

“See the Son, See the Father”

John 1:1-18

The prophet Isaiah foretold,

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" [Is. 9:6]

Isaiah clearly writes that the Messiah will be a human being; birthed as a child from a mother's womb and yet given because He already existed as God's Son. The humanity of Jesus was a subject of great debate within 50 years of his death and resurrection, so much so that when John wrote his gospel and his letters in the mid to late 80's AD a lot of his language about Jesus is very carefully and clearly written to speak of His humanity and deity. Listen to the opening words of 1 John,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Seen, heard, touched – John was emphasizing the reality of Jesus' humanity. John was battling false teaching called Gnosticism, the belief that the divine Christ spirit descended on a man named Jesus but departed from him prior to his death. Their teaching separated the physical from the emotional and spiritual so they taught that knowledge alone was sufficient to find God regardless of how you lived in the physical realm. You can see how appealing that teaching would be.

Both Jesus' deity and humanity are crucial to our understanding of salvation. We need a human Saviour who can totally identify with us. But the problem with a human Saviour is do we really believe He's God because we have this basic (wrong) idea of God that He is distant from us. The incarnation of Jesus Christ that we celebrate every December is crucial not just for our salvation but our sanctification – our ongoing walk with God who calls us to grow in holiness by drawing nearer to Him. The more we understand Jesus' humanity the closer we'll draw to God.

John's opening 18 verses of his gospel are some of the most amazing words in Scripture. We call it the prologue to his gospel. John equally communicates the deity and humanity of Jesus the Messiah here. John doesn't mention the birth account itself but instead he introduces Jesus as uniquely God and yet fully man. The question we want to answer this morning and during the series is why did Jesus become one of us? Why is that so important for our understanding of God?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

The term word is the Greek word 'logos'. In John's day logos was a huge philosophical term that was used to define life itself. While logos literally means 'word' it conveys the idea of the meaning of life itself is rooted in this word. So John tells the philosophers of the day if you want to know what the meaning of life is look at Jesus. And God Himself uses His words to speak life into existence. John takes these ideas to tell us,

Jesus is the Voice of God **(1:1-3)**

He became one of us so we could hear what God had to say. He could tell us who God is, what God wants from us and how we can know Him. Jesus is the voice, the expression of God,

Because He is always with God and is God (vv.1-2)

John employs a style of Hebrew poetry here. Hebrew poetry uses parallel thoughts to emphasize certain points. Starting and ending with “in the beginning”, John wants to stress that Jesus (twice) was with God and was God. The Jehovah Witnesses jump all over this verse and say that the Greek literally reads the Word was a God to try and convince us Jesus wasn’t God but a god created by God. Greek language is very specific and it places an article (the, as in “the God”) in front of its subjects to determine word order and sentence structure. The reason ‘the’ is in front of God and not the Word is because Word is the subject and God is the object. Besides, if Jesus is only a god why then does Thomas say when he sees the resurrected Jesus in John 20:28 ‘the Lord of me and the God of me.’ The article is used to clearly teach that Thomas believed Jesus was God in the flesh.

As well, the word “was” is what we call an imperfect tense not a past tense. So we should literally read 1:1,

In the beginning was (and still is) the Word, and the Word was (and still is) with God and the Word was (and still is) God. [V. 2] He was (and still is) with God in the beginning.

It is ironic that people would try and twist John 1:1 into saying Jesus is not God when in fact John wrote so specifically that Jesus was, is and always will be God). As the Word, Jesus spoke the world into existence. Again, John goes out of his way to teach the deity of Jesus as co-equal to God and directly involved in the Creation. The reason why John tells us Jesus clearly made everything is so that people understand Jesus was not created Himself; another false theory opponents of the gospel try to persuade people of.

But as great as creation is and it does show us God exists,

His creation should whet our appetite for more of Him (v.3)

God’s creation gives evidence of a designer but if we want to know more of who He is and what He’s like we need more information. Since Jesus has always been with God from (and before) creation, He tells us more of Him. V. 18 points out that no one has seen God, only the Son who is at the Father’s side has made Him known.

More than anything else Jesus became one of us to tell us what God is like. Since He is deity as well to see and hear the Son is to see and hear the Father. Jesus speaks on God’s behalf. He only says and does what the Spirit of God tells Him. As the Creator we want to know more of Him and as the Word we need to listen to Him if we want to know who God is and what he’s like.

John now introduces how Jesus made His appearance known, through the witness of John the Baptist.

⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God whose name

was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

In Jesus is life and light. What was the first thing created on Day One? Light. What was the last thing created on Day 6? Life. Jesus is the source of everything. As the source of everything,

Jesus Provides What We Need **(1:4-8)**

Since we already have physical life and can physically see, light and life are spiritual terms. Since Jesus has to give it to us means ...

We need spiritual life and light (vv.4-5)

... in order to know Him and His Father. Jesus opens our minds to the Father and our need for saving. He gives us new life when we repent of our sins and accept Him. We must be born again if we are to have this new life. We become spiritually alive by confessing we are dead in our transgressions, without hope and without God, repenting of our sins, asking Jesus' forgiveness and. Jesus alone is the way to the Father. We are in spiritual darkness until we accept Him as Lord and Saviour. Those who remain in darkness do not understand who Jesus is and therefore won't know God.

When John the Baptist came he was the forerunner or introducer of Jesus as Messiah. John wasn't the light himself but the witness to Jesus as the light and life.

Now we are Jesus' witnesses to tell others what they need (vv.6-8)

John was a literal witness for Jesus. The word witness is our English word 'martyr'. All humans eventually die, so someone else has to take up the responsibility to be a witness to who Jesus is and what He came to do, reveal His Father. This is the responsibility of everyone who has received the light and life that Jesus provides. We who have it know how special it is to have it and also realize that without knowing Jesus, people will remain in darkness forever.

And how do people get out of the darkness?

We Must Believe Jesus Came to Be One of Us **(1:9-13)**

Who died for our sins, yet proving He was more than just a man, He rose from the dead showing He was God in the flesh.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The problem Jesus faced with becoming human was just that – He looked no different than us! In Matt. 13:54-57 Jesus appears in His hometown and taught in their synagogue. Yet this is how they responded,

"Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. ⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?" ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at him.

The people of Jesus' day had a hard time believing Jesus was the Messiah because He looked so human! But isn't that what Is. 9:6 said?

For a child will be born to us, a son is given to us, [Is. 9:6]

The crux of faith is to actually believe the person Jesus was the Messiah sent by God who was in fact the Son God given to Israel and us. Most of them rejected Him because they wanted a warrior not a teacher. They wanted military might more than miracles. So they rejected Him because He was so human; having parents and siblings. Can't be that guy, he's too normal.

That's why we have to receive Him individually. Our lineage doesn't save us. Our parents or spouse can't save us. Our good deeds can't save us. Only faith in who Jesus is and what He did for us saves us. And Jesus wants us to be saved. Why?

Jesus and God Want Us to live with Them **(1:14-18)**

¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Divinity took on temporality. Jesus became one of us – which we'll look at more closely on the physical aspect when we get to Philippians 2. But here we read that Jesus made His dwelling among us. The word literally means 'tabernacled' and is a clear reference to the Tabernacle in the wilderness. When God took Israel out of Egypt His first desire was to bring them in the wilderness where they would worship Him. In Ex. 25-40 God told them to make a Tabernacle and He would dwell in the midst of them. His shekinah glory – His presence – sometimes visibly but mostly symbolically through the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, dwelled there. When they were camped the Tabernacle rested in the middle of the camp.

When the Tabernacle transitioned to the Temple, the Temple was set on the high spot of Jerusalem, overlooking everywhere. God was telling them I want to be with You. The greatest tragedy of course was when God's shekinah glory departed from the Temple during the time of the Babylonian captivity. Even though Israel came back in 536 to their land and rebuilt the Temple they awaited the presence to come back. The last OT prophet Malachi promised that the messenger would precede the coming of the Lord who would suddenly come to His temple (Mal. 3:1). In John 2 after Jesus performs His first miracle, He appears at the temple. Jesus came and tabernacle among His people. And even before He left Jesus said that when He departed, He would send "another" like Him, the Holy Spirit who would be with us, and He dwells in each of us and is always with us.

This has always been God's desire – to dwell with His creation in perfect peace and harmony. This is how the Bible begins and ends; God with us. He became one of us to communicate that he wants us to be with Him, we just need to believe who he is, that he loves us, so much so that he would die in our place for our sins.

Jesus came as a human in order to **show us what God is like**. And we see three emphasized themes here:

He is glorious! (v.14a)

John wrote 'We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only Son.' It is not a coincidence that John wrote Jesus Tabernacled among us and we have seen His glory. The Greek word for Glory doesn't necessarily mean 'shiny' it means the true nature of; the essence of who one is. This parallels the Hebrew word for glory very well which means 'weighty, full'. We read earlier in Ps. 19 that the whole world is full of God's glory. You see the evidence and essence of who God is around us and now that Jesus has come we get an even clearer picture of what God's essence is like; who He truly is. Heb 1:3 tells us

³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

'Exact representation' means the mould made from the original – not that Jesus was made – but to give us an illustration so that we can understand who God is.

God is glorious; He's awesome and weighty and spectacularly

Gracious (vv.14b-17)

Coming from God Jesus reveals God's essence, His character which is full of grace and truth. *"From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the Law was given through Moses grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

If people reject Jesus it's not because He spoke harshly to them and hurt them. Jesus spoke the truth to us – our need to be saved from our sins – but He did it with love. People hurt Jesus because they rejected Him. And we can still do the same some days if we're not careful.

Every time we read His Word and He speaks truth graciously to us, extending His hand saying, 'Give up your pride, stop being so impatient, stop hurting people with your tongue, put away those damaging habits that keep you away from Me', we have a choice. Will we keep sinning or will we give Him our burdens and sins and take on His yoke and follow Him? Again, a gracious picture. How are we doing at responding to Jesus' grace and truth? What bitterness have we not let go? What sin have we not repented of? What spiritual gift do we refuse to share with others? Jesus is patient but firm. He is gracious but He won't budge on the truth either and He will not let us go.

And if Jesus speaks only the truth that means He and His Father are completely

Dependable (vv.17-18)

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. That's why the people said Jesus spoke with authority because He spoke the truth. The Pharisees twisted the law (God's Word) to manipulate people to follow them. Jesus didn't force Himself on people. He spoke the truth graciously but didn't shy away from what was true. Since no one has ever seen God, Jesus who is at the Father's side (at the time of John's writing since He had long rose from the dead) has made Him known.

When Jesus tells us who His Father is and that we can have eternal life now and that we will be in His presence forever if we place our faith in Him, we can trust Him. He is dependable. He is looking forward to having us in His presence forever.

The world has many false ideas about God. They see Him as either a happy old grandpa who winks at their sin and will welcome them home anyway. Or as a harsh taskmaster who wants to make life miserable for us. Jesus set the record straight. He came to be one of us so we could see and hear first hand what His Father is like; forgiving yet firm in truth, graciously patient yet does not force Himself upon us.

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given. The Son of God became a human being so we could know who God is and what He is like. Have you ever noticed how many religions and cults have an incorrect understanding of who Jesus is and yet they try and tell people how they can get to God? A wrong view of Jesus = a wrong view of God. To know the Father is to know the Son. See the Son, see the Father. So, if we want people to know God, we must tell them about Jesus because He is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to His Father except through Him.

* * * * *

If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net