

God stepping into this World

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Date: 25 September 2019

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[0 : 00] Wish you a warm welcome to our lunchtime Bible talk. We're going to read shortly. Before we do, just a reminder that if you want lunch, you can grab that afterwards, and there's tea and coffee and things.

Please do stay behind afterwards and get chatting to others, maybe even chatting over what we're being equipped and edified with in John's Gospel. And do make the most of that time.

Now, we're going to read again the words at the start of John's Gospel. We're going to read John chapter 1, and we're going to read from verses 1 through to 18.

But we're focusing today on verses 14 to 18. Beginning verse 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

[1 : 02] 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.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him.

Yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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.

[2 : 18] 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.

And 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, the only God, who is at the Father's side. He has made him known. Amen. Amen. Let's pray before we study this together.

Father, we thank you that you speak to us. We thank you that you reveal who you are, what you're like, and all that you've planned and purposed in this world, so that we can have certainty.

And so we pray now, as we look at these words, that you would help us to understand, and that you would draw our minds, our hearts, our affections, more and more to the Lord Jesus himself.

- [3 : 26] For we ask it in his name. Amen. There was once a story recorded in a newspaper of a violent crime that happened in a street in a big city.
- A woman was attacked and killed, and her shouts could be heard around. All those who lived in the apartments and flats close by could hear, and they looked down to see what was happening.
- But they didn't do anything. And when they were interviewed afterwards, they were asked, why didn't you help? And each responded in the same way.
- I just didn't want to get involved. It wasn't my place to do anything about it. I just didn't want to get involved. Many people in the West have a picture of God as someone who's distant, not really involved in the day-to-day of life.
- He's there to pray to, maybe in an emergency, but he's not really involved any other time. And really, this kind of God only wants people to be nice, to live a happy life, and then go to heaven.
- [4 : 38] Or maybe other people have been taught to believe in a God who's distant in another way. They believe that God's all-powerful, but he's not in any way loving. He does as he pleases.
- He may be merciful. He may not be. Well, John here is telling us about the Word. And the key truth of the Christian faith is that God doesn't say, I don't want to get involved.
- Instead, this person that we've been getting to know called the Word steps into human history. That's what we see in verse 14.
- Jesus is God stepping into this world. Jesus is God stepping into this world. We've seen that the Word is God. The Word has created everything.
- The Word gives life now and forever. But now look at verse 14. This Word became flesh. God himself took on human form.
- [5 : 46] God came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. God intervenes in human history. Now, John has already made clear to us that the Word, Jesus, is God.
- We see that in verse 1. The Word was with God and was God. He was in the beginning with God. He's always existed because he's God. So when Jesus comes into the world, it is as God, 100%.
- But now we're told, verse 14, that he comes into the world as flesh. Jesus takes on human form. He became 100% human alongside his 100% God so that he could be amongst his people and get involved.
- Fully God, fully man in the world. Now, I was recently speaking at university about how we can know God. And there was a Muslim there who wanted to talk to me about what John says here.
- He acknowledged that God could do anything. Anything's possible for God, he said. But when asked why he couldn't accept that God would or could become a man and enter into his creation, his response was, well, it would be inconvenient for him to do so.
- [7 : 15] And there is a sense in which it's almost incongruous to conceive of the kind of glory that God has, having created everything, being a sustainer of life, and yet taking on flesh.
- It's an astonishing thing. How can flesh possibly contain something so glorious? But the great truth of the Christian faith is that God did inconvenience himself for us.
- He humbled himself by becoming a man. In order for him to save us, he needed to be like us. So he needed to be a human.
- And that is how he came. But in order to save us, he also needed to be God. And he is. That is John's unmistakable claim. But John isn't finished there because Jesus isn't just God stepping into this world.

He steps into the world as the revelation of God's glory. To put it another way, as we look at Jesus, we see God's glory.

[8 : 25] Look again at verse 14. In dwelling among us, what is it that Jesus reveals? We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus proclaims God's glory. He is a living sermon of God's glory for people to hear and see and touch as he dwelt among them. But look again at that word that's used.

Dwelt. John uses that because it's an Old Testament idea. Long ago, God had promised Abraham that he would be his God and would be present with the nation that would come from Abraham.

And later, when Abraham's descendants were rescued from slavery in Egypt, whilst God's people were wandering around in the wilderness, without a place as their own, sure enough, God was there with them, dwelling with them.

And he would meet with Moses in the tent of the tabernacle. And the word used here for dwelt among us is that same word. Jesus steps into this world and tabernacles with us.

[9 : 44] God himself is with his people now through Jesus. No longer only in a tent where only one person can enter it each year, but anyone can now know and see God by looking at Jesus.

And John tells us as we look at Jesus, we see the glory of God. That's what we see in verse 14. In Jesus, we can see God's glory. But what kind of glory is it?

It isn't power in the way that this world understands it. He doesn't arrive and show how mighty he is. He isn't revealing himself as a cold, distant dictator. No, look.

He comes with glory. And what that means, verse 14, is that he comes full of grace and truth. These two words mean just the same as the words used in Exodus.

When God had revealed himself to Moses by passing by him on the mountain, we're told of God's steadfast love, his covenant-keeping love, his grace.

[10 : 56] And as he passes by, we're told of that steadfast love, but also of his faithfulness. Faithfulness to what he's said, his truth, him saying, all that I've said is true.

All that I've said, I'll keep. That's the glory that Jesus reveals. His grace that keeps his promises. His truth that keeps his promises.

Jesus comes to show that God is gracious, that he pours out and generously gives grace even to the most rebellious of people.

Grace means that God shows us complete, undeserved kindness. And that's what God has done throughout history. Proven dramatically in the Exodus, proven dramatically at Mount Sinai, but now seen in Jesus himself.

And Jesus displays that God will keep his promises. That's the truth that he is. He shows the world that God will not let any promise fall.

[12 : 01] no falling word from God. Jesus is no mere moral teacher. Jesus isn't just a good peace-loving man.

Jesus is God himself stepping into this world to speak, to speak the definitive word about all that God was doing. And so John goes on to tell us that Jesus is the full and final revealing of God's glory.

Verses 15 to 18. He's the full and final revealing of God's glory. Jesus is the greatest message that the world has ever known because all the other messages about messages from God have been pointing to Jesus.

The word becoming flesh isn't just showing the same glory again as we see at Sinai. It isn't just the same glory that tabernacled with the people in Exodus.

Yes, it is the same kind of glory, but now in Jesus it's full and final. In these verses we see two prophets mentioned.

[13 : 16] Jesus, of course, isn't one of them. He is God, even though he's called the word. Jesus is the one that all previous messengers and messages point to.

Look at verse 15. John the Baptist. John was a prophet. He was a witness to Jesus. So think of a courtroom. Witnesses are called upon in a case.

They're there to testify what they've known. They're there to tell what they've seen. But is the case about them? No. The case is about something else.

They're there to point truth and clarity to something else. So John is an important figure here, but what's most important is his message. And John's message is to cry out about Jesus that he is the greater one.

Of course he's greater. Of course he ranks before John, verse 15, because look at what he says. Because Jesus has always existed. He's there before John because he's God.

[14 : 21] John's job as a prophet was to tell people about Jesus coming to say, this is the big news, this is everything that we need to know. He was to prepare the way for Jesus to say you need to listen to him.

Listen to what he's revealing. Jesus is the big story. But then let's look at the second prophet that we see here. Moses. The Bible speaks about Moses as the greatest prophet.

He's the model of what a prophet was. But look at verses 16 and 17. John doesn't play down Moses here. In fact, he says, through Moses we knew grace.

He's saying things with Moses were good. Through Moses, God's people really knew what grace was. They were rescued from slavery after all.

God was present and speaking to them. in that scene at Sinai. He spoke to them again and again through Moses.

[15 : 29] They had it good. But verse 16 says that with Jesus we have more grace, grace upon grace. There was real grace with Moses, but the fullness of God's grace wasn't here in Moses.

Moses. But it is now with Jesus. Moses was the prophet that God revealed his good law to and that was a real blessing to God's people.

It was good because God had rescued his people from a terrible slavery and then he'd shown them what life with him could look like. And as we were preparing to go to the wonderful land that God had promised them, he was telling them how to flourish as his people.

That's what the law was. And so through the law, Moses was a great sign of God's grace. It was good. But John is saying here that with Jesus we get the full picture.

Moses was actually only able to see a glimpse of God's glory. we get the whole thing. Listen to how Exodus speaks of God's glory descending on Sinai.

[16 : 46] We read this, there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln and the whole mountain trembled greatly.

And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder. The Lord came down on Mount Sinai to the top of the mountain and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain and Moses went up.

That is an awesome display of God's glory. Picture a mountain trembling. Picture the noise, the scene, everything about it was to stir the senses.

A fearsome display of glory. glory. But what John is telling us here is that that display in Exodus is only a glimpse.

[18 : 05] It's only a flicker of what's really revealed in Jesus. The grace that God's people knew back then was real grace, but it's only a shadow of what we can know as we look at Jesus.

we have it so much better than they did because the word became flesh. They had it good, but we have the same thing and we better because Jesus is the full thing.

Jesus is grace upon grace. all the Old Testament was looking forward to something. All the Old Testament points forward to this thing that John tells us was happening.

All the messages that God sent to his people find their answer in Jesus. He is grace and truth. And John's gospel holds out Jesus to us as the climax of all that God has said and done.

But that isn't just in Jesus appearing. It isn't just in Jesus becoming flesh. No, the ultimate display of God's glory is seen through what Jesus' grand purpose was for coming.

[19 : 23] Remember, we've read earlier on in chapter 1 that he was the true light who was coming to rescue from darkness. And so from here, John's gospel builds from the point of Jesus stepping into the world to get involved and it builds towards the point at which he crowns his involvement.

John's gospel builds towards the point where Jesus crowns the revelation of God's glory. And we see it fully and finally at the cross and in the resurrection.

John's message is that Sinai cannot compete with the death and resurrection. No display of glory can compete with those for through these do we see what God is really like.

We see all his promises kept. We see all his glory, all his grace poured out. And God's glory is that he didn't conclude that becoming a man was an inconvenience too far.

No, God's glory is at its peak as he steps into the world through Jesus to live and die for the sake of his people. That's what God is like.

[20 : 50] And so the beauty of what John is telling us here is that Jesus is God getting involved to offer rescue. He hasn't stood by and thought I don't want to get involved in that.

No, he's gotten involved at a cost to himself and he offers rescue to anyone who believes. We've seen that we're living in darkness.

We've seen that the world is corrupted by sin. Our own hearts are born affected by all these things. And so unless we're rescued from it all we'll ever know is the darkness that John mentions in verse 5.

I asked that Muslim guy that I was speaking to what his confidence and hope was in the face of that. He said that he would work hard at doing good and hope that Allah was merciful.

That isn't a certain hope. When he asked what mine was I didn't say it was anything to do with me working hard. I said my confidence like any Christian is in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

[21 : 58] My confidence is in the grace that God has poured out supremely here through Jesus. My hope is verse 14 that the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

we do not have to have uncertainty about what will happen to us because the word became flesh. If we believe in Jesus, he offers us eternal life.

That is God's glory. God shows his glory by rescuing frail, weak sinners through Jesus' death on the cross.

grace. And as he comes to us and as we receive him, we get to do what no other religion offers.

Look at verse 18. We get to see God himself through Jesus. We get to see God himself through Jesus because the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.

[23 : 21] Let's pray. Lord, we marvel at what you have done.

We thank you for sending Jesus. And we ask that you would grant us to always place our hope in him so that no shimmering, flickering, shadowy kind of glory that we might see in this world will ever look better to us than Jesus.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.