

A Permanent Solution

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- [0 : 00] Well, turn with me, if you will, to John's Gospel.
- This morning we are in John's prologue. And we're going to be looking at verses 14 to 17.
- John writes this.
- 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. 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.
- [1 : 22] For from His fullness we have all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Amen.
- We pray that God would bless the reading of His Word. And, well, as you know, we've been going through John's Gospel and John's prologue.
- And we've seen that the Word was in the beginning with God and was God. That all things were made through the Word. And that in the Word was life. And that life was the light of men. That the light shines in the darkness.
- The darkness has not overcome it. We learned that there was a man who was sent to testify about this Word. He was a witness. He bore witness about the light. He wasn't the light.
- But He bore witness about the light that all might believe through Him. And then the true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world. The world was made through Him. Yet the world did not know Him.
- [2 : 21] He came to His own. And His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him. And who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. Who were born not of blood.
- Not of the will of the flesh. Nor of the will of man. But of God. Now we already see that He's spoken about a rejection. But when He talks about the Word becoming flesh, He doesn't talk about the rejection.
- He talks about His own experience. We have seen His glory. This one, the Word, the true light in Him was life. The Word became flesh.
- John was bearing witness about Him. And He became flesh. And John the Apostle saw Him. And beheld His glory. And then He brings John the Baptist in again.
- And says, He said that He who comes after me ranks before me. Because He was before me. This is He. This is He. John the Apostle is now saying that John the Baptist is pointing to a single man.
- [3 : 26] And saying, That is the true light. He is the Word. And John the Apostle has said, Yeah. We've seen Him. We have seen His glory. And it's the glory of the only Son from the Father.

Full of grace and truth. Furthermore, later on, He says, The law came through Moses. Grace and truth came through. Drumroll. He gives the name of the Word who was in the beginning.

It's Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Word. Who is it? Who is this man who is God? Who is this man who has life in himself? Who is this man who is the true light?

It is Jesus. John, who was sent to bear witness about Him. John the Baptist pointed to one man and said, That is it. That's Him.

And John the Apostle said, We've seen Him. And boy, did we see His glory. There is a saying that you will probably all know. Once more unto the breach, my friends.

[4 : 31] Once more unto the breach, dear friends. Once more. Who said it? It was in a Shakespeare play. And it was King Henry. Do you not know your Shakespeare?

No, I had to look it up. Shakespeare in his play, Henry V, has King Henry saying to his troops, Once more into the breach, dear friends.

Once more. And so, there is a book that you can get. It's called SOM. The Battle of the SOM. It's called SOM Into the Breach.

And, you know, one writer about that book has said, Did the Allies gain anything from what is often seen as an absolutely unjustifiable loss of life at the SOM?

I mean, I don't know if you've ever been there, but the loss of life there was incredible. This writer says, Unjustifiable. The great loss of life there was anything gained through that, through them going into the breach.

[5 : 39] Another writer says, Well, this book shows the extent to which the Allied armies were, in fact, able to repeatedly break through the German front lines.

It took thousands of lives, but repeatedly they were able, in the breach, to break through the German front lines.

The Word became flesh. Why? Why did God become man? Why did the Word become flesh? We've done this. We've looked at this passage.

It's like a Christmas passage because it's the birth of Christ. But it's more than that. It's far more than that. Why did the Word become flesh?

Well, a writer, a really old dude from thousands of years ago, Athanasius, in the 4th century, he anticipates just about every angle of his day that people might object to the fact that God could become man.

[6 : 43] He anticipates all the arguments and all the objections, and he writes about them in a book called On the Incarnation. And so he says this.

He says, Why did he not manifest himself by means of other and more noble parts of creation and use some nobler instrument to manifest himself?

Maybe, say, the sun or the moon or stars or fire or air. Maybe, say, many, many things. Why, instead of mere man, did he not use some of them?

Why did he choose man? And he says, The answer to this is this. The Lord did not come to make a display. What a wonderful statement that is. God did not come to the earth to make a display.

It's not like Thor coming down with thunder and lightning. It's not like Zeus, you know, or someone making a big show of themselves. The Lord did not come down to make a display.

[7 : 43] He came to heal and to teach suffering men. Moreover, nothing in creation, nothing in creation, had erred from the path of God's purpose, save only man.

And this is the true reason. This is what Athanasius says. And so he says, Since man alone, of all the creatures, had departed from the order of his creation, it was man's nature that the word united to himself, thus repairing the breach.

See, the word becoming flesh is God stepping into the breach. Of all creation, the breach between creature and creator, at the very point where it had occurred. The word which created all things in the universe became flesh because there was a breach in creation that put all of creation at risk.

You know this, if there's a fortified city and part of the wall, if there's a breach, it's not just that part of the wall that's in danger. If there's a single breach, the whole city is in danger.

The single breach of creation was flesh. And it put the whole of creation in danger. And so he became flesh because he came to the point at which there was a breach.

[9 : 07] The breach happened, was in flesh, man's flesh. And so the word stepped into the breach where no man or no thing in all creation could in order to repair the breach and bring man to his purpose.

Are you living your purpose as a man or a woman, as a human? You probably think that you're not. Are we living your purpose?

Sometimes people so associate themselves with their sin and identify themselves with their sin that when you say something about sin, what they hear is there's something wrong with who you are.

And when they hear that, they're either incredibly offended and angered or they're crushed and want to end themselves.

When all they hear is there's something wrong with who you are. Now that's not who God made you to be. God created you in his image for life to know him, to love him, and to live with him and rule with him over all the earth.

[10 : 21] What was man's purpose? What was man's purpose? And I'll show you why just now we are not living according to our purpose. Because man's purpose was not sin and mortality and death.

It's not why God made us. It's not what he made us for. We were originally made without sin and for immortality, bearing the image of our creator and having dominion on the earth.

Our state of sin and mortality is less than human. David wrote a wonderful piece about this. Jesus had no sin. Of all the humans that have ever lived, Jesus, the word who took on flesh, had no sin.

And as he was life himself, death had no claim on him, nor could it ever hold him. This is one of the magnificent things about Jesus.

You get into all sorts of debates. Could Jesus have died if he wasn't killed? No. Because his nature was not like ours. It wasn't subject to death and disease and fallenness.

[11 : 28] He couldn't have died of hunger no more than he could have died of disease. Because he was without sin. The wages of sin is death. He had no sin and death had no claim over him.

So, he, even clothed in a flesh like ours that comes from dust, he showed what it was to be truly human. Truly human.

David wrote about this. You see, sin makes us less than human, because man was created before sin. Humanity was created without sin in the beginning. Therefore, to be human, inherent to humanness is not sin.

And so, you might think, Jesus doesn't really know what it's like to be a human because he didn't have sin. Oh, no, we don't know what it's like to be truly human because we have sin. Jesus had no sin and so he has the perfect picture of what humanity ought to be.

And he doesn't show that as if to say, this is what you should have been. Imagine being Jesus' brother in life. Imagine having your mum saying, can you not be more like your brother?

[12 : 39] No, nobody can. The glorious thing is, we can. He came to show us what he was going to bring us back to and not just bring us back to but bring us into.

And so, Athanasius calls the effects of sin the dehumanizing of mankind. That's what sin does. It dehumanizes mankind.

Yet, this is what he says, the solidarity of mankind is such that by virtue of the words indwelling a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all.

Like when a great king enters a large city and dwells in just one of the houses, because of his dwelling in that single house, the whole city is honoured and protected.

So, even so it is with the king of all. He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many and in consequence, the designs of the enemy against mankind has been foiled along with the corruption of death.

[13 : 48] Do you see that? Because he has indwelt one body, he has made this possible for all. And therefore, the designs of the enemy have been foiled, the designs and corruption of death have been foiled forever.

He has stepped into the breach. That is what it means for the word to become flesh. He's stepped into the breach. And by doing so, death's reign of terror, which it is, death's reign of terror has now come to an end in that the Son of God has made a way back to immortality for flesh by indwelling it with his divine life.

Crazy, unimaginable thought, but true. then if he's life himself, if he's the Son of God, if he's the one who is without sin and took on flesh, why did he die?

Could he not have done that without dying? Well, there are many, many, many points to this, but you'll be glad to know that we'll explore most of them, not today, but Easter.

But as we're talking about man's purpose, let me show you just one point from Athanasius. Just one point. You see, prior to the fall, God gave a command, didn't he?

[15 : 01] And the consequence of breaking that command was death. Therefore, as Athanasius says, it would have been unthinkable that God should go back in his word.

That man, having transgressed, should not die, for God said that he would if he did. Man did not die, then that would show God to be a liar.

So Athanasius says, it's unthinkable that God should go back in his word. Any man who bears flesh must die, for it is the consequence of sin. But, and Athanasius calls this the divine dilemma, what is God to do?

Is he going to let his creation go to ruin? What would that say about God? It would be equally monstrous monstrous that beings which once had shared the nature of the word should perish and turn back into non-existence through corruption.

Can you not think about that for a minute? If creation, along with us, are going to ruin, what does that say about the creator? It was impossible, impossible, therefore, that God should leave man to be carried off by corruption because it would be unfitting and unworthy of himself.

[16 : 19] See, God doesn't want you. People think that death means annihilation and they think that's a good thing. It's not. Even if it were true, it's not a good thing.

And I used to think that. I used to say, once you're dead, you're dead and that's it. There's nothing after that. It's not true. What does it say about the creator that his creation should go to ruin when it was destined for immortality?

What would you rather? What would that say about God? What kind of creator would he be? And so, the word, which is Jesus, perceived that corruption could not be got rid of otherwise than through death.

Yet he himself, as the word being immortal and the father's son, was such that he couldn't die. For this reason, therefore, he assumed a body capable of death in order that through belonging to the word who is above all might become in dying a sufficient exchange for all and itself remaining incorruptible through his indwelling might thereafter put an end to corruption for all others as well by the grace of the resurrection.

It was by surrendering to death for his human brethren the offering of the equivalent You see, the only way that he could die was that he could surrender and sacrifice himself give himself over to men to be killed.

[17 : 49] And so, he says, in order to effect this recreation he had to first do away with death and corruption therefore he assumed a human body in order that death in it death might be once for all destroyed and that men might be renewed according to the image the image of the father only was sufficient for this need.

And so, this is an illustration that Athanasius gives what happens to a portrait a painting when it's been painted on a panel and becomes obliterated through external stains the Mona Lisa with some stains on it what happens?

The artist doesn't throw away the panel but the subject of the portrait has to come and sit for it again and then the likeness is redrawn in the same material. Who is the image of God?

But the son of God he's the very image. We are image bearers but he is the image of the invisible God. And so, it's not just restoring man's purpose for man but recapitulating he is fulfilling human's destiny.

What we were supposed to do what Adam was supposed to do Jesus fulfills in his own human body. You see, Adam was an image of God an image bearer made in the image of God whereas Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

[19 : 16] Adam was a son of God Jesus is the son of God. Adam was given dominion to rule Jesus is the king above all kings who will inherit the whole earth.

You see, he is incarnate forever. It's not just about healing humanity but also being the human who is the king. He is our king.

Now, not only that, something else. You see, various writers in the past spoke about this. Some people say and we think about this all the time and the reason why I wanted to do this because some of this might be unfamiliar.

Why did Jesus die? Why did he become human and die? Was it merely just for our salvation to rescue us? Well, yes, it was but not merely so. You see, some people go down the routes of that his incarnation was to repair the damage done by sin but then other writers such as the Puritan Thomas Goodwin argued for higher ends than simply the salvation of God's people.

Man, the gift of Jesus is not merely salvation but the gift is his own person to us and much more the glory of his person itself.

[20 : 37] And so, Stephen Charnock, another Puritan, says this, there is something in Christ more excellent and comely than the office of a saviour. The greatness of his person is more excellent than the salvation procured by his death.

Salvation was bought at a price and the price was the cross but his gift to us is not merely that but who he is. Who he is. You see, he is a way to know God.

He is the way to know God. His permanent incarnation means permanent revelation. We're going to talk about that next week. No one's ever seen God. No one. How could you, the created person, see the uncreated God?

You can't do it. Every faculty that you have is a created faculty. All your senses, your eyes, your ears, I mean, even in the created order, your eyes only see certain wavelengths but there is more light than we can see.

Your ears only hear certain frequencies but there is more that there is to hear. Even our senses are limited. How could our senses ever sense the uncreated God?

[21 : 45] We could not know him. Yet he makes himself known in various ways. One, through creation, his power and majesty displayed in the heavens. Two, through his word, his testimony of truth about himself.

Throughout the entire Bible, the question is not, what does this say about me? It says, what does this say about God? But as Hebrews says, in these latter times, he has fully revealed himself in his son, Jesus.

The one who came from the Father's side, the place of the uncreated, and put on flesh, has made him known. Philip, one of Jesus' disciples, said to Jesus, show us the Father and it's enough.

And Jesus said, look at me and you've seen the Father. And he wasn't being glib. It's true. Ron said it beautifully last week when he said, you know, that the full disclosure of God was in the Son.

What an amazing thing. And so look at Exodus. Look at the examples in the Bible. This is why the gift of his incarnation is not just for salvation.

[22 : 58] It is for salvation. He has come to rescue us, but it's for more than that. And so look at the Old Testament. For instance, everyone knows the story about Moses. Everyone knows the story about the Exodus. The people of Israel trapped in slavery in Egypt.

And God sends Moses to free them. Doesn't he? That's what the Exodus is about. And it reveals God. That is the moment. That is the great moment in the Old Testament that reveals God.

And so thereon, after, God says, remember this, that I am the God who rescued you out of Egypt. But did he rescue them out of Egypt so that they could get on with their lives and just remember, oh, aye, God remembered.

God rescued us out of Egypt. We know something more about God. He's not only the creator. He's the one who rescued us out of Egypt. Is that all? That's not what we see in the Old Testament.

He rescued them from something to something. He rescued them from slavery in Egypt to freedom with him in covenant relationship to worship him.

[24 : 02] Let my people go that they can come out to the desert to worship me. And he makes a covenant with them like a marriage. Do you make your vows to your wife just so that she can go on with her life and think, oh, aye, there's somebody out there that loves me.

It's about the relationship that you have, the intimacy, the knowing one another that you have together. And you laugh at the things that you used to do when you were going out and you were like, ah, you were just doing that because we were still in that moment of chasing after one another and now we really know the truth about each other.

That relationship, that intimate knowledge. And so the Exodus wasn't just about the rescue. It was about knowing God, being with him forever in covenant relationship and worshipping him.

It's the same in the Old Testament in the prophet Hosea. The prophet Hosea, God had told to rescue this prostitute to buy her price so that she no longer had to do that but she could marry him and live in a better marriage, a better relationship.

But the price he paid wasn't just to free her from prostitution, but it was to give her a better relationship, a more glorious marriage. And so the gospel, we need to know the gospel is not less than the cross.

[25 : 19] The cross is the price that we should all know about. But the gospel is more than just the cross where Jesus purchased our salvation. The cross is about Jesus himself.

He is the gift to us to know him, to know God through him, to be in covenant relationship with God through Jesus, to see the glory of God through Jesus, to see his glory and splendor and love and worship him forever through Jesus.

See, the cross isn't the gift. He is the gift. And so we shouldn't worship a piece of wood in the shape of a cross. We shouldn't worship a piece of paper with words on it. John chapter 5, Jesus says, you search the scriptures because in them you think you've got eternal life, except they point to me in Christ, in Christ.

And so the gift is himself. Think about this. Emmanuel, God with us. For it's not good for man to be alone, says Genesis.

Genesis 2.18. In order to know God and have a covenant relationship with him, we need bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.

[26 : 34] Think about that in Genesis. It's not good for man to be alone. Finally, when woman comes. Finally, bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. Covenant relationship. Finally.

Now you might think, what would it have been like to be back in Eden? Imagine that, just Adam and God, you know, having the wee bromance in the garden. What an amazing thing, without sin, to know God in the garden.

Here's a thought. We have it better. We have it better. Because God is fully disclosed in Christ. We fully get God in Christ.

And the garden that we are heading to is to know God through Christ. Flesh of my flesh. Bone of my bones. Not just to know God and see God in Christ, but to have a relationship with God in Christ like never before.

And how could that happen if after his death he then took off the cloak of flesh and said, I'm done with that. He's incarnate forever. He's in flesh forever.

[27 : 40] But he's in a new kind of flesh. Not only did he become like us, but in dying and rising with him, we will be like him.

For as Adam was a man of dust of the earth and we are like him, so when the seed of our bodies is planted along with Christ, the man of heaven, we shall be raised like him.

Paul talks about when you plant a seed it doesn't come out like a seed. It comes out like something far more glorious. So when you're planted with Christ, boy, there's going to be a body better than this.

And isn't that good news? Isn't that good news? Finally, it's not just for revelation to know God, but to see the glory of God and the Son and worship him forever. You see, Jesus is the Word.

Jesus is the Word who became flesh and he is both a new flesh and bones now, a new flesh and bones forever. This series is called More Than Flesh and Bones.

[28 : 46] We need to know that he still is flesh and bones, but he is a far better flesh and bones than we experience now and that is where we are headed and isn't that good news? Let me pray together.

God, our Father, we thank you that you have given us full disclosure in Jesus and that we have had that truth passed down completely unscathed.

Though some people claim the Bible's been changed, it never has and we have proof. We have the manuscripts. It's not been changed, though people throughout history have tried to eliminate it off the face of the earth.

People have tried to corrupt it through changing it. None of it's worked, for your Word will remain even when the earth fades. But we have been given your Word faithfully so that we might know the truth in Jesus.

And we thank you that in him is life. We thank you that he has not only rescued us, but he has rescued us from something to something far more glorious that we might have immortality and life and relationship with him forever.

[29 : 56] And no eye has seen nor mind imagined what that could possibly be like and the glory of that with Christ. And so we pray that we and more people would come to trust in Jesus to have that destiny with him forever.

We pray in his name. Amen.