

The Glory of Christ's Incarnation

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Date: 24 August 2014

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[0 : 00] I have to tell you, not too long ago there was an individual visiting our church and the person, I went up to them and said, I don't think I've met you before.

! And the individual said, well, no, actually I was here two years ago. Well, my memory, short-term memory of what it is, it's like, yeah, okay.

The individual said, the truth of the matter is, is when I came here about two years ago and you were preaching and you got emotional, I thought it was pure drama. And I just thought you were putting it on.

And it was pretty disgusting. The person said, you know what? I don't think it is. I have to tell you that because my heart is full.

And we are going to get to John chapter 1. But I want to start somewhere to kind of help you understand the glory of the passage that we're going to be in.

[1 : 24] Turn in the book of Revelation to chapter 5. And listen as I read it to you. And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals. And no one in the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And one of the elders said to me, weep no more.

Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and the seven seals. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw the Lamb.

Standing as though one who had been slain with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

[2 : 52] And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song. The reason we have Revelation chapter 5 is because we have John chapter 1.

And I want you to understand the connection between the two. And as I take up this passage in John chapter 1, verse 14 through 18, I have to tell you that as a shepherd and a sower of the seed, there is a part of me that as I have studied this week and as I've prayed for our time together in the Word of God today, there has been a portion of my heart that has been conflicted a little bit.

Because I realize that in the sowing of the seed, and that's what preaching is. In the sowing of the seed, there will be some seed that falls on hard and stony ground.

And there's some of you going to walk out of here just as bitter, just as unforgiving, just as stubborn, just as unrelenting in your sinfulness as when you came in.

[4 : 28] And there's some of you that are going to respond for a moment. And perhaps by just the effect of our time together and the prompting and plotting work of the Spirit of God, you're going to have a moment of softening.

And there will be a little bit of fruit spring up, but it will soon be stifled and squashed by the life that you live. But there will also be some that will fall upon good soil that's been prepared by the Spirit of God.

And as you behold, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord are going to be changed from glory to glory by the Spirit. Now listen to me.

I want you to hear me. The God who sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to be the Savior of lost mankind, once in particular that believers, those who know the Lord Jesus Christ, do not spend the remainder of their time here on this earth as grumpy, unhappy, broken, disconsolate, discouraged individuals.

And being other than we are by nature is not something that happens merely because we take a pill or we decide to change.

[6 : 00] If salvation is of the Lord, so also is transformation. And if there's anything that changes the heart of a believer, it's seeing Jesus.

Do you understand that? And so if you're sitting here and the truth of the matter is, is that the Spirit of God is already prompting you and saying, stop, stop, I have the perfect remedy.

And it is you, by the work of the Spirit, with all humility, pleading with Him, saying, hey, Jesus, I know you saved me. I don't want to stay this way. You asking that He would open up His word and that you, by His grace, would behold wondrous truths out of His law.

Well, as we look at John chapter 1, beginning there in verse 14, it says, 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.

And so let me begin this morning by just kind of reminding you that in this passage, and we're going to take from 14 and work our way through to 18, that what we are really dealing with is the Bible statement, the Word of God that tells us, Christ Jesus chose to become man.

[7 : 25] Christ Jesus chose to become man. I want you to recognize, as you look at that passage, that these nine verses that we have here at the very beginning of verse 14 are really, in some ways, the most profound words that we've heard so far.

It is true that Christ is the creator of the universe. It is true that He is the light and He is the life. And it is true that coming into this world, many rejected Him.

But overarching and superior to all of that is the reality that at the very heart of His coming is the fact that He came to be our Savior and He came to reveal the Father to us.

And so what we find in this text is that the Word tells us the second person of the Trinity, Christ, took on for all eternity the flesh and nature of His fallen creature, mankind.

I want you to understand that there is no other religion in the world that rests its faith on the complete humiliation of its God.

[8 : 41] I remember a number of years ago as I was on West Broad in H.H. Gregg. It used to be Sun TV before that and H.H. Gregg after that. And now I don't know what it is. But I was in there, I think, getting speakers for a stereo or something.

That tells you how long ago it was. And ended up being serviced by a very likable Somali salesman. And he was the most affable, congenial man.

And guess what we ended up talking about besides speakers? What would you think? I mean, I got a Gospel of John in my pocket. It's like, hey, while we're doing this, if I'm going to buy something from you, just listen to me.

And so we're talking about our religions, you know, and we're getting into it. And he's being respectful. I mean, after all, he wants to sell me something. And he's, you know, how many of you have been involved in conversations where you're really not tracking?

It's like, uh-huh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And you're completely there. You're somewhere else, you know. And he was going through the routine. And I remember getting down to the point of explaining that God sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, here to the earth.

[9 : 55] And God became flesh. You know what he did? He laughed in my face. Salesman, hoping to sell some product, just began, I can't believe, you can't believe that.

God doesn't do that. I said, yes, he does. Yes, he does. In fact, the reason that I know I have complete forgiveness for all of my sins is because God sent his son to make complete payment for my sins.

Do you know how the Muslim, Islamic person pays for his sins? It's kind of on a basis of, hey, you do a little bit of good, you kind of pay off a little bit of bad, right?

It's kind of on the installment plan. A lot like the idea that Catholics have about purgatory. I think I shared with you, my sister, Michelle, lives in Egypt.

And one day she was working in the kitchen and cut her finger. And in ran her Muslim helper. And she said, hold your finger towards heaven. Hold it up.

[10 : 59] Hold it up. Hold it up. God will see the blood and he'll wipe out an extra sin. Well, I'm a diabetic and I prick myself four times a day. It's like...

You know, it's like... I want to tell you something. I don't make fun of the fact that Jesus is the one who satisfied the debt of my sins.

But the world doesn't understand that God, seeing our complete inability, sent his son into the world to become flesh and to die for us.

And so in using this name, the word, in verse 14, he is kind of calling back into mind all that we saw in those opening verses where he announced the deity and the glory of Christ and recognized the absolute majesty, the supremacy of the second person of the divine Godhead.

And as we think about the fact that Christ came into the world and became man, I want you to understand that our faith rests completely on the fact that Christ became completely man for all eternity.

[12 : 21] He is 100% God and he is 100% man. Now, can you tell me how that works mathematically? The answer is, it's a matter of faith. And I don't make that to be overly simplistic.

It's just a fact. The Bible tells us that Jesus is all man and all God, and he's not 50-50. It's not just in John that we find this doctrinal truth.

And I'm going to have you track with me. We're going to look at several different places where it is true. Turn into Philippians. Go to Philippians 2, verse 7 and 8.

And let me track with you there what we read. It says, Now, there's another passage that I want to reference here in 1 Timothy 3, verse 16, as the apostle is kind of putting together the mystery.

And in the scriptures, a mystery is different in terms of what the Bible means by a mystery and what we mean by a mystery. A mystery, in our sense of thinking, is something that's a secret that we're trying to figure out before the TV show ends.

[13 : 52] Whodunit. In the Bible, a mystery is something that God reveals to us that we would never figure out apart from that. And so when Paul says what he does, there in verse 16, Indeed, great, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.

In other words, it is just beyond our capacity to understand the unbelievable revelation of the truth. Speaking about God, He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up into glory.

The Savior that I worship is all mankind, entirely human. He understands my frame and my frailty and yours as well.

And He took on for all eternity the clear character and person and nature of man.

Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things that through death.

[15 : 13] Why did He take on flesh and blood? He took on flesh and blood so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death. That is the devil. Do you know why I have victory over death?

It's because Jesus died in my place. And He's gained victory over death. Well, let us go a little further into the text in John chapter 1.

We look there in verse 14. It says, The word became flesh. And in telling us that it became flesh, it's telling us what we've talked about here, that Jesus is entirely man.

I want us to take a little bit of time to think about this little word dwelt. Some of you may have the word tabernacled. And I have to say that I understand the word tabernacle here to not refer to what many have commonly thought is a reference to the tabernacle in the Old Testament where the glory of God was revealed.

You see, when John chose to use the word tabernacle in the Old Testament.

[16 : 46] That was at the very center of the camp of the nation of Israel does not really communicate accurately the imagery that this verse tells us.

You see, the word became flesh and set His tent up with us. Now, I know one of the things that happens in the summertime is some of you go camping.

And I happen to like camping. It took me probably about 40 years of marriage to persuade my wife that it was something that was a good idea.

You guys, when you go camping, and Judith and I, when we go camping, we do it a little differently than some. We go camping most of the time down at Old Man's Cave.

And we go, listen to me, we go after Labor Day and we go before Memorial Day. That's because all the natives have cleared out between those times. Last winter, Judith and I camped in Old Man's Cave in December.

[17 : 53] And besides the squirrels and the deer and the raccoons, we were pretty much on our own. Camping, for some of you, is a pop-up with a propane stove.

And you better have A.C. And God bless you. Have a good time. But that's not camping what this passage is telling us about. Listen to me. Camping is gritty business.

It really is. Growing up in India, and that's why I was fully persuaded that my wife should love camping, we would go.

We had three-day vacations and ten-day vacations. And we thought that camping was the best way to get away from that hovel that was our boarding school. And we would pack and we would be gone the minute we were legally allowed to leave the property.

And we'd go. One place was about a 15-mile hike and the other was about 26. We'd set up a tent and we'd stay. One case was three days and the other was ten days.

[19 : 00] Now let me tell you something about tenting together when you've been ten days together and it took you 26 miles to get there walking, carrying a 45-pound pack. Guess what you smell like? A goat. And not only that, but after you sat around the campfire, we didn't have propane stoves.

We didn't have kerosene stoves. It was just plain old ordinary wood smoke. Do you follow that? And about the third afternoon, as we were beginning to cook supper, there began to have this little conversational rift running through the camp of, hey, you're not sleeping in my tent.

And you're not sleeping in my tent. And so everybody would go down to the cold mountain stream.

Let me tell you something. Himalayan mountains, 8,000 feet. Even in July, the streams were not tolerable.

But the choice of sleeping outside or inside, we would dip temporarily, lather up generously, and then dip temporarily. Do you follow what I'm saying? Here's my point.

Now, when this passage tells us that the Word became flesh and set its tent up among us, what it's telling us is that he was willing to leave the glory of heaven for us and set his tent where we are and to do it forever.

[20 : 27] Worthy is the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. In order to be slain as the Lamb, he had to be willing to come and tent where we are.

And I've got to tell you that the gritty reality of tenting in this world doesn't compare to what happened when the Father sent his Son down here for us.

Allow me just to speculate just for a moment, but I want you to kind of think about the angels kind of sitting around as they're watching Jesus leave heaven. Now, this is not, I'm not going to write a book, okay, since I taught Sunday school like I did, you know, but I want you to just imagine one of them says to the other one, where's he going?

He's going down there. What? To visit? No. He's going to live there forever. He's, you know what it says in Peter, it says that the angels kind of look at this business of Christ's relationship with us and it says that they try to pull the curtain back so they understand and they can't figure it out.

He came here to be completely man, to be subject to hunger and to thirst and humiliation and endure the extreme suffering of the cross.

[21 : 46] And as it says there in this passage, it says, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. There's a reason that so much of our singing magnifies the wonder of the incarnation.

As I was studying this week, I found myself repeating the words to the song that we actually sang last week, how deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that he should give his only son.

Why? To make a wretch his treasure. Do you follow that? Why was God willing to send his son to this earth to tent with us?

It's because we need that. And so I want you to understand that John then goes on in verse 14, not only to explain the fact that Jesus came here, but also to announce that Christ came not only to take on flesh, but to show us the full glory of the Father.

Look at the second part of verse 14. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory. Glory as the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[23 : 00] Now, I'm going to beg your indulgence, because of the focus of this passage, to not spend time dealing with the uniqueness of the sonship of Christ, only begotten son.

I want you to understand that it is a foundational theological truth, but in the flow of the passage that we're looking at, as I'm going to lay it out for you here with the focus on his coming, we're not going to deal with that, which is a very important truth.

But I want you to understand that Christ came to reveal the full glory of the Father. Why did Jesus come? It's so we can see God. So we can see God. And so the second point that I want you to understand this morning, as we look at this text, is that Jesus fully reveals the invisible God. Now, I'm going to kind of step on the pedal here, and put together, we took quite a bit of time on the first part of 14, and we're going to press the rest of it together, and explain it in simple parts this way. Jesus came to fully reveal the glory of the Father, who is our God.

And in the last part of 14, what we find is that it explains to us that John wants us to clearly understand that Jesus is the glory, and we can see it.

[24 : 26] We can handle it. If you were to go at another point into 1 John, as 1 John kind of begins to lay out the argument about the Lord Jesus Christ being God the Son, he talks about the fact that our hands have handled, and our ears have heard, and our eyes have seen, talking about Christ.

I want you to look at what it says here, in essence, that John wants us to grasp, is that Jesus lets man see the fullness of God's grace and truth.

Because of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have everything that is needed for us to comprehend just how gracious and just how truthful Christ is.

As we look here in the passage, pick up now, if you will, in verse 14 or 15, it says, John bore witness about him and cried out, this was he of whom I said, he who is coming after me ranks before me because he was before me.

In essence, that passage tells us that John the Baptist's ministry was to be a formal announcer of Christ's coming.

[25 : 40] How many of you remember last week when Aaron Holopeter played Hail to the Chief? The purpose of that was to remind you that John's ministry was this formal task of letting people know, hey, he's coming, he's coming, he's coming, he's coming.

That's what John the Baptist did. And John the Baptist's ministry is stunning for the tremendous impact that he had, and he never did the kind of miracles that we find Moses or Elijah or Jesus doing.

The miracle of John the Baptist's ministry was the power of the Holy Spirit taking his preaching and using it to hammer at the issue of a need for repentance.

And people were drawn by that. And so here, what we find is that John the Apostle wants us to understand that John the Baptist's ministry, verse 15, was to bear witness to Jesus, and when John the Baptist saw Jesus, guess how he responded?

John the Baptist announced the truth. This is him. This is him. He'd been saying, he is coming, he is coming, he is coming, and when John the Baptist saw with his eyes for the first time the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you know what he said?

[27 : 05] behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. I mean to tell you, can you imagine that kind of statement being made among those Jews who were expecting the Messiah to come and who had been listening?

They'd been hanging on every word of John the Baptist, and then he stands back and he says, that's him pointing to Jesus. There's no wonder that some of his disciples packed up and left that time.

Bye, John. That's him. I'm gone. And by the way, when some of the other little small-minded disciples came to John and said, do you realize we're losing the crowd? And what did he say? He says, well, let's get this right. He must increase, imperative. It's an absolute necessity that he increase and I decrease. Well, as you look at verses 16 through 18, we find that John the apostle lays out three remaining truths about Jesus.

Number one, Jesus is the full revelation of the glory of God. Verse 16, and from his fullness we have received grace upon grace.

[28 : 21] Jesus is the full revelation of God. The word full that is used here is the word pleroma, which is talking about having it packed into the point that nothing else will fit.

Full. And when you stop and think about that statement of his fullness, he then goes on because he just doesn't want us.

He's not satisfied with just, it's the full deal. He goes on and says, and grace for grace. And when he uses that little phrase in verse 16, grace upon grace, he is talking about grace that is packed on top of grace.

Let me remind you a little bit of the fact that in the scriptures before the time of highlighting or bolding, what was used and particularly was used in auditory communication is that when you wanted to make a point, you repeated it immediately.

Such as Isaiah chapter 6, holy, holy, holy. holy. Oh. Or Jesus, one of the things that he would say occasionally, if he said it in King James, it would be verily, verily.

[29 : 32] If he said it in ESV, it was truly, truly. And what he was saying, it was kind of a double tap, you know, bang, bang. This is really right. And so here is John using that same principle of emphasis to say grace upon grace.

Second thing we see there in verse 17, it says, for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. And what we understand that to mean is that Jesus is better than the law.

We will see later that Jesus didn't come to replace the law, that's not what he came. He fulfilled the law. But we understand that the purpose of the law was principally to expose several very important key features in our understanding.

One is the holiness of God. What does the law tell us? It tells us that there is a God who has holy standards. And standards don't change.

I was getting ready to go visit my mom and dad and Pastor Saul told me in advance, he says, by the way, I want you to know there's a semi-truck that tipped over here on the on-ramp going on to 270 off of Roberts.

[30 : 50] Do you know why semi-trucks tip over? Huh? There's a little lesson in physics in case you're wondering. It's when you have too big of a load and you're going too fast and guess what happens?

And it's a sharp dug, am I right? You've never tipped one over, right? Praise God. But there it was, sprawled all over the road. And I thought to myself, I'm going to be smart, I'm going to avoid this, and then I got on the phone and guess what I did?

I'm just following habit and the next thing I know is I didn't come back and tell Pastor Saul immediately.

I was like but here's the truth. There's a reason why when you're driving on those on ramps, they have these little pictures of trucks tipped over.

Do you know why they put those there? It's not to let trucks know that that's the right place to do it. It's to say to truck drivers, please don't do this.

[31 : 56] And so Jesus came to make clear the sinfulness of our hearts, but he's better than that. And what I don't mean like the law is bad, but there's more to the glory of God in his care for us than the law.

In addition sin is grace and truth. And Jesus came and he opened up so that all of us could see that despite the reality of the fact that the law condemns us as sinners who have every reason to expect eternity in hell, God in his undeserved kindness sent the Lord Jesus to be our Savior and deliver us from the ugliness and the bitterness and the darkness of our soul.

Furthermore, as we see here in verse 18, it says, no one has ever seen God. I remember while we're on the heaven is for real deal, I remember a friend who came to me once and had a picture. He was a truck driver, Doug, I want you to know that. And he came to me and said, you have to see this, it was a Polaroid. How many of you remember Polaroids? If you're old enough to remember Polaroids, it's like you also remember horse-drawn carriages, close together.

And I remember this guy said, no, no, I've seen God. And he had a Polaroid, he'd been driving somewhere about their Pilot Mountain in North Carolina, and he'd seen this cloud formation and he was convinced it was God.

[33 : 37] God was in the cloud. Do you follow that? God, and he, I mean, heaven help me. I stared at that thing for I didn't want to disrespect the guy. He was quite a bit bigger than me. And it was like, that's God?

God, no, I don't see it. Okay? Here's what the Bible says, it says, no one has ever seen God.

And I'm of the private opinion that we will never see God, the Father. But we will see Jesus and we will be satisfied in seeing him. God. And so as we look at this majestic declaration of the reality of

the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, it tells us that Jesus makes the invisible God fully known. And what's the value of that? What's the benefit that we receive by understanding that Christ is the one who completely satisfies the longing of our heart to know the Father?

Father, there is something in our heart that desires to know, and Christ satisfies that. So let me get intensely practical as we bring things here to a close.

[34 : 55] If you're a sinner here this morning and you are under the terrifying burden of your sin, I have no doubt that some of the things that are happening to you today, your thinking are just kind of strictly the outtakes outcome of mistreatment or consequences, and you may be sitting here and just not getting the memo that God in His holy judgment will eventually deal with sin.

I want you to know that Christ Jesus came into the world to give you hope and to draw you to the light. He came to die in your place and to satisfy the debt of your sin.

sin. And I just cannot understand how you could turn away from a loving God who willingly would sacrifice His own son for you.

I don't want you to be bad soil. There are some of you here that are believers, and there was a point in your life where you were under that pall and under the burden of your sin, and you were convicted of the absolute misery and the certainty of judgment, and you came to the Lord Jesus, and you had all your sins forgiven, and do you know what that felt like?

It was like, the burden's been lifted. But as it says in the book of Revelation, you've forgotten your first love.

[36 : 26] Can I tell you that as we read through the book of John, John's gospel is, for one, profoundly evangelistic, because it will say over and over and over again, God sent His Son to save lost, broken, ruined sinners.

John's gospel is also profoundly edifying, because as we see in the gospel of John, the heart of Christ, and the love of Christ, and the wisdom of Christ, the believer's heart that is not sour-sucking on self-centered thinking, how's that, is going to find comfort and hope love and affection, patience, joy in the Holy Spirit.

God. I'll close with one other passage. You know, if there's anything that I am persuaded that God is doing in the lives of those who are truly believers, that He is changing us.

Would you agree with me? Huh? If you're a child of God, you can't stay the way you are. Everybody say yes! Okay. Hey, if you're a child of God, you can't stay the way you are.

You can come easy or you can come hard, but He's going to take you there. Now, listen to me. 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 18. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord.

[38 : 20] That's what we've seen this morning. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory. You follow that? It says, beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image.

If you're sick and tired of staying where you are, then you put your eyes on Jesus a little harder and keep locked on, because here's what happens. As you stay focused on Christ, the truth of who He is begins to change you.

And as it says, transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

I like that. Let's close in prayer. Father God, your prophet Zechariah penned under your direction, these words, not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.

And it has been my desire this morning that people would see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. That those who are here today and are under the burden and the despair of their sin would cry out and say, I need Jesus to save me.

[39 : 54] And those who are here who are believers, believers whose lives are complicated by unforgiveness and bitterness, by an unrelenting bout with self-focus and depression, that are consumed with anxiety, would be resolute this morning to set their eyes upon the Lord Jesus that seeing Him, they would be changed from glory to glory.

glory to the Spirit. And so we understand that you put us on the spot this morning of responding in some way. Some of us are going to be bad soil.

Others of us, by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit, are going to produce fruit. And we plead with you to be gracious in your precious name. Amen.

Let's stand together as we close.