

SERMON 3  
JOHN 1:14-18

THE GLORY OF THE INCARNATE CHRIST

***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. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.***  
John 1:14-18

As we saw last time, this world is full of darkness.

*And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*  
John 1:5

There is a word that characterizes the moral and religious condition of this fallen world and that word is darkness. When Jesus came into this world he came into thick darkness. Evil was running everywhere like roaches in the night. It was a dark, dark world of depravity. It was a world of moral corruption. It was a world of religious and spiritual ignorance and it was a world where God was not welcome.

But even though God was not welcome in this world, nevertheless, He interjected himself into this world.

The Word was made flesh.

*And the Word was made flesh.*  
John 1:14

This is one of the great mysteries of the Bible. This is one of those concepts that cannot be fully grasped by the human mind. There came a time in history when the infinite became finite. There came a time when the invisible became visible. There came a time when the eternal became temporal. And those of you who demand to comprehend everything in your own massive intellects will not be satisfied with any explanation of this doctrine. You see, we don't understand the infinite. We don't comprehend the eternal. And when we are told that the eternal Word of God became flesh, we have no capacity to fully understand such a thing.

The Bible calls the union of two natures in the Person of Christ a great mystery.

*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh . . .*

I Timothy 3:16

Let me clue you in to a little secret. Our intellect is not as great as God's intellect. And there are some things that He does which are so far above our capacity to understand that we must simply bow to his great knowledge and wisdom and we must trust Him in childlike faith.

Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.

Now I want you to think back on what we have learned about the Second Person of the Godhead in these first few verses of the Gospel. We have learned that:

1. He was the Word before history. (1:1)
2. He was with God the Father before history. (1:1)
3. He was God himself. (1:1)
4. He was the Word which was instrumental in creation. (1:3)

And now in this last section of the prologue, we are going to find that,

5. He was the Word who interjected himself into history to save his people.

You should know that Jesus did not take on human flesh in order to judge his enemies. Jesus was fully capable of judging his enemies and casting them into hell while He resided in heaven with the Father. Jesus had at his command countless legions of angels and it was not necessary for Jesus to come to this earth as a human being in order to judge the wicked.

I would also suggest to you that it was never God's intent to come to this earth as a human being to execute an earthly rule over the unbelieving nation of Israel. God was fully capable of ruling them from heaven and he didn't need a fleshly body to do so.

But the sole reason why the Word of God was made flesh was for the benefit of his own people. Oh how the Son loved those whom the Father had chosen. And in the infinite wisdom of God, the redemption of men required God's assumption of human flesh. This is the reason that your God became a man. He became to redeem you. It was not for the reprobate. It was not to sit on some throne in Israel. It was to save the souls of his elect.

I would like to suggest to you that there are at least three reasons why it was necessary for the eternal Word to become a man.

1. The Word became a man to pay a man's penalty under the law.

The Law said that if a man violates the law, then he shall die. It never said that a lamb shall die or a goat shall die. It was necessary that a man should die. And if it is possible that one should die in his place, then it must be a man that should die. And the Word of God became a man in order to suffer the indignities that were due to other men.

So, the Word became flesh in order to pay a fleshly penalty. But there was another reason why the Word became flesh.

2. The Word became a man in order to be a proper mediator between God and man.

In order to go between a holy God and an unholy people, it was necessary to be both God and man. This was one of the great lessons of Hebrews. In order to be our great high priest, it was necessary for the Word to become flesh and to be tempted in all points as we were. This could not have been done if Jesus Christ had not assumed human nature. We would not have a great merciful and faithful high priest if He had not become flesh.

And there is yet another reason why it was necessary to become flesh.

3. The Word became a man in order to be an example for us.

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

I Peter 2:21

For these reasons, the eternal Word of God became flesh. It was for no one else but his beloved. It was for his sheep that he came. It was for his elect and them only that he put on this body of weakness. It was for the purpose of redemption and salvation. It was for the eternal joy and happiness of his people that he did it. It was so that you and I could have the hope of heaven. It was not for his sake at all that he became a man, but it was for our sake.

### The Word took on human nature.

It says that the Word became flesh. The word flesh in the Scriptures takes on a broader meaning than just the skin and bones and organs that compose our physical bodies. When it says the Word became flesh, it means more than merely taking on a real fleshly body. It means that he took on the full package of human nature, except without sin.

The Word became flesh. Let's see first of all what it does not mean.

It does not mean that the Word became something less than God. The Word of God did not divest himself of his divinity in order to become a man. This would be utterly

impossible because God is God by very nature. His essence is thoroughly God and He cannot be anything less than God.

It does not mean that there is a reduction in the Trinity. The Word did not leave his position as the Second Person. The Trinity didn't suddenly become a duality. No, the Trinity is still one God subsisting in three persons. But notice this mind-boggling truth. The second person of the Trinity is now both God and man. He is God the Son and He is the God-man. There is a human being occupying the second seat of the Trinity. And he will occupy that seat for all eternity.

This is really a most amazing truth about Jesus Christ. He is both God and man. And in this capacity as the God-man he sits in the highest seat of authority in the universe. He sits as coequal with the Father and the Spirit. And yet, he is a man. This is utterly beyond our comprehension and yet we learned in Hebrews that we also shall be highly exalted in the world to come. We shall also share in his exaltation and we shall have all things in subjection under our feet. And why? It is because of our human connection to the second person of the Trinity. All of this, he did for us when he became flesh.

When it says the Word became flesh, it means that the Second Person of the Godhead was constituted with two natures. The divine nature was no less than divine and the human nature was no less than human. Jesus Christ was fully divine and fully human – in one Person.

Now notice that the Word was made flesh. The Word was eternal and preexisting, but his humanity was made. This is the same word that is used in John 1:3. "All things were made by him." In the same way, the Word was made flesh. The human nature of Jesus Christ was a creation. It did not exist and then God created it.

*Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body thou hast prepared me.*

Hebrews 10:5

### The Word dwelt among us

This word dwelt is the word tabernacle in the original. And the idea is that this eternal Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, God himself, tabernacled among us.

Now when John used this word, the Jews especially would have thought back to the tabernacle which was built there in the wilderness. The Jews' tabernacle was the place where God dwelt. The Spirit of God came down in a cloud over this tent and his glory filled the Holy of Holies. And when the people came to the tabernacle they knew they were coming to the place where God resided. God was in their midst in the tabernacle.

But we know by now that those Old Testament things were types. And that Jewish tabernacle in the wilderness was a type. It was a type of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ came to this earth he was the true tabernacle.

*A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

Hebrews 8:2

There was a tabernacle in the Old Testament which was a mere type of that true tabernacle which is Jesus Christ. There is a true tabernacle – a real temple if you will - and housed inside this true tabernacle is the infinite, living God. There is a place where God does still meet with men and that place is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to how the Scriptures describe this tabernacle.

*For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

Colossians 2:9

All the power and majesty of God was housed in one human body. Can you imagine such a thing? All of the power that created the universe resided in one human being. No wonder Jesus was an absolute marvel when he walked the earth. Jesus became world famous almost immediately after he opened his public ministry. The awesome power of God went out with every word that he uttered. When he touched someone the explosive power of God went out. When the woman touched the hem of his garment she was healed. Jesus waved his hand and calmed the storm. When they came to arrest him in the garden, Jesus spoke and the soldiers fell backward to the ground. The fullness of the Godhead was found in this true tabernacle.

The body of Christ has become the anti-type of that old tent in the center of the Jewish camp. God is now found in a human tabernacle. All the fullness of God, that is, God in his very essence is in Christ Jesus. And in this human vessel God dwelt in the midst of us. If the Jews wanted to meet with God, they came to the tent in the wilderness. But, if we want to meet with God we must come to the true tabernacle. If we go looking for that old Jewish tabernacle we will never find it because it is long gone. We must come to that blessed tent where God really resides. We must come to Jesus.

Now when it says that Jesus tabernacled among us, it must also give reference to the fact that Jesus was a nomad on this earth. He never built him a house. He never owned any earthly possessions. He didn't have a place to lay his head at night. He had no interest in this fallen world.

*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

John 18:36

This world has fallen into disrepair due to sin. This world is the province of Satan and the wicked. And so, Jesus never settled down here, He merely tabernacled among us.

And we beheld his glory.

This is John's way of saying, "When we looked at this tabernacle, when we saw him in his humanity, we also saw his divinity.

*We beheld his glory.*

What glory did they behold? Why, they beheld his divine glory. When they looked upon Jesus and watched him day after day, they saw his glory. Perhaps at first they saw a man named Jesus. But soon, they began to see the eternal Word of God. They beheld it. They saw it with their own eyes.

Now John witnessed the glory of Christ on a daily basis when he saw the great miracles which he did. (John 20:30) And he must have witnessed the glory when he spoke with Jesus even as did others.

*Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.*

John 7:45, 46

But John and the other disciples heard Jesus speak every day. And it says they beheld his glory.

When they looked in the eyes of Jesus day after day, they saw his glory. When they saw his absolute righteousness, they beheld his glory. That is, they were seeing the eternal Word couched in his humanity.

But John may also have been speaking of a very special experience which he and Peter and James had with Jesus.

*And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.*

Luke 9:28-32

Now on this occasion, John saw the divine nature of Christ shine through in a miraculous way. And it says, "They saw his glory."

This is the theme of the book of John. Who is this man Jesus? He is God himself. And so, John says, "We beheld his glory."

Now when John beheld the glory of Christ on that mountain, it was not as though he saw an angel. But he said, it was,

The glory as of the only begotten of the Father

When John saw Jesus transfigured on this mountain, he was absolutely certain that this man Jesus was the only begotten of the Father. This is another way of saying that Jesus is absolutely unique. He is the "only begotten Son of God." There was such glory and splendor displayed on this occasion that John could only say, "We beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father."

Of course there were many other things that the disciples witnessed that convinced them that Jesus was God. They witnessed his miracles and his doctrine. But they also witnessed his resurrection and his ascension all of which showed forth the glory that only belongs to the Son of God.

Full of grace and truth

**Example: If you were starting a new job and you asked someone, "Hey, what's the boss like," they would give you a couple of his main characteristics. They might say, "He is very mean and demanding." Or, they might say, "He is kind and generous."**

And if you were to ask John what Jesus was like, John would say, He is,

*Full of grace and truth.*

This is what Jesus was like. He was full of grace. In your daily interaction with him he would treat you with grace. If you disappointed him, he was likely to treat you with grace. If you failed him, he would treat you with grace. If you were weak, he would treat you with grace. So grace was that one special quality that characterized the life of Jesus. And as a personal recipient of his grace, John testified in verse 16.

*And of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace.*

Christ had all the fullness of God dwelling in him bodily. And therefore he had grace overflowing. And when he came around you, this grace would pour over you - sufficient grace and more than sufficient grace.

**Example: When it is summertime we often have long periods of no rain. And plants in our yard get dry. And if you take a bucket of water and pour the whole bucket at one time, most of the water just runs off. But if you do it right you will pour a little bit and then when it soaks in you will pour some more and so on.**

And if you believe in Christ he waters you with grace upon grace. This is what it means when it says, "grace for grace." He heaps grace and then more grace on you.

You know, so many people have a concept of Christ as being harsh and demanding and unforgiving. And nothing could be further from the truth. If you are his child by faith, he pours grace upon grace upon you.

All of the disciples fled the scene when the soldiers came to the garden, but Christ showered them with grace. Peter denied him three times at the most crucial moment in history, but Christ poured grace on Peter. Thomas was a doubter, but Christ poured out grace. The thief on the cross was a few moments from a hellish eternity and Christ poured out grace. They threw a woman taken in adultery to the ground in front of Jesus and Jesus anointed her with grace.

And of course if you were describing Christ you would have to mention truth. What he said was truth. Not only did he tell the truth, but he knew the truth. Great wisdom and knowledge was his by nature and this vast wealth of knowledge came out of his mouth in the form of truth. Wouldn't you just love to sit at his feet and listen to him talk? His words were truth. They were deep wells of knowledge and wisdom.

But there is another way that Jesus was truth. He was the truth in the sense that he was the substance rather than the type. This is seen in the contrast found in verse 17.

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

Now the law, which we have talked so much about recently, lacked both grace and truth. And that is why it is contrasted with Christ. The law operated by merit, not by grace. The law offered no grace whatsoever. If you failed, the law did not put its arms around you and forgive you. Rather, it cursed you. But if you believe in Christ, his arms of grace wrap around you and he freely forgives.

And the law was not the redemptive truth. Animal sacrifices were not the truth, but the sacrifice of Christ was the truth.

But Christ is truth in another sense, and that is that only Christ has full knowledge of the Father.

*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

John 1:18

Jesus is the only human being who has personal, firsthand knowledge of the Father. And that is because Jesus was with the Father before the creation and because Jesus is one with the Father in essence.

And so, when John looked at Christ, he saw something quite different from what he saw in Moses and the law. He saw a forgiving Savior, full of grace and truth and one highly qualified to teach us about the Father.