

And The Word Became Flesh (Part 2)

John 1:14-18

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Well, I invite you to take your Bible this morning and turn again John 1, as we walk our way through the birth of Jesus Christ from God's perspective. We find it here in this magnificent opening to John's gospel.

As you know, I'm sure, the early church adopted a symbol of the Christian faith, and that symbol was the fish. And the reason that it was a fish is because of the acronym formed by the five letters in the Greek word for fish - really summarizes the core of our faith. The Greek word is *ichthys*. The acronym, each of those letters stands for is this: Jesus Christ, God's Son, Our Savior. Jesus Christ, God's Son, Our Savior. Because at the very center of the Christian faith, is the unique person who is our Lord Jesus Christ.

In light of that, it really shouldn't surprise us that Satan focuses his most relentless attacks against the Christian faith on the person of Jesus Christ. Now, his attacks have come in many different forms, but let me just give you some of the more common attacks in our day against Jesus Christ.

First of all, skepticism and atheism often deny the historicity of Jesus Christ. This is not quite as common as the others that I'll mention in a moment, but there are scholars and skeptics who take this approach, and they have a huge voice particularly around **the** Christian holidays that we celebrate - both Christmas and Easter. And so, you'll see on some of the programs, scholars purporting to be speaking for the entire historical community, denying that Jesus ever existed.

For example, Boston University Professor, Michael Martin, wrote a book entitled, “The Case Against Christianity”. And he argues in that book that it is highly unlikely that Jesus ever existed. Again, this is not as common as the other attacks, but it does exist.

A second attack that comes is secularism, and secularism denies the priority, or we could say, the relevance of Jesus Christ. Most true secularists respond to the truth about Jesus Christ found in the Scripture with yawns, with apathy, and indifference. And, frankly, in this Christmas season you see this everywhere.

A third attack is liberalism which denies the deity of Jesus Christ. They strip everything supernatural from the Bible including the incarnation, the miracles, and, of course, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A fourth attack is by post-modernism which denies the exclusivity of Christ. Since for the postmodernist there can be no objective truth, there cannot be only one way to the Father. There have to be many legitimate ways, and so, the postmodernist attacks the exclusivity of Jesus Christ and the gospel.

A fifth attack comes from all false forms of Christianity that deny the necessity and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. These are all of those systems connected to the Christian faith that replace the biblical gospel with some kind of a works-based gospel in which man earns some or all of his way into the favor of God.

And, finally, and this one unfortunately here in North Texas and really across all of the southern US is very common, and that is cultural Christianity. Churches are filled with cultural Christians and cultural Christianity denies the authority of Jesus Christ. Many, perhaps even most connected **to** the Christian Church today, refuse to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ. Yes, they believe in the historical Jesus, they have had some kind of an emotional experience, they've walked an aisle, prayed a prayer (usually when they were young), but they live a life that denies the rule of Jesus Christ by refusing to obey His Word.

Those are the most common attacks in our day. And if you look at that list, what I want you to understand is that the prologue of John's gospel, the first 18 verses of John's gospel, defends Jesus Christ against every one of those attacks. We're focusing our study on just five verses of the prologue, beginning in verse 14 and running down through verse 18.

Let me read it for you again. John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

The theme of that amazing paragraph is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, when God eternal became a man. John gives us, in these verses, several crucial insights into the incarnation and

we're looking at those insights together. First of all, John reveals the nature of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Notice just the first part of verse 14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us..." There is the nature of the incarnation in the most concise, most poetic, most beautiful expression anywhere in the New Testament.

Now, last week, we began where John does with what He was before, because to fully appreciate what He became in the incarnation, you have to understand what the Word, as he calls Him there in verse 14, what He was before. And, so, last week we went back to the first four verses of this first chapter, and we looked at the eight unique characteristics of this person who is called the Word. If you weren't here, I encourage you to go back and listen this week **and** get up to speed because this really sets **the** foundation, **the** scene for the incarnation.

Here is what the Word was before - before the incarnation. He was the self-expression of God. That's what **the** very expression "The Word" means. He was revealing God, expressing God, verse 18, He was explaining God. Secondly, He was eternal. He was in the beginning. He simply already existed in the beginning with God. He, thirdly, was eternally with God, as verse 1 says. **He was** separate from God but in a relationship with God, and yet at the same time, number four, He was God. The Word was God. Fifth, He was the exclusive agent in creation. Verse 3 says, "All things came into being through Him..." "All things" - the most comprehensive expression - and yet He Himself, who created everything, is uncreated. The second half of verse 3 makes that point: "...apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In other words, there is no created thing that He didn't create, which means that He Himself is uncreated. Number seven [should be six]: we discovered that He was self-

existent. Verse 4: “In Him was life...” Like the Father in chapter 5:26, He has life in Himself, self-existent, depending on nothing and no one outside of Himself. And number eight, He gave life to everything and to everyone - “the life was the Light of men.” The emphasis in that expression is not primarily **on** giving physical life to creation, although He did that. Verse 3 is clear. It’s spiritual life which is how John uses this expression throughout his gospel. That’s what He was before. Look at that list! This is what makes the incarnation so amazing. This is who the Word was.

And now that we know what He was before, we’re ready to go back to verse 14 and see what He became. What He became. Verse 14 says, “And the Word [All that we just saw. That Word] became flesh...” The word “became” means to come into existence. The word “flesh” refers to full and complete humanity. So, listen carefully! We have to be very precise in how we say this. The preexistent, eternal Word, who had always existed as God, came into existence as a man. He became man. That does not mean - just to be clear, that does not mean that He pretended to be a man or appeared to be human. Notice John specifically says, “the Word became flesh” - came into existence as flesh. Nor does it mean that He ceased to be God and became only man. In fact, according to verse 18, during His earthly ministry, while He was explaining the Father, He was still the only begotten God. Nor does this expression mean, when it says, “the Word became flesh”, that He became part God and part man. Alan Cairns, in his Dictionary of Theological Terms, writes this: “The act of incarnation did not cause any change in the Trinity. The uncreated essence of the logos was not changed. God was not humanized. The human nature of Christ was not deified. The second person of the Trinity entered into a new relation but brought no change in the essence of the godhead.” In other words, let me put it to

you this way: the word continued to be all that He had been as God and added to Himself a full and complete humanity. It was a humanity that was real, that was complete, and that was permanent. And it was also a humanity that was completely without sin.

In John 8:46 Jesus Himself makes this amazing claim. He says, “Which one of you convicts Me of sin?” In light of the clarity of this statement, and I told you last time, that the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD used John 1 as sort of **the** major grid through which they crafted **the** classic statement, the Church’s understanding of the Scripture. Listen to this (this is the Council of Chalcedon): “Following then the holy fathers (that is, those who had gone before), we unite in teaching all men to confess this: the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, this self-same One, is perfect both in deity and in humanness. This self-same One is also actually God and actually man with a rational soul and a body. He is of the same reality as God, as far as His deity is concerned, and of the same reality as we ourselves, as far as His humanness is concerned. Thus, like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Like us in every way except for sin and yet very God of very God.” This, by the way, is exactly what the Scriptures teach. We see it here in John 1 - “the Word”. And we saw that the Word was God, became flesh.

But take passages like Romans 1:3: “concerning His [God’s] Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh”, or Galatians 4:4: “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...” 1 John 4:2: “...Jesus Christ has come in the flesh...” And yet, later in that same chapter, he says He was the Son of God. In 2 John 7 we read: “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

The incarnation - understand this - is part of the bedrock, foundational truth of the Christian faith. To deny it is to cross the line into heterodoxy, to leave orthodoxy and to move into heresy. Why? Why was the incarnation essential? You ever ask yourself that question? Why did the Word have to become flesh? And there are two reasons.

Reason number one: because only a divine person could save us. The Redeemer had to be divine because only a divine person can bring salvation. This is a stipulation throughout the Scripture but take Isaiah 43:11 where God says, “I, even I, am the Lord [Yahweh], and there is no savior besides Me.” Only God Himself could save us. No mere human can save himself, much less others.

But secondly, the incarnation was essential, not only because a divine person had to save us, but only a human could satisfy as our substitute. Only a human, only one of us could die in our place to satisfy the justice of God. This is stated clearly in Hebrews 2:17. Listen to this (speaking of Jesus): “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things...” It was necessary - literally the Greek text says. Why was it necessary? So that He could make propitiation for the sins of the people. It’s the only way.

He had to be divine to save us. He had to be human to substitute for us. Jesus added to Himself our humanity, both body and soul. And not just for Easter weekend, but for 33 years. And not just for 33 years, but forever. The Word, who was God, became man. The Word, who was with

God eternally, dwelt among us. And the Word, who made all things, became one of His creation.

Christian don't miss the incredible reality of the incarnation. The eternal Son of God, the Word who was God, who was with God, who made all things, who made you and gave you life and sustains that life, the eternal Word loved you so much that He volunteered to become just like you, except for sin. Not for 33 years but forever. There's no way to illustrate that kind of condescension. There's no way to illustrate that kind of love. There's only one, only one kind of condescension like that, only one kind of expression of love like that. The Word became flesh.

When I was in college, I took an entire semester on the works of John Milton. And I love how John Milton, in his poem "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" described the incarnation. And he does so in these hauntingly beautiful words. Listen to what John Milton wrote: "That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable, And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty, Wherewith he wont at Heaven's high council-table, To sit the midst of Trinal Unity, He laid aside, and here with us to be, Forsook the courts of everlasting day, And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay." That's the incarnation.

We have seen what He was before. We've seen what He became. As we continue to look at the nature of the incarnation, I want you to see where He dwelt. Verse 14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us..." You should hear reminisces of the Scripture reading this morning because in Matthew 1:23 we read this (quoting Isaiah): "Behold, the virgin shall be with child

and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name [what?] Immanuel, which translated means [what?], ‘God with us’”; as one of us and among us.

Now look at that word “dwell”. **That is a** fascinating Greek word. In fact, it’s incredibly picturesque. It comes from the Greek word for tent. And, in fact, at first, the verb form of this word, or actually the form that’s used here, meant to pitch your tent. It’s translated that way in Genesis 12:18 in the Septuagint - “Abraham pitched his tent”. Eventually, this word came to mean “to settle” or “to take up residence”, which is the sense that it’s used here. The eternal Word not only became flesh, but He pitched His tent among us. He took up residence among us. He entered history and He lived on this planet with us.

But that’s not where **the** beauty of this word ends. The noun form of this verb “dwelt” is used in the Old Testament to refer to a special tent, the tent that’s called the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting because it was the tent that God pitched among His people. In fact, listen to how God Himself described the Tabernacle in Exodus 25:8. He says, “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. So, in the Old Testament, the picture of God dwelling among His people was that tent, that tent that was pitched in the middle of the nation. Eventually, the word “shekinah” - you recognize that word - it’s a word, it’s a Greek word, that’s actually related to the Greek word for tent and dwelt here in John 1:14. The shekinah came to describe that bright cloud that represented God’s presence and dwelt in the Tabernacle, and later the temple.

You see how all of this comes together? Do you understand John’s point? In the Old Testament the shekinah, the glory cloud, dwelt in the Tabernacle and it symbolized God the Son dwelling

among His people. But in the New Testament, that tent is the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it's there that the glory of God was seen. And it's in Christ, in His human body and soul, that the eternal God pitched His tent among us. The body of Jesus Christ, the humanity of Jesus Christ, became the place where God manifested His glory just as He did in the Tabernacle in the Old Testament. The eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He was the shekinah living among us.

Now, you understand that He was here only for those 33 years, and at the ascension, He physically left us. And for now, He is no longer physically with us although, of course, He is with us in spirit. He promised that He was with us always even to the end of the age. But someday, Jesus will take us either in death or in the rapture. And then, He will be with us forever. John 14:3, He said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

But I love **the** reference at the end of Revelation because it comes back to this theme **of** the Tabernacle, of the presence of God among His people. Listen to Revelation 21:3: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God [the Tent of God] is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...'" That's what we have to look forward to. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That's the nature of the incarnation.

But John provides us a second crucial insight. Having seen the nature of the incarnation, secondly, let's look at the witnesses of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the witnesses. The eternal

Word became flesh and lived among us but understand this, it was impossible for Him to truly become a man and for everyone who ever lived to be there and to personally witness His becoming a man. And so, Christ did something for us. He handpicked those who would witness Him, those who would witness all He did, and all He taught, and they would then report to us all that they saw. The New Testament is exactly that. The New Testament is the eyewitness testimony of the Apostles, Jesus' own handpicked witnesses. And so, John says, "*I want you to consider the witness of the Apostles*".

Verse 14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Look at that word "saw". It's not **the** most common word for seeing in the New Testament. This Greek word means "to look intently at something with your physical eyes, **to** sort of stare at it and take it in, to observe it carefully." But this word goes beyond what you see with your physical eye. This word also means "to contemplate, to perceive the reality of something beyond what you can see with your eyes". That's what John is saying. He intends, I think, both meanings here. John says "we", that is, the Apostles physically saw and carefully contemplated His glory. What is John saying? He's saying we saw in the Word incarnate, the attributes of deity shining through the veil of His humanity. We saw His glory. It's like what the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 1:3 (speaking of Christ): "And He is the radiance of His [God's] glory and the exact representation of His nature..." John says, "*That's what we saw. That's what we saw.*"

This was prophesied, of the Messiah in the Old Testament, that He would reveal the glory of God. You go back to Isaiah 40:5, **when** the Messiah is being announced, we read this: "Then the

glory of the Lord [Yahweh] will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the Lord [Yahweh] has spoken.” God says, “*Listen, I’m going to bring the Messiah and when He comes, you will see in Him My glory.*” Later in Isaiah, in Isaiah 49:3, in the second of the four Servant Songs (songs about Messiah in Isaiah), we read this: “He [God] said [this is the Messiah talking about God. He says, “God said”] to Me, ‘You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.’” The Father said, “*When I bring the Messiah into the world, when I bring My Son into the world, He’s the Son I love. And I’m going to put His glory on display. I’m going to put My glory on display through Him.*”

That was the promise, and so, it’s no surprise then, when John says here, “we saw His glory”. And Jesus commissioned the disciples, who saw His glory, to report on His glory, to give testimony to this glory. In John 15:27, Jesus says to the Apostles, “and you will testify also [you’ll bear witness also], because you have been with Me from the beginning [you are My handpicked eyewitnesses to report on the glory that you have seen in Me].”

In Acts 1:8 - we quote this verse in reference to ourselves and certainly there is application to us, but primarily, it was to the Apostles. And He says, “...you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” “*You saw Me. I picked you to be My witnesses and you will be My witnesses.*” Go over to 1 John, 1 John 1. This is how John begins his first letter. He says in verse 1: “What was from the beginning [now watch how he describes his eyewitness testimony and that of the Apostles], what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life - and the life was manifested, and we have [and now watch this]

seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life [that is a reference to Christ Himself], which was with the Father and was manifested to us - what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you..." That was what they were assigned to do. The Apostles were picked by Christ to observe everything that He did and everything that He said and to report that in the writing of the New Testament. You have the testimony of the Apostles right here in that book that you hold in your hand. And Jesus intended them to represent Him.

So, John says, "we saw His glory." In what way did the Apostle see the glory of the Word? You understand, I think, that it wasn't that in His physical appearance he was somehow glorious. In fact, Isaiah 53:2 says, "...He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him." If you had seen Jesus in the days of His flesh, you wouldn't have seen a halo around His head. He wouldn't have looked like God in the body. He would have looked like you or one of your friends. He was like us.

The Apostles saw the glory of the eternal Word primarily in three ways. First of all, they saw his glory through His miracles. Look at John 2. You remember the first miracle, the miracle at the wedding where He turns the water into wine. Verse 11 says, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee [watch this], and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." Jesus manifested His glory through the miracles that He performed. In Chapter 11, with **the** raising of Lazarus, this was the point. Verse 3: "So the sisters sent word to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he [Lazarus] whom You love is sick.'" Verse 4: "But when Jesus heard this, He said, 'This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may

be glorified by it.”“ Jesus was glorified through His miracles. His glory was put on display. He was the Lord of life and of death and of everything else.

Secondly, His glory was seen, not only through His miracles, but through His transfiguration.

You remember this, Luke 9:32: “Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory...” They saw the shining, blazing majesty of the eternal Word. They saw it in the transfiguration.

But nowhere was Jesus’ glory more clearly seen than through His cross. Go over to [John] chapter 12, chapter 12:23. This is early in the Passion Week. Jesus answered the Greeks who had come seeking Him, “the hour has come...” That’s the reference to His crucifixion. “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” And then He makes it clear: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” He says, “*I’m going to be glorified in the hour of My suffering and death.*” [John] chapter 13:31: “Therefore when [this is on the night of the Upper Room discourse, the night before His crucifixion] he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.’” He’s talking again about the hour of His death, the hour of His suffering. That’s how He would be glorified and that’s how His glory would be seen. The Apostles personally witnessed the glory of Jesus Christ.

Now, go back to John 1 because in John 1, John tells us, “Let me describe that glory to you.” And, specifically, he describes the glory that they saw in two ways. First of all, verse 14, he

says, “we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father...” That is an absolutely remarkable statement - extraordinary statement - because what he says is, the glory that they saw in Jesus Christ was exactly the glory you would expect to see in the only one-of-a-kind Son sent by the Father. Extraordinary! The glory they saw in Jesus of Nazareth was perfectly consistent with the Word who eternally existed as God. There was nothing about Jesus - nothing about what He did, nothing that He said that didn’t perfectly fit His claims to be the Son of God. What makes that statement even more extraordinary is, when you remind yourself that John was Jesus’ cousin, and yet he said everything we saw in Him fit perfectly with His claims to be the eternal Son.

John adds a second description of the glory they saw in verse 14: “we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father [and then he says], full of grace and truth.” The word “full” means “filled, completely full”. This is how Jesus’ glory was most clearly seen, in the fact that He was full of grace and truth. Now that expression “grace and truth” here, may be a reference back to Exodus 34:6 and to God’s steadfast love and faithfulness. D.A. Carson writes this: “The glory revealed to Moses, when the Lord passed in front of him and sounded His name displaying that divine goodness characterized by ineffable grace and truth, was the very same glory John and his friends saw in the Word made flesh.” Jesus exhibited those qualities in the same way that God does. Colossians 1:19: “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him.” All the fullness of God, Colossians 2:9, “For in Him [Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form...” He was full of grace and truth, just like God.

Notice, first of all, He was full of grace. I love that because to say that Jesus Christ is full of grace, is completely full of grace, is to say that He responds to all those who deserve His wrath with goodness and gentleness and kindness and forgiveness. He's full of grace. Of course, the incarnation itself was one of the greatest demonstrations of grace. Titus 2:11 describes the incarnation this way: "For the grace of God has appeared..." That's the incarnation. He was the incarnation of grace itself. But it's beyond the incarnation. **If you** just read the gospel of John - read the rest of his gospel - you will see the grace of Jesus Christ toward sinners again and again and again. He's full of grace - completely filled up with goodness toward those deserve God's wrath. But of course, nowhere is the grace of Christ more clearly seen **than** at the cross, as we just saw a few moments ago in John 12 and in John 13. Not only is His glory most clearly seen there, so is His grace.

Secondly, we're told He was full of truth, full of truth. To say that Christ is full or filled up completely with truth, is to say that He is God's perfect revelation of truth, that everything He is and everything He does is truth. Go over to chapter 8. John 8 and look at verse 31: "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had [ostensibly] believed Him [**they** had not yet truly, savingly believed or, at least, there was a question whether some of them had. He said], 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth [Where is the truth found? In my word.], and the truth will make you free.'" Go down to verse 40: "...you are seeking to kill Me [Jesus said], a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. [Abraham didn't do this. No!]. You are doing the deeds of your father.'" Verse 42: "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not

understand what I am saying?” Here’s the reason people don’t embrace Jesus Christ. “It is because you cannot hear My word.” And why is that? Verse 44: “[because] You are of your father the devil ... and ... he is a liar [and you love his lies].” Verse 45: “But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?” He’s full of truth. Go over to chapter 18. Chapter 18:37, as He interacts with Pilate, Pilate said to Jesus, “So You are a king? Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world...’” What do you expect to hear next? This is what He says, “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Jesus came to give us the truth.

Listen, we live in a postmodern world. And maybe you’ve been tempted to buy into the philosophy of our age and you’ve concluded that there is no absolute truth. Well, listen, take that up with Jesus because Jesus taught that there is absolute truth and that He Himself is the revelation of that absolute truth in His person and in His words. John 14:6, He says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” That is the glory the apostle saw in Jesus. He was full of grace and truth.

If you’re here this morning and you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then while you didn’t personally witness the glory of Jesus Christ, you too have seen His glory. How? Through the witness of the Apostles. You’ve seen His glory and that’s why you believed in Him. You don’t need a vision of Jesus Christ. Some things spend Christians their lives looking for some extra-biblical vision of Jesus Christ. We see His glory most clearly in this book. And we will actually

see with our physical eyes His glory forever because Jesus prayed that it would be so. In John 17:24 He says, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me...” What was the witness of the Apostles? Verse 14: “...and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Go back to John 1 and briefly consider another important witness: the witness of John the Baptist. Verse 15: “John testified about Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’” Here is John’s witness to Jesus Christ - John the Baptist, as we call him, the forerunner. Notice, what he says in verse 15: “He who comes after me...” What does he mean by that? Well, he means after me in birth order. You remember Elizabeth had been pregnant with John six months when the Angel Gabriel announced her pregnancy **with** Jesus and the eventual birth to her. Also, he was after - Jesus was after John in the starting of His ministry. John had already been preaching and baptizing for some time before he baptized Jesus and learned that He was in fact the Messiah. So, Jesus came after John in birth order and in the start of His ministry.

But notice John adds in verse 15: “He who comes after me has a higher rank than I...” In fact, verse 27 tells us exactly how high that rank was: “It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” Jesus so outranked John that John was unworthy to perform the task of the lowliest slave and take off Jesus’ sandals. Why? Why did Jesus so outrank John. Well, look at verse 15 again: “...for He existed before me.”

There's a fascinating Greek expression in this verse. Let me give it to you literally. Here's how the Greek reads literally: "Because first of me, He was." *Because first of me, He was.* Most Greek scholars take that to be a reference to time, as it's translated here. "*Because He was in existence before I was.*" It's what John is saying. Even though John was older than Jesus by six months, Jesus existed before him. You see unlike John and unlike the rest of us, Jesus existed before He was conceived. How is that possible? Well, look down in verse 24. I'm sorry verse 34. Verse 34: "I myself have seen..." This is John's testimony. "I myself have seen, and have testified that this [speaking of Jesus of Nazareth] is the Son of God." This was John's testimony. What a remarkable, remarkable witness of the Apostles and of John the Baptist.

Now, briefly, let me just bring to your attention several crucial points of application from this text. First of all, if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, John intends this paragraph, that we've studied, to convince you of who Jesus is and that you should believe in Him. This is his whole point for writing. In John 20:30: "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written [here's why what we've been studying together in John 1 was written] so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Listen, what we studied together this morning, is to convince you of who Jesus is and to bring you to the point where you're willing to humble yourself and trust in Him alone as your only hope of being made right with the Father.

Secondly, if you're not a Christian, what we've study together, here in the incarnation in John 1:14, proves the willingness of Jesus to receive you in spite of your sin if you will come to Him.

Listen, if Jesus was willing to do everything we have studied together this morning, if He was willing to become flesh and to come live among us, to accomplish salvation, the salvation of sinners, then I can promise you this: He will receive you if you will come to Him in true repentance and faith, because He is, remember what we saw? Full of, completely filled with grace toward those who humble themselves and come to Him. In fact, look back at John 1:10. Here's the invitation to you this morning: "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came [in] to His own [things, that is, His own... **The** sense of this Greek expression is "He came home!"] and those who were His own [the Jewish people] did not receive Him. "But [verse 12] as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God", to bring forgiveness of sins, to bring you into a relationship with God your Creator, where you become His child. What does it mean to receive Jesus? Verse 12 - well he explains that the end of verse 12. It means to believe in His name. And when that happens, and even prior to that happening, verse 13 says, the reason you'll believe is because you've been given new life. You've been reborn by the work of God. If you will come to Jesus Christ this morning, I promise you this, He will receive you. "...as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name..."

What if you're here this morning and you're a Christian. Two very quick points to make with you. First of all, the incarnation is a powerful reminder of our responsibility to reach others with the gospel. Look at what the eternal Word was willing to do to seek and to save sinners. Let me ask you: what are you willing to do? What are you willing to do? In John's gospel, Jesus is presented as the Light who came into a world of darkness to bring the light to individuals. That

is our mission as well. Philippians 2:15, he says (Paul says) you live in the middle of “a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world [how? The next verse. By], holding fast the word of life [the gospel].” Just like Jesus did.

And secondly, Christian, the incarnation is the most powerful lesson of the love of God the Father and the love of God the Son for you that is imaginable. 1 John 4:9-10 say, “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us...” And what was the graphic demonstration of that love? That He “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Listen, you celebrate in this Christmas season not only incarnation but the truth in God that lies behind it: His great love, and grace, and mercy.

Let’s pray together.

Our Father we feel that we tread on holy ground when we study this passage together. How can we frail human beings begin to comprehend what it meant for the Word to become flesh and to dwell among us, to pitch His tent here with us? Father help us who know and love your Son to think on these things, to meditate on these things, to give You praise and worship through this Christmas season. And help us to contemplate Your love for us shown in the incarnation, shown in the life and death of Jesus Christ. And Lord help us to open our mouths and be the light in the midst of the darkness. Lord I pray for those here this morning who are not in Christ. Help them to see who Jesus really is. They’ve been blinded. Lord, You who said, “Let there be light and there was light”, may You declare, “Let there be light in their souls” and may they see the glory

of You in the face of Jesus Christ. And may that be true even today. We ask it in His name,
Amen!