

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

Please turn to chapter 1 as we continue our verse-by-verse study of this amazing gospel. This morning I've entitled my discourse to you "The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation" and this morning we will look at the last part of John's prologue in John chapter 1 focusing primarily just on verse 14. But I want to read that entire section, verses 14-18.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

This is an exciting time in the history of the world for us to come together and study the Lord Jesus Christ, to look deeply into the realities of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb who came once to die but the Lion who will soon return to reign. As we look, for example, at the crisis in Syria and consider all of her allies, we can see that the world is on the brink of another major war. Israel remains on Red Alert, people line up for gas masks. It will be an interesting time for those of us to go and visit Israel here in October. The Satanic system of Islam continues to spread its virulent strain of wickedness throughout the world. While it calls itself a religion, it really, at its core, Islam is a political ideology that seeks to dictate detailed rules for society and for the life of every person. In fact, Islam means "submission." It is utterly incompatible with freedom and democracy because it strives for Sharia, it is a totalitarian ideology that is utterly incompatible with Christianity.

As we look at all of this, those of us who understand, as I'm sure you do, the prophetic word, we can see that the stage is being set for the Russian/Arab/Islamic invasion of Israel where they will all be utterly destroyed on the mountains of Israel as we read in Ezekiel, chapter 38 and 39. In fact, an Israeli preemptive attack on Iran or even a retaliation attack on Syria could set this in motion very quickly.

So, the stage is being set for that time when the Lord Jesus Christ will return. As we look at Bible prophecy we see that the stage is also being set for a revived Roman Empire under the leadership of the most diabolical ruler in the history of the world, the Antichrist, whose initial entry into the world is symbolized in the white horse of the first seal found in Revelation 6. And who is it that breaks open the first seal? Who is it that breaks open all of the seals of judgment that will follow? John tells us in Revelation that it is the Lamb, the very one that we are studying here today. It will be the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will rise from his throne with his nostrils flared in righteous

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

indignation and he will bring his wrath upon a wicked world in the pre-Kingdom judgments just prior to his coming in power and great glory and he will establish his reign upon the earth in the Millennial Kingdom. And, my friends, we will be there with him.

What an amazing thought. The one who will set it all in motion is the self-existent, the eternally existent, the uncreated Creator of the universe, the divine Word through whom all things came into being. In light of this, my mind went to Revelation 19. Let me read this section and you can follow along because here John speaks of the glorious Savior that we will examine again this morning. He says,

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”

Whenever I think of that glorious day of triumph, my heart wants to sing those great words of Charles Wesley that he wrote in commemoration of his conversion back in 1739,

“O for a thousand tongues to sing,  
My great Redeemer’s praise.  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of his grace.”

So, let’s turn our hearts and mind toward Jesus this morning, a subject that I never tire of learning and reflecting and rejoicing over. He is the one that I love, the one that I serve and soon the one that I will see face-to-face, the one in which I will spend eternity and I hope that you share my confident faith and enthusiasm.

As we return to the prologue of John’s gospel, we’ve seen that he has summarized all that will follow in the rest of his gospel. In the first five verses, you will remember that he stuns us by revealing truths pertaining to the glory of the Son, the divine Word, that he had preexisted with God, that he coexisted with God, that he self-existed with God. And then he goes on to reveal how the divine Logos was the true light that enlightens every man but he came to his own and they rejected the light as do the majority of all mankind. Yet, he tells us that those who receive him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God. They are the ones who are actually born of God and at that point, you

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

might say that the tympanis begin to roll, the strings begin to get louder as the orchestra of divine revelation continues to reach a crescendo until suddenly the cymbals explode and the trumpets blare in verses 14-18. And at last, his introduction erupts into a soul captivating and mysterious oratory as we look at the marvelous mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friends, this is mind boggling, that the eternal Word would take on human flesh, that the uncreated Creator would inhabit that which he has created, that the infinite would become finite, that the invisible Spirit would become tangible humanity. And ultimately, as John will go on to reveal, the incarnate Son of God would live among men in order to die in the place of men and thus fulfill the very purpose of the incarnation which will find its climax in his condescending grace towards us who believe when he goes to the cross.

So, here in the final climactic verses of the prologue in verses 14-18, he will reveal four marvelous categories of truth and we're going to examine two of those categories here this morning and the other two the next time we come together. But we will see the glory of the Incarnate Word, the historical life of the Incarnate Word, the fullness of the Incarnate Word and finally, the character of the Incarnate Word. So, I pray that these astounding truths will arouse your soul to adoration, anticipation and praise.

Let's look first at the glory of the Incarnate Word as he speaks of it here in verse 14. He says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Again, my friends, this is utterly astounding: that which man could never see and live became that which they could see and touch and hear and even emulate. He became something he was not previously. Though he did not cease to be God, he became man. Fully God and yet fully man with a human nature, yet without sin. As a man, he was, according to Hebrews 7:26, "Holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners." This is the Logos, the divine Word. This personal God who is the source of revelation and truth and wisdom, who already existed at creation, he became flesh and dwelt among us.

Now, there have been many, over the course of redemptive history since the time of Christ, that have denied his incarnation, have twisted and distorted what that really means. We see that, for example, today in some of the cults like the Mormons, like the Jehovah's Witnesses. In fact, for the first five centuries, we can see that the early church had to defend this great truth. There were some back in the early days of the church that believed that he had a human body but not a human mind or spirit, that his mind and spirit were somehow divine. Others believed that there were two separate persons: there was a human and divine that somehow came together and others believed that the human nature of Christ was taken up and absorbed into some kind of a divine nature so that both natures were changed and it created a new third nature.

Although the primary purpose of John's gospel, as we know in chapter 20:31 is that "you may believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that believing you may have life in his name," there is probably is a secondary purpose in this gospel that I think is important

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

to mention. It is entirely probable that the Holy Spirit inspired John to write this gospel to combat the prominent heretic Cerinthus, John's fierce opponent at Ephesus. Now, we learn much about this guy and his battle with John and John's battle with him, from Irenaeus who was a second century church father and apologist. As a footnote, Irenaeus was a friend of Polycarp. You might recall that Polycarp was the pastor at the church in Smyrna; you read about that in Revelation 2. In fact, that's where Irenaeus was born and Polycarp was traditionally a disciple of John who wrote this gospel and his epistles as well as the book of Revelation.

According to Irenaeus, the heretic Cerinthus taught that Jesus was merely the human son of Joseph and Mary, although extremely brilliant and wise. He taught that at baptism, Christ descended on him in the form of a dove but then left him on the eve of his suffering so that it was not Christ who suffered and died and rose again but Jesus, a mere man. Cerinthus belonged to a cult known as the Docetists. This comes from a Greek word *dokeo* which means "to seem or to appear." So the idea is that what you saw in Jesus seemed to be a man but it was either a phantom or some kind of an apparition and that the divine Christ Spirit just merely descended upon this apparition, Jesus, at his baptism. This fit well with the Greek philosophy of that day. Greek dualism, maybe you remember studying about that. They taught that matter is evil but spirit is good. So, for them, God who is Spirit, would never come and inhabit a human body which is evil, a material body.

Of course, this was an ingenious scheme of Satan in those days. He continues to come up with many schemes to distort the person and the work of Christ. This is why in Ephesians 6 we have to put on the helmet of salvation. In other words, you've got to know your soteriology, you've got to understand the doctrine of salvation which at a very fundamental level includes understanding who Jesus really is.

Obviously, this heresy infuriated John who knew Jesus so well, who loved him. And it's interesting that as we see, he was, according to Irenaeus...let me give you a little history here. Irenaeus claimed that there were those who heard from Polycarp that John, the disciple that Jesus loved, entered into a bath house at Ephesus and upon entering, he discovered that Cerinthus was inside. He was not a happy camper when he realized that and according to the story, immediately John started to run out of the bath house screaming, "Let us flee lest even the bath house fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." Would that we as believers today be so discerning and flee from heretics.

To be sure, there remained many enemies of the truth that denied the incarnation of Jesus Christ. They denied that there existed what is called a hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ. Let me explain that because this is a very sacred truth: from October 8<sup>th</sup> to November 1 in AD 451 a large church council convened in the city of Chalcedon near Constantinople which is modern day Istanbul. The reason these brothers came together was to basically refute all of the heresies going around about the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And what came out of that council is really considered the standard, the orthodox

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

definition of biblical teaching on the person of Christ. They said that the two natures of Christ occurred together “in one person and one subsistence.” The Greek word translated as “subsistence” is the word hypostasis meaning “being.” And for this reason, the union of Christ’s human and divine natures in one person is sometimes called the hypostatic union. This simply means the union of Christ’s human and divine natures in one being.

Let me read you what they wrote,

“Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence (hypostasis), not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.”

By the way, that was one sentence. Kids don’t write that way today but that’s the way they used to write.

But what a marvelous mystery. In fact, Paul speaks of this in 1 Timothy 3:16. He says, “By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness.” And then we have a little phrase here that we believe were the lyrics of the hymn that they would sing in those days, “He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.”

As we look into Scripture we see that this was prophesied, even explained for example in Matthew’s gospel. You may recall that in Matthew 1 we read of the angel of the Lord that appeared to Joseph in a dream and he said this, beginning in verse 20,

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,' which translated means, GOD WITH US.'”

Now, my friends, the implications of this are staggering when it comes to orthodox Christianity. This is foundational to our faith. Jesus had to take upon himself the nature of a man to be punished for our sin yet he also had to be God in order to endure the sufferings of the elect. Think about it: the work of redemption required what we would call a theanthropone, a God/man, one who could supernaturally fuse the human nature with the divine to form an indissoluble bond. We know, according to Scripture, that Jesus was the offspring of David and yet we know that as God he was a ruler whose goings forth are from eternity, Micah 5:2.

There had to be a man to suffer the punishment that only God could endure, thus requiring both. A man had to bear the punishment for us all but only God could endure the full wrath of the Father. A perfect man had to die yet only God is holy. So, you have to have both. Human flesh had to go to the grave yet only God could overcome it. So, in the incarnation, both the human and the divine natures had to be supernaturally woven together. This is so essential as we will see.

The great Puritan theologian Francis Turretin said this,

“Both natures should be associated that in both conjoined, both the highest weakness of humanity might exert itself for suffering and the highest power and majesty of the divinity might exert itself for the victory.”

Now, I would ask you: how could Christ be our faithful High Priest that can sympathize with our infirmities unless he were both God and man? How could Christ be our Mediator unless he could bridge that infinite chasm between man and God? How could Christ be our King lest he become united to us as a man yet only as God can he reign in our hearts and have dominion over our souls for eternity? So, the Holy Spirit had to produce this amazing union. Beloved, the babe in the manger had to be fully human and he also had to be born of a virgin in order for him to be both the Son of Man and the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us. A son of a virgin according to the flesh, but Emmanuel, God with us, according to the Spirit.

So, for example, in Hebrews 10:5-7 we read that in essence in eternity past the Father prepared a human body for the Son, a body that would never be tainted with sin, there would be no sin nature in him and he could, therefore, become that perfect sacrifice to appease the holy justice of God. This was the will of the Father and Jesus came to do that will knowing perfectly, according to Philippians 2:7, that he was “taking upon himself the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

We see more of this, for example, in Hebrews 2:9. There we read, “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.” My friends, he didn’t come just to die but he came to die for us. He came to die as our substitute. Remember, this is the very heart of the atonement. We know that in the atonement you have to have a moral or legal repayment for a fault or an injury. So, the atonement requires two things: it requires satisfaction as well as substitution. There had to be satisfaction of the offended holiness of God and that could only be accomplished by an acceptable substitution for the guilty party. And so, what would appear to be this unsolvable dilemma was all resolved on the cross of Calvary because of the Incarnate Christ.

How could a holy and just God forgive sin? He can’t just show mercy and leave sin unpunished because he is a holy God. He can’t just ignore sin and shower sinners with undeserved blessing for to do so would require him to abdicate his holiness. So, the resolution is found in Christ. In Christ we see that God for his own glory sent his Son to take on human flesh, to live this perfect life and then according to God’s eternal plan, the God/man, Jesus, voluntarily bore the guilt and the curse of all of our sins, those who would trust in him. Thus, there was this great exchange on the cross: he takes our sin and gives us his righteousness. “He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” Amazing, isn’t it? God paid the penalty himself causing mercy and justice to converge together on the cross of Calvary.

So, my friends, herein is the reason for the incarnation; this is why in verse 14, “the Word became flesh.” “Became” could be translated “was made.” You know, as I have studied this over the years I can see that human language is just incapable of accurately describing the indescribable mystery of the incarnation. And it’s for this reason and because Satan is the quintessential deceiver, that these very words before us “became flesh” are prone to misinterpretation. That the eternal Word became flesh does not mean that he ceased to be what he was, namely God, but rather that his divine nature was fused together with the human nature. He did not merely become a man, he became man without every ceasing to be God.

And the term “flesh” here in this context refers to his physical being. It expresses humanity with all of its frailness, with its mortality. He became fully human. If I can put it a different way, he became flesh, not a body. He became flesh, he didn’t clothe himself somehow in flesh. He did not dwell in a man, he became man and unlike his creation that are always becoming, the immutable Word is an eternal being that entered the realm of time and space to become fully man while remaining fully God. Again, we go to Philippians 2:6. There we read of Christ Jesus “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” Hebrews 2:14, “since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death,

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

that is, the devil.” And then in verse 17 he says, “He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

This is summarized so beautifully in Charles Wesley’s great hymn “Hark the Herald Angels Sing.” You will remember there he has a phrase that goes like this:

“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail incarnate Deity.  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.”

What great words. This is so amazing. It is so foundational to the gospel. And, my friends, we need to run out of every bath house that we enter where we find some heretic that contradicts these great truths and we need to warn other people as we flee, even as John did. In fact he says in 2 John 7, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.” So, an amazing reality here as we look at the glory of the Son, the divine Word, fusing his nature with the human nature and becoming a man.

Secondly, we want to look at what John has to say with reference to the historical life of the Incarnate Word. Look at this again, it says “the Word dwelt among us.” The word “dwelt” translates the word skenoo which means “to live in” or “camp in a tent.” It can be translated “he tabernacled” or “he pitched his tent among us.” In the Old Testament, he did so with his covenant people, Israel, in the tabernacle. Remember in Exodus 40 and then later in the Temple. And whenever he did so, whenever his presence came among the people, he could be seen in this brilliant, dazzling light, the light of his presence known as his Shekinah. This was when he would put his glory on display.

Now, it’s important to note that the term “Emmanuel, God with us” was a very important Old Testament concept. God repeatedly promised that his presence would guarantee the fulfillment of all of his covenantal promises to his people, often manifested in the Shekinah, the presence of the glory of God, when he would reveal himself in this radiant blinding light. And we know biblically that his presence was housed within the tabernacle, again, later in the Temple. In fact, the Hebrew term for tabernacle is “mishkan” and it’s derived from the root word “shakan” which means “to dwell” or “to rest.” And from shakan came the term Shekinah denoting the glorious presence of God.

Throughout the Old Testament we see the mysterious light of his presence. We see his glorious Shekinah being housed in the tabernacle and the Temple but, beloved, in the incarnation, the Shekinah is no longer contained in the tabernacle. It is no longer contained in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. It is contained in a child, then a man, Emmanuel, God with us. This is Jesus the Christ. This is why John would tell us that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.” Is it any wonder that

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)



# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

the fourth and final angelic announcement of Christ's birth would include a stunning display of the Shekinah glory of the living God who came to tabernacle amongst his people?

Now, I want to consider the historical life of the Incarnate Word in light of the Old Testament. You will recall that the Old Testament tabernacle foreshadowed in many ways the Incarnate Son of God, the Word made flesh and here we see the relationship between what we would call "type" and "antitype." A type is an example, it's a pattern, it's a form, a foreshadowing. For example, God intended for Abraham to correspond or resemble Christ. Adam was the type, Christ was the antitype and in biblical typology, the antitype is always greater than and superior to the type. There is an increase, an heightening and an escalation, if you will. Christ is superior to Adam, for example.

I want you to think of how the Old Testament tabernacle foreshadowed the coming Word, the coming Incarnate Christ that would dwell among men. The Old Testament tabernacle was the type; it was a temporary dwelling that could be moved about in the wilderness that would eventually be replaced by a more glorious and permanent Temple, but ultimately it was our Lord Jesus who was the more superior antitype that tabernacled amongst men. Now, think about it: like the tabernacle, Jesus moved about from place to place; his dwelling among men was temporary, only 33 years. And do not the conditions of the wilderness where the tabernacle was used foreshadow the spartan conditions where Jesus would be born? Think of the temporary shelter that he was in, a place bereft of any glory, unfit for the one who would dwell within it. Think of the manger, the animals, the utter obscurity. Is it not true that the Son of Man had no place to lay his head? Did he not hang upon a wooden cross? Did he not find himself buried in a borrowed tomb? And I find it interesting, as we examine the Pentateuch, we learn that Israel only used the tabernacle in the wilderness approximately 33 years.

As we look further, the exterior of the wilderness tabernacle was humble. It was unsightly, just wood, skins, nothing that would catch the eye, yet within it housed the dwelling, the presence of the Living God among his people. And was not the same true of our blessed Savior in the incarnation? Like the tabernacle, his outward appearance was plain, it was humble. We even read in Isaiah 53:2 that the Jews will one day confess what Isaiah prophesied and say, "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to him." Yet, housed within his outward appearance existed the soul terrifying glory of the Living God, the effulgence of which he briefly exposed on the Mount of Transfiguration where he released some of his glory that emanated from him. According to Matthew 17:2 we read that "his face shone like the sun and his garments became as white as light."

I'm going to give you some other examples like the Old Testament Tent of Meeting, the Incarnate Christ housed the majesty of God for he was God. Was not the tabernacle the place where God encountered man? This is why it was called the Tent of Meeting. In Exodus 25, beginning in verse 21, we read, "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you.” Beloved, does not this picture the Incarnate Word? The only mediator between God and man? The man Christ Jesus? Did he not enter into the veil before us as our great High Priest so that we could enter in and have access to the Holy of Holies? Are we not unable to come to the Father apart from the Son? Even as an Israelite could not come near unto Jehovah apart from approaching the door of the tabernacle so, too, man cannot come near Jehovah without approaching the Incarnate Christ. That’s why Paul says in Romans 5:1, “Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have obtained our introduction.” And how has that been obtained? He goes on to say, “by faith into this grace in which we stand.”

May I show you yet some other striking contrasts? Even as the atonement for sin was made for the people in the tabernacle, did that not foreshadow the atoning work of the one who came to tabernacle amongst us? The Old Testament tabernacle housed the two tablets of stone within the Ark of the Covenant, tablets upon which Yahweh had inscribed the Ten Commandments that are so routinely violated. But there was a lid atop the Ark, a golden lid, that separated the violated law within from the holy presence above. And that golden lid of separation has staggering implications for each of us as sinners who would want to be reconciled to a holy God and have peace with him because on that lid the justice and grace of God came together symbolically when the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices every year to make atonement for the sins of the people. That lid was called the Mercy Seat. It was the place where the just wrath of God symbolically propitiated, where fury was temporarily appeased and justice was temporarily and symbolically satisfied. My friends, does this not picture the ultimate and final propitiation, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ where God himself provided the means to appease his own wrath?

Beloved, the best is yet to come. Do you realize that a day is coming when Christ Jesus will once again pitch his tent only this time he’s going to do it in the camp of the redeemed in the Kingdom of Heaven? John speaks of this in Revelation 21, beginning in verse 3. He says, “And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell,” there’s the same word, “He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” O beloved, what hope we have in Christ!

Back to John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,” and then he says, “and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father.” Though veiled in human flesh, those who saw Jesus saw the very nature of the Triune Godhead. It’s an amazing thought. Can there be a subject more precious than this? Yet, I fear eternity will be too brief to explore the full range of his glory. Think about it: even as the Shekinah

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

glory was hidden within the Holy of Holies behind the veil of the tabernacle in the Temple, it also remained veiled within the body of our Lord. And yet, John says here, “we beheld his glory,” so, what is he referring to here? Just what did they see then? What can we even see now? What will we see in the future?

I believe that what they saw included, among other things, the supreme excellency of his divine perfections. Apart from Adam and Eve, prior to their fall into sin and the subsequent curse upon all men, no one had ever experienced a sinless being. We have no idea what that would be like. None of us have ever experienced that. Some of us might think we come close, but we don't. It's an amazing thought. But in our precious Savior, all who encountered him beheld exactly that, a sinless being.

They also saw the glory of his supernatural birth that was accompanied by an angelic announcement to some lowly shepherds in which the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terribly frightened. They also saw the glory of all of his personal perfections. They saw a body without blemish. They saw a mind without equal. They saw a personality without pride. They saw the perfect manifestations of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. They saw his fearless devotion to do the will of his Father come what may. They beheld the incomprehensible brilliance of his teaching. They saw the awesome wonder of his miracles. They saw the righteous indignation that he had toward the wicked. They saw the setting aside of his sovereign prerogatives and power. They saw the self-sacrificing agony of the Savior when he was tortured and crucified. They saw the exhilarating reality of the resurrection. They saw the stunning glory of his glorified body. They marveled at his ascension back into heaven.

So, indeed, my friends, they beheld his glory and we behold it to this day from a distance. They saw the glory of his infinite condescension, of his matchless grace, of his unfathomable love towards them and towards sinners, the glories of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

AW Pink captured it so perfectly and I gave this to you in your bulletin today. He said,

“Greatness is never so glorious as when it takes the place of lowliness.  
Power is never so attractive as when it is placed at the disposal of others.  
Might is never so triumphant as when it sets aside its own prerogatives.  
Sovereignty is never so winsome as when it is seen in the place of service.  
And, may we not say it reverently: Deity had never appeared so glorious  
as when it hung upon a maiden's breast.”

Yes, indeed, they beheld his glory. They saw the supreme excellency of his divine perfections. And, again, we can see the same thing as we study our beloved Savior. Yes, we see them from a distance but we can still see them. But, do you know what? They witnessed something that none of us can see today but we will see in its fullness some

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

day. They saw the effulgence of his hidden glory emanating from his very body on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter was there with James and John and he said in 2 Peter 1:16, “we were eyewitnesses to his glory.” Eye witnesses.

The Shekinah glory was once the evidence of God’s presence in the midst of Israel, but because of Israel’s apostasy, you will recall that the glory departed from them. But we know that the Lord is gracious and merciful, he is slow to anger, and he is great in lovingkindness. He is faithful to his covenant promises and so, therefore, his mercy continued to pursue and his glory returned after some 400 years only this time, it returned in the person of his dear Son. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.”

One day all who have placed their faith in Christ will behold that same glory that Peter, James and John witnessed on that Mount. We, too, will be eye witnesses of it, only it will not be a fleeting glory but an eternal one. Not only will we see the fullness of his glory but we will be transformed into that same fullness. 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being,” what? We’re being “transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”

O child of God, rejoice in the greatness of these truths. Let them animate your heart to praise and to obedience as you understand more of who Christ really is. To think that the Incarnate Christ died for you specifically. That he bore on the cross your sins specifically. That he some day is going to receive you unto himself specifically, by name, with intimate relationship. And to think that he is going to transform you and me specifically into his glorious images. Let these promises eclipse any of the sorrow, any of the pain that you may be feeling today. Remember, as Paul says, “because you’ve been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of his Father. Set your mind on these things not the things of the earth.” The reason we do this, beloved, is because some day and I believe some day very soon, we are going to see him face-to-face in all of his glory. Amen? Amen.

Let’s pray together.

*Father, we give you praise for these eternal truths that just ignite our hearts into worship. What joy, what fellowship, what exhilarating anticipation we have all because of who you are and what you have done. Lord, use these truths to conform us even more into your image today. And I pray for anyone that does not know Christ as Savior. O God, will you this day so overwhelm them with the reality of their sin that they will not be able to sleep on their pillow tonight until they do business with you and cry out for that undeserved mercy that you will never turn away. I pray this in the precious name of our Savior and for his sake. Amen.*

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)

# The Marvelous Mystery of the Incarnation, Part 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 1:14-18

**Preached on:** Sunday, September 8, 2013

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).

**Website:** [otcr.org](http://otcr.org)

**Online Sermons:** [otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The\\_Marvelous\\_Mystery\\_of\\_the\\_Incarnation\\_part\\_1.html](http://otcr.org/content/sermon/799/The_Marvelous_Mystery_of_the_Incarnation_part_1.html)