

**Sunday, December 24, 2023 | The Light Has Come**

**Week 4 | John 1:14-18 | "The Advent of the Light"**

In this series, *The Light Has Come*, we're unpacking the prologue of John's gospel.

In week 1, we covered the first 5 verses. Jesus, as the Word, was with God and was God before the beginning. And through the Word, God created everything, and through Jesus, all creation holds together. Thus, **the Word of God is the light of men**. Indeed, just as he was at the dawn of creation, Jesus is the life that humanity needs.

In week 2, we moved from talking about the eternal Word to being introduced to a specific person in time: *John the Baptist*. While all the gospel writers make a special mention of him, John the Apostle strips back the larger-than-life persona of John the Baptist to reveal who the man was at his *core*. Before Jesus' cousin was a baptizer or even a preacher, he was a *witness*. He pointed people to the Son of God. And through his example, we learn that **there is no greater purpose for one's life than bearing witness to the Light**.

Last week, we explored the very *heart* of the prologue. The reception of the Light was, at best, mixed or, at worst, miserable. By and large, the world didn't want anything to do with the Light, did they? However, as we saw, the few who did welcome Him became something *new*. Though they were outcasts, anyone who accepted the Light became a *child* of God! Christ takes believers from the orphanage and makes them *heirs* to the Kingdom. But, make no mistake, only those who confess their sins and place their faith in Jesus are adopted. Thus, **reject the Light and remain a child of the Devil, or receive Him and become a child of God**.

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On October 4, 1943, Bing Crosby's *I'll Be Home for Christmas* hit the airways. At the time, the U.S. was embroiled in WWII, and as such, it struck a chord with the populace. Both soldier and civilian wanted nothing more than a *homecoming* that year. By the end of that year, the song topped the charts in the States, peaking at number three, and, according to the Library of Congress, it "became the most requested song at Christmas U.S.O. shows in both Europe and the Pacific."

Today, we'll learn how, despite his abysmal reception, the Light still *came* and made his *home* with humanity. In theological circles, we call this the "advent" of Christ. The term "advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, which refers to a coming, approach, or arrival. Thus, in the words of Bing Crosby, what we celebrate every year on December 25<sup>th</sup> is how Jesus *came home* for Christmas.

Over two thousand years ago, the Word clothed himself in the guise of humanity and dwelt among us. Though we were at war with him, the Son of God became one of us so He might *reveal* God the Father to us. And though there was no room for him in the inn, the Light somehow still made his abode with humanity.

I want you to notice *two* things:

**i. The Glory of the Light (vs. 14-15)**

**READ:** John 1:14-15 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> 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**. <sup>15</sup> (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.'")

**Vs. 14** – John tells us that “the Word became flesh...” In the ancient world, the idea that a god could *appear* in different forms was nothing new (e.g., Zeus and Callisto; Poseidon and Demeter). But John is not channeling paganism as he writes. He does not mean the Word came in the *appearance* of a man, like some temporary apparition. Instead, the apostle says that God “literally was made flesh.”<sup>1</sup> Similar to how thought is clothed in the trappings of speech when we talk, “the Word,” who made all of creation, became a creature himself.<sup>2</sup> He, a being who was *infinite* in every way, entered *finite* space and time as a man. This is not to say the Word ceased to be the Word when he “became” a human.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, the Lord possessed two natures perfectly without contradiction. Jesus was simultaneously 100% man and 100% God, even while he was on earth. As he grew in Mary's womb, he still held the universe together by the word of his power. As he was being questioned by the doctors of the Law in the Temple, he was still being worshipped by the angels in the heavens.

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<sup>1</sup> Köstenberger, Andreas J., *John*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Elowsky, Joel C., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament, IVa, John 1-10, (Downers Grove; InterVarsity Press, 2006), p. 41, quoting Augustine, "For just as our word in some way becomes a bodily sound by assuming that in which it may be manifested to the senses of people, so the Word of God was made flesh by assuming that in which he might also be manifested to the senses of people. And just as our word becomes a sound and is not changed into a sound, so the Word of God indeed becomes flesh, but far be it from us that [the Word] should be changed into flesh. For by assuming it, not by being consumed in it, this word of ours becomes a sound, and that Word became flesh."

<sup>3</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 40, “Ἐγένετο (*egeneto*, was made or born [more customarily, though somewhat misleadingly, rendered “became”]) does not mean “changed into” in the sense that Jesus, by becoming human, ceased to be God. Nor does it mean “appeared” human (*pace* the docetists; see Morris 1995: 90-91) or even “took on” humanity (as is suggested by Witherington [1995: 55]).”

Admittedly, this isn't easy to wrap our heads around. Nevertheless, this is a truth that has been revealed in the Scriptures and one that we must wholeheartedly believe and fervently defend. Nowhere in the N.T. does it say that the Lord, in any way, ceased to be God while he was on earth. *How* such a thing is possible, I do not know. It is a great mystery. But just because I cannot fully understand a truth does not make it any less accurate. Jerome, a fifth-century theologian, put it this way,

“The Word was made flesh, but how he was made flesh, we do not know. The doctrine from God, I have; the science of it, I do not have. I know that the Word was made flesh; how it was done, I do not know...”<sup>4</sup>

Theologian and pastor Gavin Ortlund framed how unique the incarnation is by saying, “The incarnation is to other miracles what miracles are to natural Law. It's this complete standout event that organizes how you view everything else. The incarnation is the miracle of miracles.”<sup>5</sup> And, as with all miracles, there is a sweet unknowableness about the incarnation. It is valid because the Bible says it happened, and, on that basis alone, we must believe, though we cannot fully understand it.

So, what's the point if we can't fully comprehend the incarnation? John wants us to see that God, somehow and somehow, is with humanity *in the most personal way possible*.<sup>6</sup> Rather than remain enthroned in the heavens, the Word “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men,” and made his home with us (cf. Phil. 2:7).

John also tells us that after the Word became flesh, he “dwelt among us.” The Greek word behind “dwelt” is **σκηνώω** (*skēnoō*), and, literally translated, it means that the Word “pitched his tent,” or “encamped.”<sup>7</sup> This phrase is an apparent O.T. reference to how God's presence was localized in the Tabernacle (cf. Ex. 40:34).<sup>8</sup> The King of Kings became a peasant and went camping with commoners. As the Lord was with the Israelites, so he has come again. But this phrase also implies something *more*; it means that the Word *replaced* all the old meeting places

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<sup>4</sup> Elowsky (2006), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Ortlund, Gavin, “Was God the Son Omnipresent in 10 A.D.?” *Truth Unites*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNryXrcY\\_2Q&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNryXrcY_2Q&t=1s), [accessed December 21, 2023].

<sup>6</sup> Carson, D.A., *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Cambridge, U.K.; Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), p. 127.

<sup>7</sup> Kruse, Colin G., *John*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Revised Edition, (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 2017), p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Carson (1991), p. 127-128, “This word [dwelt], strictly speaking, means 'residence,' but most commonly refers to the glory of God who made himself present in the Tabernacle and the Temple. The bright cloud of the presence of God settled (*šākan*) on the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled it (Ex. 24:16; 40:34-35; similarly, the Temple, 1 K. 8:10-11).

of God (cf. Jn. 4:23-26).<sup>9</sup> To commune with God, one must seek out the Son of God. **Jesus is the Tabernacle on two legs and the Temple with a face.**

John also admits that **“we have seen his glory...”** As with his use of the expression **“dwelt among us,”** the term **“glory”** is yet another reference to the Tabernacle in the O.T. When God’s presence descended on the Tabernacle, people saw visible representation of God’s glory in the form of a cloud and pillar of fire (cf. Ex. 40:34-38). **However, if a man wants to see God, they must now look to Jesus.** Admittedly, the Lord does not shine as God’s glory shined in the O.T., but for those with the eyes of faith, Jesus’ glory shines as bright as the sun.

This is why John, a *believer*, claims that **“we [emphasis added] have seen his glory.”** Though many missed it, John and his friends did not miss seeing Jesus’ glory.<sup>10</sup> The author of this account claims that he was there when God’s glory was revealed through this Word-made-flesh-man. **John is an eyewitness of the incarnation in the same way Moses was an eyewitness in Exodus 33:17-33.**<sup>11</sup> And as such, the concept of “glory” is a significant theme throughout John’s account (cf. 2:11; 7:39; 11:4, 40; 12:16; 13:31-32; 15:8; 17:4-5; etc.). **In fact, the driving force behind Jesus’ actions was not love, though he does love us (cf. 15:9; Eph. 5:25); instead, it was his desire to bring his Father glory (cf. 9:3; 11:4, 40).**<sup>12</sup> Time and again, the reader will be shown Jesus’ *glory* and how he was, ultimately, *glorified* through the crucifixion (cf. 12:20—33). Thus, **the darkest day in history was really the brightest.** Never before had God’s glory been on such a display as when the Son of God bore the sins of humanity, paving the way for the reconciliation of all those who believe.

John then explains a little bit more about the glory he saw. **He says the Word’s “glory as of the only Son from the Father...”** This glory was *unique*—i.e., “Jesus is God’s one-of-a-kind Son.”<sup>13</sup> The Greek word used for “only Son” is **μονογενής** (*monogenēs*), and of its 9 uses in the NT, 5 refer to Jesus (cf. Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn. 4:9) and 4 references the lone child of a parent (cf. Lu. 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Heb. 11:17).<sup>14</sup> **John wants to highlight the irreplaceable value of the Son** (cf. 3:16; e.g., Abraham offering Isaac—Gen. 22). In some sense, believers can rightly be called the “children of God” (cf. 1:12) and we are encouraged to call God our “Father” (cf. 20:17; Mat.

<sup>9</sup> Carson (1991), p. 128.

<sup>10</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 42, explains that the Greek term behind “seen” is “a stronger word than mere “seeing,” indicating “observing” or “perceiving” in faith.”

<sup>11</sup> Carson (1991), p. 129, “The glory revealed to Moses...was the very same glory John and his friends saw in the Word-made-flesh.”

<sup>12</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> Carson (1991), p. 128, explains, “The glory displayed in the incarnate Word is the kind of glory a father grants to his *one and only, best-loved* Son—and this ‘father’ is God himself. Thus it is nothing less than God’s glory that John and his friends witnessed in the Word-made-flesh.”

6:9). However, the difference between us and the Lord is that we *become* children, whereas Jesus Christ has always *been* God's Son. God has many adoptive sons, but only one is a Son in the truest sense of the word.

John then explains that the Word was "full of grace and truth." We'll talk more about these two things in our discussion of vs. 16-17; however, suffice to say, "grace and truth" is an O.T. reference to God's lovingkindness and faithfulness (cf. Ex. 34:6; Ps. 25:10; 26:3; 40:10; Pro. 16:6).<sup>15</sup> Specifically, John shows that the Word was "full [emphasis added] of grace and truth." Jesus' kindness is as wide as the horizon, and his faithfulness is as deep as the ocean; it is a divine fullness (cf. Ps. 5:7; 51:1; 69:16; 106:45; Lam. 3:22-23).

**Vs. 15** – Our faithful narrator reminds us that before the Word arrived, a very vocal witness prepared his way. He says, "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.'" The apostle John does not want us to forget the connection between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. When the Baptizer spoke about "He who comes after me," he spoke about the Word-made-flesh. And though John's ministry had, technically, started *before* the arrival of Jesus, the Lord *still* ranks higher ("before") than the Baptizer.

Why? "Because [the Word] was before [John the Baptist]." Whether the Baptizer meant "before" in the sense of *importance* or "before" in the sense of *pre-existence* is up for debate; the term holds a double meaning in this context.<sup>16</sup> Odds are, the Baptizer spoke better than he knew.<sup>17</sup> In fact, there are many instances in this gospel of what is called 'Johannine irony' in which someone says something and, as time goes on, it is revealed what was said turns out to be *truer* than what the speaker intended (e.g., Caiaphas's words—Jn. 11:50-52; the Jews insist that the Messiah must be of David's lineage and come from Bethlehem—Jn. 7:40-43; Jesus mockingly being referred to as "King of the Jews"—Jn. 18:39; 19:14-15, 19, 21-22).<sup>18</sup> However, setting aside the debate about how much the Baptizer understood what he was saying, the point is that he was nothing more than the *opener*. Since the Word-made-flesh was God in human form, this made Jesus the *main attraction*. John the Baptist was the *dinner bell*, and Jesus the Christ was the *dinner*.

## ii. The Gifts of the Light (vs. 16-18)

**READ:** John 1:16-18 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Carson (1991), p. 131.

<sup>17</sup> Kruse (2017), p. 72.

<sup>18</sup> Other instances can be found in John 4:12; 5:10; 6:41-42; 8:53.

<sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, **grace upon grace**. <sup>17</sup> For the **Law** was given through **Moses; grace and truth** came through **Jesus Christ**. <sup>18</sup> **No one** has ever seen God; the only **God**, who is at the Father's side, **he** has made him known.

Jesus Christ, as the Light, did not come into the world *emptyhanded*. He brought *gifts: grace, truth, and revelation*.

**Vs. 16** - Instead of talking about how the Word was “*full* [emphasis added] of **grace and truth**,” John says, “*we have all received* [emphasis added] **grace upon grace**.” As before in vs. 14, when he says “*we*,” John primarily refers to himself and all the other eyewitnesses who saw Jesus and walked with him. Once again, *he is speaking from firsthand experience*. Just as he saw the glory of God revealed in the incarnation of the Word, he has received “**grace upon grace**.” However, anyone who believes can also be considered a recipient of these gifts.<sup>19</sup> The entire community of faith has experienced firsthand what it means to receive God's grace. **But what does John mean by “grace upon grace”?** To answer that, we must look at verse 17.

**Vs. 17** – John says, “**For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**.” *So, it seems the evangelist is comparing two kinds of grace*.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, you had what we might call “Grace 1.0”—i.e., “the law” that came “through Moses;” on the other hand, you had “Grace 2.0”—i.e., “the grace and truth” that came “through Jesus Christ.” Grace 2.0 *replaced* Grace 1.0; *the upgrade displaced the older version*.<sup>21</sup> Thus, a better translation is the K.J.V.'s “*grace for* [emphasis added] **grace**” or the N.I.V.'s “*grace in place of* [emphasis added] **grace already given**.”

This is *not* to say that the Law is *abolished* (cf. Rom. 3:31). Instead, the Law has been *fulfilled* through Christ (cf. Mat. 5:17).<sup>22</sup> *The contrast is between something good and something better*.<sup>23</sup> Moses’ Law is the foundation “*upon*” which Jesus’ “**grace and truth**” is supported. Thus, embracing the “new grace” does not erase the “old grace.” That which comes after is built on top of that which came before. **The New Testament stands on the shoulders of the Old Testament**. Nevertheless, make no mistake, a much *better* program has been released through

<sup>19</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> Carson (1991), p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 47, “By portraying Jesus’ coming in terms of the giving of “grace [*in exchange or return*] for [ἀντί, *anti*] grace,” the evangelist affirms that the grace given through Moses was replaced by the grace bestowed through Christ (cf. Ex. 33:12, 13, 17).”

<sup>22</sup> Carson (1991), p. 133, “...the Old Testament Scriptures are understood to point forward to Jesus, to anticipate him, and thus to prophesy of him. In that sense he fulfils them. If even the covenant of Law is 'prophetic' in this sense (cf. Mt. 11:13), then when that to which it points has arrived, it is in some sense *displaced* [emphasis added].”

<sup>23</sup> Keener, Craig S., *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 Volumes, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 1:422.

Jesus (cf. the Book of Hebrews).<sup>24</sup> As Köstenberger points out, “Jesus’ ministry is superior to that of Moses, just as he is superior to Jacob (4:12) and Abraham (8:53).”<sup>25</sup> Through the Son, the Father’s grace has been *perfected* (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9).<sup>26</sup>

Without the grace of Jesus, all we would have would be the “law...given through Moses.” All we would know is that we were sinners without hope of salvation. The Law is a *great teacher* (cf. Rom. 3:20) but a *poor redeemer* (cf. Gal. 3:23-24). It cannot rescue what is already fallen. For that, you need something else: “grace and truth.” And these virtues cannot be cultivated on our own; they must come *through* someone. Thus, as the Law was given as a gift, grace and truth must be given as *gifts*; otherwise, no one could earn them. And this is why John says, “grace and truth came *through* [emphasis added] Jesus Christ.” For the first time, John names the Word as “Jesus Christ;” he is our benefactor.

**Vs. 18** – But grace and truth weren’t the only gifts that came through Jesus; he also gave us *revelation*. John tells us, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known [emphasis added].” John asserts, “No one has ever seen God...” And, when you survey the Scriptures, this is an undeniable fact (cf. Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Heb. 11:27). However, there are also places where it is said that God has appeared to people, implying that they saw something. The most famous instance is in Ex. 33:19-20 where Moses “saw” God’s back but did not see his face. So, in one sense, some can claim to have “seen” God; in another sense, no one can claim to have seen God *fully*. Even when Isaiah said, “My eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (Isa. 6:5), the reality was that he only saw the hem of God’s garment (Isa. 6:1).<sup>27</sup>

However, while no one will ever see God in the fullest sense of the word, God the Father can still be known through God the Son. John says, “the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Notice, as with vs. 1, John is once again dealing with two beings: the “only God [being one] who is at the Father’s side [being two].” And, as John explains, the *former* being (only God/he) has made the *latter* being (the Father/him) known. Jesus reveals the Father.

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<sup>24</sup> The writer of Hebrews shows that Jesus is better than the prophets (Heb. 1:1-3), angels (Heb. 1:4-14), Moses (Heb. 3) and how the Lord’s priesthood is better than Aaron’s (Heb. 5:1-10), Christ’s new covenant is better than the old one (Heb. 8:6), and the blood of Jesus is better than that of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:4-10).

<sup>25</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Carson (1991), p. 133.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 134, “Apparent exceptions are always qualified in some way.”

How is the Lord able to do so? Why is Jesus the only one who can make God known? **Because the Son of God is “at the Father’s side.”** This Greek phrase speaks to the unique and intimate relationship that Jesus experienced with God.<sup>28</sup> Literally translated, Jesus was “in the bosom of the Father” or “**in the lap of the Father**” (cf. 13:23; Lu. 16:22-23). **[SHOW PICTURE]** Thus, as a child might sit in the lap of a parent, so has Jesus in the arms of God (cf. Num. 11:12; Ru. 4:16; 2 Sam. 12:3; 1 Ki. 3:20; 17:19; Lam. 2:12; Pro. 8:30). As such, God the Son is the perfect one to reveal God the Father.

John concludes the prologue: “**he has made him known.**” The Greek term used for “made...known” is **ἐξηγέομαι** (*exēgeomai*), and it means “to give a full account” or “to tell the whole story” (cf. Lu. 24:35; Ac. 10:8; 15:12, 14, 21:19).<sup>29</sup> As Carson so expertly puts it, “Jesus is the narration of God.”<sup>30</sup> He is, quite literally, the commentary or the exegesis of God. Thus, as good as the Law of Moses was, it only gave a partial revelation of God. In the Temple, God was concealed behind a veil. In Jesus, God has been fully revealed.

### **So, what’s the takeaway?**

Only in the **light** of God the Son, can we **know** God the Father.

**READ:** John 14: (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

**READ:** Colossians 1:15 (ESV)

He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God

However hard the Israelites might've tried in the O.T., they would *never* truly see God. **But that all changed with the advent of Christ because, throughout the gospels, we see Jesus radiating God’s presence wherever he goes.** The Son of God made God the Father known in a way He was never known. The Lord gave the most complete account of God the Father; **he told the best story about his Dad.**

<sup>28</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 49, the phrase “at the Father’s side” indicates “the unmatched intimacy of Jesus’ relationship with the Father, which enabled him to reveal the Father in an unprecedented way.” Carson (1991), p. 135, “It apparently conveys an aura of intimacy, mutual love and knowledge.”

<sup>29</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 50.

<sup>30</sup> Carson (1991), p. 135.



Thus, while knowledge of sin came through the Law of Moses, knowledge of the Father came through the Son of God. Through Jesus came an "unparalleled revelation" of God.<sup>31</sup> Looking at God only through the Law is like looking at him in black and white. But when one looks at God through Jesus, it is like looking at him in full-color 3D.

Jesus is the Tabernacle on two legs and the Temple with a face; he is God in the flesh. Jesus, the Light, **reveals** God the Father. Therefore, only in the **light** of God the Son, can we know God the Father.

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<sup>31</sup> Kruse (2017), p. 69.

## Video Description

### **The Light Has Come | Week 4 | “The Advent of the Light” (John 1:14-18)**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

On October 4, 1943, Bing Crosby's *I'll Be Home for Christmas* hit the airways. At the time, the U.S. was embroiled in WWII, and as such, it struck a chord with the populace. Both soldier and civilian wanted nothing more than a *homecoming* that year. By the end of that year, the song topped the charts in the States, peaking at number three, and, according to the Library of Congress, it "became the most requested song at Christmas U.S.O. shows in both Europe and the Pacific."

Today, we'll learn how, despite his abysmal reception, the Light still *came* and made his *home* with humanity. In theological circles, we call this the "advent" of Christ. The term "advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, which refers to a coming, approach, or arrival. Thus, in the words of Bing Crosby, what we celebrate every year on December 25<sup>th</sup> is how Jesus *came home* for Christmas.

Over two thousand years ago, the Word clothed himself in the guise of humanity and dwelt among us. Though we were at war with him, the Son of God became one of us so He might *reveal* God the Father to us. And though there was no room for him in the inn, the Light somehow still made his abode with humanity.

**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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