

The Word Became Flesh John 1:14-18

In John chapter 1 this evening, our sermon text is verses 14 to 18, the last section of the prologue. We'll read from verses 1 to 18, to get the context, but our sermon text tonight starts at verse 14. Before the reading we'll pray. Please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we do ask that you would now bless the reading of your word. We do ask that you would bless the hearing of your word. I ask that you would help me as I seek to preach your word, and I ask that you would help us all as we hear from your word. Lord, these things I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Starting at John 1, verse 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

"⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

"⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

"¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.") ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." Amen.

Verse 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, often repeats the refrains, "Vanity, all is vanity," and, "There is nothing new under the sun." I don't think that Solomon could see far enough forward to see what God was actually going to do, because I think if he could have seen and understood from there what we just read in verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," I think he would actually have said, "Well, there may be something new that's going to come under the sun." The truth is, my friends, when we hear just that simple statement, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," we should have fallen to the floor. We really should have hit the ground. We really should have been bowing before God. Our knees should be knocking. We should be trembling. There should be tears in our eyes.

I can't exaggerate, I just cannot overblow the importance of what was just said. I can't say too much about it. Those words are incredible. They're almost beyond comprehension. I mean, it's simple language. Whether you put it in English or if you could read the ancient Greek, the words aren't complicated. They can be understood. But to understand what they mean, to grasp and take hold of what is being said—Consider, my friends, going back to verse 1 and the start of the prologue to the gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” John tells us that this one who is called “the Word” is God—alongside of God.

Remember we made the point that he said, “The Word was with God,” and that word there that's behind our English word “with” implies a face-to-face relationship—two people moving together in intimate relationship. Who can have face-to-face, intimate relationship with God but God—God who is perfect and holy, and whose eyes cannot look upon sin, into whose presence evil may not enter?

From the beginning, in the beginning, was the Word. John's inviting us to go back and remember verse 1 of the book of Genesis. “In the beginning, God.” He's inviting us to ascribe glory and majesty to the Word, and to accept that he, John—a Jewish man, raised in Jewish society, worshipping the living God, Yahweh, the God of the covenants—he, John, now accepts that this one whom he has called the Word is that covenant God, the one whom the people have always worshipped. That's the background to verse 14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” God became man. God came down to earth.

Now, you know, we weren't looking at this Christmas day, but that's what the tradition of Christmas day is all about, if you accept that Christmas is a Christian tradition. That word “incarnation,” all it means is, “into-flesh”—getting into flesh. Carne is flesh. Incarnation—God got into flesh, as we read from Philippians, where Paul speaks of Jesus adding to Himself human nature. He added to Himself true humanity. He didn't cease to be the Word, or God, or the Eternal Son of God.

He's still God, the Word, the Eternal Son of God, because, here's the thing: If He is truly God, and John tells us that He is, what we must understand is that divinity cannot change its nature. It's perfect, it's self-sufficient, it can't be improved, it can't be deconstructed or broken down. You can't divide God. You can't divide the infinite. God is one, and Christ is God, along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And Christ, in His divine nature, is as truly God as anyone else or any other thought that you have when you say “God.” Usually when we say God, we're really by implication probably thinking of God the Father. But Christ is no less God than God the Father. And this one who is God and who could never cease to be God, became man.

As I said, it's one thing to know it, it's one thing to read it, it's one thing to understand the words. And just the same as understanding the Trinity, there's a certain mystery in understanding Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one God, one being who is God, but three persons being that one God. But here we have one person, being Christ, of a truly human and a truly divine nature, both being truly Jesus Christ. It's another mystery. Once again, as I said, you understand the words, but you can't get your mind around it. But we should be shocked.

Remember the Gulf War and the U.S. reporters waving their flags and carrying on about the great military might of the U.S talking about “shock and awe.” An aircraft drop bombs and blow things to smithereens, somewhere and they’d say, “This is part of a shock-and-awe campaign.” Well, I’m telling you my friends, I don’t care what bombs are dropped from what aircraft in what quantities. They’re nothing compared to the shock and awe we as worshippers of the living God should feel at the thought that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The Word became flesh, and literally, He tabernacled, or pitched His tent among us. There’s a word association there that we should pick up. In the book of Exodus, how did God dwell among His chosen people? In a tent, in a tabernacle. He tabernacled among the Jews in the Exodus, and that’s why we took our Old Testament reading from the book of Exodus. He tabernacled among His people. Well, now Christ, revealing God to us, has tabernacled among His people.

Continuing to read in verse 14: “And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” Now in our reading from Exodus, what did Moses desire to see? What did he desire to understand when he asked to know God—“Show me your glory”? The Apostle John is saying that as the children of God through adoption by the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ, we are actually seeing what Moses didn’t get to see, because remember Moses didn’t get the whole deal. He was hidden in the cleft of a rock. He saw the goodness of God passing by him. The Hebrew literally says he saw the back parts of God, and even that was glory enough to blow his mind.

Well John is saying that Moses got to see *some* glory, but we’ve actually had God dwell among us, and He has displayed His glory in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He’s not belittling Moses. He’s not saying Moses was not truly a prophet of God, not truly the mediator of a covenant, not truly a good man. But he’s trying to make us understand that something greater than Moses, and all of the things that happened in the Old Testament to the people of Israel, has happened. God the Son became flesh and dwelt among us, “and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Full of grace and truth.

Now not only should we be awestruck, not only should we have hit the floor when we heard those things, but we should be deeply and utterly convicted. Why? Because if any child of humanity, man or woman, any offspring of Adam and Eve, could have possibly done the things that God requires, could have possibly been righteous in their deeds and acts, the Son of God would never need have taken upon Himself flesh. If anybody could, through their works and their efforts, have averted the wrath of God, there would be no need for this incarnation. There would be no need for God to become man, to live that perfect life and to die that incredibly valuable sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. It would have been utterly unnecessary.

And so when we see this, not only should we be awestruck and glorifying God, ecstatic in happiness and joy, we should also be humbled to the ground, knowing that we could not even pray, come to, or love God if this had not happened; for we, like all who came before us, are sinners. We’re the sinful offspring of a sinful race. We can claim no grace, no goodness, no righteousness of our own.

We are born in sin, as indeed Adam our human father was a sinner, for God had promised—“Eat of that fruit, and dying, you will die.” And we know that we, as a people, are mortal. We might not like to think about it. This society prefers to actually avoid all thought of mortality. Tell people they’re going to live forever. We’ve got a great medical system. Almost anything that happens to you, in some way or other, they can patch you up or they can strengthen you, or they clean your blood, or whatever it is they can do, they can extend your life for a little bit longer. And when we think in worldly ways, we’ve learned to think that today’s not the day. Death is not with me today—and not even tomorrow, and not even next week.

But the truth is, all of us know when we’re being realistic, when we’re being honest, all of us know in our heart of hearts that it’s coming. Unless the Lord returns before the day allotted, the only way out of this world is to die. The only way into the very presence of God Himself is to depart this world—to die, for spirit to be separated from flesh.

Well here in the incarnation, God was joined to flesh so that we can know that when spirit is separated from flesh, we will go into the presence of God. God took upon Himself flesh in order to work salvation. Turn if you will to the book of Isaiah chapter 63, and we’ll start reading at verse 1.

“¹ Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? ‘It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.’

“² Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? ³ ‘I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. ⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. ⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. ⁶ I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth”

Now I suppose I need to explain that a little, because it seems like there’s an awful lot of blood being spilt there. What’s this saying? What’s this all about? Well the one who is coming, and speaking in righteousness with crimsoned garments from the blood of His victims, is God Himself—Yahweh the Saviour, the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

And what’s all this talk of judgment? Well, He’s always been God. We’ll see when we get to the end of our message here that He’s always been the intermediary between God and man. No one has ever known God any other way than through the Son. And He has been enacting the judgment of God. People die. Why do they die? Because of sin. But God did not intend to destroy all of humanity. That was never His plan. He created man, bearing His image, that man would glorify God and enjoy Him forever, as the first question in the Westminster Catechism tells us—that we would glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So we have this one who is the Son of God, who has been marching out and enacting the wrath of God, who has been calling on judgment upon the enemies of God.

Again, from verse 4: “⁴For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. ⁵I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. ⁶I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.” This work of judgment is actually alongside, it’s the other side of the coin of His work of salvation. “My own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me.” The purpose of the judgment is to separate His people from the world. The book of Isaiah is always telling us that two things are inevitable: God will judge and God will save. So this one who is righteous and who comes in judgment, came in judgment, saving. His own arm brought Him salvation.

Isaiah asks the question earlier, “To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” He’s using what’s called anthropomorphic language, which just means he’s speaking of God in human terms. I mean, if God is infinite, the idea that He has an arm—that you can see His arm and no other part of Him—is just a metaphor. It’s an illustration. It’s not possible. But we know from Scripture that the arm of the Lord which did the work of salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ—Jesus Himself. He’s the great and mighty arm of the Lord, the strength, the expression of God’s strength, that does what? It does the work of salvation.

God Himself had to do the work of salvation. No son or daughter of the first Adam could ever hope to do it. We are sinful people, born of a sinful line. But Christ came, “as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”—that phrase, “grace and truth.” Turn very quickly back into Exodus chapter 34, which we read earlier, and notice something. We’ll start reading at verse 6: “Yahweh passed before him and proclaimed, ‘Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.’” And I’ll stop there.

“Steadfast love and faithfulness” are the Hebrew equivalents of “grace and truth.” That faithfulness is truth-telling, truth-speaking, commitment-keeping. Steadfast love is covenant-keeping. It’s love that expresses itself even at your own loss. Grace and truth. You see the connections to what John is saying: “Moses saw his glory.”

Let’s keep reading and clear this up a bit. “‘Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’” Now I’ll stop—when I read this, those of you who’ve heard me read it, you know that I like to ask you a question: Does that sound good? Does that sound like what you want to hear? A merciful God, abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgress and sin. Amen!

“‘Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, *but...*’” “But.” What does “but” mean in that context? It means that which came before is now about to be negated. “‘But who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’” And now you see you’re in a paradox, or a dilemma. You’ve got a bit of a problem. God has just said that He’s full of love and graciousness, and forgives iniquity and transgression and sin. You say, “Well, that’s good.” But I ask you a question, if someone has committed iniquity, transgression, and sin, are they guilty? Yes, they’re guilty. “But who will by no means clear the guilty.”

You see the way it is with God. God is just. God is good. God, when He forgives sin, doesn't just pretend that it didn't happen. We wouldn't accept that in a human judge. We would not accept the idea that a judge could say to a murderer, or a rapist, or whatever, "Look, I know you were trying your hardest, and it doesn't really matter. And so, look, I'll let you go this time. Do better in the future." We would not accept that in our system. God does not accept that. God is just. God is a God of justice and goodness and rightness. So Sin must be punished.

We like to talk about the fact that our sins have been forgiven, and they are. I comfort you in that. If your faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, my friends, your sins are forgiven. But they weren't forgotten. They were forgotten in a way—I mean, we can say they were forgotten in that our sins were separated from us as far as the east is from the west, as it says in Psalm 103. But our sins have indeed been punished. God's judgment has fallen upon our sinfulness. How? The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, went to the cross. He was guilty of no sin, but He bore the sin of many. He bore the sin of all who would believe that God's judgment, and anger, and justice, and wrath concerning that sin fell upon Jesus Christ Himself.

So, my friends, your sins are judged. Your sins are not forgotten in that context. They fell upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are hiding in Christ. He absorbed, He took, He received that wrath of God. That judgment of God due to us fell upon Him, that we could receive the blessings of God that were due to Him. We're looked upon as being righteous in Christ, and as being sons of God in Christ. And so, He receives the punishment, we receive the blessing.

But here's the thing: Though He bore our sins, He was Himself guilty of no sin, and so the penalty of sin, which is death, actually had no power over Him. In obedience over Him, in obedience, He was willing to lose the battle and be killed. But through obedience, He won the war and was resurrected. That's what we've got to understand. The resurrection is the proof of His innocence. If He had been guilty of but one sin, He would still be there, but He was not. Therefore, death had no power, and God the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, could righteously, and with justice, and according to the law, reverse death, could raise Him from the dead, where He can now be enthroned at the right hand of the Father, mediating our salvation, ruling over all of creation.

And so Exodus 34, where God speaks of His mercy and God speaks of His judgment, is fulfilled. Judgment was carried out, and mercy was granted, in and through the one person, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what we're to remember. That's what this incarnation is all about. The only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth—that's the connection back into the book of Exodus.

Verse 15: ¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me."'). What does he mean, "Because he was before me"? Turn if you would quickly in the gospel of John to John chapter 8. Jesus here is in argument with the Jews. Looking at verse 58, the second to the last verse of the chapter, "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.' This same Jesus Christ who was before John, this same Jesus Christ has now said that He was before Abraham. John is actually saying that he is a worshipper of God; he is a worshipper of this one whom he is calling the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

“John bore witness about him, and cried out, ‘This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’” “I worship this one. I am a prophet of Yahweh.” John, the last of the Old Testament prophets, the last prophet to arise from the Jewish nation in the Old Testament way, was a worshipper of Yahweh, and he’s saying, “This one was before me.” He’s not talking about time. Think about it. If you know your gospels, you know that Jesus was actually born six months after John. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit after John was conceived by John’s parents through a miraculous blessing.

“He was before me. I was a worshipper of him.” Keep reading, verse 16: “For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” Now we’ll stop there. It’s not actually 100% clear whether or not verse 16 is still John the Baptist speaking. It’s either John the Baptist speaking, or it’s John the apostle making commentary about Jesus. Either way, it’s the word of God. Do you get what I’m saying? This could still be John the Baptist; it could be John the apostle. I think it’s John the Baptist speaking.

“For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” Now what might that phrase mean: “From his fullness—from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace”? Let’s have a look in the book of Colossians, chapter 1. We’re going to start reading from verse 15. This is the Apostle Paul speaking of Jesus. Colossians 1:

“¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Verse 19: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.”

Now go back to John chapter 1, verse 16: “For from his fullness we have all received”—the fullness of His divinity, the fullness of His Godhood. The gospel of John really has a theme that is repeated over and over and over again. This one whom John starts calling “the Word,” and whom soon we’re going to see is called Jesus Christ, this one is God, truly God, the Son of God, the eternally begotten Son of God. He was never anything but God. There never was a moment when He wasn’t God. He is God, He is God of the Israelites, God of the whole world. He is divine.

“From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace,” or even “grace over grace.” He’s sort of piling it on—grace, grace, and more grace. It just keeps coming, the goodness of God. I mean, in the light of the fact that the Word became flesh, how could you measure the grace of God? You simply can’t. You can’t quantify it. It’s too much for us to understand; it’s beyond any human computation, any human understanding—grace upon grace. God poured out His love in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, who took upon Himself flesh, that we, creatures of the dust could have eternal life with God. Grace upon grace. It’s beyond our measure. We can understand the words, but once again, you just can’t get your head around it.

Verse 17, I think, is John the apostle speaking, not quoting John the Baptist: “¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Now the way to understand that is a little bit like a scene from a movie, and as soon as I say it, you’ll know what I mean. There’s a movie, and the guy says, “Knife? That’s not a knife.” Someone was holding a knife in their hand, but he said, “Knife? That’s not a knife.” Well that’s what John the apostle is now saying about the work of God through Jesus Christ. He’s not saying that there was no grace and truth in Moses, but he’s saying, in comparative terms, “That’s not a knife; *this* is! That’s not great; *this* is!” “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Grace and truth—the grace of God, the truth of God.

He’s going to say more. Let’s keep reading. Verse 18: “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” In the New King James Version—let’s just make sure we have everybody happy here—verse 18 reads, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Now that’s what’s called a textual variation. In the ancient manuscripts, there is a difference between some texts and other texts. Some say, “The only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Others say, “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

But when you think about it, and when you look carefully at what is said, it’s a variation without difference. They both say exactly the same thing, because what verse 18 is telling us to do is go back up the verse 1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,” and remember the weight that was on “with”—*in relationship with, side-by-side, face-by-face, moving closer together*. And then you down to verse 18, “The only God, who is at the Father’s side,” or, “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”—you see, they both mean exactly the same thing. They’re speaking of “that one”—that one who was always in relationship with God the Father; that Word, who is eternally God, who can be nothing less than God, the eternal God. They’re speaking of exactly the same thing.

So let’s get then to what John is saying, now that we’ve covered, I hope to your satisfaction, that detail. “No one has ever seen God,” or as it says in the NKJV, “No one has seen God at any time.” What’s he saying? Well when the authors of Scripture in the New Testament speak of *God*, and then they speak of God’s Son, you take it when they say *God* to be meaning God the Father. That becomes the key by which you understand what they’re saying.

Let’s use the New King James: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Or, the ESV, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Father and Son. So let’s break it down and use Trinitarian terms. “No one has ever seen God the Father. Only God the Son has made God the Father known.” That’s actually said in other places.

Turn to Matthew chapter 11, from verse 25: “²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’”

Understand that: “No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

So what’s John saying back in John chapter 1, verse 18, when he says, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known”? “He has made him known”—What’s he saying? Well, as you read through the Old Testament, you have, for example in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve being approached by God: “Adam, where are you?” As you read in the book of Exodus, you have Moses seeing the glory of God—he didn’t see Him face-to-face, but the hindermost parts. As you read the book of Isaiah, Isaiah has a vision in chapter 6 of Yahweh, Lord of Hosts, high and lifted up. Who did they see? What’s John saying? They’ve never seen God the Father; they’ve only ever seen God the Son. The one whom they called Yahweh was indeed God the Son, Jesus Christ pre-incarnate.

There’s only ever been one who comes between God and man, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other intermediary. There is no one else to pray to, there’s no one else to turn to, no one else to beg mercy from, but Jesus Christ. It’s Jesus’ law—the law that says you’re a sinner and you should die, it’s His law. And it’s His salvation that saves us from the penalty of the law. That’s what we’re to understand.

An amazing thing is happening here, an amazing thing is being revealed to us. The one whom we have known as God is the only one whom we have ever known as God, and that’s God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—the one who took upon Himself flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory. “The only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Now in that phrase, “He has made him known,” the technical word is “exegetes.” If you don’t know what exegetes means, it’s what I try to do when I’m preaching to you. It’s trying to bring the meaning out. It’s trying to uncover. “He has made him known.”

The only begotten Son has made known the Father. He has uncovered the Father. If you know Jesus, you know God the Father. What did He say to the disciples, to Philip, in the upper room? “After all this time, Philip, do you know me, and yet you say you do not know the Father? If you know me, you know the Father. I and the Father are one.” “He has made him known.” To what purpose? We’ve already covered it, but if you just skip forward to verse 29, it says, “The next day he,” John the Baptist, “saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

Christology and Trinitarian theology are the two things that, as Christians, you can’t get wrong. When you hear this truth, you have to submit to this truth. If you have no desire to submit to this truth, I’m telling you in all honesty, I have no reason to expect that you are actually a Christian or that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. These aren’t options.

There are some options in the Christian life. You can have options in your eschatology. I think Amillennialism is the truth, but there are others here who don’t think it’s the truth; they think Premillennialism is the truth. And there are some I know who are Postmillennials. You have options, and those options, in a way, don’t make you any more or any less a Christian. And so you have to learn to live with your differences on that subject. You can be Premillennial, Amillennial, Postmillennial.

Even in issues of baptism, while I am entirely convinced that the correct mode of baptism is the baptism of a confessing believer by immersion—we are a Baptist church, a Reformed Baptist church—but I would not say, for example, a truly regenerate Presbyterian or Reformed Evangelical Anglican is not a Christian just because that person has never been baptized by immersion. There are actually options there. If you want me to talk about baptism, I'll say I don't think it's right to baptize infants, but that baptism alone doesn't make them Christians or not Christians. It doesn't exclude people from the kingdom of God. We can have those disagreements, and we should learn to live with each other in peace. Hold to what you believe is true. But when it comes to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to Trinitarian theology; when it comes to the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God—truly God, truly man—you don't have any options, you really don't. You must accept what Scripture teaches. The Apostle John leaves no choice.

Turn to First John chapter 2, reading from verse 18. ¹⁸ “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.” Now that's interesting, isn't it, because almost all of us, no matter what your eschatology is in terms of the end times, are thinking, “The antichrist—who's the antichrist?” Well John's saying there are already antichrists in the world, within fifty years of Jesus dying. And he actually tells us who the antichrists are—not the capital “A” Antichrist. There were many antichrists in the world.

So let's keep reading: ¹⁸ ...so now many have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.” So there's the first thing to know about antichrists—they walked away from the fellowship of the saints; they went out from the teaching of the apostles; they abandoned the authority of the apostles.

Let's keep reading: “But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.” Who were they? They're the people who were reading this letter and are under his authority as an apostle. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.” “No one who denies the Son has the Father.” That's the antichrist. “Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”

So the antichrist is one who has gone out from the people of God, abandoned the teaching of the apostles, and teaches false doctrine concerning the Holy Trinity, and concerning the identity of the Son. They are false teachers concerning Jesus Christ. And John is saying that those who deny the Father do not have the Son; and those who deny the Son do not have the Father.

Now what happened when Jesus was baptized? Somebody spoke from heaven. The baptism of Jesus was a Trinitarian happening. You have a voice from heaven, a Son being baptized, and the Holy Spirit hovering as a dove. Who spoke? Who said something about Jesus? The Father. “This is my beloved Son. In Him I am well pleased.” In Him I am well pleased.

Do you understand now why John says that if you deny the Son, you're denying the Father? "For the Father spoke of the Son saying that He is His beloved Son, and He is well pleased in Him." Do you understand what the point of this is? If you don't get this doctrine right, if you don't submit to this truth, you're not a Christian. Don't fool yourself. You must submit to this truth. I'm not saying you must have some kind of PhD-level philosophical understanding. In a way, it doesn't help you. I'm telling you, I've read plenty of writings from PhD-level philosophically trained theologians about these things, and they're no further along the way than we are. They come to things like this, and they say, "This is a mystery. This is the infinite God. We know what He tells us, but we can't wrap our minds around it."

But you must believe this. You're not given an option here. This isn't one of the options. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—One, and one God only, three persons being the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, the Saviour sent forth by God the Father, in whom He is well pleased. Get this wrong, deny these truths—don't call yourself a Christian, because you're not. It is actually a dividing line. It is actually a division point.

People indwelt by the Holy Spirit hear this truth and submit. They may not claim they understand it. I'm telling you, in a way, I don't. I understand the words, I understand the boundaries that God has set around this revealed truth. But I'd be a liar if I said I can understand how one person, the Lord Jesus Christ, can be 100% God, 100% man. I mean, how can one being be 200%? Try and get your head around it; it can't be done. But it's true, and it's the truth that God has revealed in Scripture, and God demands that we accept His word of truth. This is it. God is speaking. He has spoken. He has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ, His Son. He will not accept our puny, foolish, human rebellion. If we are indwelt by the power of the Holy Spirit, we know this to be true, even though we say it is beyond us. I mean, God is infinite.

You know, the theology of the cults is usually really simple. It's so simple that a six-year-old can learn it by rote. And you can't go any deeper, because there's no depth to go into. The cults that deny the Trinity, and deny the true incarnation—it's really simple theology, because it's simplified down to blind the people under the deception. And the cults won't tell you there's a mystery, and they won't tell you that there's more here than you can possibly understand.

For example, the Jehovah's Witness will tell you, "Oh, no, Jesus was not actually truly God and truly man. He was 'a' god, and he was also archangel Michael, and the archangel Michael took on the form of humanity." Now that's actually simple. That's as simple as a fairy story, because that's what it is. You don't have to actually stretch your mind very much to understand that.

And the Islamic religion is fairly simple. One and one only god. That's it. No Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. No mystery. Nothing to enlighten the mind, stretch the mind, or challenge them. They just have to believe that there's one and one only god, full stop. No relationship, no love in the godhead, no persons in communication and in relationship with one another. And so to them, the concept of God being love is—for example, as John says—the concept of God being love is utterly foreign, for how can one and one only unified god, of one and one only being or person, have love when there's nothing else to love on his level? There's no relationship to have. The god of the Islamic religion does not have relationship, does not need relationship. That's simple.

This is not simple. You can hear the truth, you can accept the truth, you can submit to the truth, you can learn the creedal formulations, you can learn what the Scripture has to say, and you'll spend eternity growing in your understanding of it, and you'll never ever get to the bottom of it. You'll never ever wrap your mind around it, because we are finite and He—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is infinite. Infinite, great, glorious God. So great that we don't have the words. Language fails us.

And yet, He wants us to glorify Him with our words. He wants us to speak true words concerning Himself. It does say in Scripture, "By the things that come out of your mouth, you will be judged." We're to speak truth. We're to believe and submit to truth, and to speak truth concerning God. We're to love the Lord our God, with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. He's greater than we are, and these revealed truths are the things that prove to us that He is greater than we are. He's not like us.

In Scripture, in one place, it says, "The mistake you made was you thought I was like you. You thought that I was a man like you. No. I'm God! I'm greater than you!" And this God, this one who is greater, this one whom we can't wrap our minds around, whom we will never encompass—this one: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory." Amen. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, I do pray that you would help us to understand your glory, to understand your greatness, to understand your Word. I do pray, Father, that we would not have foolish idolatrous thoughts lodged in our minds. Lord, let us learn from the pure and holy Word of God, from the pure and holy living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of your Holy Spirit. Father, I pray that you would help us to worship you in spirit and in truth, and to love you as we should. In Jesus' name. Amen.