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John's Prologue (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this continuation of John's Prologue, Steve Gregg explores different interpretations of the phrase "born of the Spirit" in John 1:13 and argues in favor of the birth of Jesus as the intended meaning. Gregg also discusses the doctrine of universal presence of God and how it relates to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He emphasizes the importance of knowing and standing for the truth while still demonstrating love and grace towards others. Overall, the message highlights the fullness of God's glory, grace, and truth revealed through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

We will continue and finish the prologue of John's Gospel, which we began in a previous session. John's Prologue is John 1, verses 1-18. As I said in our previous session on this subject, this sort of stands out in the Gospel of John as being distinct from the rest of the Gospel in that he is not really talking about events in particular of the life of Christ, but a theological interpretation of the life of Christ.

All of the Gospel writers tell us the events of Christ's life, at least some of them, but only John pulls the curtain aside to show us what the origin, as it were, of this life of Christ is. Now, when we talk of the origin of the life of Christ, there's a sense in which he had no origin at all. He's always existed.

He never began. However, there was something behind the scenes that we could call the origin of the earthly life of Christ, and that was his preexistence in heaven in the form of God before he came to earth. And we saw that John, in the opening verses of his Gospel, has made a very strong affirmation of the deity of Christ, although Christ has not been identified as the subject of those verses quite yet.

He has not mentioned Jesus by name, nor has he used the term the Christ or any other term by which Jesus might be identified in the first thirteen verses, which is what we covered. But he has referred to the Word, which was with God and which was God. And, of course, at the verse where we put in today, at verse fourteen, the Word became flesh.

And while even there he does not mention by name Jesus in that verse, yet he does

before the prologue is over. And that's in verse seventeen. We first find that he's talking about Jesus Christ if we could not have deduced that.

But the Word of which he has spoken earlier becomes a human being in verse fourteen, and that brings us, of course, to the Incarnation. Now, two of the other Gospels, Matthew and Luke, also describe the Incarnation, but do so with more detail and more of a consideration of the historic events. Talking about the angel appearing to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist, subsequently an angel coming to Mary and telling her that she will have a child, and then an angel comes to Joseph and tells him that Mary's child is conceived of the Holy Spirit, and then their trip to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus there, the trip back into Egypt, and then back to Judea and up to Nazareth, all of that, all those historic details are given to us in Matthew and Luke.

But here, John, though he refers to the Incarnation, doesn't give us anything like specific historic events. He is still interpreting what happened. Instead of talking about the birth in Bethlehem, he interprets the significance of what happened in that birth without giving the details.

Now, we finished on verse thirteen last time, and I told you at that time that there are two ways of reading that verse. Different manuscripts read differently. Most scholars, I might even say virtually all scholars, seem to prefer the reading as we have it here, where verse thirteen says, who were born.

But there are manuscript evidences for another reading, and there are a few scholars I've encountered, at least, who favor that reading, which is who was born. The only difference being between the singular and the plural of the pronoun who and of the verb. Is it who was born or who were born? If it was who were born, it is a reference back to those who were said to be the sons of God in verse twelve.

As many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe in his name. Who were born. This would be a reference to those who are called the sons of God.

And the statement about them would be, they were born not of bloods, literally, in the Greek plural, bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. If this is about the sons of God, then it is emphasizing the fact that they have had a second birth. This concept of the second birth is most explicitly spoken of in John chapter three, where Jesus is talking about the subject of Nicodemus.

He said, you have to be born again, you have to be born of the spirit, you have to be born from above. And Nicodemus said, well, you know, how does one go into the womb and be born again? And Jesus clarified, we're talking something spiritual here, not physical. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

Therefore, this being born of God is a matter which speaks of a spiritual regeneration, a spiritual work in the heart and in the soul, or in the spirit of the man or woman, and they become a new creation, they become a babe in Christ and begin a growth and a new life. That is being born of God, being born of the spirit. On the other hand, there is that reading of verse thirteen that would say, who was born, in which case with the singular, the reference would be back to him whose name they have believed in, in verse twelve.

Those who are called the sons of God are those who believe in his name. Whose name? He who was born, not of bloods, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. That would be, of course, a reference to Jesus, in whose name they have believed.

As I said, most scholars do not favor this reading, though I have encountered a couple of scholars who do think this is considerable value and who would argue in favor of this reading in view of the fact that in verse fourteen, it is the birth of Jesus, it is the incarnation that is in view. So, the birth of God's children is in verse twelve, the birth of Jesus is in verse fourteen, and between those two verses stands verse thirteen, which could be interpreted as applying to either one or the other, and we can't be a hundred percent certain which category is in view here. If verse thirteen is about Jesus and his birth, then it is John's way of talking about the virgin birth.

Mark does not mention the virgin birth, in fact, doesn't mention anything about Jesus' birth in his gospel, though Matthew and Luke both refer to the birth of Jesus and both emphasize that Mary was a virgin at the time when she conceived with Jesus. John doesn't talk about his birth in very much detail and there is no reference to the virgin birth specifically unless it would be in this particular verse. John, who emphasizes the deity of Christ more than any other gospel, might be expected to have something to say about the virgin birth if anybody did, because it is the virgin birth which makes Jesus distinctively superhuman, because all other human beings are born of a human man and a human woman, but Jesus was born of a human woman but no human man, but God was his father and the only father he had.

He was conceived only because of an act of God and God was therefore called his father and he was called the Son of God. That is how the angel speaks to Mary in Luke chapter one. He indicates that the reason that Jesus would be called the Son of God was because of the method of his conception.

In Luke chapter one, verse thirty-four, then Mary said to the angel, How can this be since I do not know a man? She has just been told she is going to have a child. In verse thirty-five, the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the highest will overshadow you, and therefore also that holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Notice therefore means for this reason.

Because you will conceive in this manner as opposed to the natural manner in which most women conceive their children, that is through sexual intercourse, Mary did not

have sexual intercourse. The conception was of a totally different nature and therefore her child would be called the Son of God. Why? Because God was his father.

There was no human father. Mary was a human mother but she had no human male that she had intercourse with and therefore the miracle of God producing Jesus in the womb of Mary made God the only father that could be appointed to as Jesus' father and therefore he is called the Son, not of Joseph, but the Son of God. Okay, so the emphasis upon his virgin birth is to point out that he is superhuman and that he is the Son of God or that he is deity.

What God begets is God in that sense. But whether that is what John is talking about in John 1.13 or not, we cannot say with certainty. There can be a case made for it.

In any case, we go on and we are clearly talking in verse 14 about the incarnation and this is a verse that is packed for us to take a look at and we need to unpack it a bit. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Now, there is much in this verse that has been often quoted, but I don't know, you seldom hear everything about it discussed and there is so much that needs to be discussed about it.

It says, the Word became flesh. Now, we are already told that the Word was God in verse 1 of this chapter and now we are told the Word became flesh, which means God became flesh. How are we to understand this? If Jesus was God in the flesh, who was it that he prayed to? Who was it that he continually spoke of as separate from himself? How is it that he made such clear distinctions between himself and the Father? Where he said, I didn't come to glorify myself, I came to glorify my Father.

Or the Father is greater than I. He obviously indicated that the Father and he were distinct from each other. And yet, he is God and the Father is God. Now, when the Word became flesh, how are we to understand this? How is it that God could be in a human body and also not be in the human body? Well, the answer would be, I think, seen in the fact that there was in Old Testament times a phenomenon that we occasionally run into in the Old Testament, which was called theophanies.

A theophany is an appearance of God. It actually comes from the two Greek words, theos, which means God, and phaneo, which means appearance. Theo-phaneo.

Theophany. You want me to write it out? I don't know if you can all see that. It's kind of hiding behind a screen.

A theophany is an appearance of God. Now, in the Old Testament, a theophany might be in the form of a cloud, a pillar of cloud, or a pillar of fire, sometimes referred to as the Shekinah, glory of God. The word Shekinah is not found in the Bible, but the rabbis called this appearance of God the Shekinah.

And it might appear as a fire in a bush, as when he appeared to Moses, or even in human form. There were times where apparently God appeared in a human form in the Old Testament. We find this to be the probable explanation of the man who wrestled with Jacob all night.

We're not told specifically who the man was, although Jacob said, after it was all over, I've seen God face to face, and my life has been preserved. Furthermore, the person who wrestled with him changed his name to Israel, which suggested that this person had authority, more than some ordinary man, to change Jacob's name and for Jacob to do it. Also, the man was supernatural, because the man touched Jacob on the thigh and withered him, just with a touch.

It's obvious that the person that wrestled with Jacob was someone other than an ordinary man. In Hosea chapter 12, that wrestling bout that Jacob had is referred to, and Hosea indicates that it was an angel that wrestled with him. I wonder how quickly I could find that verse.

That's in Hosea chapter 12, and let me see if I can quickly find it. Verse 4, speaking of Jacob, it says, Yes, he struggled with the angel and prevailed. That is a reference to Jacob's fight with this man, as he's called, which is found in Genesis 32, verses 24 through 28.

Now, the fact that it says it was an angel doesn't prove that it wasn't God, because the word angel just means messenger, and sometimes, frequently, there is a character in the Old Testament called the angel of the Lord, who speaks as if he is God. In fact, in the burning bush, the Bible indicates that God spoke to Moses from the bush, but half the time it says the angel of the Lord spoke to him from the bush. And whenever you see the angel of the Lord, as opposed to an angel of the Lord, the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament always ends up talking as if he is God.

And so many have felt that even when you find the angel of the Lord appearing to people in the Old Testament, that that is God himself appearing, or Jesus in his preexistent state. Likewise, Abraham met a man named Melchizedek, who, if we take the writer of Hebrews seriously, in Hebrews chapter 7, would almost certainly have to be identified with Jesus, or with God. He was a superhuman.

Likewise, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel chapter 5, no, excuse me, 3, were thrown into the fiery furnace, and there was a fourth party in there with them who Nebuchadnezzar said looked like the Son of God. And that was probably a theophany. Three men went into the oven, and three men came out.

But while they were in there, there were four seen. And there are no doubt other cases. When Gideon had the angel of the Lord appear to him, or when Joshua saw the captain of the Lord's hosts.

In many other Old Testament places, evangelical commentators have frequently seen these as what we call theophanies, appearances of God, or of Christ. Sometimes they're called Christophanies, because they identify them as appearances of Christ before his incarnation. Now, why am I saying all of this? What's that got to do with John 1, 14? Well, simply this.

In the Old Testament, when God appeared, let's say in the form of a man or some other form, that was not the only place that God was at the moment. The Bible says in Psalm 139 that if I ascend into heaven, God's there. If I make my bed in Hades, he's there.

If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, God will find him. God will be there. The idea is that God's everywhere.

There's nowhere that God is not. And here we need to become acquainted, for the sake of clarity, with two theological concepts concerning the presence of God. The one has to do with his universal presence, and the other with what we call his manifest presence.

God's universal presence is spoken of in that it says, for instance, Solomon, when he was dedicating the temple, said, Heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you, God. God is everywhere. He fills more space than even the universe itself.

There's nowhere where you can go that God is not there. That doctrine is called the doctrine of the universal presence of God. I don't know, perhaps Phil talked about these things when he talked about knowing God, and he was talking about God's attributes.

In addition to that concept, though, there is the doctrine of the manifest presence of God. Manifest simply means revealed, where he appears. For instance, if that was a theophany, wrestling with Jacob that night, then God was manifest in that place, in the form of that human being wrestling with Jacob, but he was still everywhere else at the same time.

For God's manifest presence to be manifest somewhere, did not end his universal presence. It just means that at that moment he made his presence visible in some form or another, but without canceling out his presence in all other places. I would like to suggest to you that when Jesus came to earth, that this was something of the nature of a theophany.

That Jesus was God's manifest presence. And the principal difference between this case and the previous cases where God manifested his presence, is that Jesus didn't just kind of appear out of nowhere and disappear again. As presumably some of the other cases, like the man in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did.

But in this case, God manifests his presence physically by coming into the human family, through the womb of a human being, taking on human nature, and continuing to live what amounted to an entire short lifespan, and then dying, just like human beings die.

That certainly is something that had no precedent in the Old Testament. Though God may have appeared in human form from time to time, and even apparently physically human form, because he ate sometimes with Abraham, for example, in Genesis 18.

In Genesis 18, God appeared to Abraham and ate with him, and therefore apparently was in a physical manifestation. This would be a theophany. Well, Jesus also was a physical manifestation.

The difference being that Jesus, again, didn't just appear and disappear, but that he came through the human family, through something like a biological process, and lived a lifespan on the earth among us. Now, if that is true, then when people ask us, well then, if Jesus was God, who did he pray to? Or when Jesus was dead, who kept the universe running? You know, God was dead for three days in the tomb. The answer is simply this.

Jesus was God, manifest. But God was still universally present in his universe as well. Whenever God manifested himself on earth, it did not cancel out his universal presence.

In Jesus, I think we could properly say, we see God's manifest presence for 33 or so years, like that. But, again, God was elsewhere at the same time. God the Father.

And that would seem to agree with what the New Testament teaches. If you'll notice over in 1 Timothy 3.16, the Apostle Paul is quoting what most scholars believe is an ancient hymn of the early church. In fact, in your Bible, it's likely that it is set off from the rest of the text of 1 Timothy, as put in verse form, like a poem.

1 Timothy 3.16. And it is believed that this is an ancient poem of the early church, sung as a hymn or a statement of faith, like a creedal statement of the early church. And Paul says there, and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifested in the flesh.

Some manuscripts say he was manifested in the flesh without being so specific that it was God. But, regardless, it's obviously referring to Jesus, was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up to glory. Now, we don't have time to comment on all these lines, but the first line is significant.

God, or he, depending on which manuscript you use, was manifested in the flesh. That means that Jesus was the manifested presence of God. When it says he was manifested in the flesh, it's clearly a reference to the birth of Jesus.

And, therefore, we are quite within biblical vocabulary to say Jesus was the manifestation of God, the manifest presence of God. But, as in other cases in the Old Testament where God manifests himself in some locality, that did not prevent God from being elsewhere and filling the universe as well. And the relationship between God in his manifest presence and himself in his universal presence is one that is mysterious and, Paul says,

without controversy, it's a great mystery.

But, that is the relationship that existed between Jesus and the Father, I believe. I could be mistaken, but I think that we're within biblical grounds of saying that. And I think there's further evidence that this is how John is thinking, as we read further into the verse.

John 1.14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us. The word dwelt, the Greek word there, *dwelt*, is pitched his tabernacle or tabernacled among us. It's possible that some of you may have Bibles that say that in the margin or that even translate it that way.

Some translators have. Literally, John says the word became flesh and tabernacled with us. Now, I have no doubt in my mind that John wishes for us to think back to the tabernacle in the Old Testament.

Because he goes on to say, and we beheld his glory. Well, when the tabernacle was built, the glory of God visibly filled the tabernacle in the form of a cloud, you might recall. In fact, it is said that the cloud overshadowed the tabernacle.

It's interesting that that's the word that is used of Mary becoming pregnant when the angel was talking to her. The Holy Spirit will overshadow you. And the glory of the Lord, the Shekinah glory came to inhabit a biological person inside the womb of the Virgin Mary, just as the glory of the Lord inhabited the tabernacle in the Old Testament.

And John makes this comparison. He, the word, who is God, tabernacled with us and we saw his glory. The glory of the Lord inhabited this tabernacle just as the glory of the Lord inhabited the Old Testament tabernacle.

Now, I have, for a long time, found that very helpful. Whether you shall find it helpful or not remains to be seen. But I have found it helpful to try to understand the relationship of Jesus and the Father, or how it is that Jesus is the Son of God and also God.

Simply, as I pointed out, it's the difference between the manifest presence of God and the universal presence of God. It's also, similarly, the difference between how God manifested himself in the tabernacle and how he existed elsewhere at the same time, in the days of the tabernacle. If a person wished to have contact with God in Old Testament times, they were expected to go to the tabernacle.

That was the place where God could be approached. There was an elaborate liturgy, an elaborate ritual, an elaborate sacrificial system that were all part of the approach of God. And if you would ignore that system, it was understood you could not really approach God.

It was through this means that God would be approached. And he inhabited the tabernacle. He inhabited, more specifically, the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle.

Yet, certainly, a person like the psalmist in Psalm 42, who is far removed from the tabernacle, can cry out to God and be heard, because God is not only in the tabernacle, he's everywhere, too. And, therefore, for God to manifest himself in the form of a cloud in the tabernacle did not in any way interfere with him being elsewhere and able to see all things going on in the earth, to hear all cries that were made to him, no matter where people were. No doubt John intends for us to understand that the incarnation of Jesus was, in principle, the same.

God was everywhere, even when Jesus was on earth. He was not entirely confined to the body of Jesus, but he was there. He was there in a special sense that he's, say, differently than he is in your body or mine, I think.

I believe there's a distinct difference, though the Bible indicates that God inhabits us as well, and that we are his temple, just like Jesus said his body was a temple in John chapter 2. It's not exactly the same, because while it is true that God has come to live inside of you and me, it cannot be said that you and I are God manifest in the flesh. And, therefore, the incarnation of Jesus was God dwelling in a human being in a unique way, in a way distinct from all other ways that God may be said to dwell inside of people anywhere else. He was manifested in Jesus.

The word was made flesh and tabernacled with us, and we beheld his glory. Now, this reference to beholding his glory is elaborated on. Moses, in the Old Testament, who built the tabernacle, and who in fact saw the glory cloud fill the tabernacle, he asked God to let him see his glory in a more distinct way, and God told him no.

If you'll turn back to the book of Exodus, chapter 34, or actually chapter 33 and 34. In chapter 33, verse 17 of Exodus, So the Lord said to Moses, I will also do this thing that you have spoken, for you have found grace in my sight, and I know you by name. And Moses said, Please show me your glory.

Then he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you. I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

But he said, You cannot see my face, for no man shall see me and live. And the Lord said, Here is a place by me, and you shall stand on the rock, so it shall be while my glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and will cover you with my hand while I pass by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.

So Moses desired to see more of the glory of God than he had seen thus far, and God said, Well, listen, you can't see it all. You would die. You just couldn't handle it.

No one can see my face and survive it. It's too glorious. It's too overwhelming.

So I'll just give you a measured glimpse of my backside. Now, part of that manifestation of God's glory to Moses was, as it says in verse 19, My goodness will pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of Jehovah before you. The fulfillment of this, when this actually happened, is found in the next chapter.

In chapter 34, it says in verse 5, Now the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. So Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped.

Now, this was the fulfillment of God's promise. He says, I'll pass before you, I'll proclaim my name before you, and that's about as much of my glory as you're going to get a glimpse of. The glory of God, of course, is his character.

And therefore he described his character, and that is the manifestation of his glory that he gave to Moses. But one particular line in verse 6, Exodus 34, 6, at the very end, is worth paying special attendance to, because it says that part of his character, his glory, is that he's abounding in goodness and truth. There are scholars who believe that the last line in John 1, 14 is an echo of that line.

In John 1, 14, it says that we beheld his glory, then at the end it says he was full of grace and truth. Some feel like that is John's Greek equivalent of the Hebrew, abounding in goodness and truth. In other words, this would further connect John's interpretation of the incarnation of Jesus with the imagery of the Old Testament tabernacle system.

God's glory that inhabited the tabernacle is also revealed to Moses on the mountain there. And one of the principal summary statements of God's glory was that he was abounding in goodness, or you could say mercy or grace, because that's strongly what's emphasized, the Lord God merciful and gracious. He's abounding in goodness, or grace, and truth.

John says when we beheld his glory, he was full of grace and truth. In my opinion, John is harking back to that story. How that Moses wanted to get a glimpse of God's glory, and John says we got that glimpse.

We saw the one who is full of grace and truth. But the glory we saw was not a full frontal disclosure. Even later on in this prologue, in verse 18, John says no man has seen God at any time.

Well, no one has seen God at any time. And yet the disciples who saw Jesus had seen God in a sense, just like Moses in a sense saw God. No one, even in John's day, or in our

own, has ever seen God's unveiled glory, just full force.

But there have been ways in which he has manifested his glory in Old Testament times and new. And the most important is the New Testament time in the face of Jesus Christ. If you look at 2 Corinthians 4, verse 6, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 6, Paul says, For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God has illuminated our hearts to give us a glimpse of the knowledge of the glory of God. Where? In the face of Jesus. In seeing Jesus, we see the glory of God manifested.

And in Hebrews chapter 1, we find that seeing Jesus is about as much of the glory of God as anyone can ever hope to see this side of heaven. In Hebrews 1, verses 1 through 3, it says, God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom he also made the worlds, who, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. That reference in verse 3 to Jesus being the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person is saying that you can't really hope this side of death and resurrection, or this side of glory, you can't really hope to ever see a better representation of God's glory than what was seen in Jesus.

Because he was full of grace and truth, which is the glory of God proclaimed to Moses. Now, back in John, there was a phrase that we deferred to comment on until now. In John 1.14, it says, we beheld his glory.

He says, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Now, the expression only begotten has been subject of debate among Greek scholars lately. Most of the older translations use this word several times in the Gospel of John.

Here, he's called the only begotten. Likewise, in verse 18, no man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him only begotten. Likewise, in a more famous verse, in John 3.16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

This expression, only begotten, has come up for re-examination among modern Greek scholars. It was once believed that the Greek word, which is the root of this word, meant to be begotten. And there was an only aspect to it, so they thought it was only begotten.

But, more insight has come from the study of the Greek language to discover that the word may not have anything to do with beginning. The Greek word actually is now believed by many to mean simply his one of a kind, or his unique son. If you have the NIV, it will render it something like that.

His one and only son, or something like that. Anybody willing to admit they have the NIV here? How about the NASV? Anyone have that one here? Do you have that there? What does it say? What does it refer to in verse 14? The begotten of the Father. Okay, so some translators still stick with the older meaning of the word, and some have gone with the newer idea of it.

So, the NIV follows the newer concept, and the NASV and King James, New King James, follows the older idea of the only begotten. Now, the important thing in this verse, where it says that we saw his glory, it was the glory like that of the only begotten, or maybe the only son of a father, of the Father. In our version, and probably most translations, it says the only begotten of the Father.

But the word the is absent in both places in the Greek. Actually, it should be translated the glory as of an only begotten son of a father. He's not making a specific reference here, as later is made in the Gospel of John, to Jesus' relationship to the Father, as much as he's talking about the way a son resembles a father, in general.

It's more of a generic statement. What we saw in him was like what you see of a father in his only son. Not just of the Father God in his only son Jesus, but in general.

Now, fathers and sons don't always resemble each other. No doubt John hopes for his reader to think of the cases where that is the case, because it is often enough the case that a son will be the spittin' image of his father. And you can easily see the relationship, the resemblance.

In Jesus' case, of course, the resemblance to his father is not seen in terms of physical traits, since no one's ever seen his father's physical traits anyway, no one would know whether he looked like his father in those respects. And no issue is ever made in the Bible of what Jesus looked like. There's no description of Jesus in the Bible, except in Revelation.

And there it's a highly figurative, glorified Christ that is described there. But it is not in physical traits, but the analogy is to the way that a son resembles his father in physical traits. The word glory here is used almost interchangeable with the idea of image.

Just as we saw a moment ago in Hebrews 1.3, we just read it, that Jesus is the brightness of his glory in the expressed image of his person. The idea of Jesus being the glory of God is mixed up together with the idea of him bearing the image of God. Now, of course, God is invisible.

So when you talk about God's image, you're talking figuratively. God's not a visible God, he's a spirit. And he's called the invisible God.

The Bible says, Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. God is invisible, so when we talk about his image, we're talking about something other than his

visible image, something, a likeness in some other way. And in Jesus' case, it's the glory that he has in common.

You could see in Jesus the family resemblance of God, just as you can see in an earthly son the family resemblance of his father. Now, in Jesus, the resemblance was not a physical one. As I said, God doesn't even have a physical body, so it would be hard to know how Jesus could bear his physical resemblance.

But it's a spiritual one. It has to do with his character. In Jesus, the love of God, the grace of God, the truth of God was manifest.

Just like the physical characteristics of a physical father are seen in his physical son, in Jesus we see the glory of God, which is full of grace and truth. And then he takes off on this idea of grace and truth, but not until he has another parenthetical verse. We talked about this in our last class, that there's two times in this prologue of John where he parenthetically talks about John the Baptist.

The first time was in verses 6 through 8, and now in verse 15 he does so again. We've read those verses, and we don't need to say much about them, except that John gives those as sort of a disclaimer, saying, don't think that John is the guy I'm talking about here. He has not yet mentioned Jesus by name up to verse 15.

Jesus has not been mentioned by name. Therefore, those who thought too highly of John might have begun to wonder, is he talking about John the Baptist? This word that was made flesh, and this word where the glory of God was seen? There were some people, very possibly, who were thinking in terms of John the Baptist that way. And so again, he reminds them, I'm not talking about John.

He 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. Now, John, in saying that, was referring to Jesus' pre-existence as God, when he says, he was before me. Because technically, John was older than Jesus by about three months.

Or six, wasn't it? About six months, right. So, John was a little older than Jesus. So to say, as John did, that Jesus was before him, he's very clearly referring to his previous existence before he came to earth.

And so, John mentions this here, in order to, again, remind us that John the Baptist did not wish to take any credit for himself, but wished to defer and pass along the credit to another, namely to Jesus. And so, he says in verse 16, And of his fullness we have all received, in grace for grace. Now, this statement follows immediately after verse 14, logically.

Verse 15 is a parenthesis. Verse 14 ends by saying that Jesus was full of something, and in verse 16 it says, And we have received the very thing he was full of, of his fullness.

What was he full of? Grace and truth.

What have we received? Grace. Upon grace. And then grace is linked with truth again in verse 17.

The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Now, let's talk about this a little bit. Jesus was full of grace and truth.

We have received of his fullness also. Even grace for grace, that's how it's translated here. Some translations say grace upon grace.

The expression grace for grace is hard to interpret, but I think most interpreters and commentators would suggest that it means one wave of grace followed by another wave of grace. In other words, just abounding grace. Though some are not sure whether that's what it means.

But the expression clearly is a strong reference to grace being the fullness that we have received. We have received grace. But when we think of ourselves as having received grace, the principal way we think of it is that we've been forgiven for our sins.

That we've received unmerited favor. That we didn't deserve it, but God forgave us and received us and called us his sons, and that's all a matter of grace, and it is. That's quite correct.

But I think that John has something more in mind here. Because he says that we have received of the fullness of grace just as Jesus was full of grace and truth. Now, to say that Jesus was full of grace certainly does not mean to say that he received unmerited grace, favor from his Father.

There we go. It's not saying that the Father's favor toward Jesus was unmerited. Certainly Jesus deserved every bit of it.

But when it says he was full of grace, it means that the grace of God was manifest in his character and his behavior. He was a graceful individual, a gracious soul. When he dealt with people, he dealt in grace with them.

Mercy and kindness and generosity and patience were seen in his conduct with people. That was his fullness of grace manifested. In Luke chapter 4, when Jesus preached in his own hometown of Nazareth, the observation that people made about him, to their amazement, was that there were words of grace that came out of his mouth.

It's in Luke 4, 22. The way it's translated here, it says, for all bore witness to him and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. In the Greek, it's actually the words of grace that came out of his mouth, which does not mean that he was talking about the subject of grace.

Words of grace doesn't mean he had a message about grace. It means that the words of his mouth exhibited what was in his heart. He was full of grace, and out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

That's Luke 4, 22. And where it says, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, that comes from Jesus' statement later in Matthew 12. And verse 34, Matthew 12, 34, Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Jesus was full of grace, therefore when he spoke, words of grace, or gracious words, came out. And people marveled at the graciousness of his words. Now, when John says, we have also received of his fullness, people are, by disposition, argumentative about what they regard to be truth.

They're determined that truth will have the final word, and truth is what they believe. And they'll fight over the truth, and they'll fight hostilely against those who they see as being in error. And there can be, in many cases, very little grace coupled with the truth that they champion.

On the other hand, there's lots of people who are very kindly, and gentle, and merciful, and loving, and sympathetic, and compassionate, but who don't really have much room for being sticklers for truth. You can see this in a lot of books that are published by Christian authors. On the one hand, you've got the apologists, and I'm glad for them.

I lean this way myself, I think, as far as my temperament, is they don't want to see the truth compromised, and so they write against error as they see it in the church. And then there's others who write books reacting to these guys. Dave Hunt, for instance, several years ago wrote a book called *The Seduction of Christianity*, where he quoted a lot of Christian leaders and said that what they were teaching wasn't true.

He said that they were teaching stuff that was really New Age and not biblical Christianity. And his book sold a lot of copies. I agreed with much of what he said.

Not all of it, but much. However, his book drew some very hostile reactions from other Christian writers who said, Listen, you're destroying the unity of the body of Christ. You're calling names and slinging mud at Christian leaders and so forth.

Can't you just learn to love one another and receive one another like Jesus said to do? Now, to tell you the truth, it's possible to err on both sides. I'm not saying that Dave Hunt was erring on the side of truth versus love. I know Dave.

He's a dispensationalist. In fact, I've invited him to come debate me, because we're both concerned about truth, about that, and we disagree about what the truth is on that issue. But on issues of psychology and the word of faith movement and a lot of other issues, I've found myself to be agreeing with what Dave thinks about these things.

And besides that, I believe he's a very loving person. I have found him to be a very loving guy. I don't see him as a cantankerous, feisty guy.

He does care about truth, though. And he thinks that you need to speak the truth in love, not just have love. But love also requires you to speak the truth.

On the other hand, Dave's critics emphasize love more than truth. Now, one can find a good argument for that. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, If I understand all mysteries and have all knowledge, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

In 1 Corinthians 13, too. Also, in 1 Corinthians 8, I think, verse 2, Paul said, Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up, or edifies. So, it could be argued that love is more important than knowledge of truth, and it is.

But the reason for that is because you can't know all the truth, but you can be completely loving. Being loving is a choice. Having the truth depends on how much information you've got, how much you know the Word of God, and so forth.

And that's something that we all know in part. And fortunately, God's not going to judge us principally on how much we know, but whether we respond lovingly. But the point is that if you do know the truth, there is a place for being valiant for the truth.

Now, standing up for the truth, and as Paul put it in Ephesians 4, 15, Speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ. We're to grow up into Christ because we have His fullness. What is His fullness? Grace and truth.

Therefore, we can speak the truth in love. We can be gracious and truthful. We can say, this is what I understand to be the truth, I'm going to stand firmly on this, I'm not going to waver on this point, but I'm going to love you.

I'll extend grace to you if you disagree with me. That's okay, you don't have to agree with me, but this is the point I'm going to be unmoved from until you can show me that some other position is more true. Because truth is important.

Truth matters. In the book of Proverbs it says, Buy the truth and do not sell it. In other words, obtain it and don't release it for any price, once you have the truth.

I wish I could tell you what verse that is. Actually, in Proverbs, it's one of those verses that the number is the same for the chapter and the verse number, which means that by the process of elimination you can probably pretty quickly locate it, I just don't remember which one it is. Yeah, let me see if I can real quickly locate it, because then we'll end our curiosity on the matter.

I think it may be around chapter 20, but let me take a moment to see if I can find it. 2323, there you go, thank you. I was almost there, I was just at 22 at the time.

Someone was faster than I was. Thanks. There it is, Proverbs 23:23.

It says, Buy the truth and do not sell it. Also, wisdom and instruction and understanding. Now, it doesn't say how much you have to pay for the truth, because it doesn't matter how much it costs, you've got to buy it.

You can't ignore it. Now, you can be a good Christian without knowing all the truth, but you can't be a good Christian if you're ignoring some of the truth you know. There is a difference.

There is a difference between being ignorant of some points, on the one hand, and being willingly ignorant, as Peter says some scoffers are in 2 Peter chapter 3, being willingly ignorant, because although the truth has been made available, and you might even know what it is, but seeking to shut it out of your mind. It says this, the New King James translates it, willingly forgetful, but in 2 Peter 3, 5, it says, for this they willfully forget, but in the King James it says, they're willingly ignorant. In either case, whether they forget or not, they're ignorant, obviously.

The point here is that they don't want to know. Like those that Paul says, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against, in Romans 1, 18. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness.

They know the truth, but they don't want to know it. They don't want to live by the truth that they know. Romans 1, 18.

And of course, Paul said in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, that the man of sin will deceive those who have not received the love of the truth, and therefore God will send them strong delusion that they might believe a lie, because they didn't receive the love of the truth. That's in 2 Thessalonians 2, 10. The point here is that although you may certainly be saved and be a good Christian without knowing all the truth, you can't be a good Christian if you're suppressing some truth, or if you're compromising some truth.

Because a Christian has to be as committed to truth as they are to love. The two are not in conflict. Jesus, we think of as a man full of grace, because when he found a woman who had been taken in adultery, whom the law of Moses would have condemned, he extended grace.

He said, I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more. Jesus was always showing compassion, it seems.

Well, not always. Once in a while, he had something negative to say to those who suppressed the truth. The Pharisees.

They knew who he was, but they didn't want other people to believe it, because it challenged them politically. And therefore, they started making up things about him,

saying he was an illegitimate child, saying he was a sorcerer doing things by Beelzebul, fabricating false stories about him. They were suppressing the truth, and Jesus had very harsh words for them, very true words.

And one cannot say that those harsh words he had for the Pharisees were any less loving than the gentle words he had for the humble and the meek, because someone who's proud needs to be brought low, and needs to be brought to a place of brokenness. Now, the Pharisees didn't come to that place, but for Jesus to speak directly and rebukingly toward them was no less loving, because they needed to be told those things, than for him to forgive the woman taken in adultery. Grace and truth are not in conflict with each other.

In the Old Testament, when God revealed his glory to Moses in chapter 34 of Exodus, as we saw, he said, I am the Lord, merciful and gracious, abounding in goodness and truth. But he says, and not forgiving the iniquity of those who hate me, but visiting the iniquity of the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. The point is, there's no conflict there.

The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New is the same. He's a God of judgment and truth. He's a God of mercy and grace.

And Jesus was the perfect complement of both. And so should we be. At least we are entitled to be, not just by way of imitation, but by way of partaking of the divine nature.

Jesus was full of the glory of God, and of his fullness we have received. Let me show you what Paul said about Christ's fullness elsewhere. In Colossians chapter 1, Colossians 1.19, Paul said, For it pleased the Father that in him, that is in Christ, all the fullness should dwell.

All the fullness of what? Well, that's spelled out for us more in chapter 2 of Colossians, in verse 9. Colossians 2.9 says, For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, that is in bodily form. The Word was made flesh. The Word was God.

In that flesh person, God, the fullness of God dwelt. The word Godhead there means deity. It means who God is, the fullness of who God is dwelt in Jesus.

So, Jesus was full of God, essentially. It pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell. Look a little further, just a chapter later in Colossians 3. And in verse 16, it says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

And whatsoever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. We are to be filled with thanksgiving. We are supposed to be filled with songs and hymns and spiritual songs because the word of

Christ is richly dwelling in us.

The Godhead dwelt fully in Christ. He was full of that. But He dwells fully in us.

The way Ephesians puts it in the parallel passage to this in Colossians, there is a parallel to it in Ephesians and that's in Ephesians 3, 17-19. Paul said that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width, the length and the depth and the height and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now Christ is to dwell in us.

By the way, that's actually not the passage that's most parallel to the passage in Colossians. The one that's most parallel to it is in Ephesians 5. What? 22? Oh, 18-21. We don't need to look at that right now but that's the passage in Ephesians that's most parallel to the Colossians passage we read.

But this passage, Ephesians 3, is actually better for our point. The fullness of God. Paul's prayer here is that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now he told the Colossians that Christ was filled with the fullness of God. And now he prays that you, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith so that you may be filled with the fullness of God. What does this mean? Over in 2 Peter 1, verses 3 and 4, 2 Peter 1, 3 and 4 says, As his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to glory and virtue or by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.

What is the divine nature? The nature of God. Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Now, Peter says that we have been given by Christ all things that pertain to life and godliness.

Well, what is godliness, by the way? Earlier today, we looked at 1 Timothy 3.16 where Paul said, Great is the mystery of godliness. He was manifest in the flesh. The manifestation of God in the flesh is the mystery of godliness.

Peter says, All things necessary for life and godliness have been given to us. We have been partakers of the divine nature. Now, this is not to be equated with the Incarnation, as I pointed out earlier.

It would be heretical to say that the divine nature dwells in us in exactly the same sense as the divine nature was seen in Christ. Or that godliness in us is exactly the same thing as it was in Christ. Christ was God, manifest in the flesh.

We are not, but the divine nature has invaded our nature. See, Jesus had no other nature but that which was God made manifest in the flesh. He had a human nature, but it

wasn't a fallen nature, as near as we can tell.

He was not disposed towards sin like we are. And that's the difference. We are fallen.

Jesus was not. And therefore, the divine nature in Him was the dominant trait. It was who He was entirely.

We are, unfortunately, a mixture of who we are and who God is. But God has come to invade our lives and to make us partakers of the divine nature so that we can be filled with the fullness of God. The success of the Christian life depends on this one thing, that Christ and His life is reproduced in us, that the fullness of God will dwell in us.

Not that we mechanically seek to imitate Christ, although there's wisdom in that, but it's not the key to success. The key to success is to have Christ live His life inside of you and reproduce His nature inside of you. How is this done? Well, Peter says, through the knowledge of God.

Through the knowledge of God. Or as Paul puts it elsewhere, in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, Paul says, We all, with unveiled faces, beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, that is of Jesus, are changed from glory to glory into that same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. It's the work of the Spirit of God.

And the process is transformation from glory to glory. And our part is that we behold His glory, as we behold Him with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord. We keep our eyes on Jesus and the Holy Spirit does the work and we are changed from glory to glory into that same image.

We participate in the divine nature through the knowledge of Him, through our contemplation of Christ, through keeping our sights set upon Him. Something of His own nature is communicated to us through keeping our focus, our attention focused on Him and our sights on Him. Remember it says in 1 John 3, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him because we will see Him as He is.

We're not quite like Him yet and we won't be quite like Him until He appears. But when He does, then we'll see Him as He is. Right now we see through a glass darkly, but then we'll see Him as He is and then we'll be just like Him.

That's 1 John 3 and verse 2. 1 John 3, 2. So the Bible teaches that the life of God was perfectly manifest in Christ. And that life has come to imperfectly be manifest in us, but increasingly, the glory of God is imparted to us. The character of God, the character of Christ, the image of God is being attained from glory to glory by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we behold Him.

So this certainly is a very good reason to be continually thinking and contemplating and keeping our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Now, John 1, 16, it says,

Of His fullness we have all received grace for grace. We need grace, which is part of the character of Christ, part of the character of God, to be given to us so that we can be graceful and gracious people as He was.

And verse 17 says, For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Now, grace and truth is here, of course, in echo of verse 14. Jesus was full of grace and truth.

Grace and truth came with Him because He was full of it. The law was given by Moses. Now, here's two different characters.

He's the authors of the two different covenants. Of course, Moses wasn't the actual author of the old covenant, but he was the administrator of it. He was the mediator of it.

And he brought one covenant between man and God, which was the laws of God, the Ten Commandments and the other laws associated with it. Jesus initiated another covenant. Now, the difference between Moses and Jesus is great.

In fact, the difference between Moses and Jesus is emphasized in a number of places. For example, in Hebrews chapter 3, where it says that Jesus gets more glory than Moses, just like the builder of a house should get more glory than the house itself. And that Moses was a faithful servant in all his house, whereas Jesus is the Lord over His own house, or a son over His own house.

That's in Hebrews chapter 3, where the contrast is made to show that Jesus is superior to Moses, that those particular verses I read were verses 3 through 6. But there's a contrast between the two individuals who brought in the two covenants. There's also a contrast in what they brought. Moses brings law.

Jesus brings grace and truth. Now, no doubt there was a great deal of truth in the law, but the law was a bondage. The law brings slavery and bondage, whereas the truth makes you free, Jesus said in John.

Later on in chapter 8, the truth will make you free. So, whereas the law that Moses brought was something that brought bondage to humanity, the truth that Jesus brings sets us free, because it is coupled with grace. You see, the law didn't have any grace in it.

God was a gracious God in the Old Testament, and we see Him operating in grace, but His law doesn't have grace in it. The law was just justice. And Jesus exhibited something very different, because when He encountered people who under the law would have been condemned, He extended mercy and forgiveness and grace.

And that is what was seen in Jesus. That's what came with Jesus. Now, there's a contrast between Moses and Jesus, also between what they brought, the law on the one hand,

and grace and truth on the other, and there's a third contrast.

And that is the means by which they brought it. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus. Now, those verbs are different on purpose.

The law did not inhabit Moses. He wasn't full of the law. He was just a receiver of it who passed it along to the Jews.

He was just one who was a bystander, as it were, whom God gave the law to, and he gave it to others. One could receive the law without any personal contact with Moses. After Moses died, still there were people who received the law of regeneration.

But grace and truth is not something separate from Jesus. He didn't give us grace and truth. Grace and truth comes through Him.

When you have Him, you have it. When you don't have Him, you can't have it. A person who does not have Jesus does not have grace and does not have truth.

Unlike Moses, who simply passed along the law, which was revealed to him to man, and you could have no direct contact with Moses in order to receive the law, yet you cannot receive grace and truth without having direct contact with Jesus and receiving Him. And that is emphasized here. Grace and truth, if it is to be had, is to be had in Christ only, because He's the one who's full of grace and truth.

And the reason we have received of His fullness is because we've received Him. And along with Him comes the divine nature. Along with Him comes His Spirit.

Along with Him comes His character, His grace and His truth. And this is the divine nature that we have received. Now, in verse 18, it says, No one has seen God at any time.

The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. Now, this verse has some interesting points. First of all, no one has seen God at any time.

And yet, John has just told us that the Word was God and the Word was made flesh and we saw Him. We saw His glory. It's quite obvious that the statement that no one has seen God at any time is quite consistent with the seemingly opposite statement that we have seen God.

Have we seen God or have we not seen God? That depends on in what sense do you mean. As I pointed out already earlier, no one, even Moses, was permitted to see God fully unveiled. No one could see God's face and live.

Now, we are told here, however, Jesus is an exception. He has. He has seen God's face.

He has dwelt with God. Now, people have seen God in other forms. In the Old Testament,

people saw God in a vision.

But I'm not sure exactly what a vision is. It's not the same thing as seeing God directly. I've likened it sometimes to television.

That if the President gives a speech and you watch a live telecast of it on the television screen, there's a sense in which you saw the President. There's a sense in which you didn't see the President. You just saw his image.

You just saw a vision of him. He was really somewhere altogether different and you didn't look on him at all. You haven't come close to him.

You didn't come within eyesight of him. Yet you saw him because the vision or the image of him on the screen was really a true representation. You could see if his hair was messed up.

You could see how he gestured. You could tell what his inflections of his voice were. And you could truly say, Yeah, I saw the President on television yesterday.

But you really didn't see the President. And that may be how it is when people saw visions of God. God was really perhaps not visible, but he gave them a dramatic portrayal, a dramatic image or vision that they saw, wherein God was represented.

I don't claim to understand visions very well, and so I don't know if this is the right way of looking at it. But apparently it is quite consistent to say on one hand, no one has seen God at any time. And on the other hand, for someone like Isaiah to say, I saw the Lord high and lifted up and his train filled the temple.

Or for Ezekiel to talk about his vision of the Lord in Ezekiel chapter 1. Or for others to talk about having seen God. No doubt seeing visions of God is something very different than seeing God himself. And there were many visions of God in the Old Testament.

Likewise, the Theophanies, where God appeared in a cloud or in a fire or in a human form, those too in one sense could be said to be seeing God. When Jacob wrestled with the man all night, he afterwards said, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And he named the place Peniel, which means the face of God.

So he saw God in one sense. He also saw God in a dream. The famous dream of Jacob's ladder, where he saw God at the top of the ladder, speaking to him.

But seeing God in a dream is not the same thing as looking directly on God. There's many senses in which people have seen God. The best way anyone's ever seen God is in Jesus.

So that Jesus could say, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. By the way, let's turn to John 14, where Jesus makes that statement, to show you that this is a very strong

statement of his identity with the Father. In John 14, verse 6, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. And from now on, you know him and have seen him.

They've seen God. They've seen the Father. Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.

Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Now, it's hard to know how Jesus can make a stronger statement about his own identity with the Father.

Because Philip says, Lord, just show us the Father. And Jesus says, how could you ask a question like that? Now, he doesn't say, how could you ask a question like that as if to say, no one has the right to ask a question like that. Even Moses wasn't allowed to see the Father's face.

How can you dare ask a question like that? That's not what Jesus said. Jesus said it more like this. How can you ask that question when you've already seen the Father? From henceforth, you know him and you've seen him.

What do you mean, show us the Father? Haven't you seen me? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Don't you know he's in me, I'm in him, and the works I do, he's doing in me, and they're not my own words. I don't speak those on my own authority.

The point he's making, of course, is that you see him, you see what the Father is like. You can't get a better glimpse of the Father than by seeing Jesus. Now, many people have a very wrong notion of what God is like.

It's not uncommon to hear people say that the God of the Old Testament seems very different than the God of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, you find God hurling fire out of heaven at Sodom and Gomorrah and wiping out the whole human race with a flood, slaughtering whole populations with swords of the Israelites and so forth, and striking people dead and sending fire out of His presence in the days of Nadab and Abihu and Elijah and other cases where God's wrath is manifest graphically from heaven. People say, that seems like a wrathful God.

God can't even take a joke. And yet, what they don't realize is, first of all, that the history of the Old Testament covers several thousand years. And there are a few times during that several thousand years where God did something very unusual.

He judged people supernaturally and instantly. We see that in the New Testament happening more than once, even though that only covers 30 years. The New Testament doesn't cover any more than 30 years, except for the birth narratives of Jesus.

Altogether, maybe 60 years or so. But the point is that we see Ananias and Sapphira struck dead by God. We see Herod smitten by the angel of the Lord and eaten with worms.

We see that more than once in the New Testament, which covers a much shorter period of time, we see God supernaturally judging people. How is that different than the Old Testament, except that the Old Testament doesn't have it nearly so often as the New does, in terms of intervals between times God does that. Certainly, God's judgments in this way are unusual.

He doesn't usually judge quite so suddenly, quite so instantly and dramatically, but He does it both in the Old and the New Testament. Furthermore, God's mercy is often lost sight of in the Old Testament, because what the Old Testament is full of is stories about when God did act to redress the wrongs of His people, and many times those are judgment narratives. What we need to see is that between those narratives, there are periods of hundreds of years and thousands of years where the people deserved to be judged and God held back.

Before the flood, God waited 900 and something years after the people deserved the flood, before He wiped them out. He gave the Canaanites 400 years, according to Exodus chapter 15, until their iniquities were full, before He wiped them out. And in the books of Judges and Kings, one can hardly read those books without wondering how God could be so patient, because every time the people got into trouble, they called out to Him and He delivered them.

Then they went right back to sinning again, and He tolerated them for a great long time, over and over again. The mercy of God is seen in the Old Testament just like His judgment is. Same is true in the New Testament.

But the most important thing to know about God is He's not any different in the Old Testament than Jesus is in the New. The difference is that you can see Him in the New Testament. In the New Testament, He came to earth to declare Himself, to present Himself, because no man had seen Him this clearly ever before.

No man had seen God in any time, John says. But the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him, or explained Him, could be translated, or expounded Him. Actually, the Greek word is the word from which you get the word exegete.

To exegete a passage is to expound on it. And that's the word that is used here. Jesus

has exegeted God.

He has expounded on God so that we can know who God is. And if you've seen Jesus, you've seen God. Now, when it says the only begotten Son, here's a case where the Greek actually reads a little differently to the credit and to the benefit of those who would prove the deity of Christ, because it actually reads God only begotten, rather than the only begotten Son.

It says, No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son. No, it's only begotten God in some manuscripts, in the manuscripts followed by the NIV and the New American Standard, the RSV and many others, which would be a declaration of Jesus being God.

He's the only begotten God. He's God, only begotten, is how some translate it. So it's not a reference to Him as the Son, actually, but in some manuscripts it strongly suggests that He is God, begotten.

And He is in the bosom of the Father. That's just a way of saying who is in intimate relations with the Father. He's intimately acquainted, intimately near to the Father.

The same expression, or a similar expression, is used in one of the stories that Jesus told, Lazarus and the rich man, where Lazarus, the poor man, actually went to a place after his death, which was called Abraham's bosom. That just means into the near proximity or into the presence of Abraham. The bosom, to be in someone's bosom, means to be very close to them.

And where Abraham went is where the poor man went in that story. God is here said to be near to Jesus, and He near to Him, when He says that He is in the bosom of the Father. And He has declared Him to us.

So, John has interpreted the life of Christ in these verses rather than told us any specific details. Even when He talks about the Incarnation, He doesn't give any detail about it. But He just tells us that the life that He's about to disclose in the following chapters, or even the remainder of this chapter and the remaining chapters, is a life that had its origins prior to history.

In fact, it has no origins at all because it has always existed. It existed in the beginning with God and was the active party in creation. There is another New Testament passage that is familiar to us, but we might as well bring it up in this connection, where Paul says almost the same thing as John says.

This is in Philippians. In the second chapter of Philippians, beginning at verse 5, Paul says, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. I might as well say that this is not the best translation possible.

Where it says, did not think it robbery to be equal with God, should be translated, did not think of equality with God a thing to be grasped. He did not hold on to His equality with God. All the new translations render there.

It probably does because all the new translations do. The NIV sometimes follows other good translations in getting it right. There were a number of better translations than the NIV that rendered it that way before they did.

I'm pretty sure they rendered it that way too. They took their cue from some other translations before them that made some corrections over the King James. There are a number of places in the King James that the translation can be improved on, but the NIV was not the first to make the improvements.

Those areas where the King James needed to be improved on were improved on at least 70 years before the NIV came along in other translations. But they have become by now common knowledge to Bible scholars. The NIV wouldn't be caught dead failing to make those changes, nor would any modern translation.

So it would say, I don't know how the NIV reads exactly, but I'm sure that they render it a little bit like all the modern translations do, that He did not think of equality with God a thing to be held on to or to be grasped or to be clung to. And He goes on to elaborate on that. But He made Himself of no reputation taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men.

This is Paul's way of talking about what we just read in John 1.14. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself again, further, and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those in heaven and those on earth and of those under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Now, this begins in verse 5 by His saying, Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.

And that's just the point. What kind of mind was in Christ that He was made flesh? There's certainly nothing that compelled Him external to Himself. There's nothing that man could do to compel God to come down or to send Jesus down to save us.

We didn't deserve it. We had no claim upon it. But it was grace.

It was His commitment to grace and truth. And it's that very character of God that we see in Jesus taken on the form of a man. We behold His glory full of grace and truth.

Part of that, obviously, is His humility. And that's what Paul's emphasizing in this passage. Of His fullness we have received.

We should be like Him. And we should have the same mind He had. In becoming

incarnate, that was the humblest thing that God could ever do.

In limiting Himself to the form of a man. And not only a man, but of a servant. And not only of a servant, but a criminal who was put to death.

Successively, humbling Himself further and further. This is how Jesus is seen and represented to us by Paul and, of course, by the Gospels also. So, we come to the end of John's prologue.

Understanding that he's not the only one who had this vision of Christ being God coming to the flesh. Paul also confirmed that. And it became standard doctrine very early in the Christian church.

We saw in an earlier lecture that Pliny the Younger, writing to the Emperor Trajan, trying to decide what he should do to Christians, gave a description of what the Christians told him, whom he interrogated in court. And basically, part of what he found out was they sang a hymn to Christ as God. The early Christians came to understand that Jesus was God.

I don't know that any of his disciples understood that while he was on earth. That revelation must have come later. Remember when Jesus was in the upper room with his disciples, He said, I have many things to tell you, but you're not able to receive them yet.

But when the Holy Spirit comes, He will lead you into all truth. That's in John 16, I think, verse 12, 13, somewhere there. And no doubt, the deity of Christ was one of those things that Jesus never could really reveal to them fully.

Even there in the upper room, He says, you haven't known me yet, Philip. I've been with you all this time. But they came to know him.

And the Holy Spirit, no doubt, is the one who revealed this, that Jesus was God before he came to earth. And he came in the flesh in Jesus, which was an act of supreme humility, grace, and truth, which is not only an example to us, but which opens to us the access to the divine nature and to the same traits, characteristics, so that the word, as it were, could be made flesh in our own cases as well, though not quite in the same sense. Does anyone have any questions about this material?