

The author inserts personal comments when quoting Scripture which are indicated by square brackets. All biblical references are quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Take your Bibles please and turn to John 1. Our subject is the incarnation of God. The word “incarnation” means that He “became flesh”—God, becoming flesh.

Multonomah Press published a little booklet that I wrote several years ago. You can get it here at our bookstore or at others. It is called, *What the Bible Says about Jesus Christ*. And I want to read to you what it says in the opening of this booklet.

Jesus. Has anyone’s name ever generated so much emotion and difference of opinion? Even religious people often argue about His real identity and at times have gone to war over it. What do you believe about Jesus Christ and what difference does it really make?

The greatest problem that people have about Jesus Christ is the claim Christians make that He is God. Muslims speak highly of Jesus and list Him among the great prophets, but do not accept the Christian claim of His deity. Jews accept His Jewish roots and speak well of His teachings, as they would about many great rabbis of the past. But they are deeply troubled over the assertion that Jesus is Israel’s promised Messiah and that He is God in human flesh. That’s a tough pill to swallow if you are Jewish.

Historic Christianity has witnessed bitter partings by many over the issue of Christ’s deity. Factions that refuse to accept His deity often developed into other religious sects. Mormons, who form one of today’s largest cults, speak quite highly of Jesus Christ; and in fact, they believe themselves to be true Christians. But to say that He is God in human flesh is not theologically acceptable to them, except in the sense that they believe we can all be gods. Following that line of reasoning, each of us could speak as easily of the godhead of Jesus as we could of our own. In Mormon theology, deity is something all of us can achieve.

Jehovah’s Witnesses can be commended for their intense desire to study the Bible, although only their own version, and for their dedication to God’s unity and uniqueness. But they are especially dogmatic in their disagreement with historic Christianity concerning Christ’s identity. Like so many others, they speak well of Him and profess to follow

His teachings. But they are quick to react to claims of His deity, insisting that those who make such claims from Scripture have mistranslated or misinterpreted Bible passages.

History confirms that a man named Jesus, a Jewish man, lived in Israel more than 1900 years ago. He has had a remarkable impact on the entire world. In His own day He was called Jesus of Nazareth, since His boyhood days were spent in that city; although, the Bible indicates He had been born in Bethlehem. His mother Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Because of a Roman-imposed census requiring the Jews to register in their ancestral cities, Joseph and Mary were temporarily in Bethlehem (which had been David's home) when Jesus was born.

Only a few details are known about the rest of Jesus' life until He reached the age of thirty. When He was baptized by John in the Jordan River, John the Baptist urged the people of Israel to repent of their sins, to be baptized and to prepare themselves to receive the Messiah. When John baptized Jesus, he proclaimed Him to be the Messiah and the Savior of the world. For more than three years Jesus caused quite a stir in Israel. Jewish religious leaders refused to accept His claims and made plans to get rid of Him. They succeeded, as history records, in motivating the Romans to execute Jesus by crucifixion.

Anyone reading the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth is immediately impressed with their depth and simplicity. Such concentrated wisdom is unequaled among any sages and teachers of the past. He gave encouragement to all who needed strength to go on another day. He talked much about future events and gave people hope that one day things would be different. But His most difficult words to believe, then and now, are His claims about His real identity.

Turn to John 1 please. The book goes on, by the way, to discuss those claims.

- 1 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 nothing was made that was made.

- 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.
8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.
10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:
13 Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
14 And 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.
15 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.’”
16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.
17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:1-18)

Will you join me, please, in a moment of prayer?

Father, I would ask in these few moments together as we study Your Word that the true identity of Jesus Christ will be clear to every heart. We realize by these words the enormous responsibility we have to the God who made us. We realize that it is not a minor issue as to who Jesus is. We realize that our salvation and eternal life, our eternal destiny is resting on what we believe about Jesus Christ. Help us to understand that the Babe in Bethlehem was, according to the Bible, God in human flesh. We ask You to help us understand as well as to believe. And it is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

I want you to see three things about the incarnation of God, that God became flesh. Before I do that, I want to illustrate something. If there were a group of ants crawling on the top of this pulpit—as far as I can determine there are none—but if there were and I wanted to communicate with those ants and I wanted to reach them on their level, the question would be: how would I do that? I might put a book up here and say, “Please, ants, read this.” Or, I might scream—“Hey, I’m talking to you!” I might pound the pulpit, hopefully missing them. But my dear friends, from a philosophical and logical point of view, there is only one way that I could really communicate with those ants and that is to become one of them.

It is not a mystery to me, from a logical point of view, why God became man. If God made us and wanted to communicate with us His wonderful love and grace so that we would understand and know Him, then the best way to do that would be to become a man.

The incarnation of God was, first of all, according to the opening five verses, an eternal relationship with God. Jesus did not just begin when the baby was born in Bethlehem or even when He was conceived in the womb of Mary. Jesus has always existed. It was an eternal relationship with God.

Secondly, in verses 6–13, we are going to see that incarnation was a divine reason for the people that He had created. If God created us as we said, and He wanted to communicate with us, then the most important way is for Him to become a man. It is a divine reason, the incarnation, for the very people that He created. And we will see what that is in a moment.

And finally, I want you to know that the incarnation from verses 14–18, was a full revelation of the glory of God. It is not inadequate. It is not insufficient. It is not lacking in detail. It is a full and complete revelation of all the glory of God in human form.

Now let’s back up with the opening five verses and examine how the incarnation—God becoming a man—was an eternal relationship with God Himself. There are four things I would like to point out to you. One, the Bible indicates that His presence, the presence of Jesus Christ, was declared in the beginning. Look, please, at John 1:ok1 again. “In the beginning was the Word.” The Jehovah Witnesses, in trying to explain that to their people who study with them say, and it is printed in their literature, that there was a point at which Jesus began. He was created by God the Father. They use this verse to prove their point. “In the beginning was the Word.” The problem is that in the Greek text the definite article “the” is not in the text, although it is put here in English. It does not say, “In the beginning,” meaning a point of time. It simply says, “In beginning.” The point is that whatever it is that is beginning of anything, for God is an eternal God—there was the Word. In beginning the Word was there. His presence is declared long before He was born as a baby in Bethlehem.

Secondly, His personality is distinct. The Bible says in John 1 that “the Word was with God.” According to the Bible, Jesus is not the Father. The Father is not Jesus. Look down at verse 18: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son”—some translations read, “God.” I think the best evidence reads, “Son.” “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” The Son is not the Father and the Father is not the Son. But notice the Son was in the bosom of the Father. It is a loving, close relationship. And it is the Son who has declared the Father.

According to verse 1, “The Word was with God.” The word “with” in Greek is *pros*, which means “toward.” Literally in Greek, it is “facing.” It suggests equality. The Son was facing the Father in a perfect, loving, equal relationship as Father and Son.

Thirdly, the text says that His person was divine. It says at the end of verse 1, “the Word was God.” Jehovah Witnesses say that proves their point. They say the definite article “the” is not in front of the word “God” and they are correct. So they say what it really says is, “The Word was a god.” No, that is not what it says. When you leave the definite article out it is even stronger. It is referring to the essence and substance of what something is. “The word” was in fact, “God.” As a matter of fact, the Greek has a different word order than is in my English Bible, and I suggest it is probably different in all of your English Bibles. Let me read the actual Greek word order. The word order in the Greek says: “And God was the Word.” It does not say, “The Word was God.” It says, “And God was the Word. “In beginning God. The Word with God. And God was the Word.” It would be very hard to find a more powerful statement in all of literature to declare a person as being God in human flesh. That is what the Bible is saying about Jesus Christ.

A fourth thing I will point out to you, in verses 3–5, is that His power was demonstrated and it has to be God. Look at verse 3. “All things were [according to the Bible] made through Him. And without Him, nothing [the Greek has “not one thing”] was ever made that was made.” Out of all the material and physical creation in the universe—the trees, the mountains, the stars—the Bible says none of it was ever made without the power of Jesus Christ.

It is not just the creation of all of the material universe, it also deals with human life. Look at verse 4, “In Him, was life.” Why are you alive? You say, “Hey, if you knew my weekend, you would know that I am half dead.” Why are you alive? Why do you have life? The Bible says that when God made man, He formed man’s body out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Job says, “The breath of the Almighty gives me life.” “The body without the spirit is dead,” says James 2:26. What is life? We still debate that. We still argue that in medical journals. What is life? The Bible says that it is the breath of Almighty God. There is no life apart from God. In Him, Jesus Christ, was life. And that is the light that lights every man that comes into the world, whether he believes or he does not. All of human life is the product of the creative work of God Almighty. And according to this text of “the Word,” who is Jesus Christ.

You ask what is the incarnation of God or God becoming flesh? It is an eternal relationship with God. In the beginning or “in beginning” was the Word. The Word was with God. “The Word” or “God” was the Word. And that person who is being described made everything and gave everybody human life.

Next we will look at verses 6–13. In the second paragraph of this opening prologue to John’s Gospel, we learn that there was a divine reason for the people that He created, and why God became a man. Why, for instance, would I want to communicate with ants crawling on this pulpit? Well, only if I wanted to really talk to them or communicate. I do not see any human purpose for doing so. But if I wanted to communicate with them, I would. But God lists several purposes in the Bible for becoming man, one of which is the most important and it is in this text.

Look at John 1:7, please. Concerning John the Baptist who would witness to the light, it says that “all through him might”—What does it say? It says, “might believe.” What is the divine reason for God becoming a man? It is so that you would believe. You say, “Well wouldn’t there be some other way?” No. Verse 18 says, “No one has seen God at any time.” How in the world could you and I possibly fathom God? No one has seen Him. If God had not come in physical form and become man, how would we ever know about Him? It would be impossible.

Have you ever been to a philosophy class in college? I kind of like that stuff. Now as I look back, I do not know why, but I like that stuff. I like the way men think and reason with their puny brains. We had a textbook which was called—it was an old timer called—“From Phaeles to Dewey.” Phaeles was a nut and you know about Dewey. These people said that “ultimate reality,” or we would say “God,” is a lot of things. In fact, in that course, we had to make a list of them. I learned that some men thought it was water. Some thought it was air. Some thought it was the sun. Some did not know. Someone thought it was imagery—he was a nut. I read all this stuff about what philosophers thought was ultimate reality. And to me the whole course demonstrated one thing—man! We could have solved this problem. If I was God, the only solution to this problem is to throw the textbook out and become a man. If He became a man, we could solve the whole thing.

When I see the logic and the reasonableness of the whole argument of the gospel, it is the most beautiful story that a human mind could ever comprehend. If God made us and wanted to communicate with us, there is one way He could do it. If God wanted us to believe in Him and to love Him and to worship Him, there is one way to do it and that is to become a man.

In John 1: 6–13, consider the following three things: One, you have the witness and his responsibility. In verses 6–9, it introduces us to John the Baptist. It is interesting that Jesus said that no greater man has ever been born of woman than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11, paraphrased). But it was John the Baptist who said, “He must increase and I must decrease” (John 3:30). This passage says that John is not the light. John came to bear witness of the light.

My dear friends, the light that lights every man is Jesus Christ. The ones who speak about Jesus Christ are not important. They are the witnesses and only the witnesses. They are not the light, only He is the light. It is a natural tendency of man to want to receive glory and to want to make people believe that somehow he has the power to help them. My friends, no human beings on the face of this globe can really help you in the final analysis—only God can do that.

I believe that about everything. I love it when a doctor informs you of something that is very seriously wrong. I have done this with other folks and I have seen the impact. I had the joy of seeing my mother-in-law do it. My mother-in-law was informed that she has a terminal illness. And I told her how to handle it. I said, “If he tells you that, you say to him, ‘Tell me something I don’t know.’” He will repeat it again, “Let me tell you the seriousness of this, Mrs. McCullum, you are going to die!” Say to him, “So are you, doctor. By the way, you don’t look too well.” They are not telling you a blooming thing. For twenty-one years we listened to that story about my mother-in-law who was going to die. Listen my friends, God is in charge. Almighty God is running things and we are accountable to Him.

The witness is not important. The light is that which lights every man who comes into the world. We think we are in charge. We are not in charge.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 4, please. I believe a lot of Christians have lost sight of what our purpose is. If we really understand the incarnation of God, we have one purpose. As witnesses we are to tell people about the light. This is the only thing that can change them. It is about the purpose of God, which is to believe in Him and to love Him and to serve Him. It is to know the God who made you.

In 2 Corinthians 4 it says,

If our gospel is veiled or hidden, it’s hidden to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, [John said, I am not that light.] but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. 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. We have this treasure [this knowledge of God’s glory in Jesus] in earthen vessels [just clay pots, not worth much] that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:3-7, paraphrased)

John the Baptist was not the light. Jesus was the light.

Come back to John chapter 1 again. When you see the divine reason for the people He created, that all through Him might believe, you understand what our job is. It is to tell people about the light. That is why I get ticked. That is from the Greek “tickeo,” if you were worried. I get mad. And if you do not think I should, then pray for me. But I get mad because I think every year at Christmastime it is worse. I see the evidence of the world, the society that has decided to get God out of the picture, and they do not want to mention Jesus Christ—that is for sure. When you mention Jesus Christ, to them it is like you swore. They can say every gross word under the sun with great freedom and shock the best of us in terms of their vocabulary. They can do anything they want, but you mention Jesus and it is like panic sets in. What is Christmas without Jesus? It is nothing. It is spending too much money. That is what it is. Is it the paganism and commercialism of Christmas that they want us to just go along and talk sweetly about it? No! This culture needs to be confronted. We are removing the only reason for Christmas and that is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Why do you celebrate Christmas? I dare say a lot of you already have plans for family gatherings in which Jesus Christ will not be number one. It is in the name of being kind to your family, in the name of showing love by giving gifts, and in the name of the festive spirit of the holidays that you will celebrate; but little will be said of Jesus. I warn you in the name of our Lord that Christmas is not what the world is telling us. Christmas is about God becoming a man. Christmas is the gospel. How God, in love, came into this world to die on a cross for our sins. Where will Jesus’ place be in your home and in your heart this Christmas season?

The world needs Him desperately. The Bible says that God became a man. Jesus was born in Bethlehem so that all through Him might believe. And that tells me my responsibility. I am not the light, He is the light. But I am sent, like John, to bear witness of the light and so are you.

Come back to John 1:10-11 and look at the world and its response after seeing the witness and his responsibility, according to the Bible.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him,
and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and
His own did not receive Him.

What is the response of the world to Jesus Christ? First, they did not know Him; and secondly, they did not receive Him. Now I believe a lot of people who are Christians and know this passage have not understood the argument. The argument is building up to the fact that that the very person who made everybody, literally came to those folks and they not only did not recognize His true identity as God, but they did not really receive Him. And the fact is that they cannot receive Him without His help. That is the argument of the passage. So it is going to tell you that you cannot really know Him or receive Him without His help. It is a fascinating argument. The world did not know Him. His own did not receive Him.

Now there are several ways to look at the words, “His own.” For instance, the standard way that many of us view this in our churches is that the “world” in verse 10 refers to the “Gentiles” and that “His own” is referring to the “Jewish people.” I do not see that. I understand why people believe that, but I do not see that as being the main point. It does not fit the whole context.

Another possibility is that it is speaking of people in general. The world did not know Him. He came to His own, His people (backing up to verse 3), “All things were made by Him.” Verse 4 says, “In Him was life.” The point is that these are His own people, but they did not receive Him.

A third possibility, which is very interesting and probably fits the context, is that the words “His own” is referring to those who would believe in Him. “He was in the world and the world did not know Him.” He came even unto His own in His high priestly prayer in John 17 where He prayed to the Father. He said, “I pray not for these who have believed in Me—[referring to His disciples]—but I pray for those who are going to believe on Me.” He thanked the Father for “those You have given to Me” (John 17:9-10, paraphrased).

The Bible says we are chosen before the foundation of the world. Follow this carefully. Jesus came unto His own, even the ones He knows are going to believe in Him, and His own did not receive Him. You see, you must understand that salvation is of God and left to yourself you will not believe. You will not receive Him. It requires God’s help in order for you to believe. “He came to His own and His own did not receive Him.”

Let’s look at the way to belief and its requirements. How can I know Him? John 1:12-13 says, “As many as”—don’t you love that?

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Now notice verse 12. He gave the right or authority to become little ones born of God. And verse 13 tells you how it happens. You are born not of blood. You are not a Christian because your parents are. It amazes me, folks, how many people in our generation believe they are Christians and they have really no understanding of the true nature of the gospel.

I was talking with a man yesterday, just in a brief conversation and trying to share a little gospel with him. He let me know that he is a Christian.

He said, “I have always been a Christian.”

“Really?”

He said, “I’m a member of a church.”

I said, “That’s wonderful. What is the pastor preaching on these days?”

He said, “Well, I don’t go now.”

“Well, why not?”

“Well, it doesn’t meet my needs.”

“Church doesn’t meet your needs? Did you find in the Bible that church was supposed to meet your needs? Jesus meets our needs.”

“Well, I went to a rest home years ago,” he said.

I mean, he was getting more uncomfortable. “What did you do there?”

“Well, I sang there.”

I said, “That’s wonderful. You know the Bible teaches you’ve got to be born again.”

“We don’t believe that kind of stuff. We’re Christians.”

“Wait a minute!”

We get letters all the time in the radio ministry that tell us, “We have always been Christians.” But I love the letter I got from this particular lady. This is great. She said, “I have always known that I was a Christian until I heard you.” Hey, I am not trying to talk you out of it, but I know a lot of folks talking about going to heaven who are not going there. There are a lot of folks who say they are Christians that have never been born again.

My dear friends, this text says you are not born again simply because your parents are Christians. It is not of blood. It is not of the will of the flesh. That is a statement dealing with your own desire. You may think, “Well, I will turn over a new leaf. I will really do this. I will follow what He says.” You are going to blow it in the first week.

You are not born by your own desire. It says that it is not by the will of any other man either. No other person on the face of this globe can save you. Then how is a man born of God? He is born of God. It has to be God. So the whole context when you put it together is fascinating. Here is “the Word,” who is God, the one who made everything and gave you life. He came into this world and the world did not respond. They did not know Him. They did not receive Him. He came to even His own who were going to believe in Him and they did not receive Him. But as many as did, He gave the right, the authority to become children of God. This is even to those who believe on His name and who were born not of blood—not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man—but born of God. Wow!

The incarnation of God is an eternal relationship with God. It was also a divine reason for the people He created. If God did not become a man, none of us could be saved. If you ask me, “Why did God become a man?” I would say, “First it was to show us what He is like. Secondly, I would tell you that He became a man so that He would know human life by personal experience. The Bible says, “He was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). It says He was made like unto His brethren so He could be a merciful and faithful high priest (Hebrews 2:17, paraphrased). He can sympathize with us and He can comfort us in our trials. Why? It is because He knows human life by personal experience. You might say, “Why did He become a man?” I tell you that He became a man to show us what we ought to be. He showed us what man ought to be like by the way He lived.

And many people believe in what we call “liberal theology” and that is the only message they see of the incarnation. Just try to be what He wants you to be. But, my friends, without a spiritual awakening you are going to fall flat on your face. If you ask me, “What is the major reason why Jesus came?” I would tell you that the Bible says, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He came to die on a cross for your sins and mine. This is because we could not pay for our own sins. We could not redeem ourselves. He came to not only die, but to rise from the dead to guarantee our own resurrection. And He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). He came, folks, to give us everlasting life. “I am come that you might have life,” Jesus said in John 10:10, “and that you might have it more abundantly.” In John 10:28 He said, “I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. Yes, our Lord came for the divine reason that all through Him might believe.

Will you please notice in John 1:14–18 that the incarnation was not only an eternal relationship with God, and it was not only a divine reason for the people He created, but it was also a full revelation of the glory of God. Verse 14 says, “The Word became flesh.” That verse does not say in Greek or in English that the Word was flesh. If you touched Jesus Christ’s body while He was on earth, was it flesh? Yes. But the Bible does not say, “the Word was flesh.” It says He became flesh. The word “became” in Greek is indicating a change of condition. It indicates He already existed before He became flesh. First His preexistence is taught and secondly that His essential nature is not flesh.

Listen to me, my Christian brothers and sisters, we get messed up a lot when we try to tell folks about who Jesus is. Was Jesus flesh and bones and blood? Yes! Was He a real human being? Yes. Is that what He is—man? No. Was He a man? Yes. The Bible describes this and tells us He was God manifest in the flesh. What is the essential nature of Jesus Christ? It is God Almighty, the God who made us and created the universe; it is He who became man, so that we could know Him and have everlasting life. It was a full revelation.

Let me give you three things: 1) It was seen by eyewitnesses. You may say, “I don’t know this.” I say that you have to trust the eyewitnesses. The whole Bible is built on the fact that the record about Jesus Christ is written by eyewitnesses. John 1:14 says, “We beheld His glory.”

Turn please to 2 Peter 1 in the New Testament. Peter was one of those, like John, who knew Jesus well. It was a full revelation of the glory of God, Jesus Christ. It was seen by eyewitnesses.

2 Peter 1:16. It says,

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Turn please to 1 John 1:1-4 which is just a page or two to the right, and look at what it says in the opening verses.

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—[That was John’s favorite word for Jesus, the *logos*, concerning the Word]—
2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us
3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

I want to ask the true believers in the congregation, is your joy full that Jesus is God? You better believe it! There is not any joy apart from that. What assurance would we have of forgiveness or eternal life if He is not God? This is the fullness of joy. It was a full revelation of the glory of God. It was seen by eyewitnesses.

Now let’s go back to John 1. This revelation of God was sufficient to save us all. It was sufficient to save us all and nothing more was needed. I read in verse 14, that He was full—not half filled—but full of grace. God gives you grace. He gives you what you do not deserve. And the truth—what you believe about Jesus Christ—that is essential! He was full of grace and truth.

Look at verse 16, please. “And of—[or literally, out of]—His fullness, we have all received and grace for grace.” What does that mean? Well, in order to be saved you have to have grace from God. The Bible says, “We are saved by grace through faith, and that salvation by grace is not of ourselves; it is a gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, paraphrased). Grace gives you what you do not deserve. You cannot earn salvation. It is not based on human performance. God must grace it to you.

Now the Bible says, of His fullness that we have all received, “grace for grace.” The English word “for” is the Greek preposition *unti*, which in English today means “against.” But in ancient Greece, *unti* meant “instead of.” It is a word of substitution or exchange. What it is saying is that when you get saved, you receive grace. But guess what? That does not end God’s grace. That grace you receive when you get saved is

going to be exchanged for more grace to sustain you in your Christian life and give you blessings that you never dreamed possible and guess what? It is not even worthy to be compared with the grace that will be given to you in the future. “Eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those that love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Amen? All this and heaven too! Grace for grace.

The songwriter said,

His love has no limit. His grace has no measure. His power
has no boundary known unto man. But He gives and gives
and gives again. His grace! Grace for grace!

Yes, according to the Bible it was seen by eyewitnesses and was sufficient to save us all.

I love John 1:17. It says, “The law came through Moses.” The law condemns us. It tells us we are sinners. But it says, “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” I do not want to bore you with little Greek details unnecessarily, but this one is special. In the Greek language the definite article “the” is in front of grace and truth. The point is that we are not talking about any old grace or any old truth. We are talking about the one in the context. This is the grace that God must give you in order for you to receive Him because when He came you didn’t. And He even came to His own and they did not receive Him. We believers do not automatically believe in Him of our own desire. We need the help of God and so God graces to us even our salvation. And the grace comes through Jesus Christ.

Let’s also look at, “the truth.” What is “the truth” he is talking about? The truth that sets us free is that Jesus is God in human flesh. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14). And the truth came only through Jesus Christ. God became flesh and dwelt among us.

One final point—look at verse 18, please. This full revelation of God was seen by eyewitnesses. It is sufficient to save us all. But it was also sufficient in revealing the Father. You may ask, “The Father?” Yes. When Jesus came into this world, when God became man, He showed us the Father. Verse 18 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.”

Turn to chapter 14 and with this, we are done. When I read the gospels and evaluate what the disciples said, I often get amused. They are just like us. And I like their audacity. I mean, sometimes, if it was not for our loving Savior, if it was just one of us talking to them, I mean you would slap them around a little bit and say, “Shape up, guys!” I mean the audacity of those guys was incredible. But this is one of my favorites. John 14. Jesus announces to them that He is going to leave them. It is the night before He went to the cross.

And in John 14:9 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” You know, you can just feel it as you read it. He is making a deal with Him. “Okay,

you have been asking us to run around with You now for three years. Now You are telling us You are going to whip out of here. Okay, I will tell you what, we will do all You say if You just do one thing, just one last deal. That is all we ask. Just show us who the Father is and then it will be okay.” Don’t you like that? You may say, “Philip, do you know what you are asking?” I can just hear the other guys, “Hey, cool it, Philip. Now show us who He is and we will keep on with this, okay?” I love what Jesus does.

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 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. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”

Watch what happens and ask yourself, who could do that? Only God. Do you believe that Jesus is God in human flesh and the only One who can save you from your sin and give you eternal life?

Let’s close with prayer.

Father, thank You so much for the good news of the gospel. We read that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. You tell us that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. We thank You, God. I pray for those listening right now who know in their hearts that they have never made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. And here in the Bible it says we have to receive it. There are people in this audience who have never really been sure about the identity of Jesus Christ. And You say that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we would be saved. You know this issue is not a minor one; it is essential to our salvation. And I pray, Lord, that those in our audience who have never come to make that personal commitment to Christ, might at this moment, right now, make that decision and see their life changed for all eternity. We thank You, in Jesus’ name. Amen.