

He Tabernacled Among Us

by David Guzik

Jesus, the eternal being, came to earth as a humble man to dwell among us, bringing glory and truth to humanity and all of creation.

Duration: 34:01

Scripture: Exodus 25:8, Matthew 6:33, John 1:14

Topics: "Incarnation Of Christ", "Gods Presence"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on John 1:14, which states that 'the word became flesh and dwelt among us.' He emphasizes that there is a story behind the story, and sometimes what we see in front of us may not fully reveal the glory and significance of the event. The speaker connects this verse to the Christmas story, highlighting the humble and unglamorous circumstances of Jesus' birth in a barn. Despite the humble setting, the speaker emphasizes that Jesus' presence among us is a meeting place full of grace, and meeting with God should not feel condemning but rather inviting and blessed.

Transcript

John chapter one. This morning I'd like us to take a look at verse 14 of John chapter one. We're only going to put our focus upon one verse this morning.

Again, it's the gospel of John chapter one, verse 14, where we read 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. We know in almost everything in life that there's a story behind the story. There's what you see right out in front of you.

And sometimes what you see right out in front of you is impressive, but sometimes the story behind the story puts a different shine on what you see in front of you. Sometimes what you see in front of you doesn't look so good when you see the story behind the story. Sometimes what you see in front of you looks even more glorious when you know the story behind the story.

Well, that's how it is for us this morning as we take a look at the gospel of John chapter one, verse 14. We know the Christmas story, of course. We know about this pregnant young woman, Mary, and we picture her in our minds, you know, sort of waddling into Bethlehem about ready to give birth at any moment.

And Joseph hurriedly finding a place where she can give birth to this baby and finding no room in the inns or the motels, we might say, of their day. She had to basically give birth to the baby in a barn. And it was a very humble place, not very sanitary, not very glorious.

They laid the baby in a manger, which is really a feeding trough. It's not a very clean place. And they laid Jesus there.

And of course, shepherds came and proclaimed the greatness of this thing and the glory of the Lord shown all around. We have this picture in our mind and that's wonderful. But to know the story behind the story makes it even more wonderful because Christmas didn't begin in Bethlehem.

Christmas began long, long time ago in eternity past. And that's that's what John is speaking of here. I mean, this verse itself is simple enough to understand.

Just look at it again. He says the word became flesh. Well, John's already explained to us who the word is.

He's speaking about Jesus, the divine son of God, the second person of the Trinity and this divine eternal person, the word. Well, he became flesh. That is, he took on humanity.

He took a human body upon him. So a divine, eternal person, the word became flesh. And then he says he dwelt among us.

It wasn't just to take on a body for the sake of taking on a body. It wasn't just to add humanity for the sake of appearances, but no, it was to live among us, to dwell among us. And then he says, and we beheld his glory.

In other words, John and others, they saw this, this this divine personage who added humanity to his deity, come down and they beheld his glory. There was glory attached to the word when he became flesh and dwelt among them. And John says, I saw it.

I saw it with my own eyes, by the way, that the phrasing that John uses there, we beheld his glory. It doesn't speak of spiritual insight. He's talking about what you see with your physical eyes.

He says, we saw it. I'm not talking about an encounter with spiritual glory, although that was certainly present as well. John says we saw it with our eyes.

Then he goes on to explain that the glory that they saw was the glory of God, the father himself. He says, look at it again in verse 14. We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father.

Well, this is the same kind of glory that is attendant to the first person of the Trinity, God, the father in heaven. And then finally, he points out in verse 14 that the outshining of his glory was full of grace and full of truth. So, friends, it's not a tough verse to understand.

It's a tough verse to drink in. It's a tough verse, what might we say, to comprehend, but the essential meaning of it is right there for us. A divine, eternal person, the word became flesh.

He dwelt among us. John and others saw his glory. The glory that they saw was the glory of God, the father himself.

And the outshining of his glory was full of grace and truth. We're all together on that here this morning. It's a Christmas story in a nutshell, isn't it? Not just a baby in a manger.

But this eternal being, the second person of the Trinity coming down, dwelling among us, displaying his glory and bringing grace and truth in fullness to humanity and all of creation. But you dig a little deeper and you see even more. Isn't that remarkable about the scriptures? You just keep digging and it's inexhaustible.

Not too long ago, I was talking with just conversation in the family and speaking about some books of the Bible that I haven't taught through yet. I still haven't talked to Ezekiel or Jeremiah. And so there's a few books of the Bible that I have not yet taught through.

And my son asked me, he said, Ted, well, what are you going to do when you teach through the whole Bible? And the whole tone of his question was, well, when you finish that, I mean, what you're done, I guess. I don't know. You retire.

I explained to him, I said, oh, son, I can't get to the bottom of this. I can teach it through 50 times and not be to the bottom of it. Well, it's that way for us in verse 14.

We understand the tenor of we understand the central message, but we haven't hit the bottom of it yet. As a matter of fact, I want to focus in on one phrase here this morning, just a few words, four words in verse 14. Look at it there.

He says, and the word became flesh. Now, here are the words I want to focus on and dwelt among us. Great.

If you were to pick four words in this verse to focus in on, you might not pick those. But there's a special reason why I do, because John used a very interesting and rare word that's translated there dwelt among us. Now, you may be aware that the Bible wasn't written in the English language when the apostle John sat down and put, you know, his his pen to the parchment.

He wasn't writing in English, not even King James English. Now, he wrote in an ancient language, ancient form of the Greek language. It's known as Koine Greek and is when you translate from any language to another.

It's hard to get the words precisely. Sometimes the words need a little more explanation. Well, the specific word that John used, therefore, and dwelt among us.

Literally, the word means to dwell in a tent. It doesn't mean to live in a house. It doesn't mean to live on the street.

It doesn't mean to live in just in the sense of general living. It means specifically to dwell in a tent. We don't have one word for that in English, but they do in the ancient language that the apostle John wrote in.

And so he uses that word right here. You could translate this. And the word was made flesh and pitched his tent among us.

That's a very valid translation of this or more specifically, I think, probably even more accurately, you could translate it. And the word was made flesh and tabernacled among us. Now, do you know what a tabernacle is? A tabernacle is sort of a religious word for a tent.

And in ancient Israel, when they were in the wilderness experience during the days of the Exodus, God specifically told Moses and the nation of Israel to build a tent, a tent of meeting that is commonly called the tabernacle. And John is deliberately using a phrase to draw our minds, to draw our attention back to this Old Testament tabernacle. That's how the word was used in the Bible that John read every day.

He's using a word from that to suggest this idea that Jesus tabernacled among us, that the word became flesh and tabernacled with us. And the idea isn't only of Jesus's presence among us in a time or for a time. I mean, that's what we think of when we think of somebody living in a tent, right? A temporary dwelling, not a permanent dwelling.

Sometimes we call our bodies tents that we live in, right? Because the idea is that these bodies are temporary. The older I get, the more I understand that these bodies are temporary. It's a scary thing to turn 40 and to look at your body running down and all the rest of it.

Sobering thing. Some of you are thinking scary thing to turn 40 and you're thinking of how old you are. Well, I'll catch up to you.

Don't worry about that. But you know, the whole idea here is that that's not just John's focus here is that it's a temporary dwelling. He's making a deliberate connection between Jesus and the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Matter of fact, we know this from one of the few other places that John used this rare word. Let me read it to you. It's from Revelation chapter 21, verse three.

The only person to use this word in the New Testament is the apostle John. And he used it here and a few other places. One of them is Revelation 21 three, where it says, And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them.

The same word for dwell. And these will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. You see, he's building very deliberately on this idea of the tabernacle.

And I tell you, one other place we can see it right there from verse 14, where John is emphasizing this. Look again at verse 14. He says, And the word became flesh and dwelt among us or tabernacled among us.

And we beheld his glory. What made the tabernacle the tabernacle? It wasn't just that it was a tent. It wasn't just that it was a divinely sanctioned tent.

It was that it had the glory of God attendant with it. There at the tabernacle was a pillar of glory. It was appeared like a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night there with the tabernacle 24 7 to tell Israel, My glory is attendant upon this place.

And so you see how John is building on that idea when he says the word became flesh and tabernacled amongst and we beheld his glory, just like you could see the glory of God with your eyes at the tabernacle of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, so you could see the glory of God shining out through Jesus Christ and all of his being. You see, what made the tabernacle the tabernacle? It was not the structure. It wasn't the materials.

It was the Shekinah glory of God associated with the tabernacle of meeting. This is a very striking idea that the apostle has presented to us because what was the tabernacle? What does it show us about Jesus? Well, as much as anything, the tabernacle was a place to meet God. And this idea of a place to meet God is developed all throughout the scriptures.

Did you know that Adam and Eve had a place to meet God? They had a place where apparently they brought sacrifice. Cain and Abel knew where to bring it. They had some sort of idea, some sort of place where they came and met God.

We know that in Exodus chapter 33, before the tabernacle itself was ever constructed, God wanted Moses to make a place to meet with him. Let me read to you from Exodus chapter 33, beginning at verse seven. Matter of fact, you may want to turn there and keep your finger in John chapter one because we'll be referring to this continually.

But Exodus chapter 33, beginning at verse seven, Exodus is the second book of your Bible. So you have Genesis and then Exodus. And you'll notice it in the later chapters of the book.

Exodus chapter 33. We read this. Moses took his tent again.

I'm at verse seven. Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp and called it the tabernacle of meeting. Now, friends, let me remind you, this is Moses's tent.

This isn't the tabernacle that was built later on that had a very ornate structure that was forty five feet long and fifteen feet wide. This is Moses's house, so to speak. He took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp and called it the tabernacle of meeting.

And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting, which was outside the camp. So it was whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, that all the people rose and each man stood at his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass when Moses entered the tabernacle that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle.

And the Lord talked with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of a pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door and all the people rose and worshiped each man in his tent door. So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend and he would return to the camp.

But his servant Joshua, the son of none, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle. Isn't that glorious? God said, I want to have a tent of meeting. I want to have a place where I meet with my people.

And Moses, you're first in line. And Moses met with God in a remarkable way at the tent of meeting so much that his whole radiance shone out from this unique meeting that he had with God with his marvelous experience. And you see Joshua there, the attendant of Moses, don't you? His assistant, Joshua, I want some of this.

I'm not leaving here. Is this the place God meets with people? I'm not leaving here. I'm staying.

Just bring my food in. You see, all the people, I love how it describes it there. It says, and it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting.

You see, not all of Israel was like that. There were many in Israel who were indifferent. Oh, there's a place where you can go and meet with God.

Oh, well, I got a lot of things to do today, but not everybody was like that. There were some people who said there's a place where you can go and meet with God. I'm going there.

It's outside the camp. There's some difficulty. I don't care.

I'm going. There's some trouble to it. There's some.

I want to meet with God. Nothing more important to me than to meet with my God. And many came and they were blessed and they met with God.

You see, you have the place where Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel met with God. You have the place. Well, you could go all through the book of Genesis and talk about whenever a guy like Abraham or Isaac or Jacob built an altar, that was a place to meet with God, wasn't it? And then here you have the tent of meeting in Exodus chapter thirty three.

And then you have later on in the chapters of Exodus when they build the tabernacle, that that tent that was forty five feet long and fifteen feet wide. And there it was constructed with beautiful ornaments. But on the outside, it looked fairly humble.

That tabernacle was also called the tent of meeting. It was a place to meet with God. And the priest would conduct the sacrifices and the services there and people would meet with God there.

And then later on, you had the temple, right? The temple, a place where people would come and meet with God. Now, back in our minds to the Gospel of John, chapter one, verse fourteen. Let me read that to you again.

And the word became flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth. Do you see what John means just in those few words and dwelt with us or among us? The idea here is that John wants us to know that the meaning and the purpose of the tabernacle is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. He is how we meet with God.

He is our place of meeting. So I can't tell you a geographic place to go if you want to meet with God. I've been to Israel several times and had a wonderful time visiting you.

You should make it a priority of your life to make a trip to Israel. I say that without hesitation. You should say that that is a priority of my life.

I want to go to Israel because you will understand the Bible in a way that you just can't understand any other way. I mean, you can read about the Sea of Galilee, right? When you see it, it's different. You can read about Jerusalem.

When you see it, it's different. I tell you, for all the respect and admiration I have for Israel and for taking visits there and such, I have a confession to make. I never felt one bit closer to God in Israel or Jerusalem or at the Western Wall or any place else.

I didn't feel any closer to God there because God isn't talking about meeting with him at a geographic place. No, there is a place of meeting, but it's meeting with God in the person of Jesus Christ. He is how

we meet with God.

He is our place of meeting. And you see now how the tabernacle so perfectly speaks of Jesus. What a wonderful phrasing this is of the Apostle John for him to say.

And he tabernacled among us. I mean, think of the tabernacle. It was humble on the outside, but glorious on the inside.

Well, that's our Savior, isn't it? Humble on the outside. Isn't it amazing how Jesus was not into self-promotion? Could any of you picture Jesus handing out business cards? You know, Jesus of Nazareth, miracle worker, you know, website right there. And, you know, resume Messiah, savior of the world, all that.

Jesus wasn't like that, was he? And, you know, when you think about it, since all this was planned from eternity past, Jesus could have chosen any appearance he wanted. Right. And he chose to come as a humble man.

Matter of fact, the prophet Isaiah tells us prophetically about the coming of the Messiah, that there was nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. I'm not saying that Jesus was ugly. I'm just saying he was normal looking.

He looked like anybody else. We could surmise that just from the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, because Judas had to walk up to Jesus and identify him with a kiss. Now, if he wouldn't have done that, the soldiers wouldn't have known who it was.

Judas couldn't just say, get the good looking guy. He couldn't just say, get the tall guy. He couldn't just say, get the guy who's built like, you know, he looks just like everybody else.

So I have to identify him to you. That's our savior. Humble on the outside, but glorious on the inside.

When you walked into that tabernacle, into that tent of meeting, you saw gold. You saw tapestries with the ornate pictures or designs of cherubim all around. You saw glory all about you.

Humble on the outside, glorious on the inside. The tabernacle is also a picture of Jesus in that it was at the center of the people of God. Now, God is into order.

God is into organization. And he didn't want the nation of Israel camped haphazardly around the tabernacle. No, he said, I want the tabernacle right in the middle, and I want the tribes and their families in order around it, because God wanted the tabernacle to be at the center of the life of the people of God.

That's how Jesus wants to be, right? Not on the periphery of your life, not on the outside. No, right at the center. Where it's if Jesus is the hub in the middle of the wheel and everything is connected to Jesus, the spokes connected to Jesus, everything around, everything in your life is connected to Jesus.

As a matter of fact, that might be a good way to just sort of pass a scan over your life right now to assess it. What is it in your life right now that isn't connected to Jesus? The spoke doesn't reach there. That's probably something that needs to be dealt with in your life, isn't it? We think about the tabernacle is like Jesus because the tabernacle, well, it was a place of sacrifice, wasn't it? If you went to the tabernacle, I bet what would strike you most immediately, what was not the site of the place on the outside, it looks humble.

What would strike you would be the smell. You would smell sacrifice. I don't know.

Maybe it would smell like a great mesquite barbecue all the time because they were always essentially barbecuing and burning animal flesh. Maybe it would smell great or maybe it would have that burnt smell. I couldn't tell you exactly, but I'm sure it would strike you because the tabernacle was a place of sacrifice and we understand that the sacrifice that saves us is not the sacrifice of a bull.

It's not the sacrifice of a ram, but it's the sacrifice of Jesus Christ laying down his own body, the same body that dwelt among us, laying it down and bearing in himself all the sin, all the guilt, all the shame, all the judgment that you and I deserved. And he bore it in himself. It's a place of sacrifice.

You know, the tabernacle is also a place of God's word. Do you know where the tablets of the Ten Commandments were deposited? In the Ark of the Covenant, which stood in the holiest of holies there in the tabernacle. It was the place where God's word stood, where it was preserved.

And isn't that true about Jesus? You know, if you want to meet Jesus, meet him in his word. What a great place to come and meet Jesus. We also see that the tabernacle was a place of worship.

People would come and worship God. They would offer sacrifices not only to atone for sin. Did you know that many of the sacrifices that the common Israelite might offer in the days of the Old Testament didn't really have anything to do with atonement for sin? It had to do with worship.

It might have to do with consecration and giving thanks and praise to God. The tabernacle was a place of worship. And friends, you can't worship God in any other way than to come by Jesus.

Remember what Jesus said? I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father what? But by me. What's he saying? I'm the tabernacle.

Come through me. You want to meet God? Come to me. I'm the tabernacle.

I guess as much as anything, we could just emphasize that point. The tabernacle was a place of meeting with God. If you wanted to meet with God in the days of the Old Testament, you didn't go build your altar on some other hill.

You didn't make your own little shrine in your house. You went to the tabernacle. You went to the temple because that's where you met with God.

Now I want to emphasize that with you this morning. And I want to emphasize to you that meeting with God, well friends, it's an experience. It's not an idea.

It's not a thought. It's an experience. I find this very much on my heart.

Because as I look around at much of the Christian world today, it seems that we're very long on knowledge, but many places very short on a real experience with God. You know, you can have all the right doctrines in your mind, and praise God if you do. I want you to have the right doctrines in your mind, not the wrong ones.

But you need to follow through on it and actually meet with God at the tabernacle. Have an experiential meeting with him. That's what the whole purpose of it is for.

Can you see an ancient Israelite there in the days of Moses, and you show him a picture of the tabernacle and say, well, is this the tabernacle? Well, yes it is. Can you describe the tabernacle for me? And he knows everything. Gives you all the dimensions.

Knows it inside and out. Knows the symbolic value of each thing. He goes, oh man, he's an expert in the tabernacle.

Well, what did the priest do at the tabernacle? Well, do you believe in the tabernacle? Yes, I believe in the tabernacle. Well, have you been to the tabernacle to meet with God? Well, no. But man, I believe in it.

See, friends, the belief in the tabernacle, so to speak, should be the entree point for meeting with God at the tabernacle. And if it stops short, then something's wrong. I think part of the dynamic I see in the Christian world today, which in many places seems to be long on knowledge and short on experience, it's a very understandable reaction.

Because when you see movements in the past that are very long on experience and very short in knowledge, that makes you maybe a little bit hesitant towards experience, doesn't it? Oh, man, you know, you get that experience and we shouldn't build our Christian life on experience. And that's very true. My friends, we build our Christian lives on the truth of God's word.

But, friends, truth without experience for us is unacceptable. Then again, experience without truth is unacceptable. We're going to have both.

Period. That's how we're going to live the Christian life, full of truth, full of experience. And the experience is centered around meeting with God.

Maybe I should just ask the question very pointedly. When's the last time you had a blessed meeting with God? And I mean experientially. Now, I would hope that some of you would say, Pastor, I had it ten minutes ago in worship.

I had a blessed meeting with God. Now, let me say, it certainly could have happened for you. It certainly could have.

When we're standing around saying, I stand in awe of you, do you see God's hand from heaven reaching down to grasp yours? Say, I want to have a divine meeting with you. You need to extend your hand back to his. You see, that experience is there waiting for you.

God has his hand out to you. You say, well, you respond and take it back and make that link not only of knowledge, but also of experience. So, let me ask the question again.

When's the last time you had a blessed meeting with God? If the wheels have to turn a little bit, do you see that this should be a daily part of your life? Now, if it's not, why? Do you think it's because God doesn't want to meet with you? I think not. And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. Well, he's done everything he can to come and meet with you now.

The invitation is for you. Come have a blessed meeting with me. Now, let me show you some of the results of that.

Again, in verse 14 here of John chapter 1. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld his glory. The glory is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

You know, the tabernacle was a meeting place full of grace. That's how it is with Jesus. You know, that's what it's going to feel like when you meet with God.

Is it going to feel condemning? No. Oh, there might be a sense of conviction of sin, but that's just the prelude. That's just to get it cleared out of the way.

You know, God wants to shower his grace upon you. Have you had that grace experience with the Lord? Well, you realize that he loves you and that he loves you for the reasons that are in him, not the reasons that are in you. And he just loves you.

And you're going to stop trying to earn his love. You're just going to receive it. Friends, that's a grace experience that God wants you to have at the tabernacle of meeting.

And where's the tabernacle of meeting? It's in Jesus Christ. Then there's the truth experience, right? Full of grace and truth. Tabernacles, a meeting place full of truth.

Oh, God wants to pour his truth into you. You know, those wrong ideas you have about God and yourself and this world. Oh, God wants to fill your heart, your mind with truth.

But the thing that strikes me most pointedly there about the experience of it, where it says there in verse 14 and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. The tabernacle was a meeting place marked by glory. Now, if you would tell me, well, yeah, Pastor, I had a blessing meeting with God just recently.

I would want to know, was it marked by grace? Was it marked by truth? And did it have at least a touch of glory? I don't think you can meet with God in Jesus and not experience some of those things. Well, yes, certainly, sometimes more powerfully than others. But it'll be marked by his grace, by his truth and by glory.

Glory, that's what it's all about. Let me speak, I've spoken very pointedly to you this morning, let me be bold enough to say it again or to say something else just as pointed. Many of you are selling your lives short.

Because you're living your life for happiness. When you should be having a higher vision and you should live your life for glory. Now, not personal glory, the glory of God.

That is something far greater than happiness. Happiness pales in comparison to glory. And I'm not saying that the two are disconnected.

I'm not saying that happiness is the opposite of glory. But it's different to live your life for glory. Meet with God.

Are you meeting with Jesus? Are you experiencing him? If you are, I think other people should be able to see that grace, that truth and that glory in your life. I pray, if anything, this message this morning has shown you why Jesus has come to tabernacle among you and has given you a hunger. I want to meet with him.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for all Jesus has done to make this meeting possible, to open up the doors of heaven to us. How glorious, how wonderful.

And so, Lord, our prayer collectively this morning is that you would draw us, that you would give us a greater hunger for meeting with you. Lord, not meeting apart from truth. Never, Lord.

Lord, we want to have truth and we want to have experience of you. We want our lives to be marked by both. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for tabernacling among us, for being our tent of meeting.

We come to you now in Jesus' name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/10/SID10681.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-guzik/he-tabernacled-among-us/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net