

Sunday, February 25, 2007 Notes:

Order of events:

1. Opening prayer.
2. Praise God with song.
3. Praise God with corporate prayer: let's focus on praise this week.
4. Praise God with study of His Word.
5. Close with blessing and reminder of the Gospel.

Let's recap where we are in our study of the gospel of St. John. Our first week was spent on an overview, a 30,000 ft. view if you will, the who, what, where, when, and why questions. Following that, we started chapter 1 and we looked at verses 1-4 and they can best be summarized as John's description of the indescribable – the Deity of Christ, the God-Man. We discussed the doctrine of the Trinity and the tremendous light and life that Christ brought to His creation. Last week we were in verses 5-13 and we introduced John the Baptist and his mission and the reason for his mission, to help us, in darkness, to perceive Messiah. And we discussed the effectual nature of Christ's mission and how we are called to believe and receive after God has enlightened us to see reality. This led us into a look at the doctrine of Ordo Salutis – the Order of Salvation – and the infallibility of our effectual call such that we come most freely. Tonight we will look at verses 14-18 in chapter 1. Yes, chapter 1 still! Only 2 more weeks and we will be through the first chapter. Trust me, things do speed up considerably. There is just so much here in John's prologue, and we haven't even hardly dug beneath the surface. And tonight's lesson is no exception.

Oh, the Word of God is absolutely delicious! It is so sweet, so satisfying, and it speaks to us on every level: it stimulates our intellect; it warms and pierces our hearts, it feeds our spirit and God the Holy Spirit within us; and it motivates our wills to the pursuit of God: heart, mind, soul, and strength (emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, physically). And John's gospel, these words are like honey to the lips, there is just so much here; it just says so much. The economy of words throughout this first chapter is just remarkable. It's no wonder that Jesus said that, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." This is pure nourishment. As you read it and study it, just enjoy its magnificence; this is God's plan of salvation unfolded right before your eyes. And we have the marvelous benefit of seeing it in hindsight.

There's a funny thing about this little prologue of John's here in chapter one of his gospel; the more I read it and study it, the more it seems to turn up all throughout the Bible. Allow me to share a couple of spots where I found it this week. I just wanted to share this with you; I always wonder if things happening in my life are perhaps God's way of speaking directly to me. I try to listen and understand... I call them things that make you go "hmmmm."

Slide

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And as I was studying Romans 9... *again*, and God reminded me,

Rom 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

"The reason for the choice made is to be found only in the Chooser." unknown

Slide

Remember? (John 1:1-4) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was in the beginning with God. {3} All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. {4} In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

(Neh 9:6) You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You. Sound familiar?

Okay, let's begin. Looking tonight at John chapter 1 verse 14-18.

Slide

{14} And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

{15} (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

{16} And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

Slide

{17} For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

{18} No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

There is so much said here, one hardly knows where to start. And if you scratch just beneath the surface a bit, it really opens up. Only place to start is at the beginning, no, not that beginning *again*, the beginning of the verse, but let's rewind a bit more and go to the beginning of the chapter.

Slide

{1} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

fast forward to verse 14...

{14} And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

"And the Word became flesh..." The eternal God became a man. Can it be said any more clearly? Jesus Christ has not always been man. He became a man. The Son of God became flesh! He was born of the Virgin Mary and He became a member of the human race. He possessed a true human body made of flesh and blood and bones. He was a real man! Like I said last time, John wasn't big on long Christmas stories; here it is in verse 14

"...and dwelt among us..." "...made his dwelling among us..." "...took up residence..." Because the Greek word used can mean tent or tabernacle, some have translated it, "...he tabernacled among us..." "...he set up his tent with ours." The Greek word is skenoo { skay-no'-o } [σκηνοω]. It means to fix one's tabernacle, have one's tabernacle, abide (or live) in a tabernacle (or tent), tabernacle or to dwell. It can be in reference his body or earthly tent, or it could even be in reference to the great Tabernacle tent of the OT: only a temporary residence for the eternal Divinity. Jesus came and set up his tent among us. God dwelt in the Tabernacle amongst the Jews. The common meaning of this word fits well: association, living, eating and drinking, and conversing.

Slide

Num 9:15 On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony. And at evening it was over the tabernacle like the appearance of fire until morning. {16} So it was always: the cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. {17} And whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, after that the people of Israel set out, and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the people of Israel camped. Exo 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Eze 43:4 As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, Psalm 78:14 In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a fiery light.

Slide

2 Cor 5:1-5 {1} For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. {2} For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, {3} if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. {4} For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened--not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. {5} He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

“...and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” So, Jesus came into camp, set up his tent right amongst ours and then proceeded to light off his 10-million candlepower Coleman lantern inside that thing! Glory so magnificent that it had to come from the only begotten of the Father.

“Glory,” what a word! Who can wrap their mind around it? Like I told you, “a word is worth a thousand pictures.” That’s what kind of word “glory” is. And this isn’t ordinary “glory,” this is “glory” “as of the only Son from the Father.” “We saw the magnificence of this man!” Some translations use the word “beheld,” which is the same, but renders a sort of awe about the viewing.

Slide

glory – doxa {dox'-ah} [δοξα] – opinion, thinking, judgment, view, majesty, brilliance, holiness, power, perfection, exalted state, blessedness, exterior brightness, splendor, brightness, magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace, majesty, a thing belonging to God, kingly majesty. (Yep, that’s what they beheld!)

Slide

To Israel belonged the GLORY.

The visible manifestation of the presence of God. The majestic presence or manifestation of God in which He descends to dwell among men. Also referred to as the **Shechinah Glory** (Shechinah comes from a Hebrew verb meaning “to dwell”): “the glory of the LORD.” Most took the form of light, fire or cloud or a combination:

Genesis 15:17 Smoking furnace and burning lamp (Abraham)

Exodus 3:1-5 Burning bush (Moses)

Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20,24 Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire (The Exodus)

Exodus 19:16-20 Fire, smoke, etc. (Mt. Sinai)

Exodus 33-34 A special manifestation to Moses.

Exodus 40:34-38 Cloud and fire over the tabernacle; compare 1 Sam. 4:21-22

1 Kings 8:10-11 Cloud (God’s glory in Solomon’s temple).

Luke 2:8-9 Shining glory (Bethlehem shepherds).

Matthew 17:1-8 Brilliance of the transfigured Christ.

Revelation 15:8a “and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power,”

God never made known His presence in such a unique way to any other nation. “For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh (near) unto them?” (Deut. 4:7).

Slide

“...full of grace and truth.” What else can be said? How can it be said any better? Christ was “full of favor, kindness, and mercy to men, teaching the way to the kingdom of God with all simplicity, plainness, dignity and energy of truth.”

See why it takes so long? There is so much more here and we’ve just hit one verse yet. Only God can do this with over 40 authors and 66 books and 1,500 years in one text! An inspired wallop!

Slide

{ 15 } (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”)

On to verse 15... Some translations, like the one shown here have verse 15 shown as a parenthetical phrase, a side thought. The flow of conversation is interrupted for John the Apostle to quote one of his favorite riddles of John the Baptist emphasizing, “John told you who this man was.” This revelation probably helped convince John the Apostle of the reality of Christ. Then in verse 16, the train of thought from verse 14 continues.

Verse 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) “Him” of course refers to the glorious One in the tent we just discussed. And John the Baptist, whose history was well known to the to the persons to whom this gospel came, testified about Christ. And he “cried out” (that’s intentional, by the way) – being deeply convinced of the importance and truth of the subject, he delivered his testimony with the utmost zeal and earnestness – saying, this one, standing before you in the flesh, is he of whom I told you about.

As we know, Jesus was born about 6 months after John the Baptist. Also, Jesus’ public ministry started after John started his. So, in this sense Jesus came *after* John. But as we saw earlier in verse 1, Jesus did not have his

beginning in Bethlehem with his earthly birth. In fact, it says “In the beginning was the Word,” so Jesus was even before the beginning... of anything! The text says the Word *was*. So, no matter where you start your beginning, Jesus, the Word, was already there. John the Baptist speaks to us and to the crowd of his day in a riddle of sorts. I have a feeling he used a lot of this sort of speech. He intrigued the crowds and this is one reason why. Riddle me this, riddle me that, “He who came after me actually came before me.” Can you solve the riddle?

The Baptist was no other than the voice of the crier in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3) the forerunner of Messiah. And in this quote from him, he also seems makes allusion to the fact that Jesus “out ranked” him: “ranks before me,” “was of higher dignity than I.” Whether he meant it this way or not, John most certainly recognized that he derived both his being and his ministry from Jesus the Christ, because he is the eternal One.

Slide

{ 16 } And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

{ 17 } For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

{ 18 } No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

Continuing on from verse 14, John exclaims that from the bounty, the fullness of supply, of Christ’s grace and truth, we have received grace after grace after grace. God has an infinite supply of grace for us: God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense – GRACE! And what is that grace for? As we said before, grace is kindness, favor, unmerited favor, mercy. Why is it needed? To answer to the Law. In Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*, Javert represents the Law: firm, confident, right, unwavering, unmerciful, by the book, no exceptions. Jean Valjean represents mercy, kindness, forgiveness, pity, love. What is it that a guilty man needs when he stands before the judgment seat? Grace! The Law makes its demands, rightfully and justly (it is not evil at all), but grace is given in order to meet that demand. God provided grace from the moment of the fall (Covenant of Grace), and it culminated in our Savior: we now have and can receive the “fullness” of God’s grace. Recall these most beautiful words from Romans.

Slide

(Rom 8) { 1 } Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. { 2 } For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. { 3 } For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, { 4 } so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

(As an aside, John never uses the word “grace” again in his gospel. [4])

Notice also in verse 17 that Jesus Christ is the “fullness of ... truth.” With the “fullness of grace” he answered the demands of the Law that came through Moses, with or by the “fullness of truth” he has made God known to us. No one has ever seen God. Moses and others heard his voice and/or saw manifestations of God, but never viewed God face to face, as it were. “He dwells in light unapproachable.” (1 Tim 6:16). No man, no matter how highly favored, has fully known God, at any time, in any nation or age. And now God, manifested in the person of Jesus Christ is exhibited to the world as never before; the only begotten Son, who is in bosom of the Father, who was intimately acquainted with all the counsels of the Most High, he has declared and explained him in the fullness of truth.

Questions:

1. “What occurred at the Council of Nicea?”

Answer: The Council of Nicea took place in 325 A.D. by the order of the Roman Emperor Caesar Flavius Constantine. Nicea was located in Asia Minor, east of Constantinople. At the Council of Nicea, Emperor Constantine presided over a group of Church bishops and leaders with the purpose of defining the true God for all of Christianity and to eliminate all the confusion, controversy, and contention within Christ’s church. The Council of Nicea affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ and established an official definition of the Trinity - the deity of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit under one Godhead, having three co-equal and co-eternal Persona.

Constantine, a converted Christian (debatable), called for a council meeting to be held in Nicea with the bishops of the Christian church to resolve escalating quarrels and controversy mounting to a bitter degree of disunity amongst the church leadership and congregates concerning theological issues. The failing Roman Empire, now under Constantine’s rule, could not withstand the division caused by years of hard-fought, “out of hand” arguing over doctrinal differences. He saw it not only as a threat to Christianity but as a threat to society as well. Therefore, at the Council of Nicea, Constantine demanded that the Christians settle their internal disagreements and become Christ-like agents who could bring new life into a troubled, beaten-down empire. Constantine felt “called” to use his authority to help bring about the unity, peace, and love, all for which Christ stands. He and the bishops had reason to worry about the future survival of Christianity within the Roman world empire, let alone the survival of his world empire. The Council of Nicea, led by Emperor Constantine, was the meeting to settle differences, to become like-minded, all to the glory of Christ.

The main theological issue and focus had always been about Christ. Since the ending of the Apostolic Age and beginning of the Church Age, saints began questioning, debating, fighting, and separating over, “Who is the Christ?” Is He more “divine than human” or more “human than divine?” Was Jesus created / made or begotten? Being the Son of God, is He co-equal and co-eternal with Father God, or less and lower in status than He? Is the Father the One and only True God, or is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit the One true God? “True God of True God”, “One Being, Three Persons”, a tri-unity called “Trinity”? Jesus said, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15).

Constantine demanded once the Nicea Council meeting was underway that the 300 bishops make a decision by majority vote defining who Jesus Christ is. Constantine commanded them to create a “creed” doctrine that all of Christianity would follow and obey, a doctrine that would be called the “Nicene Creed,” upheld by the Church and enforced by the Emperor. The bishops voted to make the full deity of Christ the accepted position for the church. The Council of Nicea voted to make the Trinity the official doctrine of the church. However, the Council of Nicea did not invent these doctrines. Rather, it only recognized what the Bible taught, and systematized the doctrines.

The New Testament taught that Jesus the Messiah should be worshipped and trusted, which was/is to say He is co-equally God and man. The New Testament forbids the worship of angels (Colossians 2:18; Revelation 22:8,9) but commands worship of Jesus. Apostle Paul says about Jesus that “in Him the fullness of Deity dwells bodily” (Colossians 2:9; cf. 1:19). Paul declares Jesus as Lord and the One to whom a person must pray for salvation just as one calls on Jehovah, Yahweh (Joel 2:32; Romans 10:9-13). “Jesus is God overall” (Romans 9:5). Our God and Savior (Titus 2:13). Faith in Jesus’ Deity is basic to Paul’s testimony and theology.

Apostle John’s Gospel declares Jesus being the Divine eternal Logos, agent of creation and source of life and light (John 1: 1-5, 9). That Jesus is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6), an advocate with heavenly Father (1 John 2:1-2), that He is sovereign (Revelation 1:5), the Rider on a white horse (Revelation 19:11-16), and the totality of the Son of God from the beginning to the end (Revelation 22:13). The author of Hebrews reveals the full deity of Jesus thru His perfection as the most high priest, Melchizedek (Hebrews 1; Hebrews 7:1-3), and the full humanity (Hebrews chapter 2). The Divine-human Savior is the Christian’s object of faith, hope, and love.

The Council of Nicea did not invent the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Rather, the Council of Nicea affirmed the Apostles’ teaching of who Christ is as the One true God in Deity and Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

2. What does the word “begotten” mean in reference to Jesus the Christ?

There are exactly three passages where Jesus is called “begotten” in the Bible. There are a few more in the King James Version, but in those other places it is a mistranslation of *monogenes* according to the unanimous opinion among the scholars of the Greek language. The verses that do speak about “begotten” are:

Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5

In the above three cases it is not an “original statement” but each time it is quoting Psalm 2:7 from the Old Testament. What are all of these three passages talking about? Let us read them in context. In Acts 13 we find this expression a sermon preached by Peter:

(Acts 13:32-35 NIV) “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers {33} he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’ {34} The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: “‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ {35} So it is stated elsewhere: “‘You will not let your Holy One see decay.’”

(Heb 1:1-6 NIV) In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, {2} but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. {3} The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. {4} So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. {5} For to which of the angels did God ever say, “‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’”? Or again, “‘I will be his Father, and he will be my Son’”? {6} And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’”

(Heb 5:1-10 NIV) Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. {2} He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. {3} This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. {4} No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. {5} So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." {6} And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." {7} During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. {8} Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered {9} and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him {10} and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

All of these passages speak about the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. It refers to his taking office as king and priest. This took place about 33 years after the birth of Jesus. Clearly, in Biblical usage, the term "begotten" when used for Jesus in those passages is not at all connected with anything sexual, or in a creation sense, but has a metaphorical meaning. The expression "the begotten son" of God is never mentioned in respect to his miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit or his birth by the Virgin Mary.

What then is the Biblical meaning? I think Romans 1:4 says it most clearly that Jesus "was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." The resurrection was the time of public declaration of what he has been all along. The NIV translates the three above mentioned verses as "Today I became your Father" instead of the literal "Today I have begotten you" in order to bring out more clearly the strong symbolic meaning of the word, which should be already obvious from their original place in Psalm 2:7 as well as from the way it is quoted in the New Testament in referring to the resurrection.

Psalm 2 is an inauguration psalm for the Israelite kings – the public declaration of kingship. And most of the Kings became kings as grown men. None became king at his conception. And this meaning carries over into the New Testament use for Jesus just as well, that the resurrection is the public announcement by God about the true identity and authority of Jesus, Messiah, true king of Israel, representative of God among mankind. [6]

References:

1. Halley, Henry H., *Pocket Bible Handbook*, 1951
2. Stedman, Ray C., *Hello Darkness*, 1983
3. Guideposts, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1986
4. Zondervan, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1985
5. <http://godsvview.com/gvcm0022.html>
6. <http://www.answering-islam.org/BibleCom/ps2-7.html>