

VOC-December 2014: Christmas – God in the flesh:

1. The Light of God

Dear Listeners,

This is the time which is commonly called the days of *Advent*. It's the weeks prior to *Christmas* that we call the time of Advent. Originally it means that we focus on the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Its purpose usually is our preparation for the celebration of *Christ's birth*. Now that purpose may well be reiterated and re-emphasized at this time. As you are well aware, when we speak of preparations for Christmas we think of the hype, the shopping, the baking, and the presents, to mention a few of the features that characterize this time. It would be better, however, if people wouldn't be so caught up in this Christmas mood and merriment. Rather we would do better and use the opportunity to speak about the *true meaning of Christmas!* Yes, in our own lives and families also it will be good to prepare ourselves for Christmas in the true spirit of Christ's Advent!

During this month of December I would like to take you along to the gospel of Christmas as we find it in the account of *John*, chapter 1. In the verses 1-18 John tells the *gospel* of Christmas in his own way. Yes, he also tells about the *coming* of Jesus into the world, but in his own special way; not about the shepherds, the stable, the wise men, or the star, as Matthew and Luke do, but about the *meaning* of His birth, the *love* and *grace* of God in it. Matthew and Luke give us the details about the *circumstances* in which the Lord Jesus was born; John concentrates on the *crux* of the matter: what happened when the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem? Then *the Word became flesh!* That's not a simple birth announcement. It sounds rather mysterious. It's much easier to understand *Matthew* when he tells us that Jesus was the *son of Mary*, or Luke where he writes, "... she gave birth to her *firstborn*, a *son*." At least, we can imagine what *that* means. However, what could it mean when John tells us that Jesus was the *Word*, which became *flesh*?

The way the apostle John starts out his account of the gospel is so overwhelming, so exalted, so majestic, and so grandiose: "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was *with God*, and the *Word* was *God*. He was with *God* in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." The apostle is trying in words, it seems, to make *heaven* and *earth* flow together. In a few sentences you have to comprehend the immense universe, the *realm of the eternal God*, the Life; and in one breath he also takes you along to the place where the Life came into the *flesh* and *walked* around in the streets of Jerusalem together with His disciples (like John). Thus John begins chapter 1:1 with the words, "*In the beginning*." "*In the beginning*," these words remind us of *Genesis 1*, of God's account of His work of *creation*: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

John reminds us, dear listeners, of the *creation story*; be it in a somewhat different way: “in the beginning was the *Word*, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Yes, and then John adds that without that Word nothing was made; everything was *made through this Word!* Hence, when it says in Genesis 1 that in the beginning God *created* heaven and earth, John tells us that God did so *through the Word!* Through whom He did? Through the *Word*, whom John introduces in such an exalted way, and of whom he tells us in verse 17 that He is *Jesus Christ!* The Word is the Lord Jesus Christ before He was born! On the *first* page of the Bible you meet Him already. There you read, “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” Now John shows us, that Word by which God created the light, that *Word* was *Jesus Christ!* He is from the world of God! He is the *eternal Word of God*, who was *with God* and who *was God!* He is the Word by whom God created sun, moon, and stars, yes all things in heaven and on earth! In fact, John adds, in the Word was *life!* Every living creature received ‘*life*’ from Him, the Word, who, as John informs us, ‘became flesh and lived among us.’

This still seems overwhelming, doesn’t it, dear listener, even mind-boggling! Most people know the story of *Jesus*: born in Bethlehem, who died on the cross at Golgotha... This *Jesus*, John now tells us, is the *Word of God*, by whom God *created* all things! This is going too high, isn’t it? This is hard to comprehend, I don’t get it! Indeed, it is difficult to understand. Yet, the apostle John may pass on that wonderful gospel, that He who was in the beginning, the Word of God who was God and who remained God, that He came into *our flesh* and lived among us! In Him was *life*, and that life was the light of men, John concludes this introduction of the Word, the creating word, and the life-giving word. It’s the light for all of mankind! That’s the gospel, the glad tiding, in a world that had become *dark*, dark due to *sin*. When man *sinned* it became *dark* in the world because the bond with *God* was broken. However, John proclaims, this Jesus came from God as the Word again, to *restore life* and to *bring light* in this dark world!

It should not be too difficult to understand, dear listeners, that by man’s act of sin and through man’s sinfulness, the *night* has come into this world. Mankind has created an atmosphere of *darkness* around itself. Thankfully, however, God didn’t *leave* this world in its darkness but continued to come into world with His *Word* to make the light return to it. Yet, John shows, when the *Lord Jesus* came into the world the true light, the *full light* went up, the light from God! Ever since that time this light has been shining in the world! Sadly though, John has to observe as well, “but the darkness has not understood it!” In Jesus’ days God sent a herald to proclaim the *coming* of this light (namely John the Baptist!). Even to this day God continues to send *heralds* into this world to *witness of this light!*

That’s the purpose of this “*Voice of the Church*” as well, dear listeners, coming to you on the airwaves as the message of light. It’s coming to you from *God* again, in His *Word*, that Word that came into the *flesh* and walked among us: Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, who came into the flesh, who was born in Bethlehem! I hope you’ll be back next week again, when I will speak more about this miracle of miracles, namely that this

Word of God came into the world as the light of the World, *Jesus Christ*. He is God in the flesh who shows us the love of God! That will be our focal point next week! Thank you for listening!