroyed the devil's work (cf 1 John 3:8). Through Jesus, a person has forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. Jesus says, "I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

APPROPRIATION

Jesus' glory, his grace and his truth – Jesus shares all this with you who believe in him. While his Word of Truth uncovers and exposes your sins – your sinful nature and your actual sins of thoughts, words, actions, attitudes and behavior – Jesus exposes and uncovers your sinfulness so that you might know how much you need him as your Savior. The Truth of Jesus' Word also reveals Jesus to you as your only Savior.

Jesus is your only Savior. It is only by faith in him alone that you have forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. By his grace alone through faith alone, Jesus promises to share with you his glory. St. Paul testifies,

¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:16-18).

There will be present suffering in this life for Christians – for you as believers in Jesus. But that suffering is only temporary. Jesus promises to share his glory with you in heaven.

CONCLUSION

Who is this who in a manger lies? It is your LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus is the Creator, Preserver, Protector, and Provider of all things. Jesus was with God in eternity. In time, Jesus became a human being, so that he could substitute his perfect life for all – substitute his life for you. Jesus is the Word made flesh. Jesus brings forgiveness of sins into the world. His Word testifies to this, so that you might believe in him and have eternal life through him. Amen.