

February 23, 2014
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to study John 1:14-18.

1. Compare Moses' request to see God's glory with what the disciples saw daily.
2. List some of the evidences of grace that come through Jesus Christ.
3. How do we explain John's statement that no one has ever seen God with examples in the Old Testament and New Testament of men and women who seemed to see God?
4. What characteristics of God did Jesus manifest?

GOD THE SON REVEALS GOD John 1:14-18

False religions notoriously minimize the work and person of Jesus of Nazareth. Most of them allow Jesus to be a good man, a great teacher, and maybe a doer of hard-to-explain works. But to allow Him to be God is out of the question. If the truth is that Jesus was God in the flesh, we are without excuse. We must answer for our sins to the Creator who paid the price to redeem us from sin. Human pride prefers to create its own religion that depends on personal efforts to win redemption from sin's penalty.

That God would show such longsuffering to put up with created beings who deny Him and reject Him is hard to believe. More difficult to believe is the fact that God would make the ultimate sacrifice of His

own blood in order to redeem those denying, rejecting rebels. Most astonishing is that He would come to be one of us in order to reveal Himself to us.

Through the incarnation of God becoming man, God has given us every possible reason to know Him, love Him, and come to Him for forgiveness. His longsuffering and compassion is beyond comprehension. If God were to give us the offer He gave Moses (comparatively that would be to destroy the human race and build a new race through us), we might very likely say, "That sounds like a good idea." Instead, God patiently, for centuries of time, keeps revealing Himself to us so that we will know who He is and what He expects of us.

What a wonderful God is our Creator who reveals His glory and character to us in the most perfect way.

The Word Revealed His Own Glory (v.14).

This revelation of glory began when the Word became flesh (v.14a). As we learned in a previous study, when the Word became flesh, God became as one of His created beings. Again, this is the Word who was described for us in verses one through five. He is God the Son who has always been with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit (v.1). He is God the Son who has always been one with God (v.1). He is the Creator who always has been and who made all things (vv.2-3). Therefore, He must by extension also be the author of life—both physical and eternal. He is the spiritual Light that exposes spiritual darkness for the sin it is.

This God made Himself into one of us. The structure of the Greek text at this point is very important. John used an aorist tense, middle voice form of *ginomai*, which means to become or to be made. The aorist tense requires that this was an action already completed and the middle voice points out that the Word (Creator) made Himself something different, or through His own power He became a different form. The word is used commonly in that sense throughout the New Testament. For example, Satan tempted Jesus to *make* the stones into bread (Mt. 4:3). People who have been *made into* children of God live radical lifestyles (Mt. 5:45). When we fast, we should not *make*

ourselves like the hypocrites who intentionally call attention to themselves (Mt. 6:16).

In this amazing case, the eternal Creator made Himself into flesh. The concept of *flesh* here pertains to that which is human, physical, and, therefore, temporal. The word can refer to the fallen aspect of the world and, therefore, speak of that which is sinful (i.e. desires of the flesh are sinful). Obviously, God did not become sinful.

Rather, God the Son was made into a human, which is a temporary existence. This is the great doctrine of the incarnation, which began when God the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary the virgin. The Creator was fully man when He was born to Mary. She named Him Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. “His people” refers to Israel, which nation is indeed God’s people.

But there was another name for the baby Jesus. They also called Him Immanuel in keeping with the angel’s instruction: “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)*” (Matthew 1:23). Jesus was certainly “God with us.” That is why John recorded that God tented among us. That is the basic meaning of the phrase, *and dwelt among us*(v.14b). The word *dwelt* literally means to take up residence in a tent. It speaks of temporariness. Interestingly it also refers to the human body which we often forget is quite temporary.

The important truth is that God took up residence with us. Doesn’t that seem like an odd conclusion since God is omnipresent, which requires that God’s presence is everywhere all the time. Yes, that is true, but God’s presence is not always known or visible. In the Son, God became obvious and visible. He became as obvious as the new neighbor who took up residence down the street.

Even more special to us is the fact that God took up residence among “us.” Jesus fulfilled the picture of the *tabernacle* in the wilderness in which God took up temporary residence among His people. Not only John the apostle was aware of this, but all his peers could testify to the same truth that God the Son took up residence among them. Thousands of first century citizens had to confess that God was bodily in their presence.

As a result of the incarnation, God dwelling with us, God’s created beings saw His glory. People observed the Father’s glory in the Son. It was as John recorded as an eyewitness, *and we have seen his glory, glory*

as of the only Son from the Father (v.14c). John and his peers saw the glory of the Son. The verb John used for “see” (*horao*) means more than just observe. It means to study, to experience, or to perceive spiritually. Especially John and the apostles saw Jesus at first like a spectator would watch an event. But then they became intimately involved and studied this man carefully as they lived with Him for the better part of three years.

What the people discovered as they studied Jesus was glory. That was very true for Peter, James, and John who observed as Jesus was transfigured before them. On that special occasion on the mountain, they caught a glimpse of Christ’s divinity, His glory. But to a lesser extent that same glory was obvious in Jesus’ many miracles. His divine nature also exposed itself in His teaching. In everything Jesus did and said, people could observe the glory of God flashing like lightening on the horizon.

John said that this was the glory of the only Son from the Father. Literally, he said that this was *splendor as only born from father*. The term we translate *only born* is *monogeneis* which speaks of uniqueness, one of a kind, the only one like it. *Monogeneis* doesn’t simply refer to the first child born chronologically. False teachers emphasize “born” from this text without considering what the Greek word means. The apostles and their peers did not observe a “fellow creation” of God. They observed the unique Son from God the Father. There has never been another like Him, and there will never be another like Him.

The apostles observed His glory. What they saw was God’s glory, and He was *full of grace and truth* (v.14d). When the people studied the Unique Son, they discovered grace and truth. Everything about Him spoke of God’s favor to humanity. He was indeed gracious and compassionate, and for that the religious leaders hated Him. They could not see His grace because His truth exposed their hypocrisy. The Bible proves time and again that truth always makes sinners uneasy. Jesus never concealed truth so that sinners would see and appreciate His grace.

Not only were truth and grace obvious in Jesus, but the text explains that those godly traits were full in Jesus. He displayed the completeness of God’s grace and truth. Nothing was lacking. No one could observe God the Son and wonder about the truth or wonder about the extent of God’s grace (favor). Yet, wicked sin is so blinded by arrogance that people crucified the Son who displayed truth and grace.

John Revealed the Son's Authority (v.15).

John the Baptist preached about God the Son. The text says that *John bore witness about him (v.15a)*. The phrase means that he gave testimony. He witnessed to the facts about God the Son becoming human. The word for witness is the Greek word that gives us the English word martyr. It speaks of giving testimony to facts about a case in court. It is the testimony of an eyewitness. It is our word martyr because, especially in the Church, Christians who gave testimony to the work of Christ alone as the basis of their salvation were often put to death. Indeed, as far as we know all the apostles except John were executed because of their witness about Jesus. We know that while Jesus was still ministering on earth, John the Baptist, who gave witness to the truth, was executed because of his boldness.

Do we wonder how John could give eyewitness if he had not met God the Son? And why would he have not met Jesus if it is true that he was possibly related? It does seem that John's mother Elizabeth and Jesus' mother Mary were cousins. Yet John admitted to not recognizing Jesus (John 1:33). Actually, this was John's admission that he had not recognized Jesus as Messiah, Son of God, previously. God the Father revealed the truth to John about God the Son. Here his testimony: *"I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:33-34)*.

This man cried out about Jesus (v.15b). The verb John used here means to cry loudly, to cry with a loud and raucous voice. It is the sort of thing a speaker would do if he was dead serious about his topic and dead serious about wanting the audience to hear what he had to say. This is what a person would do if he knew danger was coming and he wanted to alert as many people as possible. That was a good description of the Old Testament prophets. John was in their line. Some Bible students consider John to be the last of the Old Testament prophets.

He was out in the wilderness, near the Jordan River, crying out about Jesus. In doing so, John simply fulfilled what God's messenger told Zechariah his father he was supposed to do. God promised him, *"And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or*

strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (Luke 1:14-17).

John the apostle acknowledged that the Son, who the Baptist was crying out about, was pre-existent. He was certainly in existence before John the Baptist who preached, *"He was before me" (v.15d)*. Actually, John was born some months before Jesus. So how is it that he concluded that Jesus was before him? John understood from God's revelation that God the Son was pre-existing for eternity.

Therefore, it was only logical for him to conclude that the Son ranks before himself. *"This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me'" (v.15c)*. In a way, to say that "He ranks before me" is a bit of an understatement. However, because John attracted so much attention from leaders and common folks alike, it was necessary for him to put truth in perspective. John was not Messiah—he was Messiah's messenger.

We Have Received His Grace (vv.16-17).

Everyone receives grace from the Son who the Baptist preached about. It flows from His fullness. The apostle put it like this, *And from his fullness we have all received (v.16a)*. His fullness refers to the full divinity of Christ. Paul wrote, *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Colossians 1:19). For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (Colossians 2:9)*. These statements mean that because Christ is fully God, we receive grace out of that fullness. We all receive out of an inexhaustible supply of grace. All receive grace because the nature of grace is to give blessing that the recipient does not deserve.

More than receiving grace, the fact is that we all receive multiplied grace, or as John called it, *grace upon grace (v.16b)*. Common grace for certain comes out of Christ. Common grace includes things like air, sunshine, water, breath, all things necessary for life. But **we** who have received the Son of God, receive grace added to grace from Him. Here are a few examples of that multiplied grace. The Son gives life, *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them*

out of my hand” (John 10:28). He gives us peace. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27). His grace includes joy. “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). It is by our Lord’s grace that we even have the Bible. Jesus prayed to the Father, “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). And His grace gives us the Holy Spirit. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

Do we get the sense that the Son’s grace is important? It is more than important. It is critical in light of the following contrast. Out of the blue, it would appear, John wrote *For the law was given through Moses (v.17a)*. It seems rather odd that all of a sudden John brought up the law God gave through Moses. The reason John did this is to contrast law with grace and truth. But was the law not truth? It was certainly the truth of God as it reveals His demands commensurate with His righteousness. The law reveals important truths about God’s holy character. But it does not reveal His grace. God gave the law and it came to humanity through Moses. By it we recognize our deficiency. By it we are condemned for failing to meet God’s righteous standard. The law through Moses condemns us.

Conversely, the Son’s grace and truth gives us life. In contrast to the law given through Moses, John wrote that *grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (v.17b)*. Notice the intricate wording. Grace and truth were not given to Jesus Christ so that He could give them to us. Grace and truth **came** through Him. He is the source of grace and truth. He is the channel of grace and truth. There was obviously revelation of God’s grace and truth before Jesus came. But He is the full expression of these blessings from God. Therefore, when a person rejects Jesus Christ, he cuts himself off from grace and truth. All we are left with if we reject Christ is our own unrighteous works which the law condemns.

Through the Son We Have Known the Father (v.18).

No one has ever seen God, John reminded us. In fact, the very thought of seeing God once caused great fear in people. In this modern

day, people scoff at the idea. However, the Old Testament people assumed that to see the glory of God would cause certain death. Jacob had a vision of God and marveled that he didn’t die (Gen. 32:20). God affirmed such to be the case when Moses requested an audience with God. “But,” He said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see Me and live” (Exodus 33:20). Samson’s parents felt that way upon seeing the Angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God” (Judges 13:22).

New Testament people experienced similar fear at the thought of seeing God. When the three disciples saw a glimpse of Jesus’ glory, they fell on their faces and were terrified (Mat. 17:6). In the third heaven Paul heard things that could not be told (2 Cor. 12:4). This fear is rooted in the fact that God is so holy and we are so sinful. We cannot imagine the extremity of God’s holy character. Therefore, we cannot imagine how heinous our sins are in His sight. If we could catch a glimpse of God, the best of us would respond like Isaiah did (who was among the most righteous people in Israel). *And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5)*.

No one has ever seen God, but God has graciously revealed God. How so? The only God at the Father’s side has revealed Him. Again at this point we find the word *monogeneis*, the one and only, the unique one. The only unique God is at God the Father’s side. The term speaks of intimacy and it speaks of equality. It is a reminder that Jesus the man was God the Son, wholly equal in character with God the Father.

Therefore, the only God has revealed the only God. John wrote, *He has made him known (v.18b)*. No human can figure out God. Whatever we know of God we know because God has revealed it. This was His plan. In the past, God revealed Himself through the prophets (the preachers) He chose. *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1)*. Consider how a handful of those prophets showed us God. Moses gave us the law which reveals much about God. Elijah and Elisha revealed the miraculous power of God. Hosea revealed the compassion of God. Jeremiah revealed the longsuffering of God. Jonah revealed the mercy of God. Habakkuk revealed the faithfulness of God.

Now God has revealed Himself to us through the Son. *But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of*

all things, through whom also he created the world (Hebrews 1:2). That is what Jesus meant when He responded to Philip's request. Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:8-9). We God because God the Son has revealed Him to us. What do we know?

If we know God, we know righteousness. If we know righteousness, we know sin. If we know sin, we know ourselves. That is truth! When we finally know the truth about ourselves, we should be quick to run to the Savior, confess our sins, and beg for His grace to save us. He will forgive your sins because that is grace! Truth and grace came through Jesus Christ because He shows us God.