

His Glory Appears (John 1:1–18)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (December 21, 2021)

Introduction

1. In the prologue to his Gospel (1:1–18), John established that Jesus existed before creation and served as God’s agent in the creation (1:1–5), which is also attested in Colossians 1:15–23 and Hebrews 1:1–4.
2. The term, *word (logos)*, is a *concept* word, symbolic of the nature and function of the Divine Son. The concept of *logos* was already established in both Jewish and Greek philosophies; thus, John presents the divinity of Jesus in terms that *both* Jews and Greeks could grasp.
 - a. The first-century Jews understood *word* as a divine term by the uses of the Aramaic *mem-ra*, which substituted for human parts. For example, *word* was identified as *hand* in Isaiah 48:13 (“*By my word, I founded the earth*”).
 - b. Greeks, on the other hand, understood *logos* as rational thought (*reason*)—the *establishing* and the *ordering* principle of the universe, the creative and sustaining energy at the source of all things.
 - c. John subverts the Greek notion of the *logos* as an impersonal force by showing the true *Logos* as a *person* appearing in human flesh. This was important also as a preventative for errors arising in the early church.
3. As we celebrate our Savior’s incarnation, I would like to return to John 1 and reexamine His being the Word made flesh to tabernacle among His people to manifest God’s glory and grace.

I. His Incarnation

1. John began His Gospel by declaring that the *Word* was in the *beginning*. The Hebrew *reshith* signifies the origin of what had no previous existence; thus, Jesus pre-existed all creation, being uncreated but creating everything else. He was with God and was God, establishing that God is one essence but more than one person.
 - a. Being the Divine Second Person of the Godhead, the Word was *life—eternal life* (used in this Gospel 36 of the 135 times in the NT). This life is *light*, another metaphor for eternal life (used 21 times in John) because it is light that makes life possible.
 - b. The Word, which is life and light, became *flesh*. The emphasis is upon *flesh*—the human condition, which depends on life and light. The focus is on the Divine Word entering the flow of human existence to be *seen* and *experienced*, correcting the false teaching that Jesus only appeared to be a man.
2. This in-fleshed Word *tabernacled* among us because God desires to *dwell in the midst of His people* as He did in the tabernacle/temple of the OT.
 - a. The purpose of His *tabernacling* is that His people might *see* His glory. *Glory* refers to the unapproachable manifestation of the immediate presence of God, connoting His inexpressible beauty and majesty and His absolutely pure and terrifying *holiness*.
 - b. Christ’s flesh veils the terrible *holiness* aspect while allowing us to see His beauty and majesty. He is truly *Emmanuel*—God with us (2 Corinthians 6:16, citing Leviticus 26:12).

II. His Glory

1. What is *glory*?

- a. The Greek word translated *glory* means “to form an opinion.” In other words, *glory* is a *response* to someone. God manifests or reveals Himself to His creation in order to receive a *response* from His creatures.

God’s character is majestic or *holy*; thus, He is *glorious* in His being because He is the standard by which all else is to be evaluated. In other words, because He is God, He is worthy of all praise and honor (Revelation 4:11).

- b. Man can recognize and respond to God’s glory only as God reveals that glory in word or deed. After deliverance from the Egyptian hosts, Israel sang, “*Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*” (Exodus 15:11). Tragically, mankind is unable to respond properly to God’s glory (Romans 1:21; 3:22, 23).

2. Jesus is the true manifestation of God’s glory. John erupts in ecstasy of wonder: “*We have seen his glory.*” Contrast Moses’ request to see His glory where God responded, “*You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live*” (Exodus 33:20).

3. *Glory* can be manifest in various aspects: here John’s focus is on His being the *only* Son from the Father.

- a. The Word did not become God’s Son in His incarnation. That would be blasphemy. The term *monogenēs* (*only*) stresses the uniqueness of His existence as the perfect reflection of the Father. God requires a perfect *image* of Himself (Hebrews 1:3).
- b. Remember when God revealed His glory to Moses? The glorious manifestation of His truly unique image centered on two aspects of God’s character: *steadfast love* (*hesed*) and *faithfulness* (*emeth*). These terms convey God’s covenant loyalty to His own, particularly in light of our tendency to fail in our covenant obligations. Thus, Jesus came to enable His people to live, through the Spirit, the New Covenant (v. 17). Grace and truth come into our experience in Jesus Christ (v. 16), not in a sudden transformation, as many wish, but in a gradual growth in grace (2 Peter 3:18).

Application

As you celebrate this Advent season, take time to meditate on John 1:14–18 and ask yourself:

1. Do I truly experience the wonder of His glory? Have I seen His glory, the glory of the unique and only Son from the Father? Is He beautiful and majestic in my opinion?
2. How has such a vision of Glory affected my life? Has it transformed me into the image that God intends that I wear? We were originally created in the image of God, and this image is being restored by the Spirit of God in sanctification. “*Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*” (1 Corinthians 15:51). “*Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure*” (1 John 3:2, 3).
2. Am I growing in my covenant loyalty, yielding all to the transforming power of His grace? Or am I still enamored with my life in this world?