



### John 1:14-18

14 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.

15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

John's teaching in the preceding verses has centered on the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in these verses John adds to that teaching, he will now speak of the humanity of Jesus Christ, while continuing to affirm the absolute uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

One of my least favorite lines from any hymn in the Trinity Hymnal actually comes from "*Away in a Manger*" "**The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes, But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes**" Now I don't hate it because of its sentimentality, but because the idea it expresses is profoundly unbiblical. A normal human baby when awoken by noisy cattle, cries. In fact crying, is one of the four big normal activities all newborns spend their time in, the others being sleeping, eating, and filling their diapers. Crying in that case is not sinful it is communication, it is how your baby tells you, hey my diaper is full, I'm hungry, I need to be burped, and so on. If your baby doesn't cry, you start to panic, and I'm sure Mary and Joseph would have done just that. But that line is rather like the paintings of the nativity that have Jesus glowing like a lightbulb as everyone leans over him in wonder.

In an effort to express Christ's Divinity they have totally obscured the point that John is making in verse 14, that Jesus Christ the Son of God really became man. The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us means that in the incarnation Jesus took on a humanity as real as yours or mine – the only difference being his sinlessness. But Christ ate, and slept, and cried, and hungered and felt pain. As a baby he cried and filled diapers and needed to be burped.

Now John is teaching the truth here, and at the same time dealing with a heresy that was gaining ground. For many Greeks the of idea the Son of God clothing Himself with human flesh was abhorrent, so they said he only appeared to have flesh like ours. John warns about their false teaching in his letters saying for instance in 2 John 1:7 "***For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.***" (2 John 1:7) John wants us to know that they were wrong Jesus Christ didn't merely *appear to be a man* as some were heretically claiming, he really took on a new nature, a true body and a reasonable soul as the Westminster Confession put it.

Many Old Testament prophecies had said that God would do exactly that, that He himself would come and dwell bodily with his people, in order to be their Savior and their righteousness. Job for instance confessed in 19:25 "*For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth*" and now that redeemer Jesus who was the long promised Immanuel, *God with Us*, had come and John says they knew He was no

mere prophet for they had beheld His glory and knew who He was, in an event that had had an incredibly profound impact on both John and Peter they had stood with Christ on the mount of the transfiguration and had seen the veil lifted for a moment and had seen the glory of his Godhead, and heard the voice of the father – "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

We were eyewitnesses of his glory, says John, and that glory was of the *Only Begotten Son*. Only begotten – *monogenes* – It means *one of a kind or unique*, God has no other Son, there is no parallel to this, no other revelation of God's grace and truth comes close.

Jesus, the Son of god, had become man that he might fulfill the law on our behalf and suffer as a Man in our place, and have a fellow feeling with our infirmities but he had to remain God in order that his righteousness and sacrifice might have infinite value when they are imputed to us. But Christ never ceased to be God. As Acts 20:28 reminds us with the phrase "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." No one but Christ could do that or did do that. Grace comes by Christ and Christ alone. The incarnation is unique, it formed the greatest possible expression of God's mercy coupled with the most perfect way of revealing His truth to our understanding. The scriptures don't want anyone to believe that even the best of men could compare with the incomparable Christ:

That's why in verse 15 once again, John turns to deal with those who think that John the Baptist was greater than Christ, to show that John the Baptists own testimony bore out all the things that John had taught in these verses. This is way before today's youth culture, and back in the day when new wasn't linked to improved. It wasn't just in terms of wine that the older it was the better it was, they understood the same of teaching, they were after, all instructed to seek the old paths and walk in them. John's testimony, even though John was born first and his public ministry began before Christ's he affirms that Christ is intrinsically greater – before me – *protos* – *refers to his rank or importance*. But it also refers to his eternity. Jesus outranks John, and if you are looking for the older teacher, long before John or even Abraham, Jesus existed. He is in fact infinitely older than him.

after me--in official manifestation.

before me--in rank and dignity.

for he was before me--in existence

"My Successor is my Superior, for He was my Predecessor."

John was a great man, a great prophet. But not the source of God's grace. That can be found only through the Lamb of God that John the Baptist was pointed to – Jesus In Him is an endless abundance, a fullness – *pleroma of Grace*. All you who believe in Jesus have received the grace of God that alone answers your spiritual needs from Him. And that not just in a stingy barely adequate way, but exceeding grace, grace on grace. So much so, that once you have received that grace you shall never again go without it: ***John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.***

He has dealt in verse 15 with those who believed that John was greater than Jesus, especially because he came before Him. He shows using John's own words to show that Jesus was the greater and actually preceded Him. But now he turns to those who might think that MOSES was greater than Jesus, and shows that Moses was but God's servant mediating the Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil laws to God's people. He could never bring in salvation, because by the Law no man is saved. Only Christ could bring the grace that alone saves. The Law condemns, but grace and truth, which comes through the work of Jesus Christ, saves.

I think Augustine's comment on this verse is peerless – *“The law threatened, not helped; commanded, not healed; showed, not took away, our feebleness. But it made ready for the Physician, who was to come with grace and truth.”*

It is therefore no accident that in the next verse John says that no man has ever seen God at any time, for even Moses was told by God that he could not see his face – “But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” (Exodus 33:20). No man can bear the sight, even the angels cover their faces in his presence. Yet Jesus - who was forever in the bosom of the father can make Him know to us. Jesus has therefore **declared Him** – *exegesato* – *comes from the same word as exegesis – to explain or interpret, to make clear.* Jesus reveals God to us. John 14:9 *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father”*

Now Brothers and Sisters, I want you to take notice of the phrase *The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.* Our closest are our bosom buddies, the people who have a special place in our hearts. In the bosom of the father, an expression which speaks of the closeness and the intimacy between the Father and His only begotten Son, but which maintains their separateness. The so-called “oneness” doctrine that states that only Jesus is God, who merely manifests himself as the Father or the Spirit – which is a heresy called *modalism*, makes nonsense of this verse. How can you have the Son in the bosom of the Father if there is only the Son. Against the nonsense of Modalism, you have the love and unity of the members of the Godhead. One God in three Persons.

Well a couple of quick applications of these verses:

I hope you are seeing this incarnation that came in the fullness of time was the fulfillment of all that God had long promised, since all the way back to Gen 3:15 when He had said that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. When he said that he would be Jehovah Tsidkenu, God our righteousness. Now the Old Testament, is full of Gospel truth, but sometimes it is difficult to make out. The gospel in the Old Testament is veiled, but when Jesus came to bring grace and truth, the veil was lifted and what was in the old concealed was in the new revealed.

That is why the incarnation is the most important of all Christian doctrines, without it, as David Brown put it “all substantial Christianity vanishes,”

*While there have been many prophets in this world I hope you are seeing more and more clearly how different Jesus Christ is from all of them.* How only he could be the Logos, the divine Speech, the perfect self-revelation of God. How he not only reveals God to us, but how only He the God-man was suited to make atonement for our sins. Brothers and Sisters, Jesus as God had always been present in the world spiritually, and via his prophets he had been speaking to His people, but there was something that he could only do clothed in our flesh, and that is to keep the law on our behalf, and then suffer and die on the cross to make atonement for our sins.

Now Muhammad couldn't do it, not even Moses Could, only Christ brings in the fullness of the father's mercy and grace. It may well be though, that up till this point you have been trusting in something or someone else to save you. Thousands of people who call themselves Christians for instance tragically deny that Christ was in fact the Son of God and are this very day trusting that they are good enough to make it into heaven. Well friend, if Moses the law giver could not keep the very law he gave to the people, and remember his sins meant he could not enter in to the promised land, can you?

If you have any hope of heaven it must be through the abundant grace that comes only through Jesus Christ.