

OpenTheo

John 1:10 - 1:18



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses John 1:10-18 in this lecture, focusing on the prologue of John's Gospel. He delves into the spiritual and mystical language used by the author and highlights the deliberate selection of material around John the Baptist to calm his exuberance. Gregg reflects on the concept of God becoming flesh in Jesus Christ, emphasizing the humility required for God to become man. He also touches on the communicable and incommunicable attributes of God and how they define His character, before concluding with the proclamation of Jesus as the Word of God.

Transcript

We're continuing our examination of the first part of John's Gospel, which is sometimes called the prologue. It's the first 18 verses of John chapter 1, which actually precedes his telling of the story. He's not telling any story here in the first 18 verses.

The story begins in verse 19. Verses 1-18 are his sort of analysis or his theological interpretation or explanation of the significance of the life of Christ, rather than the events of the life of Christ. He's going to give both.

He's going to give events. But he wants us to know what he has come to understand as the significance of the life of Christ. When he saw Jesus, he saw a man who looked like an ordinary man.

However, he beheld something in him which he calls his glory. He beheld his glory. It was the glory like that of the only begotten of the Father.

And he says, we came to understand things about this man that you might not catch at a glance. Even if you watched all of his behavior and cataloged everything he said and did, you might not grasp who he really is, because you might assume that he had a beginning at his birth like the rest of us have. But in fact, he is an invader from heaven.

He is God come down. And this is what we're told in the first 18 verses that precede the telling of the story of Jesus here. Now, he is in the early verses.

We looked at verses 1 through 9 last time, and we have about the same number of verses to cover to the end of the prologue now. And in the first nine verses, there are certain concepts, rather rich and broad and mysterious concepts in some ways. The concept of the word, the concept of light, the concept of life, all of them being used in ways that are somewhat more spiritual, somewhat more, I don't know, mystical than the same words could be used in other settings.

The word word can be a very common thing. You're listening to my words, but that's not what he means. Not at least that's not all he means.

Jesus may be, in fact, analogous to as far as God speaking is like our speaking. But to him, the word is something that has personality itself. I can talk about my words, or I can talk about your words, but I'm not talking about something that has personality.

Your word doesn't have its own personality, its own personhood. But he speaks about in the beginning was the word, and he says in him, in who? In the word. The word is a who? The word is a he? And so he's got a rather strange usage of the expression word, a very common term, word, but not at all the common thought about it.

Likewise, he says in him was life. And we, of course, can use the word life in a very ordinary sense. Life is what is in living things, and life is no longer in dead things.

Life is just the contrast to death. But he's got something much more in mind. This life is light, and even light, obviously, is a spiritual concept here.

It's not talking about the lights that come from the stars and from the sun and from candles and light bulbs. It's talking about spiritual things. He's introducing spiritual ideas, which, by the way, John is apparently very fond of, because they come up a lot in his writings elsewhere also, not just this book.

I mean, when you look at 1 John, he says this is the message that we have heard of him, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

And you think, walk in the light. I mean, we know this expression because we live in a Christian culture that is shot through with Christian phraseology. Walking in the light is not a strange term for us, but when we think about it, we realize it's metaphorical.

John says, and so does Jesus, that he that walks in darkness stumbles because he doesn't know where he's going. But he's not talking about literally walking through a dark room or walking through an enlightened room. He's talking light is something else in this case.

Light is truth or light is illumination or something. It's spiritual. So we've got these words that have very common meanings in other contexts, but not common here.

That he's trying to get across something in popular language or well-known language that are concepts that are very hard for humans to grasp because God is hard to grasp. God is spirit. As John tells us, Jesus said to the woman as well, he said God is a spirit.

And spirit is a subject that we don't know much about because we don't see it. It doesn't register in our senses. And we're very familiar with the world of our senses, but we're strangers to the world of spirit.

At least we start out that way. We may become more acquainted with it, but the language and analogy of spiritual things is something that John explores and exploits and the words he likes to think of to explain these spiritual things that pertain to who Jesus is at essence. He's light.

He's word. He's life. And this word was made flesh.

This light was the life that enlightens everyone. All these concepts, some people may find them merely difficult. Others may find them intriguing.

But they are definitely a different approach to the record of the story of Jesus than the synoptic gospels have given. And in the synoptic gospels, it's just the historical facts. This happened and this happened and this happened.

And John wants to try to get behind the facts, get into the meaning of the life of Christ. And so that's what he's doing here. Now I mentioned that in this prologue, I believe there's a flow, even a chronological flow of thought.

That is, he's moving from the creation chronologically through history up to the incarnation, I think. It's not necessary to see it that way, but I've come to see it that way in recent years. And in doing so, though, he interrupts that chronological flow with a couple of parentheses.

And one of those parentheses is verses 6 through 8 and the other is verse 15. And if the narrative is read just omitting those, and that's what we mean by a parenthesis, that you could read it sensibly without the parenthesis there. The parenthesis is an aside that could have been left out, and it would have made perfectly good sense without it.

But it's an aside that the author considers to be an important point to get straight, so you don't get confused about something. And both of these parentheses in John chapter 1, the one that's in verses 6 through 8 and the one that's in verse 15, are about John the Baptist, and both of them calculated to diminish somewhat unrealistically high opinions of John the Baptist. Some people apparently had extremely high opinions of John the Baptist, which, by the way, one should.

I mean, Jesus had a high opinion of John the Baptist. The problem is, when you have a high opinion of a mere man, one can come to the place of giving him honor that really belongs only to God. And people do that.

That's what cults do. Cults give their leaders respect and honor and deference that really is at a level that really should only be reserved for God himself. And it would seem to me that John is addressing that tendency in someone that he thinks may be reading this letter.

I mentioned that John was in Ephesus writing to an audience that was probably in Ephesus, and we know that there had been a group of people in Ephesus. The book of Acts testifies to this in chapter 18 and 19 of Acts. There had been some people there who were acquainted with John the Baptist, not personally, but had heard about him, were disciples of his.

And apparently, John's ministry had been introduced in Ephesus by a traveling preacher named Apollos, who came from Alexandria, while Paul was away from Ephesus and influenced a number of people. And Paul, when he revisited Ephesus, had to bring some adjustment because the people had come to... They were baptized in John's baptism, but they didn't know anything about Jesus' baptism. So Paul had to say, well, John's not the final word about this.

John testified of Jesus. And that's what we find John the author doing here also. He's saying, okay, there's this message from God, this word from God, this light that has been sent to people that gives life.

And apparently, he felt like there might be someone who's thinking he's talking about John. And among his original intended readers, there might have been some who were making that mistake. So he says in verse 6, there was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

But this man came for a witness to bear witness of the light, that all through him might believe he was not the light. He was sent to bear witness to that light. And, of course, the parenthesis in verse 15 has the same effect of calming down to someone who's putting John too much on a pedestal.

It says, John bore witness of him and cried out saying, this was he of whom I said, he who comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me. In other words, Jesus has a more exalted position than John. And even once we get past the prologue and he starts talking about the story, he starts with John the Baptist and John's testimony about Jesus in contrast to John's testimony about his own self.

And notice he says in verse 20 that John confessed and did not deny, but he confessed, I'm not the Christ. So almost everything that he records from John is John diminishing

himself and pointing to Christ. And like I said yesterday, the final words that this gospel records from the mouth of John the Baptist are about Jesus.

He must increase. And John says, I must decrease. So there seems to be, in the selection of material that the author has chosen to say about John the Baptist, a deliberate calming of perhaps an exuberance about John the Baptist that was beyond what was appropriate.

But having observed those things, we see that the narration of the prologue continues now. At the end of verse 9, we saw that Jesus was the true light. Actually, we're not calling him Jesus yet.

We're still calling him the word and the light and the life at this point. We're not probably even talking about the incarnation yet. The incarnation is clearly mentioned in verse 14.

And so it's very possible that everything prior to verse 14 is prior to the incarnation. Now, lest you just see it through that grid and not think otherwise, there is another way to see it, of course. It is possible that he's got the incarnate word in mind almost all the way through here.

And it especially sometimes seems like it when you come to verse 10 and it says, he was in the world and the world was made through him and the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own did not receive him. We think immediately of the incarnation here.

He, Jesus, was in the world. He came to his own and they didn't receive him. And this is a good summary of Jesus' actual earthly incarnate life.

But it is also a true statement about the word prior to the incarnation. God's word was in the world. God was communicating through the prophets.

He was communicating through the heavens declaring the glory of God, the conscience of man. In many ways, God was trying to talk to people. He did not leave the world without a witness.

As long as there were people, there was God's word coming to them. Not always as clearly in some cases as others. Certainly, the word of God that came through Moses was not as clear as the word that came through Christ.

As Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 3 when he talks about Moses' face being veiled and thus veiling the glory of the covenant that Moses inaugurated. And then Paul goes on to say, but we are speaking with unveiled faces. And we are not like Moses and those before who spoke unclearly, he says.

We speak boldly and plainly. So there are degrees or a procession of God increasingly

giving more light, speaking more plainly as history goes by. It's obvious that Adam and Eve didn't have a lot of instructions from God.

Noah, after the flood, received a few more that others had not ever had. And when the law came, the Jews received more of the word of God and had more knowledge of God. More of his self-expression and disclosure of his will than anyone had had before, apparently.

But in Christ's incarnation, we have the ultimate. But I'm not sure that John's thinking that far ahead yet in verses 10 and 11. When he says that he, because he says he was in the world, we think of a man, Jesus, walking around in the world that he's talking about.

Remember, he said he made everything, too, and this is before the incarnation. He's been personifying this word all the way through, and he continues to do so. He was in the world.

God's speaking to man was always a phenomenon in world history. And the world was made through him, and yet the world didn't recognize him, didn't recognize his word. You know, there was a time later in the Gospel of John where this seems to be illustrated, the tendency of people to maybe have the opportunity to hear and understand God, but miss it.

In John chapter 12, Jesus said, Father, glorify your name. And a voice from heaven spoke and said, I have glorified it, and I will do it again. And the Bible says, some said it thundered.

Others said an angel spoke to him. Now, John's Gospel tells us it was the voice of God that spoke to him, but some received it as a message from God, perhaps from an angel. Others just said that was just thunder.

In other words, even when God is speaking, some people can discern that's a message from God. Others just say, no, that's just a natural phenomenon. Now, that's why I don't accept this claim that atheists sometimes make, that if God would just reveal himself that they'd believe.

In debating atheists, sometimes I've put the question to them, what would it take for you to believe in God? They say, well, if he'd just appear before me, or if he'd just write, you know, in the sky, Hi, I'm God. I think, no, you wouldn't. You'd just say it's a hallucination.

You'd give it a natural explanation. There's some people who, no matter how clearly God speaks, they're going to give it a natural explanation. Some will say it thunders, even if he speaks audibly from the sky.

That's just thunder, you know. His voice and his word has always been in the world, but people have not been tuned in to it so that they, you know, nature is crying out the glory

of God, but many people are not getting the message. The world didn't hear it.

The world didn't recognize it. And in verse 11, he came to his own, and his own did not receive him. And now the word own, in each of these two clauses, is a different form in the Greek.

The word own, the pronoun his own, in the first case, is in the neuter, which means his own things, his own world, his own place, his own home, something non-personal. But the second own is personal, it's masculine, his own people. And so sometimes translators have made that clear, the New King James does not, except by putting a marginal note in there about it.

But he came to his own place, his own things. He came to his own world that he'd made. And his own people, which would be the Jews, did not receive him.

So what we have in this survey of the history of the word is that he was in the beginning with God, he made the world, he was continuously in the world, continuously communicating, people were not hearing him, so he came especially to the Jews, his own people. Even they didn't hear it. They didn't receive him.

Now, this again sounds like it could be a reference to Christ coming to Israel and being rejected, and a person is certainly at liberty to see it that way, but we can also see it as he's talking about when the law came, God spoke to his own people in a special way, through Moses, through the prophets. God's word came to the Jews continuously for 1400 years before Jesus was born, and they weren't receptive. I mean, they were temporarily receptive when Moses gave the law, but they never really submitted.

The nation of Israel did not live according to God's words. They rejected the prophets, they killed their prophets. So that's kind of them not receiving him.

And so he says, but as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Now, I want to say that these two verses present the biggest challenge to the thesis I've been suggesting, that this pre-incarnation, because if he is talking about before the incarnation, that God's word came to Israel in Old Testament times, and they were not receiving him, yet it says there was a remnant who did receive him, and he gave them the power to become the sons of God, even to be born of God. Now, the reason I say this is a bit of a wrench in the works of what I've been suggesting, is because in my understanding, people in the Old Testament, though they could be justified by faith, like Abraham was, I don't believe they had the experience of spiritual rebirth.

I believe the experience of being born of God was a new privilege, brought about through the new covenant. Being born again is like having a new heart, having God's

laws written on the heart, having the heart of stone taken out and the heart of flesh put in. These are all things the Old Testament predicted would happen when the Messiah comes.

And the Bible says these are done by the work of the Holy Spirit, who was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John tells us that in John chapter 7. When Jesus says in John 7, verses 37-38, Jesus says, if anyone thirsts, let him come unto me, and he that believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. But then in John 7, verse 39, the explanation of the author is, this he spoke of the Holy Spirit, who was not yet given, because Christ was not yet glorified.

Now, rebirth is the work of the Holy Spirit, and John's gospel later tells us the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus wasn't yet glorified or resurrected. Likewise, 1 Peter chapter 1 speaks about rebirth. Not many of the epistles actually use the expression born again, but some of them do, a very few.

And Peter uses the expression in 1 Peter chapter 1, and verse 3, he says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 1 verse 3, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again. That is, we have been born again. He has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Now see, our being born again is even likened to the resurrection of Christ. We were dead in trespasses and sins, and God made us alive. He brought us to life.

We've experienced a resurrection in Christ, because Christ rose from the dead. Our rebirth in the theological writings of the New Testament is attributed to Christ's resurrection. It's our own participation in his resurrection.

And therefore, being born of God seems to be a phenomenon that could not really be happening before Jesus rose from the dead, because even we who have been born again have been through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Spirit has been given since Christ has been glorified, and that Holy Spirit given works regeneration in us so that we're born again. Now, that is my understanding reached from the verses I've just shown you.

I should tell you there are people, the Reformed theology, for example, would not agree with me on that. They believe that Old Testament saints were regenerated too. And so I would stand not quite on the same set of presuppositions with them.

They believe that regeneration occurred in the Old Testament to Abraham and to David and to people. And there is certainly, there are some wording that might give that impression, even when Samuel told Saul, you know, you're going to meet this company of prophets and the Spirit's going to come upon you and you'll become another man. It almost sounds like being born again, although the language is not identical, and I don't

think the phenomenon was identical with Saul.

The things that the Bible says about rebirth in the New Testament sounds like this is one of the new phenomena of the new covenant that was brought into existence through the resurrection of Christ and the giving of the Spirit of Pentecost. So, you can agree or not agree with me, and it won't bother me in the least, but the point is I personally still think that while people were certainly saved by faith in the Old Testament, that salvation did not include the privilege of a regenerated soul, a new life given through the Spirit. Though, let me just say this by way of balance to that.

Maybe what is new about that is that it was wholesale throughout the people of God. When Jesus, when the Spirit was sent on the church in the upper room, perhaps the new thing is that all the Christians had it, whereas in the Old Testament only individuals like the prophets and a few others had it. Maybe it is conceivable that in the mind of the apostles there was a phenomenon like this experienced by a small number of people in the Old Testament, special people, Moses, Joshua.

The Spirit of God came upon David when he was anointed. Maybe what they experienced was a regeneration, but it was not given to all of God's people. Because you might remember in numbers, I don't mean to confuse you by thinking on my feet here and even modifying my own position while I speak, but I do that.

I never stop correcting myself if I can. In numbers, we find that Moses was complaining to God about having the burden of leading all the people. And God said, well, I'll give some of that burden to some other men.

You find 70 good men and bring them to me, to the door of the tabernacle, and I'll tell you what, I'll put some of the Spirit that's on you on them too. And so he did. And this is the 11th chapter of the book of Numbers.

So it says that in Numbers 11.25, Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him and said, He took the Spirit that was upon Moses and placed the same upon the 70 elders. And it happened when the Spirit rested upon them that they prophesied, although they never did so again. Now, it turned out there were a couple of guys who should have been there and were elsewhere, but the Spirit came on them anyway, even though they're elsewhere in the camp and not under Moses' oversight.

And Joshua was concerned about that and thought that Moses should tell them not to do that, not to prophesy in the camp where Moses can't sort of keep an eye on them and make sure they're not false prophets. And Joshua, in verse 28, said to Moses, My Lord Moses, forbid them, these two men who are prophesying in the camp, but they're not there being properly supervised by the maiden prophet Moses. And Joshua thinks that might be a little bit of a dangerous situation.

Maybe might start a rival movement against Moses because these people too now, like him, have the Spirit. Maybe they could compete with him. I think that's what Joshua's concerned about.

And he says, Moses, forbid them. But look at Moses' words in verse 29. Moses said to him, Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.

Now, see what Moses is noticing is there are some, a few, now 71 in Israel, who the Lord has put his Spirit upon them. Wish that would be true of all God's people. He's acknowledging that that is not the wholesale experience of all God's people, but it seems to be of a few.

And it may be, although the Bible doesn't use this language, and therefore I'm not sure, it may be that these people had the Spirit come upon them. Maybe they were born of God. But what was new in the new covenant is that this is true of all God's people.

That in the last days I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams, and upon my handmaidens and my maidservants and my servants, I'll pour out my Spirit on them and they'll prophesy. In other words, the prediction of Joel chapter 2 is that this thing that Moses wished would happen to all God's people is in fact someday going to happen to all of God's people. Moses said, would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and he'd put his Spirit on them.

Joel said, that's what God says he's going to do in the last days, he's going to pour out his Spirit on all flesh, and they'll all prophesy. The very thing that a few people did here, be done by one. And Joel is certainly prophesying about the new covenant because that's what Peter told us in Acts chapter 2, when the Spirit came he said, this is that which Joel spoke about.

So in a sense, it may well be that the phenomenon of being born again was not entirely withheld from humanity prior to the resurrection of Christ, but that God selectively on occasion when he selected a leader or prophet would actually cause that person, we know that he put his Spirit upon them, but whether that was the same thing as being born again back then, I don't know. That's going to have to remain something that I'm, it's just speculation as far as I'm concerned. But I'm saying that that might modify what I was saying about rebirth didn't happen in the Old Testament.

Maybe with a few people it might have. But what I'm saying is when we look at John chapter 1 and these words about to as many as received him, John 1, 12, to them he gave the right to become the sons of God who were born of God. If my thesis is correct that this is still prior to the incarnation because it's not until verse 14, it says, and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that would be the next step in the survey of

history of the word.

Then it would seem like it is saying in verse 12 and 13 that even before the incarnation there was a remnant. His own people, the Jews in general, did not receive him, but a few did, and to those who did, to as many as received him, he gave the right to become the children of God, and it may be that he is talking about actual experience of being born of God with a few in the Old Testament. I'm not sure.

There is another way of seeing it that there's some manuscript evidence for, but it's not one of the more important manuscripts. A few manuscripts of the New Testament read verse 13 a little differently than what we have it here, because here we read who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. But there's a few manuscripts that say who was born, singular, and see it might be a reference to the incarnation at this point of Jesus, saying that as many as who believe on his name, he who was born, not of blood nor of the will of man, but he who was born of God, meaning Jesus.

So the way it stands in most manuscripts with the who were born, plural, sounds like it's talking about the believers were born, but if the manuscripts that read who was born really are retaining the original reading, it's not a reference to the believers being born of God, but to him on whose name they believe. He was the one who was born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the very next statement is the word became flesh and dwelt among us, so it would not be unnatural for John in verse 13 to be talking about the birth of Jesus, but the trouble is that the more important manuscripts don't read that way.

This is one of those things, when you study the Bible, you find out there's more options than you wish there were. There's more alternative readings than you would like. You just would prefer, why don't you just tell me one possibility and no more, so I don't have to think about it, you know? But, you know, if you're in any other professional field, secularly, you'd be willing to give it your best thought if it mattered to you.

There's nothing more important than the queen of sciences, theology, that would warrant our giving it our best intellectual efforts. We just don't want that. We don't mind putting our great efforts in learning engineering, if that's our field, or law, if we're lawyers, or medicine, if we're doctors, or whatever else.

Professionals always put a great deal of intellectual energy into analyzing and sorting out and solving the problems with their particular field of expertise, but we don't want to do that with theology. We don't want the preacher to just tell me what it says and don't make me think about it. That's where I'm a little different.

I've always wanted to have to think. I don't want the preacher to tell me what it means. I want to know what the option is.

I want to think about it, even if I don't know what the answer is. Even if I never figure it out, I'd rather have had the pleasure of thinking about it myself rather than following what someone else decided was the right answer. And that's a lot of fun to me, but not everyone seems to enjoy it.

So I'm just telling you, I don't know. I don't know if this is, this verse 13 is talking about the people who believed in the word were born again, or if it's talking about the word himself was born of God, not of blood, not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh. So that simply isn't an option that exists because of a variant in the manuscripts.

There's more than one manuscript possibility. Now I want to say something about verse 12 anyway, and that is, even though I believe it is a reference to people receiving God's word before Jesus was incarnate, we do know that people were called the children of God in the Old Testament. That doesn't mean they experienced rebirth as we do because there's a lot of ways the term sons of God can be used.

Jesus is obviously called the son of God in one sense, different than we are. We're called sons of God, or children of God, but not in the same sense that Jesus is the son of God. Angels might even be called sons of God.

In the book of Job, there's reference to sons of God in a context that sounds like it's probably talking about angels, so that's disputed too, or disputable. And in Hosea, Israel is said to be, you know, destined to be God's sons when they're loyal to him. Even Israel as a whole is seen collectively as God's firstborn son.

So when we talk about being sons of God, it's not always the same thing. It depends on the context and who we're talking about and so forth. So it's not necessary to assume that if we say godly people in the Old Testament who received God's word and responded in faith, they were called sons of God.

It doesn't necessarily tell us that they experienced rebirth as we have in our sons of God or children of God who've been born again into God's family because the term son is used a variety of ways. But this verse is the closest verse we have, I think, in the Bible to using a term like we commonly use when we talk about people coming to Christ to talk about accepting Jesus. It's a very common thing when we evangelize people to tell them what you need to do to get saved is to accept Jesus into your heart.

Now that, in fact, could be a reasonable way of describing what really has to happen. But many of us don't realize that expression is never really found in the Bible. No place in the Bible ever instructs anyone to receive or accept Jesus into their heart.

And when we do talk about that, when we use that kind of language, I don't know if people really have a clear idea of what we're asking them to do or not. If I said to somebody who I was hoping to win over their affection, you know, let me into your heart,

they might understand that that just meant I want you to remove the barriers to accepting and loving me. You know, don't block me out of your life.

But when we say accept Jesus into your heart, especially when we say it maybe to children, I don't know what they picture. I think they picture a little Jesus coming and living inside their heart. In fact, sometimes we even encourage that idea.

With little children, sometimes Christian parents want to show their Christian friends that their kids are saved. We say to their little child, where's Jesus? And the right answer is supposed to be, they're supposed to point in here. You know, he's in here.

Well, technically, the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible says he's at the right hand of God and he's going to stay there until he comes back. But there's a sense in which he's in here.

I mean, the spirit of Christ is in me and in that sense, Christ is in me. So depending on what is meant by the words, they're not objectionable. To say you need to accept Jesus into your heart is not an objectionable thing, depending on how you're understanding it.

What it really means in this case is he doesn't say as many as accepted Jesus into their heart. But as many as received him in the sense that most people did not. He came to his own requesting their loyalty, requesting their submission, presenting himself to them as their king and as their ruler.

And mostly, they didn't accept him in that role. They didn't accept the word as the ruler of their life. Some did, though.

They received that word. They were not resistant to the word of God. They didn't reject, but they received.

When we hear this verse, this is such a great evangelistic verse, as many as received him. And then we tell people, you need to receive Jesus into your heart. As I said, that is true depending on how you understand it.

I just wonder. I was raised in evangelical hearing. That terminology, I never really quite understood what that was calling me to do.

I thought it meant say a sinner's prayer and ask Jesus to come into my heart. But receiving him doesn't mean you ask him to come into your heart. It means you open your heart to God and you're receptive to him completely rather than resisting him.

And in this case, of course, in the case of Jesus, we receive him as our Lord, which is what he presents himself and offers himself as. It doesn't mean we ask him to step from this spot outside my heart into a spot inside my heart spatially. It means my heart is surrendered to him rather than rebelling against him.

Rather than rejecting his claim upon my life, I'm receiving it as valid. I'm receiving him as who he says he is rather than resisting and rejecting that. That's certainly when he came to his own and they didn't receive him, but some did.

Whether this is talking about Jesus in his incarnation presenting himself to the Jews as their Messiah or whether it's simply referring to God trying to approach them again and again through the prophets and trying to get them to receive his word and to govern themselves under his words. In any case, it's a matter of a stance that one takes hardening their heart against or softening their heart to be compliant with him. This is the idea rather than asking a little man to step inside and live in this house in my chest, this blood pump under my fifth rib.

Now, a privilege was given to those who were receptive to him to be included in God's reckoning as his children. Now, we read of the incarnation unambiguously in verse 14. I said the incarnation might be in view earlier but I'm thinking not, but I could be wrong.

Maybe it is, but it certainly is. There's no question about verse 14. The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.

Now, these words, as I mentioned briefly yesterday, I didn't say much briefly yesterday, but this I said briefly yesterday because I knew I'd say it less briefly tonight. The language of the first part of this verse is, I think, deliberately reminiscent of God's dwelling among Israel in the tabernacle because although our translation says the word dwelt among us, the word dwelt in the Greek is the word for pitching a tent or a tabernacle, living in a tabernacle. And so it literally says the word became flesh and this flesh became a tabernacle in which he dwelt among us as God dwelt in a tabernacle in the Old Testament among his people.

God visited and lived with them. So did the word. In another kind of tabernacle, a human body, a human being named Jesus.

And when he says we beheld his glory it continues the connection because it was there at the tabernacle that the Shekinah glory resided. When you come to the tabernacle to worship God, there were three sections. The open courtyard was just open to the light of the sun and natural light.

And you'd offer your sacrifice at the brazen altar, then the priest would go and wash himself at the brazen labor of cleansing, and then he'd go inside the building. But the building had two parts. The first part twice the size of the second.

And the first part was called the holy place. He'd go in there and there was the golden lampstand and there was the golden incense altar and there was the table of showbread. And the priest would go in there and he'd burn incense and so forth.

There was no light from the sun in there because there were no windows in the building.

The light of that place was from the seven lamps of the golden lampstand. But once a year, the high priest would go beyond that, beyond the second veil, into the cubicle called the Holy of Holies.

There, there was no natural light at all, nor was there any lamp. There was no artificial light or natural light there. So what was he doing? Groping around in the dark? You'd think the ends of the cherubim wings might poke him in the eye or something if he's moving around blindly.

But actually, the assumption was there's plenty of light in there. There's no windows and there's no lamps, but the glory of the Lord resided there. Nothing illuminated the Holy of Holies except God's own glory.

That's where he lived. That's where he lived among his people. That's where he met with his high priest.

By the way, in Revelation chapter 21, where there's the description of the New Jerusalem, it is described in terms intentionally reminiscent of the Holy of Holies. The New Jerusalem is a cube shape. The Holy of Holies was 15 feet wide, 15 feet deep, and 15 feet tall.

It's a cube, 15 feet. The city of the New Jerusalem is described as being 1,500 miles by 1,500 miles by 1,500 miles cubed. It's a big, big cube.

And we're told about the Holy of Holies, I mean, about the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. It says there was no light of the sun and no light of the moon shining there. Not necessary.

The glory of the Lord and the glory of the Lamb was the light of it, just like the Holy of Holies. There was no natural light there. Didn't need it.

The glory of God illuminated the Holy of Holies. So also the New Jerusalem is illuminated without natural light, but only by the glory of the Lord. It's like a big cube, a big Holy of Holies.

Really, that's the deliberate imagery that the city of God is to the people of God what the Holy of Holies was to one man, a high priest who could go in once a year. No, we live all the time in the privilege of the immediate presence of the glory of God. And John said, you know, we saw that glory in another tabernacle, a man.

The Word who was God became flesh. He took on human nature, not just human body. Jesus took on human nature as well.

Now, I don't mean sinfulness. I mean human limitations. And this is something that we have to understand.

Becoming flesh meant becoming human, becoming mortal. All flesh is as grass. Jesus said, unless those things are shortened, no flesh would survive.

Flesh is mortal man. And the Word became mortal, became man. And in so doing, became greatly reduced.

It was a great humbling of himself to become a human being. At least that's how Paul describes it in Philippians chapter 2. Because there, he reminds us that Christ, prior to his incarnation, existed in the form of God. Entirely agreeable with John's doctrine that Jesus was God before.

And then he became a man. So also in Philippians 2, we have this reference to Jesus in verse 6 as having been originally in the form of God. But in verse 7, it says, he made himself of no reputation.

That is a strange translation. The new King James slavishly follows the King James in this. It really should say he emptied himself.

The word kenosis in the Greek means emptied. The King James translator's being, I guess, more poetic, wanted to expand it out to a lot of words and said he made himself of no reputation. That whole phrase, simply in Greek, is he emptied himself.

The new King James sometimes follows the King James a little closer than it probably should have. But the whole idea of the new King James was not to change the King James much, just to modernize the language. But occasionally we need to be aware that the King James had its flaws in the way it was translated.

Any modern translation will say he emptied himself because that's what the Greek says. Jesus existed in the form of God but in becoming that, he emptied himself. Of what? Of his prestige, of his divine privileges.

And he took on himself, instead of the form of God, the form of a servant. And then he goes on to say he humbled himself even further to suffer death at the cross, which is the most humiliating of all deaths. A person could have died in that situation.

And so he came from the highest place of honor and glory and came to the lowest place of disgrace and humility. This is the mind that was in Christ we're told to emulate. He begins this section by saying let this mind or this mentality be in you that was in Christ.

Be humble like that. But the point is, Paul is saying that in the process of becoming man, this required God, God the Word, God Christ, to empty himself of a lot of stuff. You can't fit God into such a small container and not leave something out.

Now you kind of could in some respects, but God is, one of the things about God's nature is he's uncontained. Solomon, when he dedicated the temple in praise of God, who am I

to build a house for you? Heaven, even the heavens can't contain you. What house am I to build for you to live in? Solomon knew that you can't really contain God in even a house, much less in a smaller container or human body.

But if you trim off some of the large parts of God, his essence could possibly be presented, he could represent himself in a scaled down version. Now what does scaled down mean? When Jesus became man, in what way did God scale himself down? And just so people don't think that I'm saying something that I'm not, because I'm not. I'm not saying something I'm not.

When we talk about God's essence, who God is as opposed to who we are and what everything else is, when we talk about God himself, we sometimes talk about his attributes and we sometimes talk about his character. And I think sometimes Christians don't think very clearly about making any distinction between his essential attributes and his character. We just think all that's just all mixed together is what God is.

But when I think of God's attributes, I'm usually thinking in my mind of those qualities that describe what God is. And when I think of his character, they describe who he is. You see, if you describe my physical self to somebody, they'll say, oh, you're talking about a man.

And that's true. That's what I am. I'm a man.

But you can know that I'm a man without knowing at all who I am. You don't know what kind of a man I am. You don't know what my passions are, what my opinions are, what my beliefs are, what my character is like.

Because saying I'm a man isn't telling you very much about me except what species I am. And there are attributes of God that define, if I could be so crass, what species God is, what God is as opposed to something else. He's not a rock.

He's not a tree. He's not an animal. He's not even a man.

He's something else. And the description of what he is that distinguishes him from what he is not are terms like omniscience. He knows everything.

Omnipotence. He has all power. He's omnipresent.

He's everywhere. He's invisible. You can't see him.

He's eternal. He has no beginning or end. These are, we might say, his attributes of majesty.

They are also sometimes called his incommunicable traits. Because when God wants us to become like him, these are not the things he wants us to become. He's not asking us to become omnipotent and omnipresent and omniscient.

To be like him, those are not the traits he's talking about. Only he is those things. Only he can be.

Those are distinctive of God. That's what he is. That's the kind of being he is.

But there's another aspect. Who is he? What kind of a person is he? Not what kind of a being, but what kind of a person. And when we come to that, we're talking about his character.

And then we're talking about he's loving. Or is he? He's just. Or is he? Discussing his character, we're talking about is he compassionate? Is he considerate? Is he generous? Is he forgiving? Is he harsh? Is he fair? These are the kinds of things that describe a person.

And what kind of a person someone is. Because as I said, once you've discovered that I'm a man, you don't know what kind of a person I am yet. You only know what kind of a being I am.

I'm a human being. And so there are descriptors of God that describe what kind of a being he is. And these are things that we could call his incommunicable attributes.

That means he can't share those with someone else. Someone else can't have those. But then what kind of a person he is, his character, that's what kind of a person he is.

Those are communicable. We are actually supposed to become like him in character. We're supposed to become loving like he is.

We're supposed to become compassionate like he is. We're supposed to become generous and fair and just and faithful. These are the attributes of his character that tell us what kind of a person he is.

Now when God became a man, we know that there are some of his attributes he had to empty himself of. He had to trim down. Jesus was not everywhere at once.

He was not omnipresent when he was here. Now some people might think he was because they're not thinking clearly. They're thinking, well, Jesus was 100% God, 100% man.

And if he was 100% God, he had to be omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, all those things because God is those things. This is, I think, the mistake that sometimes people are making when they say God, and frankly, almost all Orthodox theologians say this, and I think they're mistaken. They say Jesus could not possibly have sinned.

Now, of course, we know he didn't. The Bible affirms that. Jesus never sinned.

The question of whether he could have is, we might say, a moot point because he didn't. Who cares whether he could have or not? But there are some who think it's the essence

of Orthodoxy to affirm that Jesus was not able to sin, that all that temptation went through was just a sham. The devil was wasting his powder because Jesus was invulnerable, and there's no possibility that he could have succumbed to the temptation.

Now, I don't know that that's true. I don't even think that's true, but if it is, it still is argued wrongly. Those who say Jesus couldn't sin, they say because he was God, and God can't sin.

Well, there's lots of things about God that were different about Jesus. God can't be tempted with evil, the Bible says. Not only can he not sin, he can't be tempted, but Jesus was tempted.

God can't die, but Jesus died. God never becomes weary, but Jesus became weary and fell asleep many times. He got tired.

He wasn't omnipotent. He didn't have unlimited power. He ran out of steam at times.

He got exhausted. He wasn't omniscient. We know he wasn't because he said so.

When they said, what day is that going to be? He said, I don't know the day. No one knows the day of the hour. Even I don't know it.

He said, only the Father knows that. He confessed he was not omniscient. The Father was, but he wasn't.

Now, does this mean he wasn't God? No, I believe it means that though he was God, he emptied himself in becoming a man, and what he emptied himself of was those privileges that come with being the kind of being that God is. His qualities of infinitude. Jesus became, in some respects, constrained by finiteness.

If someone said, I think he was still everywhere at once. No, he was not. He said so.

When Lazarus died, Jesus said to his disciples, our friend Lazarus is dead, and I'm glad I wasn't there. So you might believe. So Jesus makes it very clear.

He wasn't there. If he wasn't there, there might be other places he wasn't. He wasn't omnipresent.

He was in one spot, not all spots. So when the word became flesh, he who exists in the form of God took on the form of a servant, and had to empty himself of a great deal, which is why, frankly, one reason I appreciate Jesus so much is because he not only took on such handicaps, but under those handicaps, he did what we, who have to live under those handicaps, should do. And sometimes people say, well, so what? Jesus didn't sin.

He was God. I wouldn't sin if I was God too. Well, in other words, when the writer of Hebrews boasts about Christ, he was tempted always, like we are, yet without sin.

If the writer of Hebrews was thinking, of course he couldn't sin, then why even mention it? You know, what's the point? What was accomplished by him being tempted and not sinning? The point here is that he knows what it's like to be under our handicaps, and yet to defeat them, to be victorious with them. But Jesus lived as a man. When Jesus was born as a baby, he couldn't change his own diaper.

He couldn't control his bowels. He couldn't feed himself. He couldn't walk.

He couldn't talk. He was a helpless baby, like any baby. And we know that because it tells us of him as a boy.

In Luke chapter 2, that Jesus as a boy increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Increased in wisdom, particularly, makes it clear he wasn't born with all wisdom. You couldn't increase if you already had it all.

He increased like anybody does. He learned how to read. He learned how to talk.

He learned obedience, the Bible says, through the things he suffered. Jesus, when he came to earth, was not omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, invisible, immortal. He was capable of dying.

And in that sense, we can probably have a better appreciation of Jesus because he wasn't living above all of these vulnerabilities. He was living in them. He was living with vulnerabilities.

And yet, he remained faithful to his father. He lived under human handicaps. Now some people say, but what about all these miracles and stuff? Didn't that prove that he was exercising his divine prerogatives? I don't think so.

The apostles did miracles too, but they weren't divine. They were operating through the Holy Spirit. And so was Jesus.

Miracles are a gift of the Holy Spirit. Healing is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Even teaching is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did all these things, but he did it through the Spirit. Remember, Jesus said in Matthew 12, If I'm casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

In Matthew 12, 28. Or 27, I think it's 28. In Acts 1, 1, it says that Jesus, through the Spirit, gave instruction to his disciples.

He taught them, but not without the spiritual gift of teaching. It was through the Spirit that he gave instructions. In fact, it even says in Hebrews that through the eternal Spirit he offered himself up when he was crucified.

Even his presentation of himself to God as a sacrifice on the cross, he did that through the Spirit. He walked in the Spirit. That's why he was able to do miracles and know what people were thinking and prophesy things.

All the supernatural activity of Jesus' life is said to be essentially the working of the Spirit through him. And then when he went to heaven, he gave his Spirit to the church and those kinds of things were seen through the apostles. Jesus' miracle-working powers are not demonstrations of his deity.

They're demonstrations of his submission to his Father and his being empowered by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit he's now given to us. And so Jesus, living a perfect life as he did, was not him manifesting that he's God and can't fail and can't sin. It was he showing us that if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

He walked in the Spirit all the time. We don't. Now, having said that, I'm trying to give you a sense of what it means when the Word became flesh.

He became a real man with real limitations. He knew his Father, but we're not even sure when he came to know because as a baby in the crib, he didn't even know he didn't know anything. He was a baby.

Anyone who thinks that the baby Jesus was laying there in the manger and the shepherds and he knew all their names and knew their wives and knew what day they were born and where they're going to heaven or hell, I mean, Jesus wasn't omniscient laying there in the crib. And therefore, it's probable as a baby he didn't even know who God was at that moment. He didn't even know the word God.

He hadn't learned any language yet. But, as he grew and increased in wisdom and his stature and faith with God, then he came to know his Father. I think the reason that we're even given that only one story from the childhood of Jesus is recorded, and that's when he was 12 years old, and that's when he said, did you not know I must be about my Father's business? I think that story is included to let us know that by age 12 he realized who his Father was.

Before that, maybe not. I don't know. That is the age essentially when the Jewish boys reach maturity, you know, bar mitzvah and so forth.

And it may be that it was only then, maybe it could have been before then, but that he really could say, I know who my Father is. This temple, this is my Father's house. I'm going about my Father's business.

He knew his mission. How much earlier than that he knew, we don't know. But certainly as an infant he didn't.

And this is where a lot of the apocryphal Gospels, the Gnostic Gospels, they just can't

resist the temptation to make up stories about miracles that Jesus did as a baby or as a little kid. Because they've got this magical idea of Jesus. Jesus became a real human being with the real limitations and had to learn and had to grow and so forth.

But of course, at a young age he came to realize who he was and who his Father was and what and how he was not like other people. He had come down from heaven. And he could say to people, you're from below, I'm from above.

I came down from my Father. It's really a fascinating thing to contemplate the awareness of Jesus as a child growing up and especially transitioning to the point where he really knew. But in taking on flesh, the word became flesh, he took on not just a shell of meat and flesh, bone, but he took on human nature, flesh.

And all that that implies except for the sinfulness of it. And so the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. All of that's reminiscent of the tavern.

But then he says the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Now the expression the only begotten of the Father, actually the word the is not in the Greek. It's a peculiarity of the Greek language that a noun doesn't need to have an indefinite article.

It is implied. An indefinite article is a. If we say a man, the indefinite article is a. If we say the man, that's a definite article. It's speaking of a definite individual, not just any man.

So in our language we have the word a and we have the word the. The is the definite article. A is the indefinite article.

In Greek there is no indefinite article. There is a definite article, but when it's not used, the indefinite article is often implied. And so when it says we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father, actually it's translated as if the definite article is there.

The only begotten of the Father. There's no definite article in Greek. And can be, perhaps should be translated as of an only begotten of a Father.

Now this is not to say he was not the only begotten of the Father, but the point here is the comparison. We beheld his glory. What we saw in him was like what you see in the only son of a father.

Generically. You see the resemblance of a father in his son. Not always, but in many cases he's the spitting image of his father.

And that's what he's saying. I don't think he's saying we saw him and recognized that he was the divine second person of the Trinity. God the son of God the Father.

I think what he's saying is what we saw in him was a glory that was like the image of a father that is seen in a son. And glory in the Bible and image are used in some measure

interchangeably. For example, look at Hebrews chapter 1 which is talking about this very same thing.

Hebrews chapter 1 the first three verses it says God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by a son. There's no article there. There's not even a word his.

It's in italics. He has spoken to us by a son. That is instead of through a prophet he had decided to give us this time a son.

Something much better than a prophet. His own son. Whom he has appointed heir of all things through whom he also made the worlds.

The same ideas as in John chapter 1. God made the worlds through him who that is Jesus being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Jesus is said to be the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person. Image and glory.

Similar concepts here used almost interchangeably. He is the glory of God. He's the spitting image of God.

He's the image of God. It says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 Paul says that man is the glory and image of God. The word glory and image are again used.

Man was made as the glory and image of God. In the scripture glory and image obviously have a very close connection if not identity of meaning. If you look at 2 Corinthians chapter 3 here's a very obvious example of that.

2 Corinthians 3 18 Paul says but we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are changed transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord. That is we're beholding the glory of the Lord and we're being changed into that same glory that is image. Glory, image kind of used interchangeably.

We're beholding the image of the Lord, the glory of the Lord and we're changing that same image from glory to glory. He's got these concepts almost intermixed together. And likewise that's how we see it in John chapter 1. We beheld his glory.

It was like the glory that you'd see in a son of his father. The image of a father you'd see in his son. You see a likeness, a family resemblance.

That's the glory of God. Now the reason I go off on this is because of the amount that the New Testament emphasizes the glory of God in connection to us because in Colossians chapter 1 it says Christ in you is the hope of glory. In Romans 5 Paul says we let me get the verse here because it's the middle of a sentence that's why I can't just pick it up in the middle.

Romans chapter 5 verse 2 he says through whom also we have access by faith into this

grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. What is the Christian hope? Our hope is the glory of God. In fact in Titus 2.13 it says the blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

The blessed hope of the Christian is the glory of God. Titus 2.13 says the appearing of the glory. I know that the New King James and the King James say the glorious appearing but in the Greek it's the appearing of the glory.

Our hope is the appearing of the glory of God. But where does the glory of God appear? Where are we anticipating the appearing of the glory of God? Look at Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8 verse 18 Paul said for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. Where? In us.

Now if the glory of God seen in Christ is the image or likeness of God and our hope, our blessed hope is the appearing of the glory. But that's going to appear in us. That is the image of Christ.

The likeness of Christ. We are being changed from glory to glory into that same image. We are the glory of God that we're hoping for and that we are being transformed toward is the likeness of Christ.

And if you look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4 just the next chapter after we looked at 3.18 which is where we're changed from glory to glory in the next chapter Paul says this in verse 16 Therefore we do not lose heart even though our outward man is perishing yet our inward man is being renewed day by day for our light affliction which is but for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Our affliction is working something in us. It's working the image of Christ in us.

It's working glory into us. And the blessed hope is the glorious appearing or more probably the appearing of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ which will be appearing in us. And so the reason I go off on this is because John has introduced this idea that we saw the glory of God.

The Jews saw, Israel saw the Shekinah glory in the tabernacle. We saw the Shekinah glory tabernacling in a man, in a human being and that glory was like the image of God. What's interesting is that's our destiny too.

Our destiny is not to be God but to have the image of God, the image of Christ work in us. We're to become like Him so that Paul said in Romans chapter 8 whom He foreknew. He also predestinated to become transformed into the image of His Son.

That's the hope that is the destiny of us is that we will be changed from glory to glory. We, our character will become more Christ-like. That's the image of His Son.

And John says we saw that already in one man. Eventually the world is going to see it in us. And we're going to see it in us.

That's where the glory is going to appear. It's going to be revealed in us, Romans 8.18 says. But it hasn't yet, at least not in full measure, but in Christ we saw it.

We got a foreglimpse of where we're going. We're going to be exhibiting the image of God too, but we saw it in one man already as good as it gets. It was like the image of a father seen in His only Son who takes after Him.

That's what we saw. Then he explains what he means. Full of grace and truth.

There at the end of John 1.14. The image of God that was seen in Christ was these qualities. Grace and truth. And He was full of it.

He was full of grace and full of truth. Now this phrase, full of grace and truth is also thought by many to be an echo of something from the Exodus. And that would be when God declared His glory to Moses in Exodus 34.

At the end of Exodus 33, Moses said to God, Show me your glory. And God said, I can't do that. No one can see me and live.

No one can see my face and live. This is Exodus 33.20. Moses wanted to see the glory of God and God said, You can't see my face. His face and glory are used interchangeably here.

But the Lord said in verse 21, 33.21, and the Lord said, Here is a place by me. You shall stand on the rock so it shall be while my glory passes by that I'll put you in a cleft of the rock where you can't see it happening and will cover you with my hand while I pass by. Then I will take away my hand and you shall see the back side of me after I've gone by, but my face you can't see.

I can't let you see my glory full on. You could not survive that, but I'll filter it for you. I'll let you see a glimpse of the afterglow when I've passed by.

And even that moderated vision of the glory of God caused Moses' face to become shining. He took on that glory himself as he beheld the glory of the Lord. He was changed and bore that glory himself for a while.

It faded. But that's exactly what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 3, what we saw. He's talking about Moses veiled his face to the end that people couldn't observe that which was fading away.

But it's at the end of that chapter he says, But we all with unveiled face, beholding as an emir the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory. Moses saw the old covenant revelation of God's character and glory and that was good, amazing, but limited and

diminishing. But in Christ, as we behold him, it doesn't diminish.

It gets better. The glory doesn't get less upon us. It infects us more and more.

We take on more and more of that image as we behold his face. That's what Paul is saying. This is interesting stuff.

But then in verse 34, I mean chapter 34 of Exodus, when God actually fulfills his promise and he does pass by and he declares his own name or his own character. In chapter 34, verse 6, it says the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth. Now this expression, abounding in goodness and truth, is essentially the same as full of grace and truth.

So in a sense, when God described his glory or his character to Moses, this phrase was a pretty good summary of what God's glory is. He's full of, he's abounding in goodness and truth. And John says, we saw his glory.

He was full of grace and truth. And many commentators feel that John is deliberately echoing the Exodus description of God's glory or God's character. He says, when we saw this man, we were not seeing an ordinary man.

He was the word who was God, you know, dwelling among us in a tabernacle and his glory could be seen. Now he doesn't mean we saw the glory of the man of transfiguration when Jesus glowed. Certainly John saw that too.

But I don't think that's what he's referring to. I think he's saying, while we walked the earth with him, while we observed his life, we saw God with skin on. We saw somebody whose character and whose behavior was exactly corresponding to the image of how God is.

He was full of grace. He was full of truth like God is. That's the character and the glory of God.

But look at, once you jump over verse 15, which is parenthetical to the next statement of verse 16, and of his fullness, whose? Christ's. What fullness? He was full of grace and truth, we were told. And of that very stuff, of that very quality, that fullness, of that we have received.

Now we have been partakers of that character. We have now been infected with that glory. We're taking on a little bit of that glow.

That which was the glory of God seen in Christ, that fullness of grace and truth, we have received of that fullness too. We're participants in it now. Even grace for grace.

The main characteristic of God's character that is emphasized here is not even just the

truth. Although that's part of the emphasis of the Gospel of John as well. But the grace.

Jesus was full of grace and truth. We've received that fullness, especially grace after grace. Grace upon grace is how some translate this phrase.

We receive from God more and more of his grace. And that grace is his character. I'm afraid that sometimes when we think about grace, we're thinking only in terms of forgiveness of sins.

I don't deserve to be forgiven. God forgave me. That's grace.

Isn't that how we're mostly here about grace? But Paul talks about grace and John and Jesus, the other parts of the New Testament talk about grace in a different way than that. Not excluding that. Not excluding the idea that we receive more and better than what we deserve.

But far broader than that, grace is God's character given to us, which is a supernatural enablement. Remember when Paul said he had this thorn in the flesh and he prayed three times that God would take it away and the Lord said, my grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in your weakness.

My grace will strengthen you. My grace will be adequate for you. I'm not going to take away the pain, but I'm going to give you the grace for it and it'll be a different kind of experience for you.

You'll be enabled to endure it full of grace. Everybody suffers. Christians and non-Christians suffer, but Christians can receive grace in their trials so that they suffer gracefully.

They suffer differently. In their trial, the grace of God dominates their character and their demeanor and their reactions. Grace is not just something that we receive in a sense that God is gracious, and that means he likes us even though we don't deserve for him to like us, but he is gracious.

He makes us gracious. He gives us grace too. Grace is a character trait of his.

It's his glory to be gracious and he gives us that grace to be part of what we are and that's our glory too. And as we become more full of grace, we become more like Christ. We exhibit more of the image of our Father who is full of grace and truth.

So Christ was full of grace and truth and we are now privileged to receive by rebirth and by the work of the Holy Spirit the infusion of that grace upon grace upon grace so that we are now becoming full of what Jesus was full of, the image and likeness of God. So that we are changed from glory to glory into that image even as by the Spirit of the Lord, Paul says. You know, it says in the book of Proverbs chapter 4, it says the path of the

righteous person is like the light of dawn.

It's Proverbs 4.18. It says the path of the just, following the King James closely, New American Standard says the path of the righteous, just and righteous are interchangeable terms really, but the path of the righteous or of the just is like the shining sun. New American Standard says like the light of dawn. It says that shines ever brighter until the perfect day.

Again, following King James language, New American Standard says the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. Your life, your path, your progress as a righteous person walking with God is like the dawning of a day in a dark world. When people look your direction, just like when they look at the horizon in the east in the early dawn, they see a brightening of the sky.

They see something different than the darkness that has dominated the whole night. And yet it's not, it doesn't stay that way, it gets brighter and brighter. The glory becomes more and more intense until full day and the sun itself appears.

I believe that what God is doing is seeking to cause His glory to arise in His people. The glory that should be revealed in us is the likeness of Christ. One reason that I don't think that Jesus is necessarily going to show up today, though He could as far as I'm concerned, I don't know.

I think He's still waiting for this brightness to become brighter and brighter. The church has to become more of a Christ-like witness before the sun himself pops over the horizon, visible to all. As the sun draws nearer to becoming visible, His glory is seen where? In His people.

In Psalm 4, David said, there are many who will say, who will show us any good? And then David says, Lord, lift up the light of your face upon us. There's many cynics out there who don't think there's any good to be seen in the world. They're saying, who will show us any good? And David said, let them see it in us.

Lift up the light. Let the light of your countenance shine upon us. There's a really perplexing verse, even commentators don't know what to do with it, in 2 Peter chapter 1. Just about done here.

In 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 19, it says, we also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until when? How long shall we heed the prophetic word as a light shining in a dark place? Until the day dawns and the day star arises in your hearts. What was Peter expecting here? The ultimate consummation. Even the time when it's no longer necessary to be heeding the prophets anymore.

We're supposed to heed them because they give light to us while we're in this dark

place. The time will come when we're not in a dark place anymore. When the day dawns and the day star arises in our hearts.

There's something throughout the scriptures that we often have not noticed and that is that God is not just going to send Jesus back to light the sky. He's working in us in the meantime so that the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn growing brighter and brighter from glory to glory into that same image. We're pretty far from that right now.

That's why I don't think Jesus is coming back right away. I think that there's a lot more sun rising to happen in the church. But it says in Isaiah chapter 60 that darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness to the people but my light shall arise upon you.

It says the Gentiles shall come to the light of your rising. Talking to the people of God. There's something different that I think is hinted at in these things.

Look at a familiar verse. I want to give you an unfamiliar understanding of it. In Matthew 24 verse 27 you know this verse.

Jesus said for as lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west so will the coming of the Son of Man be. I don't know if you're like me but I don't just hear things I puzzle over them. From earliest childhood knowing this verse I puzzled over why did Jesus say the lightning flashes from the east to the west.

I had not observed it to be so. It certainly is not axiomatic as if it has been spoken of as if it is axiomatic. Just like the lightning flashes from the east to the west.

That's a given right? So also but wait a minute. Is that a given? That lightning flashes from east to west? And I always puzzled. It seems to me like the movement is more vertical.

You know of lightning. It puzzled me for many years. I was meditating on that once as I was just driving around in LA many many years ago.

I thought I wonder if lightning means like a bolt of lightning or if it means like these lights are lightning the room. As the lightning flashes from the east to the west. Like light itself comes from the east in what circumstances? Sunrise.

And I thought I wonder what the word lightning means. And so I went home when I was driving around in LA when I thought this. I thought I better check on this.

So I went home, got out of concordance, looked up and sure enough the word lightning here is the word astrape in the Greek. Astrape. A-S-T-R-A-P-E.

Astrape. And I looked in the lexicon and found out that the meaning of the word astrape in Greek is lightning or bright shining. And I found out that it is used in another place in the gospels.

I don't remember the exact reference. It's in Luke. And it's in the place where Jesus says your whole body will be full of light as when the bright shining of a lamp lightens a room.

And the word bright shining is astrape in that passage. Now of course astrape can mean lightning or it can mean bright shining. But when it talks about the bright shining of a lamp, it's not talking about a lightning bolt.

It's talking about a bright shining. That's unambiguous in that passage. But what about this more ambiguous passage, Matthew 24-27.

As the astrape flashes from the east even to the west. It can easily be translated as the bright shining flashes from the east even to the west. That would be axiomatic.

Because everybody knows that. Everybody knows that the light begins in the east in the morning and comes westward. And it seems that Jesus probably should have been translated that way.

Now this is always tricky because I've never found a translation that agrees with it. The lexicons do. But the translators don't seem to have seen that.

And I've never met anyone who has said it but me. And I don't say that to give myself credit but to tell you how much you should beware of believing it. I'm always nervous when I'm the only person who saw something because I feel like it must not be right.

But I can't see how it's wrong. I looked up the word. Bright shining is what it means in at least one other case in the scripture.

And it would make more sense that way. It's almost like the same thing. It's like the light of dawn that grows brighter and brighter.

The sun of man's coming will be that way too. The sun will become visible over the horizon. Jesus will come personally back.

But as that day approaches the horizon gets brighter. The glory of the sun is seen more and more. Where? In his people.

The image of Christ. Now John in John chapter 1 says we saw that already. We saw it in Jesus and they even saw it in a real dramatic way on the Mount of Transfiguration when his face actually glowed like the sun.

That was maybe just sort of a momentary glimpse of things to come but the point is we beheld his glory as of the glory of the only begotten son. The image of God in Christ. But we have also received of that.

And then just very quickly verse 17 and 18. For the law was given through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time.

The only begotten son who is in the bosom of the father he has declared him. So of course there's a contrast made between the law which was given by Moses and grace and truth which came by Jesus. Notice it doesn't use the same verbs.

It doesn't say the law came, the law was given by Moses and grace and truth were given by Jesus. Moses gave the law as something external to himself. He was not the law.

You could receive the law and never have contact with the man Moses. I have. I can read the law of Moses without ever meeting the guy.

The law was given by Moses. He handed it over. But grace and truth comes in Christ.

He can't just give you grace and truth and then you never meet him. You can't just get grace and truth by reading about it and never have an encounter with him. You receive grace and truth when you receive him.

We are saved in him. It is not salvation is given to us as something external to him but it is something we have by our connection with him. Grace and truth comes along with him.

It came with Christ. And it says no one has seen God at any time. A strange statement that I would take a long time to talk about because it justifies it but we don't have the time.

I have to quit. But there are people who have seen God in various senses in the Bible. There are theophanies in the Old Testament.

There are visions of God. Isaiah said in Isaiah 6, I saw the Lord. He was high and lifted up and was trained for the temple.

In Exodus it says that the elders of Israel went up on the mountain with Moses and they saw the God of Israel. Moses is said to have seen God and talked to him face to face and all kinds of things. God appeared to Abraham.

So why does it say no one has seen God at any time? I think this is echoing again the same Exodus material where God said no one can see my face and live. Moses said Lord show me your glory. He said you can't see that.

No one can see that. To see the unveiled glory of God no one is allowed to see that. Not because it's not permitted but because it would be deadly.

Just like certain bacteria would just die when you turn when you shine bright light on it. The glory of God seen unveiled and unfiltered upon us would just melt us. So it can't happen.

No one has seen God like that. People have seen God in other senses through a

somewhat more filtered means, through a vision, through a theophany or as in this case the book of Hebrews says the veil of his flesh. His flesh is referred to as a veil.

We saw God but not full on. We saw God sort of like reflected in like you see a father in seeing his son. It's not a direct frontal view of the glory of God but we did see that glory like Moses did and even better than Moses did.

But we didn't see and no one can see the unveiled glory of God. That would be a deadly situation for humans. It would be lethal.

But he says there is someone who has. The only begotten son who is in the bosom of the father he has declared him. We can't see God like that.

Not at this point in time later. Yes. Not now.

But we can know about him because his son who has seen him that way has given us the full report. He has declared all that he knows of him and he knows it from his personal face to face acquaintance and intimacy with his father. So we have in Christ the ultimate authority about God and having said that we begin to hear the story of him.

Only one thing I would say more before I let you go here and that is that the expression the only begotten son is again a King Jamesism. It is a reflection of an early misunderstanding of the word monogenes. Monogenes is the Greek word that is translated only begotten.

In the days when the King James version was translated in 1611, Greek scholars thought that monogenes was related to the word begotten. And mono means one or whatever. And so they thought monogenes means only begotten.

That is how the translation King James took it. The new King James as I said follows the King James very closely in some cases. This is one of them.

Modern translations won't use that term because now Greek scholars have discovered that that word is not related to the word begotten. Monogenes is more a word that means one and only or unique. Of course an only begotten son is a one and only son, is a unique son.

The concept is not entirely different but we are so familiar with that term especially from John 3.16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten, his monogenes son. Just for the record, only begotten is not the correct translation but unique son, one and only son. I think those are the terms that the modern translations choose because that is what monogenes is now known to mean.

It is just an advance in the knowledge of the Greek language that scholars have had over the past four or five hundred years. The only reason that might even have any relevance

is that in speaking of Jesus as the only begotten son, it seems to conflict with the idea that we have been begotten of God too. The Bible says that God has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus isn't the only son that God has begotten. All of us are begotten of God too. To call him the only begotten son is not quite accurate and it's not quite what John is saying.

He's just saying that Jesus is a unique son. He's a one of a kind son. We are children of God but not the same kind.

He obviously is in a unique state that no matter how much like him we become, no matter how much his glory is seen upon us, we won't be of the same status as him. He'll always be our Lord. He'll always be our superior.

He'll always be in a class essentially above what we could ever become but we do share in his likeness as we behold him and as we study the gospels and we seek to apprehend who this is that we're being introduced to in these gospels that is beholding him as in a mirror. We're beholding the glory of the Lord and it's through this that we become changed into his likeness too. So the goal of course of reading the gospels is not just to satisfy a morbid curiosity of historical interest.

It's that something will be imparted to us. The word of God is alive and powerful and sharp as an intuitive sword. In the word was life and the life was the light of men.

So as we read of the word and we receive him, he gives us the power to become children of God ourselves and to receive grace upon grace and to be received of his fullness. So there's more than just, it's not like reading the biography of George Washington or someone like that. We're not just reading a biography of Jesus.

We're receiving the word, the living word of God with which is communicated to us his own nature and his own life. If we receive it in the sense that he intends it to be received. Not just that we believe it, but that we're open to receiving the life that comes from exposure to Christ and these words are there to give us that life.

John said these things are written so that you might believe in it, through him you might have life by believing. So John expects his words, his record to convey not just information, but life to us. And he's tried to give us in the prologue an idea of what he's talking about.

This life is kind of a it's the life of God. It's the word of God. It's the light.

It's the light of all men who are enlightened and it's the life that makes us children of God. These ideas, like I said last night, they're pretty hard to grasp. If you don't grasp them fully, I'm with you there.

I don't grasp them fully either and I don't know that John did, but he certainly was fascinated with them and for good reason. They are indeed fascinating and will reward contemplation and meditation probably for a lifetime. As more and more of this is as you can milk more and more spiritual life from these concepts as you meditate on them.

That's what they're for.