

The Word Became Flesh (Advent Series)

III. God Dwells

12/14/2008

1. There are lots of terms we use as Christians that we just “know” fit the situation. If one said “The First _____” every one would just know that the next word was Noel, even though we don’t use that word in everyday conversation and many might not know what it means. We talk about the incarnation of Christ, but what does “incarnation” mean?

Appearing in human form; becoming real; God taking on the limitations of being human.

2. Jesus coming to live on earth as a human was a big deal. What other examples can you think of when God lived on earth in one form or another?

We find God co-existing in the Garden of Eden with Adam (Gen. 3: 8). God lived with the Jews as they wandered the desert on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land (Exodus 40:33-38, John 1:14), showing his presence in the Tabernacle as a cloud by day and fire by night. God lives with us and within us now in the form of the Holy Spirit.

3. How does all this relate to Advent?

God decided that the time was right to interact with mankind in a new and more direct way. He could have come in any form that He wanted (bright light in the sky in the middle of the night, a great storm, or a 3-D image on the side of a mountain), but He decided to come as a baby and grow up as all humans grow up to illustrate what a godly life would look like.

4. Pastor Steve asked the question “If Jesus came back today, would you recognize Him?” How would you answer that?

We assume He would come back in the clouds with the sound of trumpets announcing His arrival (Acts 1: 9-11, Rev, 19:1-16). We have read and studied the Bible, so we know how the second coming is described.

5. Since most Christians would answer question 4 with some specific examples of signs they would expect to see (and hear), how do you then answer the second question: “What if He has already come and you missed Him?”

Most of us would say that it is not possible. Yet, that is what the religious scholars felt when Jesus was born. They knew the Bible (then the Old Testament writings) and were confident they knew what the Messiah would look like and act like when he came. Yet Jesus came as a baby born to a carpenter. He had no interest in being a ruler on the throne. Thus, he didn’t fit their understanding of what the Messiah would be like. (John 1:26) Isn’t it possible that Jesus has come – possibly many times – while we were looking for Him to come the final time to end the present age?

6. Pastor Steve makes the case that Jesus is here right now. Read John 17:18 - 23 and then discuss the basis for this rather radical statement?

Jesus constantly is talking about the Father being in Him and He is in the Father. He then extends that to us, saying Jesus is in us and we are in Him. This all sounds a bit confusing to nonbelievers, but we understand that the Holy Spirit enters our life once we accept Christ as our Savior and that means God is now part of us. At the same time, we have become a child of God. Thus, we are in the same role as Christ was – a child of God, and others should be able to see God through us. We have become like Jesus. We are His surrogate until He comes again.

7. What do you make of the comment “We are worried about getting to heaven, but God is worried about getting to earth.”?

God is trying to touch as many people as will receive Him. That’s why our lives on earth ought to be spent reaching out to others on His behalf. Getting ourselves to heaven is a good thing; bringing lots of others along is even better.

8. Why did Pastor Steve suggest that we not look for the supernatural to find God, but to look for the ordinary?

Those who are acting as the hands and feet of God are often those who are doing something that, at least at first glance, seems ordinary – visiting prisoners, serving in juvenile homes, helping mothers in jail read books to their children, or serving each other when in need.

9. How does all this affect the church, the body of believers?

Whenever the people of God come together, Christ wants to be seen through their words and deeds. To the extent that we are following the leading of the Holy Spirit, those around us will see God through us.

10. Can Advent occur outside of the few weeks before Christmas?

Advent happens regularly. When a new believer is “born again”, they are like a baby, and they start becoming more like Jesus each day. They are Jesus to others, and they sense the presence of the Holy Spirit themselves. They exude grace and truth to all around them. This does not happen just in December. Rather, this is when we look at the ultimate example, Jesus.