

John Ch 1:14-28

“Grace For Grace”

As Solomon dedicated the temple that he had had built he asked the question, “*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You.*” 1 Kings 8:27 As he considered the magnitude, and the enormity, and the fullness of God, He’s created all things, and I’m going to make a structure that You call home? Isaiah records for us where the Lord has said, “*I have made the earth, And created man on it. I -- My hands -- stretched out the heavens, And all their host I have commanded.*” Isa 45:12 The heaven of heavens can’t contain the magnitude of God and yet Solomon built a temple only to realize the insanity of it all in one respect, “How can I house God?” “Will God indeed dwell on the earth?”

Yet such is the mystery that’s before us today, God would indeed dwell on the earth, in a temple not crafted by human hands, but in the body that had been prepared for Him, God became a man and tabernacled among us in the person of Jesus Christ The incarnation of Christ answered a resounding yes to the question that Solomon posed so many generations before, “Will God indeed dwell on the earth?” Look at vs 14

Vs14

Believe me when I tell you that words fail me to do any sort of justice to the magnitude of this vs. This is that culminating point whereby all of this time that John has spent preparing us comes to a head in the incarnation of Jesus Christ establishing the fact that God indeed dwelt on the earth, in the flesh, in the person of Jesus.

This is that massive sway of the pendulum whereby the infinite steps into the finite, the eternal subjects Himself to time and space, the One who dwells in unapproachable light becomes flesh and blood that He might be touched, and handled, and gazed upon. “In the beginning was the Word, and that Word was with God, and God was the Word.” “and The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” God became flesh and dwelt among us. and So for our portion of study today, I’ve divided it up into 3 words that will serve as a basic outline. So far in our study of John’s gospel we’ve encountered 2 people, “The Word”, a.k.a. Jesus Christ and J.B.

Today’s text is no exception to that and so the 1st thing we see is, or #1 for us, “The Incarnation” The Word, the Logos becomes flesh, 2^{ndly} we see, or #2 “A Proclamation” in vs 15-18 *regarding* Jesus Christ and Finally in vs 19-28 we have #3 “Further Clarification” as to who John the Baptist is and/or is not.

#1 The Incarnation, notice it there in vs 14, “And the Word became flesh.” and Of course the 2 words that immediately arrest our attention are these words “Word” and “Flesh.” and Rightfully so because of the massive gap that’s represented between these 2 concepts is nearly (or in reality completely) unfathomable. The “Word” and all the Logos represents, again Eternality, Deity, He is the Creator, He is Life, and He Light, and the fullness of each of those characteristics individually is enough to cripple your brain, how much more when you consider such attributes collectively?

Then you have the “Flesh” which speaks really of frailty, vulnerability, as one commentator put it, “A transitory (or temporary) fabric woven from the dust, and destined to return to dust; limited to time and space.” The word that bridges these 2 extremes? If your bible says, “The Word was *made* flesh” that’s a bad translation, the Word was never “Made” anything, He has always been. and John didn’t say, “The Word *clothed* Himself with flesh” as though He was just temporarily covered but would cast it off in due time. No, the Word “Became” flesh. Or to understand it another way, though there was a definite transformation of sorts, He maintained His personal identity in that there was never a lack in Deity, He didn’t cease being God to be made a man, God became a man, fully maintaining His Godhood.

Now having said that, I in no way want to take away from the fact that Jesus was fully human as well, this is the mystery, fully God, and fully man, zero lack in Deity, but simultaneously no less human than the rest of us. We’ll see in Johns gospel where Jesus was weary (4:6), thirsty (4:7), where He inwardly groaned in the spirit and was troubled (11:33) wept, (11:35), died (19:30) and bled (19:34), and even after the resurrection He showed Thomas (though glorified) He was still in the flesh (20:24-29).

So we want to note this word “Flesh” because this is that which allows Him to identify with mankind, now often times, or most generally in the bible the word “Flesh” carries with it the connotations of sinful desires and appetites. But in its strictest definition such is not the case, and that’s how it’s rendered here, in the strict sense of that which is covering your bones. The Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines this word, “Flesh” as “The soft substance of the living body, which covers the bones and is permeated with blood.” and So what’s in view here is the reality of humanity, and so the reason the word “Flesh” is used here is so that we would know that Jesus is able to sympathize with the frailties of humanity.

If we would’ve read, “The Word became a Man” then we might be prone to think, “Well we know that Jesus can identify with men, but what about the struggles, and emotions that I deal with as a woman?” But in this word “Flesh” all of humanity is encompassed, every ethnicity and each gender, and so we read in Heb 4:15, “*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*”

So the Word became flesh, not only to identify with us, but to *reveal*, and to *redeem*. To reveal to us who God is (as we'll see in a few minutes) and to redeem us from our sin, you see we were all being held under the curse of the Law having broke the Law thereby condemning ourselves as sinners. *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."* Gal 4:4-5 Why did the Word become flesh? Jesus was born of the flesh that we might be born again of the Spirit.

So the Word became flesh, (and notice 2^{ndly}) "Dwelt among us." Or as I mentioned a few minutes ago (and what would be more properly rendered here) "Tabernacled among us." Why make the distinction? Because the allusion to the tabernacle shows us the fulfillment in Christ of that which was merely foreshadowed in the OT, you recall the tabernacle of the OT, that tent that Moses had constructed according to the lay out God gave him on the MT. and Though ordinary looking on the outside, simply covered with badger skins, on the inside was all this fine embroidery, gold and silver, and in that tabernacle was the holy of holies where the glory of the Lord would reside.

The glory of God would be "veiled" (if you will) in this tabernacle which to the outward appearance appeared to be really no different in it's make up than any other tent. and Yet it was in this tabernacle that God would be dwelling which was pitched in the center of the camp and the idea is that God would dwell in the very midst of His people. and What John is showing us here is that the Tabernacle though seemingly ordinary to the onlooker, yet housing the very glory of God was simply a foreshadowing of the incarnation. Whereby Jesus, though ordinary in appearance (so much so that Judas had to identify Him with a kiss, he didn't say get the tall, muscular, good looking fella, you can't miss Him, or get the One who's glowing) he said, "I'll need to identify Him for you because you'll never guess by looking."

Isaiah tells us regarding the Messiah, *"He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him."* Isa 53:2 In other words He wasn't a stumbling block for all the ladies, He was just an ordinary guy as far as appearances go. But His flesh served as a covering, or a veil almost that shrouded the very glory of God, and we see His glory begin to breakout just a bit in Mark Ch 9 on the MT of Transfiguration when Peter, James and John saw Him glorified standing there with Moses and Elijah. But the point here is that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of what that Tabernacle pointed to, how often the bible refers to these bodies as tents, or tabernacles, simply temporary dwellings. and Even as God dwelt in the midst of His people, leading them and guiding them through the desert after delivering them from Egypt. That was but a foreshadow of God (with all His glory) dwelling in the midst of His people in the person of Jesus Christ

“We beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father”, I can’t help but wonder if John as he reflected back through the years on the reality of what took place in his generation before his very eyes didn’t get the impression that he by the grace of God sort of one upped Moses. That God privileged him in a way that made what happened with Moses pale in comparison; you remember that Moses wanted to see God’s glory. and One day he and the Lord were having a beautiful time of fellowship, and Moses said to God, “*Please, show me Your glory.*” Ex 33:18 and God said, “You can’t see Me and live, so what I’ll do is place you in the cleft of this rock and when I pass by, you can see My afterglow.” Moses wanted to see God’s glory, John says, “I did!” “I beheld God’s glory in the person of Jesus Christ” I can’t help but believe the more John thought on that throughout the years the more blown away he became; he was still thinking about it when he wrote his 1st epistle. and He begins it much the same way, “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.*” 1 John 1:1 “We’ve seen God’s glory, we’ve handled with our hands, we’ve touched God Himself, the Word of life.”

Notice these last 5 words of vs 14, “Full of grace and truth.” Grace becomes a key word in this passage mentioned over and over again, it’s like the closer we get to the culmination of the revelation, the more “grace” is brought into the picture, and rightly so. and What we see here is some keen insight into the make-up of the heart of God, Jesus being fully God, being full of grace and truth. He strikes the balance, now if something is full, there’s no room for anything else, and it’s important that we see the balance here between grace and truth because we’re called upon by the scriptures to be imitators of Christ, so then what’s the chief characteristics of your life?

If it’s either of these to one extreme or the other than there’s a lack of balance, some people are all about grace, tolerable of anything and everything in the name of grace and so there’s a lack of accountability and responsibility in their lives, because it’s not balanced in truth. But then there are those who are all about the truth so much so that they’re offensive in their approach to everyone’s life around them. Their job is to speak the truth! and So they’ll be sure to tell you every problem you have, let you know when you’re dressed funny, when your breath is bad, when you’re putting on a few pounds, they’ll point out every short coming and sin in your life, and so they’re difficult to be around because they just don’t exude any grace.

Jesus was the perfect balance, straight shooter, didn’t pull punches, spoke the truth, He was the truth, and yet as we read the gospels we realize as it tells us in Luke 4:22 that as He spoke people would marvel at the *gracious* words which proceeded out of His mouth. He was full of *both* grace and truth, and we do well to exude such qualities. and Of course grace and truth speak candidly of the fullness of His deity. The Pulpit commentary makes this comment, “The combination of these two ideas of grace and truth pervades the Old Testament description of the Lord.”

When God passed before Moses to allow Moses to see His afterglow we read there, “*And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth."* Ex 34:6 In Ps 40:10 we read, “*I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth From the great assembly.*” and Permeating all throughout the OT we have these divine qualities of grace and truth, mercy and faithfulness as it pertains to God, and so what’s being revealed to us here is the fullness of deity that was in even the humanity of Christ, there was never a compromise in His Deity, He was full of Grace and truth, fully God, fully man.

Vs 15

Real quick here this is just another testimony of J.B. now you have to bear in mind the fact that God had not spoke to Israel in 400yrs, and then a prophet of God storms on the scene and has something to say. Of course the prophet being J.B. and so John the apostle keeps referring to J.B. witness because as God’s prophet, he spoke God’s Word to the people, his witness was viable. and Even as John bore witness to the reality of Jesus Christ so we’re to do the same, you and I are to bear witness to the reality of who Jesus Christ is, why He’s come and what He’s done for you, and John is here bearing witness to the eternal deity of Christ. and When he says here, “He came after Me.” This is a witness of the chronology; Jesus was born of Mary (physically) 6 months after J.B., but “He’s preferred before me” means Jesus ranks higher than John. Now obviously there’s even remnants of this thought in our culture and it dominated theirs, the older is honored before the younger.

So John is humbling himself and saying, “Jesus is greater than I am, even though I’m older (physically) than Him.” Why, “For He was before Me.” Now how can he say that if Jesus was born 6 months after him? Because Jesus didn’t come into existence at conception as do we, Jesus is that which was from the beginning, in the beginning “was” the Word, He has always been, He’s eternal.”

So John is testifying here as to the deity and eternity of Christ, for who but God is eternal, and so in our vernacular we might understand this to say, “and John bore witness Him saying, I might be older than Jesus physically, but He’s the Ancient of Days in reality, Jesus is God.” “He has always been.” Or something to that effect, remember Jesus said, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.*” John 8:58 and So here we have the prophet of God, testifying of the reality of Jesus being God in the flesh.

Vs16

Another key word in this passage is “Full” or “Fullness” meaning, in Christ there is no lack, He’s is complete, He is a never ending reservoir of resources from which all of humanity throughout every generation is able to draw from in order to have their deepest need met and they’ll never exhaust Him, or draw the needle off the full mark. Jesus invited all of humanity to come to Him to receive of His fullness, we’re filled from His fullness, and He can fill from His fullness the deepest need of your heart. He fills your emptiness, soothes your pain, refreshes your weary soul, He satisfies your hunger, quenches your thirst, heals your brokenness, He calms your anxieties, brings peace where there’s stress, shines light upon our blindness, and gives life where there’s death.

Jesus can fill wherever you may lack, He is able to make whole because He is whole, even as He can give life because He is life. You see how can I give you what I don’t have, even so Jesus can’t fill you lest He first be full, the bible says, “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell.” Col 1:19 and Again “*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*” Col 2:9 and So whatever your need may be today, receive of His fullness that He might meet that need. It’s so unfortunate that of His fullness He’s prepared to give, and so often we are satisfied with less, receive of His fullness, and grace for grace.

Or more literally, “grace upon grace” or even “grace against grace” and “grace in place of grace” what does that mean? It means God’s mercies are new every morning, and every morning, and everyday He wants to supply you with His grace fresh for your life, He wants to stack more grace today upon the grace He gave you yesterday. He wants to replace the grace of last year with fresh grace for today, don’t rely on God’s grace in your life last week, or yesterday. It’s grace for today, grace for grace, and though this is a brief segment of the study, I titled the message grace for grace because I believe it’s pivotal that we receive this point. God just wants to lavish grace upon grace, like wave after wave crashing over you, they’re waves of grace just overwhelming our lives. So you can know that whatever is happening in your life today, if you’ll allow Him, God will exchange the grace He gave you yesterday, or last week, or last year for the grace that you need fresh in your life today. “and Of His fullness we have received, and grace for grace.”

Vs 17

Of course here John pointing to the new covenant and 2 means by which God has communicated to man. Of which one way ultimately brought death, the other brought life, on the day the law was given 3,000 people died. On the day the Holy Spirit was given in the New covenant 3,000 people were saved. The bible says, “*The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*” 2 Cor 3:6 and Even as we read here that the Law was given not “By” Moses, he didn’t author the Law, it was given “through” him instrumentally. Even so grace and truth were given by the Father to mankind through Jesus Christ Jesus is the truth, and the instrument of God’s grace, God showers us with grace in Christ, and only in Christ, Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” John 14:6

Why, because He is the instrument, the Medium through which God extends His grace and His mercies, and it's only by grace that we're saved. "Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Which by the way this is the 1st mention by John of Jesus by name and His title as the Christ in this gospel). Again the Pulpit Commentary makes this observation, "The highest manifestation and self-communication of Divine love and Divine thought, came into human experience through Jesus Christ." (Of course referring to grace and truth being that highest self-communication of Divine love and thought).

Vs18

Only one word I want to focus on here briefly and it's this word "Declared" it's the Greek word "Exegeomai" (ex-ayg-eh'-om-ahee); from which we get our English word "Exegesis" and it means, "to lead out" or "To unfold, or rehearse, or to explain" it speaks of expositing or exposition. Or to understand it another way, Jesus has led the Father out into the open for us to see and understand and has expounded Him, or explained Him so that we might have an accurate assessment of Him. Jesus has unveiled or unfolded the Father for us to see, and relate to, you remember when Philip said to Jesus, "*Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.*" Jesus said to him, "*Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*" John 14:8-9

So if you want to know what God is like you have to study the life of Jesus Christ Because He was God come in the flesh, He revealed the Father to us, because the Father had been so grossly misunderstood. Even as God is so often misunderstood today, Satan seeks to have God maligned, and slandered, and to give people completely wrong concepts of God. One of the most frequent vanities and profanities uttered from the mouths of non-believers almost without thinking about it is that God might damn an individual, or certain things. and It's said and so much that there's almost this given understanding that God is the Big Hammer in the sky, who's looking to Damn and judge and destroy anyone He can get His hands on for any loop hole He can find.

As though He's got this big fly swatter He's looking to swat us all with, and that couldn't be further from the truth. That goes against the very core of all God is who's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, God doesn't hate the world, desire to Damn the world or condemn the world. and So Jesus comes along and says, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*" John 3:16-17 People have a tendency to see God as fury and wrath, judgment, hellfire and thunder, but God has said, "*As I live, 'says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*" Ezek 33:11 and So Jesus comes along to reveal to us the heart of the Father, how He is for you and not against you, to remind you of the thoughts that He thinks towards you, thoughts of peace and not evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Vs19-23

J.B. was so cool, the more they probed him, the less he would say, he wasn't there to draw attention to himself. This could've been his big break, he was a prophet, born into the lineage of the priesthood, the big dogs of Israel are asking about him, he could've capitalized on this moment. But he didn't, he didn't have to make somebody of himself, he didn't have an identity crisis, he knew exactly who he was and who he wasn't. He was not the Christ, he wasn't seeking to be in the limelight, he didn't need everyone's attention, he wasn't Mr. Fix it. He wasn't life's problem solver, he wasn't The Word, he was a voice, here's the deal, you can't see a voice, you can only hear its message. So often we can want to be the center of attention, all eyes on me, Mr Fix it, life's problem solver, listen, I'm not the Christ, I'm not the word, I'm a voice, and you're a voice. and My mission, your mission is to bare witness of Christ, point people to Him, give Him the Lime Light, place Him in the center of attention. Because He's Mr. Fix it, Life's problem Solver, our need Meeter, we're to testify of Him.

Vs 24-28

We'll glance briefly over these 10vs or so next time as we continue on in this passage regarding J.B. Who he was and was not, but as for "Bethabara" that word means, "House of misery" or "House of depression", and it's a rough and rocky place near the Dead Sea, and yet that's where John Bore witness to the Life giver Jesus Christ and Let me just close by saying there's going to be times that we're called on to witness and testify of the goodness of Jesus Christ The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world from the house of misery and depression, don't think that things have to be perfect in your life before you're prepared to share Jesus Christ with those around you in need. Don't think that you can't share unless your circumstances are plush, and your walk perfectly pure, or you'll never share, sometimes the most effective witness comes from those rocky times in life when we're out in the desert. In the house of misery, because when we're weak, His strength is perfected, so no matter where you may find yourself today, yield yourself to God and allow Him to use your life as a witness to the reality of who He is, and of His love, and His goodness, His grace and truth as you receive of His fullness, and grace for grace.

Maybe you're here today and you've never received the grace of God, you could sit there and testify of the reality of lack that's in your life, be it pain that needs soothed, or emptiness that needs filled, brokenness that needs mended and made whole. The bottom line is that you have sin that needs forgiven, and you need to know that God loves you so much that He gave His only begotten Son, so that if you would just believe upon Him, God will through Him give you His grace. It's by grace that we're saved, and grace and truth comes through Jesus Christ Receive of His fullness today, that you might be filled, and forgiven.