

## John's Prologue [Part 3]: The Word Became Flesh

### John 1:14-18

We will finish the Prologue today; but the Prologue isn't finished with me - and us!  
- For the rest of our lives we will meditate on these marvelous 18 verses. Summary:

**Part 1** – Jesus is the fully Divine Son of God (1:1-2)

**Part 2** – Jesus is the True light who compels a response of everyone: receiver/rejectors.

**Part 3** – Jesus is Deity who takes on humanity, revealing glory. We call this *the incarnation*.

*Incarnation* is a big word – **If you have trouble remembering the meaning of this word, just think, “Mexican food” and then go from there!**

- Think “carne” as in **carne asada(!)**. *Carne* refers to *meat*.
- The incarnation is “God with meat” God in flesh.
- **(How many of you love Mexican food and Jesus?! Amen. Most of our problems can be solved with Jesus and some Mexican food!)**

The incarnation is a stunning, mysterious, miracle: the Son God taking on human flesh.

- **Verse 14 changes everything. It was a radical idea to both Jews and Greeks.**
- C.S. Lewis called it “the grand miracle”
- “He that made man – was made man.” (C. H. Spurgeon)
- “The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that he sunk himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding.” (Martin Luther)

**John 1:14-18 provides some very important teaching on the incarnation.**

After giving us a glorious statement on the incarnation in verse 14, John goes on to show us how Jesus is superior to everything and everyone that has gone before him in verses 15-18.

Jesus' glory is greater than the glory of the tabernacle; His greatness transcends his predecessors: John the Baptist and Moses; He provides a greater grace than in the OT; and He provides the fullest and greatest revelation of God for us.

You will notice the echoes of the OT....

- Phrases like “**dwelt among us**” “**seen his glory**” – there is a clear reference to the **Exodus** account, to the **tabernacle**. (**Exodus 33-34** are all over this passage)
- The phrase “**only son**” also has an OT story in mind – Abraham and Isaac.
- The “**law given through Moses**” causes those who know Scripture to recall **Sinai**. Knowing these passages, gives added value and significance to what he's saying.

You have probably had the experience of reciting lines from a particular movie with your friends. It's not uncommon to hear someone quote a line from a movie, and then if you're familiar with the film, to quote a line in response. Sometimes this can go on for a while! Can you name these films?

- “**We're not in Kansas anymore**”
- “**There's no crying in baseball**” (**A League of their Own**)
- “**I must break you**” - “**Yo Adrian**” ... “**I'll be back**”
- “**I'm your huckleberry**”
- “**Luke...**”

Many of John's readers (& other NT writers' readers) could do this with the OT stories! They could say a phrase, and they could pick upon it and share the whole story.

I want us to consider this passage in two simple parts: (1) The Word Incarnate, and (2) The Word's Superior Excellence.

## #1: The Word Incarnate (14)

### "And the Word became flesh"

John returns to the this name for Jesus, "the Word."

- Here is **the most concise statement of the incarnation in the NT.**
- It's a stunning statement.
- In one of those magical lines in Narnia, Lewis records Lucy saying, "**in our world too, a stable once had something in it that was bigger than the whole world.**" Yeah, that's the incarnation. The one who created all, had entered human history.
- Lewis' fictional story points to the true story of the Bible that captivates us and fills us with wonder...
- "The more you think about it [the incarnation], the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the Incarnation." (Packer)

"Became" -- This verb is in a tense that denotes **a point of time.**

- **Deity took on humanity, revealing glory.**
- **Jesus did NOT lay aside his deity when he took on humanity.**
- "**Remaining what He was, he became what He was not.**"
- It's not subtraction but addition. He took on humanity.

"Flesh" -- John doesn't say "body" or a "man" -- though that would be true.

- Instead he states the matter **more bluntly, and even crudely -- "flesh."**
  - It implies all the **creaturely weaknesses, except for sin.**
  - Recall **Rom 8:3** -- "Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh." He *didn't* taken on sin, but everything else that it meant to be a human.
- John uses this blunt term probably to address the false view of Jesus **that Jesus only appeared to have a human body**, flesh and blood.
- No, we could apply what John is saying: **The Word had fingernails. The Word had stomach problems. The Word became flesh.**
- This is indeed a remarkable mystery, but we must maintain the tensions -- for **if you lose the tension, you lose the truth!**
- We meet this tension throughout the NT, esp in the gospels.
  - **Though He was born of Mary, He was the Creator of all things**
  - **Though He grew in wisdom and stature, He is omniscient**
  - **Though he slept on the boat, He commanded the waves to be still**
  - **Though He got hungry, He is the bread of life**
  - **Though He got thirsty, He is the Living Water**
  - **Though he wept at Lazarus tomb, He raised him from the dead**
  - **Though his soul is troubled in the garden, He is the Prince of Peace**
  - **Though He ascends bodily into heaven, He promises to be with his disciples always**

- He is fully human, fully divine. This is beyond our full comprehension!
- **John unambiguously affirmed Jesus' deity in the previous verses, and now in verse 14, he unambiguously affirms Jesus' humanity.**
- The NT writers who affirm the deity of Christ more than the others, **Hebrews and John**, also go to great lengths to affirm his humanity.
- This is the heart of Christianity: **God has come to us in Jesus Christ!**

**“And dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory”**

**Dwelt** – He literally, **“tabernacled among us”** – is what Jewish ears would have heard, the noun corresponds to the verb used here (*skeeno*)

- **“the Word lived among us for a while”**
- **“The Word became flesh and blood and moved into our neighborhood”** (The Message)
- **The tabernacle was the place of worship for the Jews in the OT during the wilderness wanderings.**
- **Here's the ultimate tabernacle – Jesus dwelling with us.**

**Glory -- God's glory was associated with the tabernacle. (Ex 40:34)**

- Later, **the temple was** that place in Jerusalem.
- But then, as Israel drifted into idolatry, what do we read of: **glory departs.** (Ezek 10)
- **Now, John is saying, Jesus is the new and better temple, and the glory has returned – but not in a building – but in a person!**
- The tabernacle/temple was the place to meet with God – but now, **we meet God in Jesus.**
- We can know God not through sacrifice of animals, but their the sacrifice of the lamb of God.

**Seen his glory** – This is what we're made for, to see glory.

- **They really saw his glory – not in some vision, but with **real human eyes.****
- **When? His glory was revealed in his **miracles** (Jn 2:11; 11:4, 40), but most majestically in **the cross**, the place of shame to the world (Jn 12:23-24; 13:31).**
- **We need spiritual eyes to see it.**
  - **Many who were alive in Jesus' ministry saw the miracles and weren't moved. (eg., Lazarus)**
- **The cross is the blazing center of the glory of God (Piper) – we need eyes to behold that glory.**

**“Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”**

**Only Son** – John highlights Jesus' unique relationship with the Father.

- There are echoes of the Abraham/Isaac account (Heb 11:17).
- John now leaves behind the word “Logos” for Jesus (“Word”), and from this point forward refers to **Jesus'** historical name, and the more personal name **“Son”**

**Full of Grace and Truth**

- **This is big. We could read “full of wrath and judgment.” But we don't.**
- **God's glory revealed didn't consume us; it saved us.**
- **John 3 – The Some came “not to condemn” but to save (Jn 3:17)**

- **Grace** -- **He was full of God's kindness, goodness, and love to the underserving.**
  - He has supplied everything we need for salvation.
  - The incarnation is an unparalleled act of grace.
  - God has come down to do what we couldn't do for ourselves.
  - "Grace has appeared" (Titus 2)
- **Truth** – John will use this word throughout the book, some 25 times.
  - In Jesus, we find truth.
  - Jesus is completely reliable.
  - Jesus reveals that which is true about life, humanity, and salvation. It's not either/or. He's full of both.

John is probably alluding to Exodus 33-34, particularly **34:5-7** – Moses wants to see glory, and God reveals his name, which includes **steadfast love and faithfulness.**

- Carson says "The two words that John uses, 'full of *grace* and *truth*', are his ways of summing up the same ideas"

Jesus has come to reveal God's grace and truth.

**At the cross**, we see these attributes displayed most fully.

- At the cross, the truth is upheld, and grace is unleashed.
- Grace at the cross – we get what we don't deserve.
- Truth at the cross – all the promises of God and the prophecies are fulfilled; God's justice is upheld, as sin is punished.
  - Grace is dispensed without truth being compromised.
- **We behold his glory in the cross.**

In Christ, the one full of grace and truth, the answers to life's deepest questions are found in The Word.

- Questions of origin, meaning, morality and destiny come together in Christ Jesus.
- Start with Jesus for meaning, life, morality, destiny, identity, etc.
- He is full of grace and truth.

## **#2: The Word's Surpassing Excellence (1:15-18)**

John closes this magnificent Prologue by highlighting **Jesus' uniqueness.**

### **A. Jesus' Superiority to John the Baptist (15)**

In antiquity, **chronological priority meant superiority.** They esteemed those who went before them greatly.

- But notice what's going on here. There is a bit of a reversal of this principle. John the Baptist came before Jesus was *born* of Mary ("he who comes after me"), yet, John the Baptist says that Jesus is superior to himself.
- Why? He turns around and says, "**because he was before me.**"
- So which was it? **Was he before or after John the Baptist?**

- Well, though Jesus appeared on the scene after JB, we know from the preceding verses, that he actually came before JB, as **Jesus was pre-existent.**
- **The pre-existence of Jesus shows his superiority to JB.**
- **The pre-existent one is the preeminent one!**

## B. Jesus' Super-Abundant Grace (16)

**“For”** links this verse with verse 15.

Here's another reason why Jesus is superior to John the Baptist: **He supplies super-abundant grace to his people!**

- John pictures in Jesus as a fountain brimming over with grace.
- Jesus is the source of all spiritual blessings for the Christian.
- “Grace for grace” or “grace instead of grace” (Lit) or “grace that keeps following grace” “grace heaped on top of grace” – that is, God’s grace is never exhausted!
- **“He gives more grace” (James 4)**
- **His grace knows no limit for his people! It knows no interruption!**
- **Morris: “Grace is always an adventure. No one can say where grace will lead, what blessing it will bring, or what challenge it will make. Grace means an ever deepening experience of the presence and blessing of God.” (Leon Morris)**

In the 18th century a young boy was born into a Christian home. (ht: Hughes)

- For the first 6 years of his life, he heard the the gospel and was dearly loved.
- But then his parents died. He went to live with his relatives and was mistreated for his interest in Christ.
- He couldn't tolerate the situation so he ran away.
- He joined the Royal Navy. And his life went downhill.
- He eventually left the navy and fled to Africa, where he joined a Portuguese slave trader.
- Things got worse. At times, he actually ate scraps off the floor.
- He then escaped, only to join another slave trader, as the first mate on his ship.
- This young man continued to descend into more and more depravity.
- Finally, in the midst of a great storm off the coast of Scotland, he began thinking on passages in the Bible – verses he heard as a child.
- And God graciously saved him.
- The new life he found is reflected in these famous words:

*Amazing grace—how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found;  
Was blind but now I see.*

This young man, John Newton, became one of the great preachers of the 18th century, and an amazing hymn writer, and friend and supporter of the abolitionist, William Wilberforce.

**Paul says, “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Romans 5:20).**

**John says, “From his fullness, we have received grace upon grace.”**

**Glory be to God for his super-abundant grace.**

## C. Jesus' Superiority to Moses (17)



Jesus has revealed a more excellent way than the way of Moses, through whom God gave his law.

- John is **not saying that “law” is not to be associated with grace.**
- **God was gracious in his covenant making, and his law giving.**
- The problem wasn't with the law, but with the people.
- Further, John is also saying that the law had **a preparatory and prophetic function: the law anticipated the Word incarnate's coming into the world. .**
- **Fresh grace has come in Jesus! Grace has surpassed previous grace!**
- Jesus' grace is greater than the “grace of the law.”
  - **We see continuity and discontinuity between the covenants here**
- **In Judaism the law had become an end in itself, rather than something preparatory and anticipatory.**
- Jesus didn't come to destroy it; but fulfill it.
- The law points to our need for Christ, and prepares us for Christ, who lived a perfectly obedient life to the law, and then died on behalf of lawbreakers

#### **D. Jesus' Sufficient Revelation (18)**

Here now, John summarizes his Prologue.

**“Non one has ever seen God, the only God”**

Yet another OT episode: When Moses “saw” God's glory (Ex 33-34)

- Moses wanted to see God's glory, but no one could fully do so. You would die.
- The theophanies/Christophanies, the mysterious appearances of God to people (Ex 33, Moses seeing the afterglow of God's glory; or Isaiah 6) **may seem to be exceptions, but they're not. In the OT no sinful human being could see God's essential being.**
- But now, Christ has revealed God's glory.

**This doesn't mean that there is nothing more to learn of God outside of the incarnation; it does speak to the adequacy and sufficiency of the revelation of God in Jesus.**

(Morris)

- We can have confidence that Jesus has given us an accurate revelation of the nature of God. (Ibid)
- This prepares the way for “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father” (6:46)

**“Made him known”** is the word for which we get **“Exegesis.”**

- We might say that Jesus is the **“exegesis” of God** (Carson)
- Jesus has exegeted God, that is, provided an explanation or narration of God.
- Elsewhere, the verb means to “narrate”
- Paul: “Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God.” (Col 1)

And notice the language, the One **“who is at the Father's side.”**

- This is intimacy, knowledge, mutual love
- There's also fitting inclusion, closing bracket, with verse 1 – eternal, in a unique relationship with the Father, sharing in the divine essence
- This is the God we have been made for.
- We have been caught up in this Trinitarian love – for we are in the Beloved right now.

## Concluding Reflections

What are some of the implications of the incarnation?

I want to point out five applications – and these are really five ideas to keep in mind as you read the rest of the book of John.

**#1: Salvation.** The incarnation highlights our need **for divine rescue.**

- Why John was written: John 20:30-31
- Many want a “doctrineless Christianity” — “Give us the moral teaching of Jesus, not the doctrines, not the miracles.”
- Then you lose the gospel.
- Moralistic therapeutic deism.
- It simply creates well behaved people who will perish.
- The incarnation matters for our salvation.
- We can’t save ourselves. Only God could save us.
- God came in Christ, fulfilling the ancient promise of Genesis 3:15.
- Jesus is the only mediator between man and God! (1 Tim 2:5)
- He has healed the divide between us and the Father, by obeying for us, and then going on to die for us. (Cf., Jn 20:30-31)

**#2: Identification.** The incarnation reminds us that **God can sympathize with our human weaknesses.**

- There is no parallel to this idea in other religions.
- **Jesus knows suffering – not just because He knows all things (though He does) but because He entered into this fallen world, and He himself suffered.**
- If you say, “Life is hard right now” – then look to the man of sorrows, who was acquainted with grief.
- Hebrews says he sympathizes with us and gives us grace and mercy in our time of need.
- **The older I get, the more precious this is to me. The Savior is near to us in suffering.**
- **I’ve preaching for 20 years, and pastoring for almost 15.**
- **I don’t think I was ready for the internal warfare of pastoring.**
  - Unresolved conflict, being wounded, bearing wounds, constant criticism, family attacks, slander, power-plays, jealousy, the emotional drain, lack of sleep
  - It’s easy to just self-medicate — **Moose Tracks...**
- Where do you go? You go to the gospel, to the Savior; you take your wounds to the wounds of Jesus... He is the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.

**#3: Adoration.** The incarnation should drive us to worship.

Is that’s your response?

One of the great problems today is the lack of imagination and fascination. Pornography and other things have a deadening effect on human wonder.

Glory is not in Porn, but in this Person.

Glory is not on the Screen, but in the Son.

O come let us adore Him; there is none like Him, none above him or beside Him.

We could cite hymns for days.

Phil 2:5-11 is an inspired hymn on the incarnation.

We also read of the little creed or song in 1 Tim 3:16, the “mystery of godliness”

*Meekness and majesty manhood and deity  
In perfect harmony the Man who is God  
Lord of eternity dwells in humanity  
Kneels in humility and washes our feet.  
Graham Kendrick*

*Who is He in yonder stall,  
At whose feet the shepherds fall?  
'Tis the Lord! Oh, wondrous story!  
'Tis the Lord, the King of glory!  
At His feet we humbly fall—  
Crown Him! crown Him, Lord of all!  
B. R. Hanby*

#### **#4: Emulation**

The incarnation provides the model for us to follow in our lives, in relationships, and in mission (cf., 1 Jn 2:6).

##### **A. Emulate His Lifestyle**

- He modeled godliness (while being around sinners), truth-telling, prayer life (Mk 1:35), perseverance (Heb 12:3).

##### **B. Emulate His Love for Others**

- “Love one another as Christ has loved you” (13:34)
- He demonstrated his love by coming — in the flesh.
- The incarnation magnifies the importance of “embodiment.” He came in person.
- He showed up — not on a screen. But he came personally. And he loved sacrificially.
- If our study in John doesn’t make us more like Jesus in the way we love one another, then we are missing a major reason why we are studying this book!
- **Phil 2:5ff** – When Paul shares the Christ hymn of the incarnation, he does so as the grounds for unity and humility in the church.

##### **C. Emulate His Mission**

- We like Jesus are sent into this world, to continue the words and deeds of Jesus, as a church (Acts 1:1)

**Summary:** We measure spiritual maturity by likeness to Jesus, not diplomas, experience, or popularity.

**#5: Anticipation.** The idea of God dwelling with man is picked up in John’s other books as he describes the return of Christ, and the new creation.

- The incarnation reminds us that God always keeps His promises.



- **Jesus came the first time, as He said. And He will come again!**
- **We live between the two advents, and we – in this fallen world – long to see Him as He is, and we shall be like the glorified Christ.**
- **He was not only the pattern for living, but he is the pioneer and provider of our hope!**
- **This hope encourages in suffering, and it purifies us while we wait.**

**“He that made man – was made man”**

- **Come to him for salvation**
- **Look to him in suffering.**
- **Worship him in adoration.**
- **Imitate him in life.**
- **Anticipate him in his coming.**