

“We Beheld His Glory”

December 23, 2012

Text: John 1:14

**At this time of year, we sing some of the most profound
theological statements found in the English language.**

E.g. Christ, by highest heav’n adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the virgin’s womb;

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th’incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel [“God with us”]

Think about the enigmas we celebrate at Christmas time=>

Offspring of the virgin’s womb (Virgins don’t have offspring).

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see (God is an invisible spirit, not
human flesh).

**In our study of the Prologue to John’s Gospel, we have
encountered several amazing enigmas/mysteries.**

Not contradictions, not inconsistencies—mysteries, that are
enigmatic truths.

As I said last time, it shouldn’t shock us that God
understands ideas that seem mysterious to us, since
His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isa 55:9).
Nor is He constrained by human logic.
He is infinite, and therefore unconstrained by
anything at all.

Praise God for that! => If He were just like us, He couldn’t
save us—because we can’t save ourselves.

So we trust His understanding, over our own understanding.

In the very first verse of John we ran across more than 1 such

enigma=>

- * John referred to the pre-existent/pre-incarnate X before His birth, as the “Word” of God (the Self-expression of God).
- * The Word existed before the beginning of time/creation. You need time to even have a beginning.
- * The Word was God, and yet He was “*with God.*” How can you be “with” a person if you yourself are that person?

We try to find theological solutions to these issues, but ultimately we must deal with them through faith, as the H.S. witnesses to our hearts that John’s words are absolutely true, and He gives us the faith we need to believe them & believe in them.

Now John adds one more amazing enigma in today’s text.

John 1:14=> the Word (God) became flesh (a human).

This is the story of Jesus’ birth, as seen by God, from the perspective of eternity, rather than our logical space/time perspective.

Someone: That’s not really a mystery/enigma. I understand it.

Well, consider the implications of the Word becoming flesh=>

- * What sort of nature did that Baby in the manger have?

A divine nature capable of creating whole worlds w/
a word, as He lay there?

Or a human nature that's weak/limited/vulnerable,
babbling baby-talk, & having to be fed?

* If He had both a divine/human nature, did He think/act
like God part of the time, & like man at other times?

* Did His 2 natures conflict, or meld into 1 another,
creating a middle form that was neither truly
God/man?

**In A.D. 451 the Council of Chalcedon carefully searched the
Scriptures for answers to these questions, & declared=>**

- 1) Jesus actually had 2 natures (a divine nature & a human nature).
- 2) Because His divine nature is whole/complete/separate from His human nature, He is fully God.
- 3) Because His human nature is whole/complete/separate from His divine nature, He is fully man.
- 4) And yet neither nature got mixed-up/confused-w/ the other, but Jesus was/is 1 single person—not a split personality.
A fully integrated union of 2 different natures in 1 unique individual.

Whether/not we realize it, that's what we're declaring as we sing,

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel [God with us].

These are not simply theological facts for us to recite/memorize, but a description of the glory of our Savior, that causes us to worship Him just as the shepherds/wisemen did.

When we pray to Jesus, we are praying to a complex Person, who is and has been since His birth, 100% God, & yet 100% man.

* He is the almighty Word of God, who existed before time began.

He created time and the whole universe, & apart from Him nothing came into being, that has come into being (Jn 1:3).

He planned out the heavens by His own eternal wisdom, on His own eternal drafting board.

And right now He sits on His Father's throne, ruling over all creation, while yet serving as His own people's Priest/Advocate/Mediator.

He holds the keys of heaven/death/hell in His hands.

* But Jesus is also a man like us, minus our sin/guilt.

He was from the moment of His conception, & He still is today.

He is bone of His mother's bone, and flesh of her flesh, except that His flesh/bone have now been resurrected and glorified.

He has experienced all the same sufferings we experience,
so He can sympathize with our weaknesses & come
to our aid when we're tempted/troubled.

John 1:14 (our text today) scoops up all these truths about Jesus
& includes them in a description of His birth—His
incarnation into human flesh.

**This morning we'll take John 1:14 apart, one phrase/segment
at a time, to maximize our understanding of it, and the
spiritual blessings it holds for us...**

[John 1:14]=> *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among
us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten
from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

*** Segment 1—“And the Word became flesh”**

John 1:1 had said, *“In the beginning was the Word... the Word
was God”*; & now John adds *“& the Word became flesh.”*

**The Word of God, the 2nd Person of the Godhead, had
enjoyed the delights of His Father's presence from all
eternity.**

But now He left those joys in heaven, emptied Himself of the
right to freely exercise His prerogatives as Creator-God,
and took on Himself our humanity, as a helpless Baby.

He didn't share our sin/depravity, but He did share our weakness,
and the disastrous effects of Adam's sin on our race.

When John says the Word became *“flesh,”* he's not giving that
term “flesh” its usual negative meaning—sinful flesh.

He's referring to man's weakened state, due to Adam's fall.

Like any other man, Jesus suffered hunger, pain, thirst,
fatigue, sadness, & humiliation, to the point of death,
on a cross.

Heb 2 explains why He subjected Himself to all this=>

“Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (2:14).

The pre-incarnate Jesus, who is the perfect Word of God, took on Himself our mortal nature & entered into our fallen world, so He could die for our sins, & free us from slavery to Satan/death.

He didn't simply take our manhood upon Himself like a cloak.

He actually became (lit. turned Himself into) a man, and to this day, remains a man, still.

That's why I Tim 2 says=> *“There is [right now] one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (2:5).*

He's still a Man!

And He did this w/o ceasing to be the divine Word,
or laying aside His own divine nature.

At this moment in heaven, Jesus X is still fully God,
and fully Man (a glorified Man, but a Man
nonetheless).

In the words of the Council of Chalcedon=>

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood...in two natures inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures by no means taken away by the union, but...each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person...not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

As you can see, there’s a lot more here to the story of Christ’s birth than first meets the eye, or than you normally hear about at Christmas time.

*** Segment 2—“and dwelt among us”**

“*Dwelt*” literally means “tented” (lived in a tent).

Why would John describe X’s life on earth as “tenting”?

First, because this earth was not His permanent home, but merely a temporary residence among men, in the wilderness of our fallen world.

His home was in heaven, with His Father.

Second, because Jesus did for believers, what the Tabernacle (a tent) did for Israel in the OT, “tenting” in His flesh on earth=>

Let me point out 5 similarities between the Tabernacle, and Jesus’ dwelling on earth for 33 years.

1) The Tabernacle was a temporary arrangement, designed for the rigors/difficulties of wilderness life.

Jesus’ humble/mortal body was also a temporary arrangement, designed for His mission on earth and ultimately replaced by a glorified body, just as the

Tabernacle was ultimately replaced by Solomon's Temple.

2) The interior of the Tabernacle was beautiful, but its exterior was not, covered as it was w/ animal skins.

X was spiritually beautiful on the inside, but Isa 53:2

prophesied of His outward appearance=>

“He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.”

3) The Tabernacle was where the Law was kept, inside the Ark of the Covenant;

But the Law was/is also kept in X's heart.

In Psa 40, Messiah says=> *“I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart”* (40:8).

4) The Tabernacle was where God manifested His presence, so that His people could approach Him, appeal to Him, and be with Him.

Lev 26 (God)=> *“I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you”* (26:11).

Jesus is the permanent manifestation of God's presence, & our only means of approaching God, appealing to God, or being with God.

He declared=> *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me”*
(Jn 14:6).

5) The Tabernacle was where a Jew went to gain peace in His soul that God's anger over his sin was settled, having been propitiated thru the sacrifices he offered.

We go to Jesus as God's final sacrifice for our sin, which all those animal sacrifices merely foreshadowed.

I Jn 2:2 says that He Himself *"is the propitiation for our sins."*

Israel's greatest boast/blessing was that God was with them.

He dwelt/tabernacled among them, right there in the midst of their camp, providing them a great sense of security.

Psa 46 is a celebration of that fact.

Vs 7=> *"The LORD of hosts is **with** us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold."*

Because the Lord was with them, the Psalmist could confidently

say=> *"God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. / Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea" [46:1b-2]*

Not only was God's presence their security, it was also the great source of their gladness.

Vs 4=> *"There is a river whose streams make **glad** the city of God, The holy dwelling places of the Most High."*

The Tabernacle was a prophetic object lesson, teaching what the coming of the Messiah (Jesus), living in His people's midst, would mean, becoming their Tabernacle, when He entered this world at Bethlehem.

He is our security, our refuge, our strength.

He is the Source of our gladness, knowing that someday
He will take us back home to be with Him, in heaven.

*** Segment 3—“and we beheld His glory”**

John says he & Jesus’ other disciples “*beheld*” X’s glory=>

They carefully examined/scrutinized His glory,
contemplating it, reflecting on it, with wonder.

**God’s glory in the Tabernacle was to be found in the Holy of
Holies over the Ark of the Covenant—God’s royal
throne.**

But John is saying in our text that he/others beheld God’s glory in
the Person of Jesus X.

John could have been describing the Transfiguration, where the
face/clothing of X took on that same heavenly brightness
seen over the Ark of the Covenant in the OT.

John was actually there himself, to see it w/ his own eyes.

So was Peter, who later wrote=> “*We were eyewitnesses of
His majesty*” (II Pet 1:15).

But the “*we*” in our text, who beheld X’s divine glory must also
include others beside Peter/John/James, the only disciples
present when Jesus was Transfigured.

It must also include Matthew, who described that scene so
vividly in Matt 17, even though he personally wasn’t
there.

Nor is the manifestation of X's glory to be limited only to the Transfiguration, w/ its spectacular visual luminescence.

Jesus' glory was manifested in many other ways as well.

* The various forms of evidence of His deity=> His virgin birth, the miracles He performed, His incomparable teaching.

These too were manifestations of His divine glory, & they were seen by all His disciples.

* Jesus' moral perfection also manifested X's divine glory=>

Out of selfless love for His people, He left the riches of His Father's house, came to earth, & became a poor, houseless, despised Nazarene, in order to atone for our sins.

He did all this for a world of people who would not even know/acknowledge Him, & a nation of Jews who wouldn't receive Him.

That's a form of glory all true disciples saw/still-see, through the pages of Scripture.

* But the ultimate display of X's glory took place at His crucifixion/resurrection/exaltation.

In Jn 17, Jesus prayed=> "*Father, the hour has come;*

glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee."

Then He added=> "***Glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was***" (Jn 17:1, 5).

The word “Beheld” (“We beheld His glory”), leaves the door open for you/me to see X’s glory too.

Real beholding (real “seeing”) isn’t done with the eyes, but with our hearts.

We who are believers don’t walk by sight, but by faith.

In fact, sight isn’t even an advantage to our faith.

Judas saw lots of marvelous/miraculous sights, & then he betrayed X.

The scribes/Pharisees saw them too, & they just became jealous of X.

Spiritually speaking, sight is for faithless people, like Thomas,

who said=> “*Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe*” (Jn 20:25).

Jesus later said to Thomas=> “*Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed*” (Jn 20:29).

That actually puts us, who weren’t around to see w/ our eyes

Jesus’ miracles or His Transfiguration, in an advantageous position, if we can “see” them through our faith.

Peter saw all of that w/ his eyes, & yet Peter says to us=>

“*Though you have not seen Him, you love Him, & though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory*” (I Pet 1:8).

Why do a believer/non-believer view the words of the Bible

**so differently? Because only 1 of them has eyes of faith,
to appreciate/understand its truth.**

As I Cor 2 explains=> “*A natural man does **not accept** the things of the Spirit of God; for they are **foolishness** to him, & he **cannot understand** them, because they are **spiritually appraised**. / But he who is spiritual (through faith) **appraises all things**” (2:14-15).*

With eyes of faith, a Xn can actually “see” X’s glory in His shame, triumph in His death, and power in His meekness. By faith, a Xn’s experience has shown him that the glory of X is found in times of difficulty, as Jesus takes him thru them. His faith in the X of glory has taught him how to both live/die w/ confidence, & ultimately how to rise to glory in X’s presence, beyond the grave.

In each of these ways, he has seen his Master’s glory just as certainly as if his own eyes had gazed upon it.

And as we read Rev 19 w/ eyes of faith, we, w/ John, see our Lord’s returning in glory as clearly as we see a sunrise.

John=> “*I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war*”
(Rev 19:11).

John saw it in a vision;

We see it by faith, but it’s John’s vision we see,
recorded for us in Scripture.

*** Segment 4—“glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

The same Jesus who was placed in a manger has a glory that proves Him to be the only begotten from the Father.

He is God's only-begotten Son, His unique Son, the only One who shares God's own essence, and God's own glory.

In fact, Rom 8 refers to Him as God's "*own Son*" (8:32).

When He came into the world, the Father announced=>

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Mt 3:17).

In Jn 1:12 we learned that X gives the right to anyone who receives Him by faith, to become a "child" of God.

But our sonship lacks the essential glory of X's Sonship.

We have been created in God's image, and are becoming conformed to the image of His Son.

But Jesus alone shares the glory of God's very essence, and has done so, from eternity past.

He is equal to the Father in honor (5:23), life-giving power (1:4), and dominion (16:15).

Col 2 says that "*in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form*" (2:9).

Jesus was God's Son even before He came to earth as a Man.

Jn 3:16=> "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.*"

He sent/gave Someone who was already His Son.

Jesus is God's Son in a unique sense, & that is His glory.

Jesus' glory impacts us/our-salvation, because it is full of grace/truth.

He has saved us by His grace, and even the faith by which we became saved was a gift of His grace.

By His grace He has justified us, & given us eternal life.

His messages, which we read in the Gospels, are full of grace for sinners who don't, & never could, deserve God's favor, on their own merits.

He graciously calls to them, saying=> "*Come to Me,*

all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28).

His atoning sacrifice, which saves our souls from hell, is absolutely undeserved, & yet graciously/freely given.

We who know Him can say, "He has done for us something, that only God in His glory/grace, ever-could/would, have done."

* He has changed stony/stubborn/rebellious hearts of people like us, who would have gladly remained trapped in spiritual darkness/sin, until we ended up in hell.

* He has melted away our hardness, and given us peace.

* He graciously has drawn us when we didn't even want to come to Him;

And when we struggled to resist His grace, He patiently continued to draw us.

- * He has changed our souls' mourning into gladness, and our hopelessness into optimistic joy, putting a new song of praise to God, in our hearts, & in our mouths.
- * He has caused us to rejoice by faith in our Savior/Master, w/ joy that is inexpressible, and full of glory.

Jesus' glory is not only full of grace, it's also full of truth.

X Himself is the way, the truth, and the life, that saves us.

He is the full expression of God's truth, come to our world like Light infiltrating the darkness of sin's ignorance/evil.

The OT Tabernacle was not full of truth, but merely suggested it w/ symbols/types/shadows/ceremonies.

X is the full Reality suggested by symbols/ceremonies such as the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

But as believers, we can be very glad that X has come to us, as God's real Tabernacle, full of His glory/truth.

God sent X to earth as the embodiment of truth, the radiance of His glory, & the exact representation of His nature.

In Jesus we don't have a symbol of truth, but Truth itself.

We became born again when we placed our faith in that truth which Jesus revealed—the core of which was X Himself.

Paul wrote=> *“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of **truth**, the **gospel** of your salvation—having also **believed**, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise”* (Eph 1:13).

Paul told Timothy that we are saved by coming to the
knowledge of the truth, of the gospel.

Everything Jesus has promised us has proven to be true.

We must sadly admit that, at times, we have doubted Him.
But our Master has never yet failed us, a fact in which we
find great satisfaction and joy and assurance.

Never has any servant had a Master who is so true, nor one who
is so gentle/humble in heart, nor one whose yoke actually
brings rest to our souls.

Never has a sinner found a Savior so kind.

Never has a mourner found a Comforter so
compassionate/gracious.

His glory shines forth in our poverty, as He becomes our wealth;

In spiritual hunger, becoming our manna;

In times of darkness, becoming our only Light.

He is=> Christ, by highest heav'n adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the virgin's womb;
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
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“We Beheld His Glory”

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Text: John 1:14

1. In our study of the Prologue to John’s Gospel, we have encountered several amazing [16 enigmas] and mysteries.

Isa 55:9

2. Now John adds one more enigma in today’s text: The Word (God) became [12 flesh] (a human).

Jn 1:14

3. These are not simply theological facts for us to memorize, but a description of the glory of our Savior that causes us to [16 worship] Him just as the shepherds and wisemen did.

Jn 1:3

This morning we will take John 1:14 apart, one phrase or (segment) at a time, to maximize our understanding of it and the blessings it holds for us...

[Include this whole verse as a Power Point slide but not in Sermon Notes]
[John 1:14]=> “*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*”

*** Segment 1—“*And the Word became flesh*”**

4. The Word of God, the second Person of the Godhead, had enjoyed the delights of His Father’s presence from all eternity; but now He [10 left] those joys.

Heb 2:14

5. The pre-incarnate Jesus took on Himself our mortal nature; He did this without laying aside His own [14 divine] nature.

1 Tim 2:5

[This is to be included as a Power Point slide, but not on the Sermon Notes]

The Council of Chalcedon

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood...in two natures inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures by no means taken away by the union, but...each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person...not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

* **Segment 2—“and dwelt among us”**

6. Jesus did for believers what the Tabernacle did for Israel in the OT, “[16 tenting]” in His flesh on earth.

Isa 53:2; Psa 40:8; Lev 26:11; Jn 14:6

7. The Tabernacle was where a Jew went to gain peace in His soul that God’s anger over his sin was settled through the sacrifices he offered; we go to Jesus as God’s final [20 sacrifice] for our sin.

I Jn 2:2; Psa 46:7, 1b-2, 4

* **Segment 3—“and we beheld His glory”**

8. God’s glory in the Tabernacle was over the Ark of the Covenant; but John is saying that he and others beheld God’s glory in the [14 Person] of Jesus Christ.

II Pet 1:15; Jn 17:1, 5

9. The word “Beheld” (“We *beheld His glory*”) leaves the door open for you and me to see Christ’s [12 glory] too.

Jn 20:29; I Pet 1:8; I Cor 2:14-15

10. With eyes of faith a Christian can actually “see” Christ’s [12 glory] in His shame, triumph in His death, and power in His meekness.

Rev 19:11

* **Segment 4—“glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

Rom 8:32; Mt 3:17; Jn 1:12

11. We have been created in God’s image and are becoming conformed to the image of His Son; but Jesus alone shares the glory of [12 God’s] very essence.

Jn 5:23; 1:4; 16:15; Col 2:9; Jn 3:16; Mt 11:28

12. We who know Him can say that He has done for us something that only God in His glory and [12 grace] ever could, or ever would, have done.
13. We became born again when we placed our faith in the truth which Jesus revealed—the core of which was [14 Christ] Himself.
14. His glory shines forth in our poverty as He becomes our wealth; in spiritual hunger, becoming our manna; in times of darkness, becoming our [12 Light].

Eph 1:13