

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #7

John 1:14-18

A number of years ago a man in a church used to get up and go outside and sit on the step when the preaching started. Several people saw him do this. When he was confronted about this publicly, he denied he did it. Now the problem is what do you do with all the eyewitnesses who saw him do it? Do you disregard their testimony? Do you really think they were on some vendetta against a person? Did a group of people become delusional, thinking they saw something they really didn't see? Is it normal for people to go around making up things about others that aren't true? The truth is, you either accept the testimony of several eyewitnesses or you end up believing a lie.

When we come to this part of the Gospel of John, we come to what William Barclay said was the whole reason John wrote John. You can choose to believe whatever you want to believe about Jesus Christ, but this one thing you cannot deny, **John claims that Jesus Christ is God and God did come to this earth in the Person of Jesus Christ to offer God's grace to sinners.** John was a witness to this reality. John claims he was an eyewitness to the fact that Jesus Christ was here and that Jesus Christ was God. Now what do you do with that? What do you do with the testimony of Peter, James and John? What do you do with the testimony of Paul? What do you do with the testimony of thousands who say they have experienced God's grace? Were they inventing stories or were they telling the truth? This will become a critical matter of your faith.

That is clearly what John communicates here. The primary point is this:

JESUS CHRIST IS GOD AND GOD REALLY DID COME TO THIS EARTH IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE APOSTLE JOHN AND OTHERS PERSONALLY SAW THIS AND TESTIFIED OF THIS.

In these verses John is stating a series of seven facts concerning Jesus Christ and we would like to draw them to your attention:

FACT #1 – Jesus Christ became flesh. 1:14a

Here is the one sentence that tells us why the Gospel of John was written. Augustine said that he spent years studying Platonic philosophy and had read all about “the word” and “creation”, but he said he never read anything like what this verse said (James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, p. 86). People seem to be always looking for God. Take a look at Jesus Christ; there He is!

The first thing that catches your eye about the opening of this verse is that it says Jesus Christ, The Word, became flesh (σὰρξ) and not became man (ἄνθρωπος). Why does John say this? Why did Paul say exactly the same thing (I Timothy 3:16)? The answer is because Jesus Christ, The Word, was far more than a man. He wasn't like the man named John. He was Deity becoming human. As Matthew said, He was “Immanuel,” God with us (Matthew 1:23)! God with us in the flesh.

Jesus Christ was the Word, that is, He was the entire and full revelation of God and Jesus Christ became flesh, that is, He became a real Person. It is interesting that John uses the term "flesh," in fact, John used this term on purpose. There was a heresy called Docetism which denied that Jesus Christ had a real human body. Docetists claim that Jesus seemed to be human, but He really wasn't human. By using this term, John says that Jesus Christ did become a real flesh and blood human. Deity chose to appear in a real human condition.

The verb "became" is aorist, middle. The aorist tense speaks of a moment or point in past time or history. What this means is that there was a point in time in which the Word, the second member of the Trinity, chose, in and of Himself, to be born as a human, to become flesh. He was always the Word, He was already God but at one point in time He chose to become flesh. **He did not cease to be God, but as God He chose to take a flesh body.**

Think of it. The One who brought the whole universe into existence decided to be born as a human into His universe. God comes out of eternity to be born as a baby. When Jesus Christ was born, He was not part man and part God. He was fully man and fully God at the same time and that is exactly what John is presenting in this gospel. Dr. Chafer was asked in a radio interview in New York in 1936, "When did Christ begin to realize that He was not like other human beings?" Dr. Chafer said He was always aware of His deity for deity cannot ever be restricted. His Deity wasn't the new thing, the flesh body was the new thing (*The Incarnation of Christ A Radio Broadcast by Lewis Sperry Chafer, conducted in New York on December 27, 1936, Bib Sac, Jan. 1937, pp. 12-13*).

If God did become flesh, He must have had some tremendous reason for doing so. Why would you leave the stable, righteous, glorious environment of heaven to come into this dark, depraved, wretched world? The answer to that question is found in John 10:10 - He came so sinners could have eternal life.

God always inhabited eternity, but in order for a sinner, separated from God to inherit that eternity, God must provide a way. His way is that a member of the Godhead come to this earth and take on human form so that humans could inherit everlasting life and that is why Christ came.

FACT #2 – Jesus Christ dwelt among us. 1:14b

That word "dwelt" is a very interesting Greek word. The word means to dwell in a tent or tabernacle. You could literally read this - the word "tented" or "tabernacled" among us. This tent concept speaks of a temporary state of residency, not a permanent residency. That concept to the Jewish mind was very important. To the Jew, the O.T. tabernacle or tent was the place which featured the presence of God. This is where Israel went to hear the Word of God, to offer sacrifices to God and to worship God.

That is precisely what John has in his mind concerning Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the presence of God. This is where you must go if you want a relationship with God. With Christ in your life, you'll begin to understand the Word of God and you will be able to worship God.

Jesus Christ temporarily pitched His tent, and His Divine presence right in the midst of sinful humanity. He dwelt among us. Jesus Christ did really come to this earth. He did really show up in human form. You cannot deny that. You also cannot deny that John claims He is God. **John was Christ's best friend on earth, but John was overwhelmed with the fact that his best friend was God.**

FACT #3 – Jesus Christ revealed the Glory of God. 1:14c

John said that he and others personally saw the glory of God displayed in Jesus Christ. What is so odd is that the glory John saw was not initially political - a royal regality, not physical - divine cloud or halo hanging over His head, not financial - not known for having castles and gold, but it was profoundly spiritual and very visible.

Throughout John's travels with Christ, he saw God's glory displayed many times. In fact, starting with John 1:19 - 2:22, John will tell us about the first time he saw it - when Jesus changes water into wine. **When John looked at Jesus Christ, he did not see another man, he saw God and he saw the glory of God.** There are two distinct elements of this glory that John brings out:

(Element #1) - Christ's glory was unique .

The phrase "only begotten from the Father" means that Jesus Christ displayed a unique glory that was from God the Father. He was a one of a kind Son of God, distinct and unique. The word "glory" refers to visible brightness and splendor (Smith, p. 121). John is claiming that Jesus Christ displayed visibly a brightness and splendor that was that of God the Father as no other person ever has or ever will display. This is a far cry from the false claims of the Mormons that Jesus is a son of God like we all may be a son of God. You and I will never be God. We cannot display the special kind of glory He displayed. He did and said things only God can do and say.

The phrase "only begotten" (μονογενος) is one that means unique such as one class or kind or race. Jesus Christ uniquely displayed the glory of God the Father. He was His one and only son. It is true we may become a child of God by faith in Christ (John 1:12), however no one will ever equal Christ's Sonship. It is unrivaled, unparalleled and unrepeatable.

(Element #2) - Christ's glory was full of Grace and Truth.

The first thing revealed about the Word becoming flesh is God's grace . God came to this world and took a flesh body to offer us His grace. **Grace is the unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor of God which is given to one who deserves just the opposite.** This world did not merit or deserve Jesus Christ coming in the flesh to save it, and neither do we. Because of our rebellion against God we don't deserve anything from God except His wrath. But in an amazing demonstration of grace, "the Word became Flesh."

The word "full" carries with it the idea of not having any room for more. In other words, the full demonstration of God the Father's grace and the full demonstration of God the Father's truthfulness was revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ. You cannot find any more Grace or any more Truth concerning your relationship with God than Jesus Christ. He is the "Full Gospel."

Grace is found in Jesus Christ and grace and truth go hand in hand. Grace is a big Pauline word and a word rarely used by the Apostle John, in fact it is only used four times (1:14, 16, 17). However, truth is a big word in John's vocabulary for he uses it some 24 times. John expected people would know that to be right with God and experience His grace, you must deal with truth about yourself and God. This is objective truth, not subjective opinion. **In order to experience God's grace, you must be willing to admit the truth about yourself as a sinner in need of a Divine Savior.** You will never experience God's grace until you are willing to admit that truth.

FACT #4 – Jesus Christ was testified of by John. 1:15

Now the John referred to in John 1:15 is John the Baptist, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. John was the last of the O.T. prophets and he was the last of the law (Matthew 1:13; Luke 16:16). It had been almost 400 years since God had given any direct revelation to Israel, so when John surfaced, he was highly regarded. John testified concerning Jesus Christ and his testimony is profound. In fact, we may carefully observe the emphasis of John's verbal witness - "witness", "cried out", "saying." John was giving much verbal communication concerning Jesus Christ. There is nothing that will ever replace you and I talking and witnessing about Jesus Christ. There are two main realities to which John testified, which come from the pen of an apostle who zeroes in on "truth."

(Reality #1) - Jesus Christ has a higher rank than John the Baptist. 1:15a

John was born six months before Jesus Christ (Luke 1:24, 26, 36). John began his ministry before Jesus Christ. Now the Jews deemed John as a very important prophet of God - John 1:21. That is also the way God viewed him (Luke 1:76). So when John says that Jesus would hold a higher rank than he did, he would have to be God, for there was no higher rank than being the greatest prophet.

(Reality #2) - Jesus Christ existed before John the Baptist. 1:15b

How is this possible? How is it possible for One who will be born six months after John to exist before John? There is only one explanation - the One born is Eternal. He preexisted before His birth. The One born is God. Not only was Christ before John, He was before Abraham (John 8:58); before the angels; before the mountains, before the heavens, before everything - He is God!

Whatever you decide to believe about Jesus Christ is your business. But you need to know this - people who were there, who saw Him, who spent time with Him, who talked to Him and lived with Him, identified Him as God - The word. He was not God the Father, He was the unique God the Son.

FACT #5 – Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's grace. 1:16

The grace of God is the undeserved, unmerited, unearned favor of God upon a sinner when that sinner deserves just the opposite. Jesus Christ embodies the fullness of God's grace.

God's grace has always been in existence. There is a common grace of God that all humans have experienced - health, prosperity, family, friendships and good times. When God did not instantly destroy Adam and Eve there was His grace. When God made animal sacrifices possible, there was His grace. The ultimate demonstration of the grace of God is Jesus Christ. God's O.T. grace is replaced by His ultimate N.T. grace. Every thing full comes from Him and His Grace. Full relationship with God, full life, full joy and full purpose. You will be lacking in your life until you come to faith in Jesus Christ and experience the Grace of God. Something will be missing. Something will be lacking. Notice Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's grace. You don't need Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Mary Baker Eddy, L. Ron Hubbard, Confucius, Socrates, Plato or Buddha; all you need for God's full grace is Jesus Christ.

FACT #6 – Jesus Christ is the end of the Law. 1:17

To “rightly divide” the Bible (II Timothy 2:15), one must “divide” it by dispensations. Back in 1963, Dr. Roy Aldrich said there are two dispensations in this verse - “Law” and “Grace,” which comprise 93 percent of the Bible (Roy L. Aldrich, *A New Look At Dispensationalism*, Bib. Sac, 1963, p. 46). The Law of God will not and cannot ever make you right with God. What the Law of God will do to every sinner is: 1) Shut the mouth (Romans 3:19); 2) Prove you guilty and accountable to God (Romans 3:19); 3) Give you personal knowledge of your sin (Romans 3:20); 4) Show that you deserve God's wrath (Romans 4:15). **The Law of God cannot ever justify a sinner (Romans 3:20), ONLY God's grace can justify a sinner (Romans 3:21-22, 28).**

Moses gave the Law to Israel; Jesus Christ brought Grace to the world. He offers you amazing Grace. But in order to experience this, you must admit the truth about yourself. Grace and truth go hand in hand. The truth is, we are all sinners and have no hope in and of ourselves of ever changing that. That is why Christ's coming to this world is so vital. If you want to experience God's grace, you must come to faith in Jesus Christ. If you want to experience God's grace, you must tell the truth about yourself and believe the truth about Him. The truth is there is no other way for any sinful human to be right with God other than by faith in Jesus Christ.

Every human here is either under the condemnatory Law dispensation or the non-condemnatory Grace dispensation. The determining factor as to which one you are in is what you believe will save you - your keeping the law or accepting Jesus Christ who gives you grace.

FACT #7 – Jesus Christ is the only One who has seen God the Father. 1:18

There is no article “the” before the noun “God,” which means what is being stressed is the character and quality and essence of Deity. No human has seen God as God face to face. There were various manifestations of God in the O.T. (Exodus 24:9-11), but no man ever saw God face to face.

No mere man can see God the Father and live (Exodus 33:20). Jesus Christ is the only One who has seen God the Father and He came to this earth to reveal Him. What does God the Father look like? Jesus Christ. What is God like? Jesus Christ. The only Person we may look at and say - there is God - is Jesus Christ.

There are three types of sight in the Bible:

- 1) There is physical sight - you see with your eyes.
- 2) There is rational sight - you see with your mind.
- 3) There is spiritual sight - you see with your heart.

Everything you will ever see about God comes from Jesus Christ.

Now the verb "explain" means to "lead out." Jesus Christ came to lead God the Father out into the open. He displays God. In fact, Jesus would later say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Augustine prayed, "Let me die that I may see Thee; let me see Thee that I may die." We will not ever see God with our physical eyes until we get to glory, which for most comes via death. However we can by faith see Him and believe on Him through the Scripture.

Now notice the reference to "bosom." Jesus Christ came to reveal the real heart of God. Jesus Christ is the complete revelation and explanation of God. He is, as one commentator said, the "exegesis" of God.

The question every person must ask is whether or not he will accept Jesus Christ and the pure grace of God.

What Christ displayed the first time He came was full grace, what He will display the next time He comes is full wrath!