

The Word is Illumination - John 1:14-18 - Jn 02

Today is Part 2 of the introduction of the Book of John, but really, John's intro is actually a summary of his Gospel. Let me just list the main themes of John's introduction summary:

- The complete deity of Christ
- The miraculous incarnation of Christ
- The perfect illumination of God in Christ
- The ultimate purpose of Christ's coming

Jesus Christ is completely God, who was miraculously incarnated so He could perfectly illuminate God for the ultimate purpose of saving us from sin. In our last study, in the first half of John's intro, he made it very clear that:

1. Jesus Christ has always been God;
2. He is the vehicle of creation of the Godhead;
3. In Him is life, and He is God in communication;
4. He came to the world and the world, as a whole, did not receive Him;
5. But to those who did receive Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

That was a very big first message, but remember, it was a summary. By the time we're done, it's safe to say we'll touch on those points again. In this study, we'll see:

- 1) The miraculous incarnation of Christ in verses 14-15;
- 2) The fullness of grace toward us in Christ in verses 16-17; and
- 3) The perfect illumination of Christ in verse 18.

Let's look at verse 14, this is the REAL Christmas story:

John 1:14

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Luke uses 2,500 words to convey the “Christmas story” of the birth of Christ. Mathew uses almost as much in the genealogy and birth story. But here, John tells the same story from an eternal or heavenly perspective. When the angels in heaven told the Christmas story, they would've truly been in “awe” and amazement. Can you imagine them looking at the sinfulness of man, and looking at the incredible eternal glory of Jesus Christ condescending to man, and the only words they could get out, with great bewilderment, would be the words John says here, “The Word became flesh.” How those 4 words must have traveled around heaven! Can you imagine? “The Word became flesh! The Word became flesh! The Word became flesh!”

The Christmas story is a beautiful one as we tell it, but sometimes the “heavenly significance” is lost. To say “a babe was born in a manger” sounds like a new life had begun. That was absolutely NOT what happened. John tells us exactly what happened on that first Christmas morning. The Eternal, All-Powerful, Creator-God in Communication, the Word, became flesh. Now THAT is the Christmas story from heaven's perspective. And the word translated “flesh” here actually means that Jesus Christ *took on human nature*. He took on human nature because He had to be

100% man. But He DIDN'T take on our sin nature because that wasn't part of our original human nature. He was 100% man and 100% sinless, and that's why His death paid 100% of the penalty required for our sins. When verse 14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," the word for "dwelt" can also be translated *tabernacled*. Young's Literal Bible says, "The Word did tabernacle among us."

There's a good chance Jesus was born on the first day of the "Feast of Tabernacles," which would have actually been about September 29th, in the year 4 BC. The Feast of Tabernacles is a celebration of remembrance of Israel's time in the wilderness when they dwelt in tents. John's use of the word "tabernacled" here would have brought up fabulous images to the Jewish mind because, at the time of the tabernacle, the *Shekinah* glory of God dwelt with Israel under a veil or tent just like theirs.

The tabernacle is a complete picture of Jesus Christ. Inside the tabernacle, dwelt the full *Shekinah* glory of the Almighty God, but you'd never know it by a casual glance at the outside. You had to "know" the tabernacle to know that God Himself dwelt there and, if so, you would know the tabernacle is where a sinless God met sinful man, and it was in the tabernacle that man's sins were dealt with before God. The full glory of God was "veiled" in the tabernacle, and God dwelt among the people there. In Christ, the full glory of God was veiled in the tabernacle of human flesh, and He dwelt among the people there. And in the tabernacle of Christ's human flesh is where God met man and where man's sins were dealt with before God. We'll come back to the rest of verse 14 in just a bit, but for now we'll move on to verse 15, John the Baptist's witness.

John 1:15

"John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' ""

John the Baptist was the last of the OLD TESTAMENT Prophets, and He was the first to identify Jesus here in verse 29 as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," and there were two things John the Baptist certainly knew about Christ:

- 1) He knew the Lord had priority in pre-eminence. Over in verse 27, John the Baptist says, "It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose;" and
- 2) He knew the Lord had priority in pre-existence. The phrase "He was before me" is not a type of "birth-order" phrase. He was saying Jesus was always before him, meaning Christ came out of eternity.

We'll be talking more about John the Baptist in our next two studies. In verse 16, we go back to the Apostle John's writing about all that comes from "The Word, that was made flesh," His fullness of grace.

John 1:16

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace."

The word for "fullness" here is *pleroma*. Its definition is *the sum total of all the attributes and all the power of God*. So out of the inexhaustible supply of God, we have all received "grace for grace." The picture of this phrase "grace for grace" is of a fountain overflowing without end. It is abundantly adequate grace. It is "much more" grace, overflowing from the "fullness" of God.

And this word “fullness,” or the sum total of all attributes, is the same word used in Colossians 2:9-10.

Colossians 2:9-10

**“⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
¹⁰ and you are complete in Him...”**

It is also the same word we read at the end of verse 14.

John 1:14

“...the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”

Not only does the fullness, or the sum total of all attributes, of the Godhead dwell in Christ, but He is also the fullness, or sum total of all attributes, of grace and truth. And from this fullness in Christ, we receive abundantly adequate, much more grace. John’s trying to convey the overwhelming sufficiency of God’s grace. Martin Luther said:

“Christ our Lord is such an infinite source of all grace, that if the whole world were to draw enough grace and truth from Him to make all the world angels, yet He would not lose a drop. The fountain of grace always runs over, full of grace.”

In Christ, we’ve been given all we need. It’s now only a matter of appropriating it. Move on to verse 17, Grace and Truth coming to us.

John 1:17

“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

The Law was “given,” but Grace and Truth “came.” The law was given in thunder and lightning on Mt. Sinai in the midst of God’s terrifying power, but grace came humbly, condescending, veiled in human flesh to sacrifice all for us, even when we could not earn or deserve one bit. Although the law contained sharp, demanding truth, turned into over 600 edicts, it actually prepared the way for God’s grace. But it was not until Jesus Christ came, that the truth of the Law and the grace of God could be fully implemented in the world. Notice, at the end of verse 14, it says, “full of grace and truth.” So Christ is not only the “fullness of grace,” but He is equally the “fullness of truth.” And as we study this Gospel, we’ll see John pick events that illustrate the fullness of grace and truth of our Lord:

- The late-night meeting with Nicodemus
- The Woman at the well
- The Woman caught in adultery, not to mention her accusers

All incredible illustrations of the fullness of grace and truth of our Lord Jesus. But the question is, “How do we ‘appropriate’ the grace that Christ came to give us? The answer may sound too simple, but it’s the most powerful ‘agent of change’ in the universe. Back in verse 14, it says “We beheld His glory.” The definition for the word “beheld” is ***to view attentively for a purpose, or to gaze at in admiration***. Do you want to know how to bring more of Christ’s grace and truth into your life? Spend some time “viewing Jesus Christ attentively for a purpose.” Spend some time “gazing at Jesus Christ in admiration.” And when I say “some time,” I mean like a lifetime! Jesus Christ is not some complex, intellectual philosophy for living. Jesus Christ is the fullness of the

grace and truth of God, and He miraculously pours out HIS grace and truth on all who follow Him. And the way you follow Him is by “falling in love with Him.” Verse 18 tells us the Word is Illumination.

John 1:18

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

Let’s break this down into thirds:

- 1) The first third – “No one has seen God at any time...” In the OLD TESTAMENT, God granted people *theophanies*, which are manifestations of God. But no one saw God as “fully God.” Now we’ve already made it clear that Jesus IS God, so how can John say, “No one has seen God at any time?” Because, although Jesus Christ is fully and equally God in every way, when He “condescended,” or came down to earth, He deliberately laid aside, NOT His deity, but those attributes of His deity that would be incongruous or incompatible with true humanity. For instance, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus unveiled just a bit of His divine glory and, in Matthew 17, it says, “His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.” That type of appearance isn’t really compatible with true humanity. So while Jesus Christ was “fully God,” He had to set aside certain divine attributes so that He could be “fully man.”
- 2) The second third – “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father...” First of all, the word “Son” here can also be translated “God.” The New American Standard Bible says, “the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father.” The term “in the bosom of the Father” means *has His being in*. It’s describing the deepest intimacy and unity possible. In essence, it’s describing “Two as though they were One.”
- 3) But here’s the most incredible third at the end of verse 18 – “...He has declared Him.” The Son, who is “in the bosom” of the Father, has declared Him to us. The other phrases used here are:
 - He has shown us God
 - He has made God known
 - He has revealed God to us

And that’s why I say, “The Word is Illumination.” But this word “declared” is actually *exegeomai*. The word *exegeomai* is where we get our English word *exegesis*, and it’s a very critical word for every Bible teacher. To *exegete* the Bible means *to expound or to bring out what’s already there*. It means *to fully and accurately set forth the truth that God has already spoken*. It’s not adding, subtracting, or changing. It’s simply illuminating what’s already there, and that’s exactly what Christ has done. When verse 18 says that Jesus Christ exegetes God to man, it means He fully and accurately sets forth, expounds, brings out, and illuminates GOD. Jesus Christ exegetes the heart of God to man!

So the Word is God, and the Word became flesh to illuminate God to us so those who receive Him may become “children of God.” If John would have only written these 18 verses, he would have

given us an incredible view of who Jesus Christ truly is and why He truly came. We have an incredible book, full of grace and truth, ahead of us, but my prayer today is that this intro has caused each of us to desire to “behold” Jesus Christ, to gaze in admiration for a purpose, to behold Him, to know Him better, and that He would become bigger and bigger in our lives. But if you can’t say today that you know Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Lord, then today is the day to call out to Him.