***The Man; and, the Eagle

RV82-01***

We are studying worship in the throne room. This is segment number five in Revelation 4:6-11. In Revelation 4:6-7 we read, "And before the throne, there was a sea of glass like crystal, and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind." We have indicated that the expression there, "Round about the throne" indicates that these four living creatures were situated around the Father's throne with one on each side; one in the front; and, one behind. We've indicated that "in the midst of the throne" means that they were on each of the four sides of the throne of God. They are literally surrounding the throne of God the Father in the form of an honor guard. Because they are cherub type angels, the kind of angel that Satan was, we know that they are involved with protecting the holiness of God.

**The Four Living Creatures**

Verse 7 says, "The first living creature was like a lion; the second living creature (or living being) was like a calf; the third living creature had a face like a man; and, the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle." The four living creatures which surround God the Father's throne in the heaven are these four cherub type angels. They each have a different face: one, a lion; one, an ox; one, a man; and, the other, an eagle. These creatures symbolize the qualities which are exercised by God in His government of His creation.

The Lord Jesus Christ, as the God-man, expresses these governmental qualities in His ministry, and in His own ruling authority. So, the lion, we have seen, portrays the role of Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews. The lion is the leading animal of wild animals. He is the king. The ox portrays the role of Jesus Christ as the servant of God. The ox is the chief of the domesticated animals, the laborious worker. The face of the man portrays the role of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man that stresses His humanity. The eagle face portrays the role of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and His deity. This creature is the chief of the bird realm, and is associated with the heavenly area of flight.

**The Four Gospels**

The four gospels, we have observed, bear a very significant relationship to this. They portray these same pictures of God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, as lion; ox; man; and, eagle. So, we've seen that when you read through the gospel of Matthew, lo and behold, you discover that there's a very distinctive kind of picture that comes out of that gospel. This is particularly evident, again, if you line up a harmony of the gospels, where you put everything that all four gospels reveal in order, and then you make an overlay template, and you see what one gospel covers, but what it omits. What they omit and what they cover are a clue to what the design was of that particular gospel.

**Matthew**

When you look at the materials that are included in Matthew, it's very clear that Matthew is trying to present Jesus Christ as the King. He is presented in that role of the King of the Jews, which is represented by the banner of the lion.

**Mark**

The gospel of Mark gives a different portrait. As you look over the materials that are included in that gospel, the picture that you get of Jesus Christ is very clearly that of the laboring Ox under the ox banner as the servant of God.

**Luke**

When we come to Luke, which is the next one we're going to look at now, Luke gives the portrait of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man, which is designed to stress His humanity.

**John**

When we get to the gospel of John, and we look at what John omits and what John includes out of the total content of the gospels, lo and behold, it is very clear that the picture you get of Jesus Christ is as deity as the Son of God, stressing His divine origin.

Each gospel writer was guided by the Holy Spirit to select, from the total life of Jesus Christ, The particular elements which would present Him according to the theme of that particular gospel. Certainly, John tells us that there is a great deal more of what Jesus Christ said, and of what He did, which was never recorded in any of the gospels. But such as we do have recorded, was divinely selected by the Spirit of God, and selected in such a way as to convey the portraits that reflect these four living creatures around the throne of God. These four qualities are also seen then in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and they are thereby to be the patterns for our lives – we who form the members of His body.

**A Man**

So, now we come to the next banner. This was the one which was on the south side of the tabernacle as Israel of old aligned itself in the four sides of the earthly tabernacle, which was a symbolic picture of the heavenly tabernacle. On the south side, they gathered under the banner of the man. The rabbi's tell us that on that banner was the face of a human being.

**Luke**

When we look at the gospels, who presents Jesus Christ in His humanity? It becomes clear very quickly that that is the gospel of Luke. Luke presents a portrait of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man. That expression stresses His genuine humanity.

This characteristic of this particular gospel is declared for us, for example, in Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." In that particular concise little statement, Luke summarizes what his objective was in writing this particular portrait of Jesus Christ. This expression, "the Son of Man," occurs 25 times in this gospel. That's a large number of times. It is used again and again just because Luke is trying to drive home that idea: this Man that I speak of is genuine humanity. That is very important to realize that Jesus Christ is genuine humanity.

You and I say, "Oh yeah, that's true. I don't have any problem with that." But don't forget that for the first three or four centuries of the Christian era, we had a series of theological debates called the Christological controversies where theologians were getting together again and again over those centuries, and were hammering out, piece-by-piece, the truth of what the Bible taught about the person of Jesus Christ.

They had all kinds of conflicting views that they had to fight off: one, that He was only a God; one, that He was only a man; one, that he was part God and part man; and, one, that he had one nature, but they were mixed together – part God and part man. Eventually, one heresy after another was put down. One of the things they finally established was that the natures of Jesus Christ are never mixed, but that those natures are never less than complete. He is 100% humanity. He is not, in one whit, less human than we are, but He is at the same time 100% deity. He is not one whit less God than is the God the Holy Spirit or God the Father. But when They come together, They are in one person, but never mixed. The humanity always operates with the humanity. The deity always operates as the deity.

So, when Luke comes along here and stresses, with this expression "Son of Man," that Jesus Christ is truly 100% human, that is a very important fact. If he were not 100% human, then He could not have been the Savior. That's the problem. The principle had to be that He had to be a kinsman redeemer (to use the Old Testament phrase and illustration). He who is saving us had to be like us. And that's why he had to be born just like anyone else. He had to grow up from infancy, to childhood, to teenager, and to adulthood. He had to go through all the phases and stages of life that we do. He just started with one thing different. He started with what Adam started with – no sin nature, which was accomplished through the fact that He had only a human mother, and not a human father.

**The Genealogies of Jesus Christ**

So, Luke's gospel very clearly is presenting Jesus Christ under the banner of humanity: the Son of Man. The mission of Jesus Christ was to substitute Himself in death for all humanity. For Him to do that, He had to be human Himself. The humanity of Jesus Christ is very clearly established in the gospel of Luke, because Luke gives us another family tree, just like Matthew did. Except the family tree here in Luke has a different emphasis than the one in Matthew. The one in Matthew was seeking to establish the right of Jesus Christ to rule as King of the Jews. Therefore, He had to be traced through David back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. But Luke says, "I want to establish that He is a man." Therefore, you will notice that in chapter 3 of the gospel of Luke, the family tree (the genealogy of Jesus Christ) goes all the way back to the beginning to the first man, Adam. Luke 3:38 says, "Who was the son of Enos, who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God." That's a significant difference in the two genealogies, for the simple reason that they are seeking to stress the fact that this is true humanity. He is identified in this way with the entire human race.

Luke 3:23 declares that while Jesus Christ was true humanity, He was not the natural son of Joseph, who was only his legal father. Luke 3:23 says, "And Jesus Himself began to be about 30 years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, who was the son of Heli." What Luke is seeking to establish there is the fact that, while Jesus Christ was genuine humanity, He was not born through a human father, and thus with a sin nature. It would have done no good to establish that He was a genuine human being if His birth was just like the rest of us, and He had entered the human realm with a sin nature. We would have all been back to square one, and everything would have been just as badly off as it was before.

So, there are two things that Luke's genealogy makes clear: First, this Man goes back to Adam, and He is in the true line of the human race. Secondly, He has entered the human race by a supernatural entrance, which has preserved Him from the personal sin nature. And, of course, without that personal sin nature, he has also been preserved from the imputation of Adam's guilt. So, here he is. He's home free to begin with. Now the question is: what is this man (the last Adam) going to do with His life as a human being? Is He going to be able to make it all the years of His life, and not blow it the way Adam did by falling into sin?

That was the whole point of the examinations of the life of Jesus Christ while He was under attack by those who were His critics. This was the one thing that the Pharisees (the religious leaders) could not refute, and they could not cope with – that this Man was sinless. The Lord Jesus made no hesitancy of saying, "I'm very happy for any of you people here that think that you can point your finger to one sin of which I am guilty, to do it." That is terrible. When you get up before the religious leaders who are attacking you, and they're saying, "No, you can't be what you claim to be – the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Then He says, "'Well, then you prove it, and I'll tell you how to prove it. All you have to do is show that I'm in sin." They never could do it. That enraged them all the more.

The bloodline of Jesus Christ, here in Luke, just as in Matthew, does go back to King David. However, in Luke, it goes back to King David through His mother, Mary. Luke's genealogy is particularly from the frame of reference of His mother, Mary. Mary was in the line of King David, but she was through the older son of David and Bathsheba, the son Nathan. The son Nathan was the line of Mary. The son Solomon, who was also a son of David and Bathsheba, was the line through which Joseph came. In Solomon's line was that gentleman, Coniah, that we looked at, who was under a curse, whose line, from that point on, was under a divine curse through which the Messiah could not come.

Part of the curse upon Solomon's line was simply that Solomon, who began so well with the knowledge of the Word of God, and with a positive attitude toward divine viewpoint truth, fell away from it; became an apostate; and, went negative, whereas Nathan was a faithful man. So the honor of being in the direct line of the Messiah went to Nathan, and not to Solomon. Mary, the mother of Jesus was in the line of Nathan. Luke 3:31 indicates that: "Who was the son of Melea, who was the son of Menan, who was the son of Mattatha, who was the son of Nathan, who was the son of David. So, while Jesus Christ was true humanity, He also qualified as being the human being who was in the line of David.

Because Luke wants to stress the humanity of Christ, that's why we have the famous Christmas story of the birth of Jesus Christ so extensively reported in Luke. Luke gives the most extensive account to be found of the birth of Jesus Christ in Luke 2:1-20. A reason for this, again, is because Luke is out to demonstrate that this person, Jesus Christ, that he's writing about, is a true human being. So, he gives the details of His birth. But again, in the process of giving the details of His birth, it is necessary for Luke to make it clear that it was a supernatural birth – with no human father, and thus no genetic transfer of the sin nature.

**The Greeks**

Luke had a specific realm of human beings in mind in the empire when he was writing, just as did the other writers. Luke was directing his gospel particularly toward the Greek gentile world, as Mark was directing his toward the Roman gentile world. So Mark presented Jesus Christ as the Servant, and the One who was an achiever with power, because that's the Roman mentality. The Romans were interested in the person who could do things, and the person who had power. Luke, on the other hand, appeals to the Greek world. The Greek mentality glorified what they considered the ideal man. It was the Greeks who had the philosophers such as Homer and Plato and Aristotle and Demosthenes, who proclaimed so concisely the concept of the ideal man. So, the Greek mind was centered upon what they considered the ideal human being. That's why they entered the realm of the Olympic Games and the expression through art of the sculptures of the human body (the human form). All this was part of humanity – the ideal person that captivated the thinking of the Greeks.

Their philosophers expanded this attraction to the ideal of human man into their deity. When the Greeks thought about their gods, they thought about their gods as being super perfect human beings. That had one very bad factor, because what you ended up doing was deifying humanity – deifying a human being. And they not only deified the virtues, but they deified the vices. That's why you have all that hanky-panky going around up there on Mount Olympus with all the gods, because the gods are just humans, but they are super humans, and they're still acting just like humans who are sinful creatures.

The religion of the Greeks, with its exaltation of man, into even deity itself, resulted in debasing their character. It didn't work. It debased their character, and it caused their minds to be restless and in despair. That's what's behind certain statements that you have in Acts as you come up against these philosophical thinkers (these leaders of Greek thought), that Luke was well acquainted with, and that Luke was facing. Luke himself wrote this very book of Acts. For example, in Acts 17:16, we read, while Paul was in Athens: "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given over to idolatry." They had a lot of religion in Athens, but Paul immediately saw that it was this quality of the ideal human being elevated to deity with all of his vices.

Acts 17:21: "For all the Athenians and strangers who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." What were they after? They were always searching. In another place, the apostle Paul says, "Ever learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth." That's what these people were: ever learning, but never coming to a grasp of divine viewpoint truth, because they didn't have any basis for it. They didn't have any revelation of Scripture that they were functioning from. They were reaching out to what they could envision in ideal humanity.

In Acts 17:23, Paul says, "For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription to the unknown God, whom, therefore, you ignorantly worship. Him I declare unto you." The best that the Greek philosophical mind could come up with in deity, was not only a debased ideal human, but the uncertainty and the restlessness that they hadn't covered all their bases. So, they said, let's put up a statue, and we'll see that this is to the God that we may have forgotten – the unknown God.

So, Luke proceeds to give these people, who have an appreciation for idealized humanity, the picture of Jesus Christ as the one truly perfect human being. Luke does a superb job. Luke was a medical man. He had a lot of smarts in addition to the fact that he had a lot of education. So, he knew how to speak to the Greek philosophical line, and to the Greek people, and the frame of reference from which they thought. Luke's portrait of Jesus Christ satisfied the Greek intellect. For those who accepted this message about the ideal man, Jesus Christ, they discovered that their religious aspirations were purified. They were elevated from the debased quality that had been characteristic of them in their pagan days.

**Emotions**

In a variety of ways, then, Luke proceeds to present the true humanity of Jesus Christ. He does this by giving the fullest account of the birth; the childhood; and, the home life of Jesus Christ. He describes a variety of feelings that Jesus Christ had. If Jesus Christ was a human being, then we would expect that he has some of the comparable emotional experiences. For example, in Luke 10:21, Luke says, "In that our Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight." The Lord Jesus here is expressing personal joy and delight over the fact that people who are not viewed as being the important people, or the smart people, in Jewish society, yet are responding to the truth of the Word of God.

In Luke 19:41, there is another emotion: "And when He was come near, He beheld the city (that is, Jerusalem), and He wept over it." When the Lord Jesus saw the city of Jerusalem, His heart was broken, and He wept over this city as He as he looked out upon it. If you ever travel to Israel, and, for example, you stand, as He often did, across the Kidron Valley on the Mount of Olives, the city of Jerusalem is a fantastically inspiring sight out there below you. You'll just be able to enter into this passage of the Lord sitting there looking at this city, with tears coming down His face, as He thought of what He could have done for them had they been positive to the truth of the Word of God. Instead, they lost it all, because of their refusal to accept what He had brought them, even when it was confirmed by His miracles and His life.

In Luke 22:44, you again have this demonstration that you have a human being here in the Garden of Gethsemane: "And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Here he had a physical problem in the small capillaries of the skin under the intense pressure of emotion that Jesus Christ was experiencing now as He was about to be taken captive, and the next morning put on that cross. So, His blood vessels were breaking, and along with His perspiration, blood was being mixed and dropping to the ground. That is a human being that is being described. Luke makes a great point of that.

Luke also demonstrates the humanity of Jesus Christ by recording the social life of the Lord. The records, for example, His associations with Simon in Luke 7:36-15; with Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42; with the Pharisees in Luke 11:37-52 and Luke 14:1-24; and, with little Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. There are many of these little portraits and pictures of Jesus Christ in social relationships that human beings have.

One of the things that Luke stresses is the prayers of Jesus. Who needs to pray? Human beings need to pray. If somebody is a human being, and is aware of his limitations, then he turns to God in prayer. All four gospels put together record 15 occasions of Jesus Christ in prayer. 11 of those 15 are recorded in the gospel of Luke. That's very significant. The reason that Luke concentrates so many references to the prayer life of Jesus Christ is because it helps convey His picture (His portrait) that this is a Man who needs divine help. Remember that the humanity functioned independently of the deity, but not in conflict with the deity. The humanity of Jesus Christ needed the sustenance of prayer just as much as our humanity does. He had to operate just the same way as we do.

Furthermore, there is a lot of teaching in the gospel of Luke about prayer. For example, in Luke 11:5-13, Luke 18:1-8, and Luke 20:11-36, in the course of the ministry of Jesus Christ, this further stressed the human quality.

The thing that Luke had to be careful of was not to give people the impression that all he was dealing with, in Jesus Christ, was a human being. So, Luke balanced his portrait of the humanity of Christ by stressing His deity. The way the gospel of Luke does this is by reporting the miracles that Jesus Christ performed. Here again, you have an inordinate number of miracles being recorded in one gospel. You have 20 miracles by the Lord Jesus recorded in the gospel of Luke. And the reason for that is because Luke says, in effect, "Now, while He is 100% humanity, I must stress to you that He is also the living God. He is God-man – not just humanity.

**Parables**

Of Christ's 35 parables, 19 of them are unique to the gospel of Luke. They're not recorded by the other writers. We would never have known about them if it hadn't been for the record that Luke gives us. All of this appealed to the intellectual quality of the Greeks.

The humanity of Jesus is also shown in Luke by his concern for those who are in realms of being weaker and subordinate. So, the gospel of Luke stresses the dealing that Jesus Christ had with the needs of women; of children; and, of the outcasts. In Luke 13:34-35, we've already seen, He wept for Jerusalem. We've seen in Luke 22:24 the sweat of His suffering in Gethsemane. In Luke 23:40-43, we have described His mercy to the positive thief on the cross. All of these are concerns for other human beings that were expressed by the Lord Jesus.

The humanity is also declared in what the Man, Jesus Christ, suffered at the hands of other men. He was treated in a way that human beings are treated that brings them great personal suffering. In Luke 22:1-6, you have described the plot to betray him. That's what you do to a human being. In Luke 22:7-46, you have described those last strong, emotional, sad hours that He spends with His disciples. In Luke 20:47 through Luke 23:25, you have a series of records about the abuse of the religious leaders, and of the mobs that they influence. Here you get very clearly the picture that you have a Man who is going through intense suffering at the hands of other human beings.

**The Resurrection of Jesus Christ**

The grandiose portrayal, however, of the humanity of Jesus Christ is in Luke 24:1-53, where you have the magnificent description of His resurrection. Salvation required the payment for the sin of the world by a sinless human being – a human being who was 100% human, but who was sinless. The penalty for sin was paid by the only sinless person that has ever lived since Adam. That is Jesus Christ, who in His humanity, then was raised from the dead.

That's why Luke 24 is so dramatic, because it declares the fact that a human being has been raised from the dead. The gospel of Luke closes with the triumphal note of joy of the God-Man ascending to heaven. In Luke 24:50-53, you have this closing dramatic scene, and it's describing, all the way to the end, a human being. Luke 24:50: "And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen." What were they so excited about? What were they so delighted about those? It was because the human being that they had known all those years had died and had indeed performed the work of finally providing a ground for people to be saved. It had to be a human being – a perfect human being.

However, that was not enough. Having died for the sins of the world, and having, in those three hours on the cross, from high noon to 3:00 in the afternoon, had the sins of the world: past; present; and, future poured out upon Him, He paid the penalty. He went into the grave. Unless He had been raised again, we would have no evidence that God the Father's justice had been satisfied. That's exactly what the apostle Paul tells us – that it was on account of our justification, that He was raised. That is because justification (that is, possessing absolute righteousness, so that in the sight of God, you are as good as Jesus Christ, and always will be as good as Jesus Christ) had become a reality, the Father could say, "Now I can raise this human being to life." So, the resurrection of a human being is of enormous importance to us.

**The Ascension of Jesus Christ**

However, there's something else. This human being also ascended. That was what was so exhilarating to these disciples. When they saw the person whom they knew to be a human being, as well as the Son of God, but He was just like themselves, they knew, as He went out of their sight, that now there was a Man in heaven. Now there was a human being in heaven. Therefore, they had the final bit of evidence and of reassurance that they, too, could be in heaven. Up to that time, they had no real ground for thinking that. Now they know that there is a human being in heaven. Therefore, they know, since He has said, "Where I am there, you will follow, "we too shall be there as human beings.

So, the living creature that John sees with the face of a man symbolized this quality of the humanity of Jesus Christ. And remember that it is eternal humanity. He's never going to be less than the person He was here as the God-man. He is eternal humanity. Because Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, is now in heaven, we human beings who are born again will follow, and enter that heaven as well. I'm happy to say on the authority of the Word of God, that there is a place in God's heavenly throne room for you and me, just as there was for John.

**The Eagle**

Then, looking at the fourth and the last living creature, we come here to the one that had the face of an eagle. In the old tabernacle in the wilderness, that banner with the eagle on it was there on the north side.

**John**

This, of course, is the last gospel, the gospel of John. John's portrait of Jesus Christ pictures Him as the Son of God. That is the phrase that John uses to convey that specific bit of information. John explains this near the end of his gospel in John 20:30-31: "And many other signs (that is, miracles) truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through His name." John indicates here that he selected only some of the miracles which were performed by Jesus Christ: "Many other signs (many other miracles) truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book." The reason they're not written is because they were not pertinent to the portrait that John was drawing of Christ. John wanted to show the Son of God – the deity of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he picked certain signs for that purpose, and he omitted others. John's book about Jesus Christ omitted materials, consequently, which are found in the other three gospels, but which were not pertinent to the deity factor.

John's goal was to provide a basis, he says, "For believing that Jesus Christ was the son of God, and therefore to be trusted as Savior. These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. He uses the expression "the Christ" because he also wanted to convince the Jews. The word "Christ" means "the anointed one." That was the Old Testament way of describing the Messiah. What he is saying is that John wrote to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, and to convince the gentiles that He was the divine Son of God. In the Christological controversies, in the early centuries of the church, they hammered out to the conclusion that Jesus was not only 100% human, but He was also 100% divine. This gospel is designed to lead sinners into eternal life on the basis of the sacrifice of a God – on the basis of the sacrifice of God Himself. Through that sacrifice, the believer will have eternal life. So, what we have here is to lead sinners to the God-man, Jesus Christ.

At the very beginning of the gospel of John, John reaches all the way back to the beginning of the book of Genesis. He begins with the same three dramatic words that the book of Genesis begins with: "In the beginning." In some respects, you could almost consider this the beginning of the New Testament, because this gospel is uniquely applicable to the church. The other three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are called similar gospels. They use the technical term "synoptics," because they deal with a similar area of material and of approach. But John suddenly is different. Of course, part of this was because John was written way down at the end of the first century, quite a while after the other three gospels had been written. When John wrote, the church had very dramatically shifted from being Jewish oriented to being gentile dominated. Furthermore, the situation had dramatically shifted, so that there was no further question about Judaism being dead, and the church and Christianity being the new era of God's dealings.

So, John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then John 1:14, tied that to that first verse, immediately declares that this divine One described in John 1:1 took on humanity, and the Word was made 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. So, John 1:14 declares that the divine One of John 1:1 had assumed humanity to become the unique God-man.

These first 18 verses of the gospel of John are an unexcelled compact presentation of the gospel message of anything you'll find in the Bible. It begins with these first three words from Genesis. Then in the third verse, John makes a summary statement to the effect that the One whom he calls the Word in verse 1 is the Creator: "All things were made by Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made." The comparison between John 1:1 and John 1:14 makes it clear to us that this expression "the Word" is referring to Jesus Christ.

I remember when I was a teenager, once in Bible school, when we were studying the gospel of John, the teacher kept talking about the Word. Finally, I raised my hand and said, "Who is the Word?" And the answer was, "It is Jesus Christ." The identification comes by comparing it to verse 14. In verse 1, we see the statement, "In the beginning was the Word." That One is declared in verse 14 to have become flesh. "The Word which was in the beginning" is an expression for deity. In, verse 14, that same Word was made flesh, and that obviously applies to Jesus Christ. In verse 1, we read that, "The Word was with God;" that is, it was face-to-face, in the presence of God, again indicating deity. Verse 14 says that that One, who had once been in the presence of God, "Dwelt among men." Who was that? Who was in heaven who came to dwell among men? Obviously, only one person could fulfill that, and that is Jesus Christ.

Then verse 1 says, "And the word was God." It was deity. And verse 14 says that, "This Word was full of grace and truth, which again, is a description of deity. Who is full of grace and full of truth? That means all grace and all truth. That is true of nobody but God. So, when you match the statements of verse 1 with verse 14, you see that you are talking about the God-man, Jesus Christ.

John goes on, then, immediately, after the first 14 verses here, all the way through John 4:54, to show how the Creator Jesus Christ was the basis of the Father's plan of redemption for fallen humanity. You come to that famous story in dealing with unsaved Nicodemus that you have in chapter 3, in the process of which John records that famous verse, John 3:16. In this discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus reveals His deity as the One who is the Teacher from God, and who is the Life-Giver. In this whole section from the very first of the book through John 4:54, it is the Creator who is presented as the God-one who is the basis of God's plan of salvation.

Throughout the gospel of John, there is at least one reference to the death of Jesus Christ in every chapter. You cannot find one chapter in which John doesn't hit upon the fact that this is a 100% divine person. Let's look at just a couple of examples. John 1:49: "Nathanael answered and said unto him (that is, to Jesus), 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.'" In John 3:16, we have: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," again, establishing the deity of Jesus Christ. In John 8:58, "Jesus said unto them, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.'" And you see what they did in verse 59. They took up stones to cast at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

When Jesus Christ used this expression, "Before Abraham was," He didn't say, "I was." But He said, "I am." That's an Old Testament usage that is part of that sacred Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew, that most sacred name, "YHWH," of God. That is related to this (at least in sound) to the verb, for "I am." When somebody said, "I am," to the Jews, that was a declaration that you were God. And they knew that. And when He said, "Before Abraham was, I am," they said, "He's telling us that He is God. That is what He is claiming." And to claim that you were God was blasphemy, and that was a capital crime in Israel, and you were rightfully to be stoned and killed for it. But yet, the Lord Jesus Christ, because He was God, could do such a very amazing thing. It says, "He went through the midst of them." Now that, folks, is what you call a command presence. That is command presence. You have a bunch of people that have their shotguns loaded, both barrels, and they're looking down the barrel, and you're walking down and shoving them out of the way. They put the shotguns down, and they didn't dare their fire. That's what you call a command presence. That's what he did, and those stones would execute.

The Lord Himself, of course, did claim to be deity. He makes that very clear. John 10:36 records one of those claims: "Say of Him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world (that is, Himself), You blaspheme, because I said, 'I am the Son of God?' If I don't do the works of My Father, then don't believe Me." The Lord says, "You say that I'm blaspheming because I say 'I am the Son of God? Thereby I am deity?' Well, if I don't do the works that only God can do, then OK. Call me a blasphemer. But if only God can give life to a dead human being, then you've got a problem. If only God can give sight to blind eyes, even those born with blindness, then you've got a problem to challenge that I am God. I am the Creator God, and I have control over matter. I can make blind eyes work. I can make deaf ears hear. Yes, and I can even make dumb minds smart, because I'm the creator God." They couldn't do anything. They couldn't answer Him. The Lord Jesus very clearly said that He was God.

You have to smile when you read a verse like that, and you think about the liberals today who love to say Jesus Christ never claimed to be God. The people around Jesus recognized that He was God. John makes a particular practice (a particular stress) of naming several people who clearly recognized that Jesus was 100% deity. John the Baptizer did it in John 1:34; Nathanael did it in John 1:49; Peter did it in John 6:69. Martha did it in John 11:27. Thomas did it in John 20:28. All of these people are on record of having recognized Jesus for what He was.

The recipients of the gospel of John was all of humanity: Jews; Roman; and, Greeks. John is different from the other gospels in that it was written later in the Christian era. It provides mankind with more of the spiritual aspects of the Lord's ministry. But it's a gospel to meet the needs of the church as the body of Christ. So, John wrote to the Christian church, but to the world as a whole. John's readers, in large measure, were gentiles, so he translates certain Hebrew and Aramaic words like in John 9:7; John 19:13; and, John 19:17, and he explains certain Jewish religious practices as in John 19:40. This is because, when he wrote, the church had shifted, by and large, to a gentile base. John records the miracles to establish deity. John gives extensive coverage to the last months of Jesus's ministry. Those last months of the God Jesus are very important. Therefore, John gives special attention to the death and resurrection of this God Jesus. John shows that it was God Himself who paid for sin through the death of the Son. That's why He had to be a God-man. God cannot die. He had to be humanity and deity, so that as humanity, He could die.

We are told that the gospel of John was written so that the Jew would know that Jesus is indeed the Messiah Savior, and that the gentile would know that He is the Son of God; He is deity; and, therefore, He is the Savior provided, so that you can believe this, and you have a basis for eternal life. If you do not believe that He is deity, you cannot be born again. Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is true deity (very God of very God) is not born again. For that reason, John said, I give you these facts because you must have this as a basis for you to believe the gospel, so that you may be saved. This is the gospel of the good news that a God-man paid for my sins.

98 times in the gospel of John, the word "believe" is used. You can count them. It is a gospel written to tell you how to go to heaven. 98 times it says to believe plus zero (human works). There are a lot of folks who say, "Yes, you must believe, *and* you must do this: You must believe, and you must take the Lord's Supper. You must believe and you must join the church. You must believe and have water baptism. You must believe and live a good life." What a dirty trick that God the Holy Spirit pulled on us in giving us a gospel that summarizes its purpose as being the key explanation of how you can escape the eternal fires of hell, and 98 times it tells us to believe in order to secure that eternal life, and it doesn't make it clear to us that we have to do these other things. You think about that. The gospel of John presents the deity (the divine one) as providing it all apart from human doing.

So, the living creature with the face of an eagle symbolized the heavenly origin of Jesus Christ, and His deity as the Son of God. The One whom John sees on the throne is not a God in man's fallen image, as was true of the Greek mentality. This is the True Creator God. This is the One who was sent to deal with human sin, and who could deal with it because He Himself was deity. The believers of the church age are forever associated with the deity of Jesus Christ. They are forever associated with the true God Himself.

Here's the dramatic declaration of that truth, in Revelation 21:3. This is in the new heaven and the new earth: "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.'" To John, that living creature with the face of an eagle which represented the deity of Jesus Christ, reminded him that he is going to be in that throne room of God's third heaven forever associated with the living God – not some dumb idol, and not some Greek God from Olympus made in the evil nature of human beings, but the real true living Creator God. Wonder of wonders, you're going to be associated with Him, and part of His ministry. You believe that. You will be part of the ministry of the very true and living God.

Revelation 21:7 adds to that: "He that overcomes (that is, those who are born again) shall inherit all things. And I will be his God, and he shall be My Son." It is no small thing for you and me to be able to say, "He is my God." That's what Jesus said after His resurrection, speaking to Mary, "My God, your God; My Father, your Father." To us, He is that. Forever we will be associated with what this living creature, the eagle face, signifies – that God is the real God and the true God, the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are associated with Him. And we ourselves, consequently, will be acting for deity.

The devil knows how to twist the truth. He gets the Mormons thinking that they're going to be gods someday. The truth is we are going to act like God, but not in the way they think. We are going to act with that perfection; with that righteousness; and, with that absolute devotion to the will of God. Once again in the universe there aren't going to be two wills anymore (Satan's and God's). It's going to be one will. We are going to be part of that one will that rules and reigns and run things, because we will be in perfect compatibility. Jesus said, "When you see Me, then you will be like Me."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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