

God Made Known

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- [0 : 00] Well now if you'd like to turn to your Bibles to John's Gospel chapter 1 it's page 886 if you have one of the church Bibles and Angus Patterson's going to come and read to us some verses from John's Gospel chapter 1 verses 1 to 5 and then verse 14.
- In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.
- In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. 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.
- Thank you Angus. Amen. Now Rachel the bleak is going to come and read to us again also from John's Gospel reading from verse 14 of John chapter 1. It's page 886 in your church Bibles.
- 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. 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.
- [1 : 38] For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- No one has ever seen God but the one and only one himself God who is at the Father's side. He has made him known. Thank you Rachel. Thank you Rachel.
- To keep your Bibles open I want to think this morning in between our carols about this question. It's a hugely important question. Indeed I think it is the most important question for the whole of life on this earth.
- And it's simply this. How can we know the one true God? A God who created all things. Who created everything that we can see.
- Everything we can hear. Everything we can touch. The God who created us. If he's real. If he is really there. Then he must be the God who owns us.
- [2 : 39] He must be our Lord and Master. Mustn't he? How can we know the one true God? That's the question that John the writer is answering in this gospel.
- Of which this is the opening chapter. It's the prologue to the whole thing as we call it. Look at verse 1. He speaks of one that he calls the Word.
- Who was with God at the very beginning. And notice who was God. Indeed verse 3.
- Look. He the Word who was God. He made all things. And in him. Says verse 4. Was life. Life itself. He's the source of all life. In this whole wide world. Including us. And you see the light. Of men. He is the light.
- [3 : 37] Of all humanity. He's the source of all our knowledge. All our intelligence. All the glory of humanity. All through the ages. And how can we know this God?

Not just know about him. But actually know him. Is such a thing even possible? Think about the author of a play.

Or a story. He knows all the characters in that play. He knows their thoughts. He knows their temperament. He knows the things that they're going to think. And say. And do.

All through the story. Of course he does. He created them. But they can't know him. Can they? Because they live in the world of the play. The world of the story.

How can they know him? He's out with. That whole universe. They can't possibly know him. Unless by some miracle. The author. Writes himself. Into the play.

[4 : 35] And becomes. One of them. On the stage with them. Talking to them. Living among them. Revealing himself. To them. Well that is what the one true God.

The only God. That's what he really did. He came. Into. The world. That he had. Created.

To make himself known. To all within it. But it began. In a very extraordinary way. The birth of a baby. And not in a hospital. Not even in.

In a home birth. So trendy today. But in a cave. A filthy place. In a cattle stall. Surrounded by oxen looing.

Little knowing. That Christ. That babe. Is Lord. Of all. We're going to sing that lovely.

[5 : 34] Polish carol now. Before we go on. Infant holy. Infant lowly. For his bed. A cattle stall. Or. God. Or.

Or. For his bed. For his bed. If sacrifice. Thank you.

Amen. Amen.

I want to focus for the rest of our time here this morning, in between singing some more carols, I want to focus on these last verses of John's prologue. John chapter 1, the final bit, verses 14 to 18, where he tells us that God is made known to this world.

And that revelation climaxes in a real and glorious person in history and at a real and glorious place in history.

[8 : 01] I want us to think about each of these in turn. First of all, John tells us that the one true God who created all things is made known in a real and glorious person in our human history.

Look at verse 14 there. The Word, the eternal creator God became flesh and dwelt among us.

That's where we get our word, the incarnation. It's a Latin word that just means the enfleshment. And that's what Christmas is all about. It's a celebration of the incarnation, the enfleshment of the Word, the person of God himself.

God becoming man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Verse 18 there is very plain, isn't it? Nothing half-baked at all about what John is saying.

It is the eternal unseen God who no one has seen moving from eternity into history to be seen, to make himself known.

[9 : 16] It's the creator of the entire universe coming into this world so that we may know not just any longer his reputation through the things that he's made, but actually know him ultimately, personally, intimately.

It's almost impossible to imagine because it does require us to think outside the whole universe, the whole of the dimensions of our own existence.

It is akin to the author of a play coming onto the stage at its climax, becoming the chief character in that play, explaining and interpreting with absolute authority, absolute clarity, what that work is about that he alone has authored and written.

And that's what some of the finest of our Christmas carols are wrestling with and grappling with and trying to give expression to. It really is worth reading carefully the words of some of these carols. Isaac Watts, Let earth and heaven combine, angels and men agree, to praise with songs divine the incarnate deity.

Our God contracted to a span the size of a baby, incomprehensibly made man.

[10 : 41] Of course, it's incomprehensible. We are finite creatures. We can't totally comprehend it. But that is the message of Christmas.

God himself invading, coming into the world that he has made in order to reveal himself to the world forever in Jesus Christ, in the word become human flesh.

You only need to talk like that. Talk about the idea of such a thing happening. The unseen creator God to make himself known.

You only need to begin to talk about it to realize that that must be a revelation that comes from heaven to earth, from beyond us into our world. That can never be an inquiry that is made from earth to heaven.

It can't possibly be that, can it? Outside the world that we are confined to. But that is the hopeless quest of all human religion and all human philosophy.

[11 : 48] It begins with man and this world and says, We will look for our creator. But that is just as foolish, isn't it, as James Bond in the film going into the workshop and saying to Q, Now Q, I've been thinking about this.

There must be a creator of us somewhere out there. So can you get to work in your workshop and make some special new gadgets that can help us find our way out of this story and go and find our creator?

That's absurd, isn't it? Preposterous. But that is actually what people like Richard Dawkins and others like him are saying when they say, Well, we can't find proof of God's existence within our world, so he doesn't exist.

How could James Bond find Ian Fleming? How could Harry Potter go on a quest to find J.K. Rowling? No, they are those characters creators in a world outside and beyond that whole sphere of existence to which they belong.

But John says, look at verse 18 there. John says, Though no one has ever seen God, how could anybody, how could the characters in a play ever see their creator? Nevertheless, God himself has made himself known.

[13 : 05] In his one and only son, in this glorious real person in our human history, who is himself God and who has come.

Look at verse 18. From the father's side into our world to reveal himself to us. You see, without that revelation from outside, without that revelation, well, the skeptics like Richard Dawkins and others would, of course, be right.

Without revelation by God himself, all human origin is utterly futile. It's folly. It's ignorant. It doesn't matter how learned it might be.

It's just what the apostle Paul encountered in Athens with all those highly intelligent people in the Areopagus and so on. Very sophisticated. Very intellectual. But Paul said, you're just worshipping the unknown God.

You worship, he said, ignorantly. Otherwise, you don't know what you're doing, you clever people. Ignorantly. That's what agnosticism is, isn't it?

[14 : 19] Agnosis. It's just the Greek word for not known, without knowledge. Ignorant is just the Latin version of the same word. Doesn't sound quite so good, does it? It's funny how we prefer Greek words than Latin words, isn't it?

Demos is the Greek word for people, and democracy is the Greek word for the power of the people. Populis is the Latin word for people, and populism is the rule of the people. It's funny how populism is sneered at and democracy is lauded, isn't it?

There must all be Greek snobs in this country. We like the Greek, not the Latin. But I'm speaking here, says John, of not ignorance, not agnosticism, not without knowledge.

I'm speaking of divine revelation. The knowledge of God himself come to this earth. Unlike any other, God made known in Jesus Christ, in the flesh, in a real and glorious person in history.

And he tells us in these verses that this is the climax of God's self-revelation to human beings in two different ways. But before we think about that, we're going to sing once again a lovely carol again by Timothy Dudley Smith, telling us that, God everlasting, God everlasting, God everlasting, stoopes into space and time.

[15 : 41] Gang on my new brother.

That's the grace of God. There must vain be■■■■■, And seek then be, God everlasting, God everlasting, To all you have to believe. giving our ÉI, Christ let's worship you, By beauty foi, and I, Your love, Satsang with Mooji For you ■■■■■, is our soul in his life.

Wait through the posters, Qur'an, O God, turtle mystery to the pot.

God for you. The Lord is the Lord, how in heaven He is.

Where our strength is, how Christ comes to life. I need the greatest, the holy is.

[17 : 33] Where our strength is, how Christ comes to life. We can thank God for the love, how in heaven He is.

Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is. Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is.

Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is. Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is.

Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is. Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is.

Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is. Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is.

[19 : 03] Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is. Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is.

Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is. Jesus, our Savior, how in heaven He is.

akh 6teleavepi alternative Jesus Christ, this real and glorious person in history, is the climax of all the revelation of God forever.

And that is in two ways, according to John, in these verses. First of all, verse 14, he's the climax of God's glory made known to this world.

He dwelt among us and we have seen his glory. You could literally translate that word dwelt among us to say he pitched his tent among us.

[20 : 51] He tabernacled among us. And when you use that word very quickly, you realize that John's readers would understand immediately that what he's referring to there is the Old Testament scriptures, the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was the tent of God, God himself, which went with God's people in the midst all through their wilderness wanderings. And the glory of God himself descended on that tabernacle, surrounded it, and never left it.

Indeed, the glory of God upon that tabernacle was so great, even Moses himself to begin with couldn't go in. And the tabernacle, and then later on the permanent temple, was the throne room of God himself, where he presents himself here.

It was the most glorious place in the entire universe. But what John, you see, is saying here is that even that glory was far superseded in the bodily presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom God himself tabernacled among his people.

And that is the glory seen in Jesus Christ, the glory of the God of heaven, the Father's only Son. In Jesus Christ, we have the climax of God's glory witnessed here in our world.

[22 : 23] And also, the incarnation reveals to us as well, not only the climax of God's glory, but the climax of God's grace made known in this world.

From his fullness, he says, we have received grace upon grace, grace on top of grace that we had before. A grace that supersedes all the former grace of God's dealing with his people right from the very beginning of time, the beginning of history, right up until that moment.

What does he mean? Well, he goes on to say in verse 17, that the grace that came through the law of Moses in ancient times, it was magnificent, it was glorious. Even that is trumped by the grace and truth.

The greater grace by far that came at last through Jesus Christ. The law was given from heaven to earth through Moses.

But that grace and truth came bodily in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that is an enormous claim, friends, for anybody who knew and understood the Hebrew Scriptures and the Israelite faith.

[23 : 36] Because at Sinai, when God appeared in extraordinary glory to the people and to Moses, remember Moses went up on the mountain, and so great was God's glory, he could not look upon it.

God had to protect him from it. He put him in a big crack in the rock to hide him. Because the glory was so magnificent, Moses would have died instantly, had he opened his eyes and seen it.

And God passed by Moses while he was hidden in that cleft in the rock, and he spoke to him. He proclaimed his name, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, abounding in grace and truth.

In God's covenant love, his grace, and his truth, his faithfulness. See, God's great salvation was revealed to Moses by God, the covenant God of grace and truth, so gloriously, it was absolutely overwhelming for Moses.

And he had to hide in the rock. What could possibly, possibly better than that? Well, John says the coming of Jesus Christ utterly supersedes that.

[24 : 44] Here is grace that crowns magnificently all the grace of God's covenant faithfulness to his people ever before. Here is the fulfillment.

Here is the definitive revelation of all God's glory and grace in human flesh, showing us God himself in the flesh.

Everything that Moses and the other prophets spoke of, everything they promised, everything they pointed to, at last climaxed, fulfilled itself in God, made flesh in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

That is the message of Christmas, of the incarnation of God. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead seen.

Hail the incarnate deity. Nothing less than the last word, the ultimate word about God and from God for this world, revealed in a real and a glorious person in our human history, who was seen and heard and touched and known.

[26 : 01] An extraordinary thing, isn't it? But there is more to think about even than that. And we will, but we are going to sing another lovely carol first, about that love that came down at Christmas into our midst.

Love incarnate. Love divine. Love divine.

Great. Moo. Your country is a Christian in the world. It can only be always understood by the world.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. The one true God who made all things made himself known in a real and glorious person in history.

[28 : 13] But the climax of that revelation was all focused on a real and glorious place in human history.

We're again at verse 14 of John chapter 1. We have seen his glory, says John. Now when John says we there, he does not of course mean you and me.

He doesn't mean people in this world generally, people today. He means very specifically himself and the other apostles and others who saw the Lord Jesus with their own eyes.

That word we have seen there, it's not metaphorical. It doesn't mean to just perceive in that sort of way. It means really to notice. It means to observe with your eyes.

It means to really see physically. And John uses exactly the same language again at the very beginning of his first letter. First John in chapter 1.

[29 : 17] And he says that he is emphasizing that the one he is speaking about, Jesus, is one he says that we have seen and heard and touched. What we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, he says.

What we have looked upon and touched is what we proclaim to you. Nothing vague, nothing metaphorical, absolutely specific and definite.

We saw this glory that I'm talking about with our earthly eyes, is what John is saying. So where did John see that glory?

When did he see that glory? Well, of course, for John, it wasn't in the cradle at Bethlehem, wasn't it?

You read John's gospel, you won't find the nativity stories like you do in Matthew and Luke. He didn't record it for us at all in his gospel. So that's not what he's thinking about.

[30 : 19] Well, you say, well, he must have been thinking about when he, along with Peter and James, were on the Mount of Transfiguration and saw Jesus transfigured in all his heavenly glory before them.

I know John doesn't record that in his gospel either. Did you know that? He was there. Matthew and Luke tell us that plainly. The question that the magi asked, remember the wise men we were looking at last week in Matthew's gospel, was where is he who has been born king, king of the Jews, king of the world?

And for John, you see, there is only one place in his whole gospel where he wants us to look for the glory of a great king. Where the pinnacle of the divine kingly rule of God is seen on this earth with human eyes.

In that one unique, glorious place in human history. Where is that? Well, Jesus himself tells us in John chapter 12.

When he says, The hour has come now for the Son of Man to be glorified. Now is the Son of Man glorified and God glorified in him.

[31 : 39] What was he speaking about? He said those words when Judas was coming to betray him to death. Where is he who is king?

Well, for John, Jesus is named king only when he's on the cross.

And he tells us about the titulus above his head that says, Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews. Where in all our human history has the true glory of God been seen with real human eyes physically?

The answer is, yes, in the person of God incarnate. And the word made flesh. But not just that.

More than that. In the place. Where the word. Was made sin. For a world of lost human beings.

[32 : 49] Jesus incarnate in the flesh. And Jesus. Immolate on the cross for our sins. That is where the ultimate revelation of God to man was seen.

Was realized by real people. In real history. We have seen his glory. Full of grace. Grace. And truth.

You see, friends, the cradle of Jesus that we love to sing about at Christmas. And the cross of Jesus. Can't ever, ever, ever be separated. Only together.

Is there the true revelation of God's ultimate glory. Let's ponder that as we sing again a traditional carol.

But one that, like so many of them, does link for us so clearly the cradle and the cross. And the crown of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ponder the words as we sing them.

[33 : 57] And see what the carol is saying to us about these things. The holly and the ivy. Ain't there heaven. What are you getting on our own Delicious?

And you are on the toolbar. The eras universum launder. What are you going on there from the saints? Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[37 : 29] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Because the place of glory revealed in this world was not ultimately the cradle in the stable or the cave or the cattle shed or whatever it was, not the cradle, but the cross and the rubbish dump outside the city of Jerusalem on Calvary's hill.

Rembrandt the painter understood that Phil Copeland spoke of that last week his beautiful painting The Adoration of the Shepherds you should see it a wonderful painting where all the light in the stable scene comes not from lanterns but eminence from the child in the manger and the light suffusing the background in the stable casts a shadow on the beams and paints that subtle shape of the cross right over the Christ child from the moment he was born and he understood that the carol writers understood that that's why so often the carols bid us to as we've just sung to follow the Christ from the cradle of his birth to the cross on Christmas morning we'll be singing let Mary let like Mary let us ponder in our minds God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind trace we the babe who has retrieved our loss from his poor manger to his bitter cross together from the beginning now the carol we sung last week there was no room at Bethlehem for him who left his throne to seek the lost at countless cost and make our griefs his own but there was room at Calvary upon a cross of shame for him to die uplifted high to bear the sinner's blame the cradle and the cross together always from the beginning because there at a real place in our human history there is the height and the depth of the glory of God and we saw it says John with our own eyes and that's the message that I'm proclaiming to you he says in this gospel that he's written this is he so John the Baptist says in in verse 15 here this is the one this is our God made known in all his glory in the person of Christ and at the place of his cross and you see friends that is why the gospel of Jesus Christ from the beginning and right up to today has been has been rejected by so so many people because it's a scandal it's a scandalous idea of glory isn't it no pious Jew could count it in such a scandal that God that the Lord of Israel could take human flesh and then beyond that the Lord of glory himself could be found on a Roman cross crucified by Gentile pagans but in just the same way no Muslims can tolerate such blasphemy even a bit of Muslim holy book upon the ground is a blasphemy or to talk against it how much more to say that kind of thing of God almighty and it's the same with secularists in our society today this whole thing just just smacks of such utter foolishness and folly just as it did long long ago to the Greeks with all their secular learning that's what the apostle said foolishness to the Greeks and a scandal to the Jews but John says

I saw it with my own eyes and in seeing that my whole world was changed my life my world my future everything forever because you see at one time John himself had the same view of glory as everybody else it was all about position it was always about achievement it was about strength that's how our world thinks about glory doesn't it the glorious ones in our eyes the ones with all the money the power the strength zooming around in private jets with a retinue behind them able to do whatever they want that was John's view remember there's a story in the gospels about how John was fighting with some of his other disciples fighting over which one of them would get the best seat beside Jesus in the kingdom that was John's view of glory but then at last he saw true glory the glory of

[43 : 20] God himself in Jesus the son of God lifted up in a Roman execution post on a cross in a shameful criminal's death to give himself to save rebellious and scornful and sinful enemies of his and what John saw that day opened the eyes of his heart and changed his heart forever when at last he understood who God truly was and what he was like you see those two things always go together don't they because when you do see the true glory of the one and only God in Christ on the cross dying for your sins then your heart is changed it can't not be changed if your heart's not changed it just means you've not yet seen you've not yet grasped understood the true glory of

God as it's revealed to us in Jesus Christ you see friends what John saw with his own eyes he wrote down in his gospel called John's gospel so that you and I also who weren't there and couldn't see with our own eyes so that we also can know and understand what he saw first hand and understand that final ultimate word of God to man the light of true glory in our Lord Jesus Christ and Christmas time is a great time it's a great time to open your eyes the eyes of your heart to see the glory of Jesus through the message which John proclaimed and which has been preserved all through the generations in his book so that we don't need to remain in darkness any longer but can come into that wonderful light of his glory the light of God made known in Jesus Christ that's my prayer for all of us here this morning that God will open your eyes and keep opening them day by day to his glory all the days of your life to change your heart now and to keep on changing it forever and ever that's the prayer of every Christian person here for friends and loved ones of theirs who are not yet Christians haven't seen the glory that they've seen and shared 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 no one has ever seen God

God in heaven but the one and only one himself God who is at the father's side he has made him known and that means every one of us friends can know him in the gospel of his son let's pray together our heavenly father we thank and praise you that you came down such as your love from earth from heaven to earth to make yourself known that in your son the Lord Jesus we have known you truly in all your glory and in all your grace and we ask Lord this Christmas season the light of this glorious truth will shine brightly loudly and long in our lives through our church in our city across our nation and to the very ends of the earth that those who are still walking in darkness may see that great light and come to rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory for we ask it in the name of your precious son our savior

Jesus Christ the Lord Amen Amen