Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus: Glory, Grace, and God
Scripture: John 1:14-18
Code: 43-4

All right, the gospel of John, what a wonderful place to be in the time of darkness to shine the light, right? We have been introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ in this gospel. He is the Word. He is the Life. He is the Light, as we learned in the first four verses; and the fifth verse began to expand on that concept of light, and we came all the way down into verse 13 last time. So pick it up at John 1:14; let me read it to you.

"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."

John opens his gospel with 18 verses that we would call a prologue, a prologue. This is John talking theologically. Starting in verse 19 he goes into the narrative part of it in which he starts to tell the story of Jesus' life in the world. And he goes into the statements that Jesus makes and the works that He does and the miracles He performs, and gives us the wonderful story all the way to the cross and the resurrection. But in the opening prologue he makes his thesis statement. And the statement in the opening prologue is that Jesus is God in human flesh. That He is the Creator of the universe who has become a part of His creation. He is pure, eternal being who has become a man. That is John's message, that Jesus is not a created man; He is God in human flesh. And that, dear friends, that is *the* most essential doctrine in the Christian faith. That is it. And that is why there have been and continue to be so many heresies concerning Jesus Christ, concerning the essence, or the nature, or the person of Jesus Christ. This is *the* important doctrine in the Christian faith. It must be known; it must be believed for someone to escape hell and enter heaven, that Jesus is God.

Summed up in four words at the beginning of verse 14, "The Word became flesh." "The Word became flesh." That is the central truth of Christianity. That is the theme of John's gospel. And that is the required conviction for anyone who will escape hell, to understand that "the Word became flesh."

Now we've already learned in the opening thirteen verses that what that is saying is that the one, true, eternal God became human. That the infinite One became finite; that the eternal One entered time; that the omnipresent One became confined in the space of a human body; that the invisible One

became visible. The true church of Jesus Christ has always believed that. It has always proclaimed that. It has always demanded that. Any other view of Christ is unacceptable; it is a damning heresy. This is the only view of Christ by which someone can escape hell and enter heaven. This is the reason John makes such a case out of the deity of Jesus Christ.

He gives his purpose in chapter 20, verse 31 at the end of his gospel. “These have been written”—everything in the gospel up to this point—“so that you may believe that Jesus is the anointed One, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” The only way to have eternal life is by believing in Him—believing who He is, first of all, and what He has done.

So in His opening prologue, John talks about the nature of Jesus Christ. He introduces Him as the Word. This is a metaphor which speaks of Christ as coming from God, as God revealing Himself, disclosing Himself, speaking. And he says, “The Word was in the beginning.” In other words, He already existed when everything that began, began—which means He’s eternal. He was with God, which means though He was God, He was at the same time distinct from God. He was with God and was God. That is Trinitarian. There is one God and yet three persons. Jesus is God and yet He is with God. The theology here is profound. And in the beginning when everything came into existence that came into existence, He “was”—the verb “to be,” pure being; He eternally existed.

To prove that, everything that came into being came into being through Him, and without Him did not anything come into being that came into being—and that because He is life. He has life in Himself. He is the Creator. And the Creator whose eternal being, verse 5 says, came into the darkness of this world like a light. And that’s how he introduces this incredible book—the arrival of the Light, the very life of God, the very Word of God into the world.

Now I think it would be safe to say that John was legitimately obsessed with this great foundational doctrine. And again I urge you, whenever anybody talks about religion and gets to Jesus, you want to focus right down on what Jesus they are talking about. Are they talking about the One who is *the* eternal God? The One who is *the* Creator, who existed infinitely forever? Or are they talking about some other Jesus? John is obsessed with this.

In the last century, the last decade, rather, of the first century—in the nineties—he wrote his gospel and he also wrote three epistles. And just to show you what was so much on his heart, turn to 1 John for a moment, 1 John. And John launches his epistle, and he’s writing this epistle to believers to identify for them the marks of true salvation. And listen how he starts. He starts very much like he started his gospel. “What was from the beginning,” that’s Christ, who when the beginning began already existed because He’s eternal. “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, namely the Word of Life—and the life was manifested.” There is very parallel language. The eternal Word, life itself, manifested itself in the world, John said, and we saw it with our own eyes. And we looked at it, and

we heard, and we touched Him with our hands. “We’ve seen,” he says in verse 2, we testify, we proclaim to you the eternal life—you could capitalize that, The Eternal Life, meaning the Son of God—“which was with the Father and was manifested to us—and we’ve seen and we heard and we proclaim to you.” He can’t get over this. John is absolutely blown away by the fact that he has heard, he has seen, he has looked deeply into the face of, and he has touched the Creator of the universe in a human form. I think this would be something to obsess about. That’s where John is. And what we have seen and heard and touched, we declare to you “so,” verse 3, “you may have fellowship with us,” so that you may come into the kingdom, believing in Him, and “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these are things we write, so that your joy may be made complete,” because complete joy can only be found in knowing Him.

You know, John never got over it. You wonder why John refers to himself in his gospel, not by his name, but he calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” or “the disciple who leaned on Jesus”—because he never, ever could fathom the reality that this is the eternal Creator God, the One true God in human form; and He loves me; and He walks with me; and He talks with me; and I touch Him; and I fellowship with Him; and I can’t get over it. This is the obsession of all of his writing.

In chapter 2 of 1 John, down in verse 22, he says, “Who is the liar...Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son doesn’t have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning [from the apostles, from us] abides in you, you will abide in the Son and in the Father.” Again he goes back that if you tamper with who Christ is, you will alienate yourself from God—very, very serious to John.

Chapter 4, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit.” Don’t believe every claim, every teacher, every spirit behind every teacher. Test the spirits, see whether they’re from God because there’s so many false prophets in the world. How do you know when someone’s a false prophet? “By this you know the Spirit of God [that is behind the true Spirit]: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” Those who affirm the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, they’re from God. “Every spirit that doesn’t confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now already in the world.”

John is absolutely crystal clear that one’s view of Jesus Christ is determinative, determinative. Down in verse 12, same chapter: “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, His love is perfected...and it’s by this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He’s given us His Spirit. We have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

If you tamper with the deity of Jesus Christ, you are not in the kingdom of God. Chapter 5, he's not finished. Verse 1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." That simple. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Verse 4, "Whoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" And finally, down in verse 20, "We know that the Son of God is come," "we know that the Son of God is come." We've seen Him, heard Him, touched Him, "and is given to us understanding so that we may know Him who is true. And we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

In the second letter, after the first epistle, verse 7, he says: "Many deceivers are gone out into the world...who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and antichrist." Verse 9, "Anyone who goes beyond doesn't abide in the teaching of Christ, doesn't have God; the one who abides in this teaching...has the Father and the Son." So "if anybody comes to you and doesn't have that teaching, don't let him in your house, don't give him a greeting," because you would be a partaker in his evil deed. It's all about Christ and who Christ is.

Now with that in mind, you can go back to the first chapter of the gospel of John. It is therefore not surprising that of all of the Christian doctrines there has no single doctrine been more assaulted and attacked than the truth concerning the incarnation of Jesus Christ. There have been all kinds of Jesuses, all kinds of Christs offered to the world. And in the future, we are warned that as we get closer to the coming of Christ, false Christs will multiply, false Jesuses will multiply, and we have to be discerning about whether people are speaking of the true Christ.

To put it another way, it is as damning to believe in the wrong Jesus as to believe in no Jesus. To believe in the wrong Jesus is as damning as to believe you're saved by a rock, some animistic religion. You can't be saved by believing the wrong thing about Christ. You must believe in His deity and humanity. And that's why John is so compelled at this point.

Now in verses 14 to 18 we come to the crescendo, "And the Word became flesh," "the Word became flesh." The Word, meaning the preincarnate Son of God whose eternal being became flesh (*sarx*). Sometimes the word "flesh" is used in a moral sense, deeds of the flesh—like Romans 8, Galatians 5. But sometimes it's used in a physical sense, and that's the way it's used here. Romans 1:3 says that Jesus was the Son of David, "according to the flesh," humanly speaking. So sometimes it has a moral component, and other times it's just talking about a physical component—and that's what it is here. The eternal Word became human, that's what it means; the eternal Word became human. So you have the God/Man. The eternal God who is pure eternal being, and not becoming at all as His creatures are, becomes a part of His creation. God and man are joined in one person, never again to be separated. Listen to that. They are joined in one person, never again to be separated, yet never confounded and never mixed. His human nature, His human nature does not overpower His divine nature; His divine nature does not overpower His human nature. They are both perfect and distinct

and indivisible and yet unmingled and unmixed.

The deity of Christ is not diminished by His humanity, nor is His humanity overpowered by His deity. And maybe I can illustrate that by saying this: when you see Christ in heaven, He will be exactly the same God/Man that He was when He walked on earth—in the post-resurrection form of the body that the disciples spent forty days with. He is the same Christ. He doesn't become a floating fog in heaven, as some of these silly people say who take fake trips to heaven and then make up things. He is exactly who He is. He will be who He was on earth—fully man, fully God in the same way He walked on earth.

And let me take it a step further. His humanity is not the humanity of Adam before his fall. He does not have a pre-Fall humanity. Some people think that, yes, He's fully man; but He's fully man in the sense of Adam was before the Fall. That is not true. He is fully man in the sense that Adam was after the Fall. How do you know that? Because He lived and grew and died, and that is a factor of fallen condition. Furthermore, if He was not in the form of man after the Fall, He would have no ability to understand our weaknesses and our infirmities and be tempted in all points as we are tempted, and come out as a merciful, sympathetic High Priest. So He is truly human in the sense that we are human in the post-Fall realm. With one exception: no sin. He is without sin—holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, without sin forever. Second Corinthians 5, He knew no sin.

So this One, John says, this God/Man, "the Word became flesh." And then He says, "And dwelt among us," "dwelt among us" (*skenoo* means to pitch your tent). He brought His tent to us and He settled down in our world. For thirty-three years He lived in our world—took on the form of a man; came and became one of us, Hebrews 2, Philippians 2; grew in wisdom, stature, favor with God and man. You can't deny that. That's 1 John. I just read it to you (4:2 and 3). If you deny that Jesus came in the flesh, that the Son of God was an actual man, then that's heresy and you don't know God. God in human form dwelt with us.

How did we know He was God? John gives us three very important statements and they're tied to three words—clear evidence that this is God. First word, glory; second word, grace; third word, God. And we'll just look at this briefly. I know you're familiar with it.

Back to verse 14, first point: the incarnate Christ displays divine glory. The incarnate Christ displays divine glory. John says in verse 14, "And we saw His glory." "We saw His glory." And it was glory that belongs to the *monogenes* of the Father, and it was full of grace and truth. We saw His glory.

What is glory? What does that mean? You have to go back to the Old Testament to pick up on that, really. God's glory is intrinsic to His nature; it is who He is. It is the sum of His attributes. Take all the attributes of God and you can list them; all of the attributes of God in perfect complex are His glory, His intrinsic innate glory—all of His attributes. But then there is also His manifest glory. And He

manifests His glory symbolically and in reality. Let me tell you what I mean.

Moses in Exodus 33 says, “Show me Your glory. I want to see Your glory.” And the Lord says, in effect, “Okay, I’ll show you My glory, but I have to warn you, I can’t show it all to you because no man could see My face and live” (Exodus 33:20). “So the Lord said, ‘There’s a place by Me, and you can stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, I’ll put you in the cleft of the rock and I’ll cover you with My hand until I pass by.” And what you’re going to see is the edges of My glory shining across the cover. You can see the fringes of My glory, because if you saw My full glory, you’d be incinerated in a millisecond.

What is this kind of glory? What is this? This is God’s nature, God’s essence that the eternal complex of all that He is—the all-glorious God manifest in blazing light, manifest in blazing light. I think that’s something of what Adam and Eve saw when they walked and talked with God in the garden, because God is invisible, called repeatedly the invisible God. So what did they see? They walked with the *Shekinah.* They walked with the presence of God manifest in light to some degree. And maybe they were able to absorb more of His glory since they were unfallen, and once they fell they had to be kicked out because they could no longer look at His glory or fellowship with Him. Moses says, “Show me Your glory,” and God says, “I’ll let you see the afterglow; I’ll let you see the back part; I’ll let you see the edges or you’d be incinerated in a millisecond. That’s the powerful majesty and glory of God that would destroy us because we’re sinners.

And then the glory is defined. Moses said, “Show me Your glory,” and He said, “Okay”—God did—verse 19, “I’ll make all My goodness pass before you. I’ll proclaim the name of the Lord, and the name of the Lord is all that He is. Before you I’ll proclaim My attributes; I’ll be gracious to you; I’ll show compassion on you. And then down in verse 6 of the next chapter, “The Lord descends,” in verse 5, “and then the Lord passes in front of him and His light passes in front of Him,” this glowing light, and the Lord begins to describe His glory.

Verse 6, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, forgives iniquity, transgression, sin,” etc. The glory of God is the complex of all of His attributes and sometimes it was manifested in blazing light.

Later on when the children of Israel were walking in the wilderness, you remember God led them by a fiery flame at night, and when the tabernacle was built in Exodus 40, the glory of God came down to the tabernacle. When the temple was built, 1 Kings 8:11, the glory of God came down to the temple. So God’s glory is His attributes, but manifestly seen frequently in the Old Testament as light.

In the future, Matthew 24, Matthew 25, Jesus returns and it says in both those chapters, chapter 24, verses 29 and 30, chapter 25, verse 31 that He will come in great glory and the *shekinah* will be back.

Revelation says people will call on the rocks and the mountains to hide them from the face of the glory, the sky will go dark, the moon and sun will not give its light, and into the blackness will come this blazing *shekinah* presence of Jesus Christ.

Again, the manifestation of the attributes of God in light. So that had happened in the past and in the future will happen again in the meantime—the glory comes to earth in Jesus. Okay? And on one occasion Matthew—Luke also records it—they went up to the mount, Peter, James and John, remember? And the Lord pulled back His flesh and what did they see? They saw His glory, and it was so blinding they fell like dead men under the sheer shock and force of this blazing light, even though it was veiled to some degree so they didn't burn up.

And Peter writes, "When we were in the holy mountain, we saw His glory"..."we saw His glory." Let's go back now. When John says, "We beheld His glory," "we beheld His glory," he can mean that they beheld the light, the *shekinah*, the blazing light, because John was up there on that mount. He certainly could mean that. And this is written long after that happened, so he would remember that experience as well as Peter did.

But it's more than that. When John says, "We beheld His glory," he's not only talking about the representation of that glory in light, he's talking about the reality of those attributes which were manifest throughout the ministry in the life of Christ. John could say it this way: "We saw His love; we saw His mercy; we saw His wisdom; we saw His knowledge; we saw His power; we saw His justice; we saw His holiness; we saw His compassion; we saw His omnipotence; we saw His omniscience; we saw His anger; we saw His wrath; we saw His kindness; we saw His patience; we saw it all. We saw all those things that the Lord listed back in Exodus 33 and 34, and we saw the light, and we saw the light. We saw His glory. We don't question that this is God, right? We saw the manifest light that symbolizes His glory, and we saw the attributes that make up His glory—we saw it all, we saw it all. We saw a visible representation of His glory, and we saw the invisible representation of that glory in His life.

We're going to find out in John 2 when we go to a wedding together that Jesus did a miracle there and verse 11 says of John 2, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory." "Manifested His glory." He didn't pull His flesh back like He did in the Transfiguration, but He manifested the glory of His power by creating wine out of nothing. So John says, "Look, we saw His glory; yes, on the holy mount, visible glory. But yes, we saw that invisible glory, the operation of His attributes."

So when you ask John if Jesus is God, the God/Man, God in human flesh, John will tell you yes—yes He is because we saw His glory. Secondly, John will tell you that the incarnation of Christ dispenses His grace, dispenses His grace. At the end of verse 14, "Full of grace and truth." "Full of grace and truth." Not half measures, not fractions, not incomplete—"full of grace and truth."

Grace and truth are together in this passage. They need to be together. They have to be together because the only way that you can experience grace is by believing...What?...the truth. They go together, they go together. And so John says, “We have experienced who He is intrinsically. He is the *monogenes* from the Father. That’s His essential being. We’ve also experienced His glory through His grace and truth—manifest in His works and words and life.”

And then John calls His friend, John the Baptist; we call him John A and John B. John the apostle calls on John the Baptist and says, “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.”’” How can somebody who comes after me exist before me? John says He came after me. He was born after me. Elizabeth was pregnant with John the Baptist before Mary was pregnant with Jesus. John was born first. And John says, “The one who was born after me was before Me. He existed before Me.” Again, that’s pure eternal being. So John the apostle borrows some testimony from John the Baptist. Why do you think he does that? Is that necessary? It’s necessary if you’re Jewish and you believe in Deuteronomy that everything has to be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Why not? It was John the Baptist. This language here, the verbs here indicate that this was constantly John’s pattern. This was what he was always saying. “He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, because He existed before Me.” How could anybody who comes after me have existed before me unless He’s eternal?

So the testimony of John A, the apostle, John B, the Baptist, join together to declare that Jesus is the divine glory, that Jesus is the divine glory, divine God on display. Number two: the incarnate Christ dispenses grace “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.” We’re so glad to be delivered from the law, right? And brought to grace, grace came through Christ. So He displays glory, He dispenses grace. This is the evidence of His deity.

He is “full of grace and truth.” He is full, in verse 16, and “of His fullness we have all received,” and then he illustrates it by saying in the Greek, “Grace after grace”; “grace in the place of grace.” That’s what that is. It’s just endless, non-diminishing supply of grace upon grace upon grace. I love that the preposition after grace, after grace, after grace—after this grace is moved, there’s more grace filling the vacuum. There’s never any diminishing of grace. We have received the fullness of the grace that He possesses, grace in the place of grace, in the place of grace, in the place of grace. Romans 5, Paul says, “In this grace we stand”—we live; this is where we exist. Grace comes constantly to us because we have believed the truth of the gospel, and we don’t receive some small amount of grace. You remember to the apostle Paul who was concerned about his thorn in the flesh. Our Lord said, “My grace is sufficient,” right? “My grace is sufficient.” It’s a never, ever ending supply. We read in Hebrews, “Come to the throne of grace”; there’s a never diminishing supply for every need that you will ever have. John says, How do we know He’s God? Because we are living in this realm of grace

that just keeps being poured out and poured out and poured out on our lives.

And all we knew under the law was threats and warnings, and death and judgment, and along comes Christ, and it's grace in the place of grace, in the place of grace. At the end of verse 17, "grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." Promised in the Old Testament? Yes. Promised in the Old Testament. Activated in the Old Testament? Sure; Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Grace all through the Old Testament. Everybody ever saved in the history of the world has been saved by God's grace.

But grace was not fully realized until Christ came and paid His penalty on the cross. The word "realized" here is *egeneto*, *egeneto*. It's from the verb *ginomai,* "to become," and it means "came into being," "came into existence." We could read it that way. Grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.

Well, you say, "If they only came into being through Jesus Christ, then was there any grace before Jesus Christ?" Yes, God knowing that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world was applying the grace that had not yet been validated. And the grace that Christ exhibited and purchased at the cross extended back as much as it extends forward.

John says, "This is not an ordinary man." Gospel truth tells us that this is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the God/Man, fully God, fully man. We see it; we've experienced it; we've touched Him; we've heard Him. He displayed grace, and He dispensed glory.

One final point: the incarnate Christ defines God, He defines God. He displays glory, dispenses grace, and defines God. I love verse 18. "No one has seen God at any time." Why? He's invisible. There are times when God has appeared as smoke and fire and things like that, but He has no form. No one has seen God at any time. However, the *monogenes*, the Son of God, the incarnate One, the One "who is in the bosom of the Father." "Bosom" is really an antiquated word; let me tell you what that word is. It's actually used in the book of Acts for "bay," or "inlet." It's a word for the fold in material. If you took a bunch of material and piled it up, and it had little folds, that would be the word used; or it's for a very tight, small pocket.

And so, what he is saying is the *monogenes,* who is tucked in intimately to the very presence of God—beautiful picture—who is folded into God, he has explained Him. That last statement: "He has explained Him," really powerful. Wouldn't you like to have God explain to you? When somebody said to you, "How would you explain God?" where would you go? Well, you'd go to that verse and say, "Look at Jesus Christ, He explains God." By the way, the word "explained" is an interesting word. It's the word *exegeomai* from which we get *exegete*. We use that word a lot in seminary because we teach people how to do exegesis, how to exegete Scripture.

What does it mean? It means to explain, interpret, give the meaning. Jesus exegetes God. So you want to know about God? Jesus defines God. He displays glory; He dispenses grace; and He defines God. So don't come to me with any patronizing nonsense about Jesus being a nice man, a good teacher, a noble, religious leader. That's not an option. He's God. He is God. And if you believe that and you receive Him, "to those who received Him," right? Verse 12, "He gave the right to become children of God...to those who believe on His name."

In order to be a child of God, you have to believe on His name. To believe on His name, you must believe that He is who He is.

Father, we are grateful again for how clear and yet profound Your Word is, and we thank You for the treasure that every verse, every phrase is to us. We feel like we've gone way too fast; we could spend a year on that passage alone. We're going to have to trust Your Holy Spirit and gladly go to unfold its truths to us as we go back and meditate, and meditate, and meditate on its truth. More importantly, Lord, I pray for those who have not yet confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord, who have not yet come to know the God/Man who died on the cross to pay the penalty for their sins and rose again to provide eternal life. May those hearts be open today. May they believe, and not having heard this preached, walk away in rebellious disobedience and forfeit eternal rest. May they enter into the rest that is found only through faith in Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

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