

# THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD

## Pt3

### JOHN 1:14-18

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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.’ ”

<sup>16</sup> And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.  
<sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> **No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Author Eugene Peterson wrote these thought-provoking words a few years ago,

*God’s revelation of Himself is rejected far more often than it is accepted, is dismissed by far more people than embrace it, and has been either attacked or ignored by every major culture or civilization in which it has given its witness:*

In our culture, in many cases we have decided to reject God by redefining Him. We choose to make God in our own image.

We could call it the **southern comfort view of God**

He's the "man up stairs"

OR THE BIG MAN

OR "A LOVING GOD" ( implied He would never send anyone to hell)

recently

Schoolchildren in Austria were sent home from class with some very special homework: Memorize the words to a famous Christian hymn.

Except the hymn had been changed. Instead of singing "liebe ist so wunderbar," (God's love is so wonderful,) the word "God" had been removed and replaced with "Allah."

Sadly the Evangelical community has not helped matters nor have some undiscerning pastors by propagating notions about God that are not Biblical whatsoever.

Most of us have heard of the book

***Heaven is for Real***, by Todd Burpo, tells the story of Burpo's son, Colton, who says he visited heaven while anesthetized for an appendectomy at age 4. Colton, now 13, says in heaven he got a halo and real wings (though they were too small for his liking). He also claims he sat on Jesus' lap while the angels sang to him; he saw Mary standing beside Jesus' throne; and he met the Holy Spirit (who, according to Colton, is "kind of blue").

By April 2012 over one million ebooks had been sold,<sup>[1]</sup> and by 2014 over 10 million copies had been sold.<sup>[2]</sup> A [movie based on the book](#) was released on April 16, 2014, earning \$101 million at the box office.<sup>[3]</sup>

That book is not to be confused with ***The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven***, by Kevin Malarkey—another runaway best-seller. Malarkey's book is about his son Alex, who at age 6 was nearly killed (and left permanently paralyzed) in a devastating automobile accident. In the immediate aftermath, and then during his rehabilitation, Alex says he made multiple trips to heaven and back.

The Malarkeys' version of heaven is considerably darker and not as full of details as the Burpos'. "There is a hole in outer Heaven," Alex says. "That hole goes to hell." The devil evidently uses this portal freely, because he is a major figure in Alex Malarkey's description of paradise. Alex says he has personally seen Satan many times, first at the accident scene and then later in heaven. Indeed, this is perhaps the most vivid part of Alex Malarkey's whole account: "The devil's mouth is funny looking, with only a few moldy teeth. And I've never noticed any ears. His body has a human form, with two bony arms and two bony legs. He has no flesh on his body, only some moldy stuff. His robes are torn and dirty. I don't know about the color of the skin or robes—it's all just too scary to concentrate on these things!"

Shortly after the publication of this article, Beth Malarkey, Alex's mother, contacted Grace to You to let us know that the analysis of these books is accurate, and that she and her son had been working for years to disavow and recant the story depicted in *The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven*. To read the rest of the story, including a letter from Alex that resulted in the book being pulled from the shelves of several Christian book sellers,

John wrote:

Although Kevin and Alex Malarkey are listed as joint authors on the book's cover, Alex has publicly disclaimed the book online, calling it "1 of the most deceptive books ever." Beth Malarkey, Alex's mom and Kevin's wife, describes the book as "a beautiful testimony distorted, twisted, packaged and used as business."

Beth Malarkey perfectly summarized the issue in three sentences, saying: "Alex never concluded he was in heaven. He was a small boy who experienced something extraordinary. The adults made it into what would sell to the masses" (footnote, p. 201).

Last week, Alex Malarkey himself weighed in with **a short open letter**.

**An Open Letter to Lifeway and Other Sellers, Buyers, and Marketers of Heaven Tourism, by the Boy Who Did Not Come Back from Heaven**

Please forgive the brevity, but because of my limitations I have to keep this short.

I did not die. I did not go to heaven.

I said I went to heaven because I thought it would get me attention. When I made the claims that I did, I had never read the Bible. People have profited from lies, and continue to. They should read the Bible, which is enough. The Bible is the only source of truth. Anything written by man cannot be infallible.

It is only through repentance of your sins and a belief in Jesus as the Son of God, who died for your sins (even though he committed none of his own) so that you can be forgiven may you learn of heaven outside of what is written in the Bible . . . not by reading a work of man. I want the whole world to know that the Bible is sufficient. Those who market these materials must be called to repent and hold the Bible as enough.

In Christ,

Alex Malarkey

When Alex has tried to make similar statements on Facebook or in other online forums, he has been routinely shouted down, his comments deleted, and his fragile voice silenced. We want to give his testimony maximum exposure, because Alex is right: The truth is more important than how anyone feels about it.

What they don't realize is that there is a massive industry behind books like these, heavily populated with decision makers who care more for filthy lucre than for truth. Employed in that industry are some mercenaries who have no scruples whatsoever about making up tales like these, polishing and embellishing them, and buttressing them with details designed to enhance the illusion of believability. It's the very worst kind of pragmatism gone to seed. What's "good" is defined by what sells. Scripture calls it "the teaching of Balaam" ([Revelation 2:14](#)).

Those books are part of a burgeoning genre, currently one of the hottest trends in publishing: imaginative tales purporting to be eyewitness accounts of heaven and the afterlife. (Blogger Tim Challies [has labeled the genre "Heaven Tourism,"](#) candidly dismissing one bestseller in the category as "pure junk, fiction in the guise of biography, paganism in the guise of Christianity.") Examples of these works include *My Journey to Heaven: What I Saw and How It Changed My Life*, by Marvin J. Besteman; *Flight to Heaven: A Plane Crash . . . A Lone Survivor . . . A Journey to Heaven—and Back*, by Dale Black; *To Heaven and Back: A Doctor's Extraordinary Account of Her Death, Heaven, Angels, and Life Again: A True Story*, by Mary Neal; *90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death and Life*, by Don Piper; *Nine Days In Heaven*, by Dennis Prince; *23 Minutes In Hell: One Man's Story About What He Saw, Heard, and Felt in that Place of Torment*, by Bill Wiese; and many others. Several of these titles have appeared on various bestseller lists, and most of them are still riding high.

One major, obvious problem is that these books don't even agree with one another. They give contradictory descriptions of heaven and thus cannot possibly have any cumulative long-term effect other than the sowing of confusion and doubt.

This trend away from biblical authority was even noted earlier this week by a secular reporter in *The New York Post*. Consider the implications of this quotation:

Lynn Vincent, who ghost-wrote "Heaven is for Real" on behalf of the young boy Colton Burpo and his father, said that she was initially reluctant to include Colton's description of people in heaven having wings. "If I put that people in Heaven have wings, orthodox Christians are going to think that the book is a hoax." She did and they didn't.

## Article in Christianity Today

Near-death experiences make for popular books and movies. But what should Christians do with them?

**Scot McKnight/ SEPTEMBER 11, 2015**

**Mally Cox-Chapman, a skilled journalist, read and interviewed and tracked down one story after another. In her book *The Case for Heaven: Near-Death Experiences as Evidence of the Afterlife*,**

The issue is what to make of NDEs. After studying story after story of the NDE Pattern, Cox-Chapman landed on at least three conclusions, and these conclusions need to be considered before we rush to affirm too quickly the truthful witness of NDEs.

First, Cox-Chapman concludes that those who have an NDE become believers in an afterlife or in some kind of heaven. This is surely Piper's experience.

Her second conclusion ought to warn those who find their faith most confirmed by these NDE stories: those who have NDEs become more universalistic in their faith. (I have not read anything by Piper that would indicate this, but there is plenty of evidence in NDE collections that this occurs.)

Cox-Chapman's final conclusion startled me: the diversity of the experiences and the variety of religious ideas at work in those experiences lead her to conclude that "we will be provided with the Heaven that is right for each of us."

That is, NDE studies make us think each person gets the heaven they want.

This is where our deepest concern breaks through the surface: the variety of NDEs, if they are true experiences of the afterlife or heaven, may well be a deconstruction of all faiths.

My reading of hundreds of NDE stories is that they in fact often don't confirm what the Bible says. In fact, they bring into the light the faith and convictions and suspicions and hopes and dreams of what that person already believed. In this case, the Bible is being pushed to the side for the sake of the experience.

Christians of all stripes, Muslims, Buddhists, and others tell similar stories. In fact, there are NDE stories going all the way back to ancient Egypt and ancient Rome. Many of those stories have similar elements, though each religious orientation causes a reshaping of those elements.

It seems to me in the flourishing of these NDEs, many Christians will want once again to take a whole new look at what the Bible says about heaven. What they will find, in almost all cases, is a view of heaven that is quite unlike what is experienced in the NDEs.

In an **upcoming book** dealing with this subject, John MacArthur says,

For anyone who truly believes the biblical record, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that these modern testimonies—with their relentless self-focus and the relatively scant attention they pay to the glory of God—*are simply untrue*. They are either figments of the human imagination (dreams, hallucinations, false memories, fantasies, and in the worst cases, deliberate lies), or else they are products of demonic deception.

We know this with absolute certainty, because Scripture definitively says that people do not go to heaven and come back: "Who has ascended to heaven and come down?" (**Proverbs 30:4**). Answer: "*No one* has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (**John 3:13**, emphasis added). All the accounts of heaven in Scripture are visions, not journeys taken by dead people. And even visions of heaven are very, very rare in Scripture. You can count them all on one hand.

Only four authors in all the Bible were blessed with visions of heaven and wrote about what they saw: the prophets Isaiah and

Ezekiel, and the apostles Paul and John. Two other biblical figures—Micaiah and Stephen—got glimpses of heaven, but what they saw is merely mentioned, not described (**2 Chronicles 18:18**; **Acts 7:55**). As Pastor MacArthur points out, all of these were prophetic *visions*, not near-death experiences. Not one person raised from the dead in the Old or New Testaments ever recorded for us what he or she experienced in heaven. That includes Lazarus, who spent four days in the grave.

Paul was caught up into heaven in an experience so vivid he said he didn't know whether he went there bodily or not, but he saw things that are unlawful to utter, so he gave no details. He covered the whole incident in just three verses (**2 Corinthians 12:2-4**).

All three biblical writers who saw heaven and described their visions give comparatively sparse details, but they agree perfectly (**Isaiah 6:1-4**; Ezekiel 1 and 10; Revelation 4-6). They *don't* agree with the Burpo-Malarkey version of heaven. Both their intonation and the details they highlight are markedly different. The biblical authors are all fixated on God's glory, which defines heaven and illuminates everything there. They are overwhelmed, chagrined, petrified, and put to silence by the sheer majesty of God's holiness. Notably missing from all the biblical accounts are the frivolous features and juvenile attractions that seem to dominate every account of heaven currently on the bestseller lists.

## REVIEW

### I. THE EXPRESSION OF THE WORD

<sup>14</sup> 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.

### II. THE EXALTATION OF THE WORD

V14

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup>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.’”

<sup>16</sup> And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.  
<sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

## LESSON

### III. THE EXPOSTION OF THE WORD

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

## A. **THE NEGATIVE**

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time.

**No one has seen God at any time** - No one is absolute negation = "absolutely no one." The point is that no one has ever seen God, in His full and complete way (cf. [Jn 6:46](#)), but some people did see partial revelations of God in the OT. However, most commentators feel that the One Who was seen in the OT was Christ, presenting Himself in a so-called pre-incarnate Theophany (or "Christophany") (See study of **Angel of the LORD**, almost certainly a **Christophany**). Later, John records under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the prophet Isaiah "saw His (Jesus') glory, and he spoke of Him." ([Jn 12:41](#), cp [Isa 6:1-5](#) = Isaiah declared "my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.")

Even Moses did not see God but only His glory ([Ex 33:20](#)).

Numerous passages emphasize that no one has seen the Father...

[1John 4:12](#) **No one has seen God at any time**; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

[John 5:37](#) "And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, **nor seen His form**."

[John 6:46](#) "**Not that anyone has seen the Father**, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father."

One reason no one had seen the essence of God was that to do so would have brought instant death ([Ex. 33:20](#); cf. [Ge. 32:30](#); [Dt. 5:26](#); [Jdg. 13:22](#))

**Paul** writes that the essence of God is **invisible** = "Now to the King eternal, immortal, **invisible**, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." ([1Tim 1:17](#)), "Who Alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, **Whom no man has seen or can see**. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen." ([1Ti 6:16](#)) What Paul is saying is that no man has ever seen the very essence of God, or God in His essential nature.

**Utley** - Some say that this (**No one has seen God at any time**) contradicts [Ex. 33:20–23](#). However, the Hebrew term in the Exodus passage refers to “afterglow,” not physical sight of God Himself. The thrust of this passage is that only Jesus fully reveals God (cf. [Jn 14:8ff](#)). This verse emphasizes the unique revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. He is the full and only divine self-disclosure. To know Jesus is to know God. Jesus is the Father’s ultimate revelation of Himself. There is no clear understanding of deity apart from Him (cf. [Col. 1:15–19](#); [Heb. 1:2–3](#)). (**John 1 Commentary**)

Boice - No one in the ancient world would have disagreed with the first part of that statement—“No one has ever seen God”—for, as William Barclay notes in his commentary, “In the ancient world men were fascinated and depressed and frustrated by what they regarded as the infinite distance and the utter unknowability of God. ... Xenophanes had said, ‘Guesswork is over all.’ Plato had said, ‘Never man and God can meet.’ Celsus had laughed at the way that the Christians called God ‘Father,’ because ‘God is away beyond everything.’ At the best, Apuleius said, men could catch a glimpse of God as a lightning flash lights up a dark night—one split second of illumination, and then the dark.” Even the Jews would have thought this way, for they knew that God had spoken to Moses in the Old Testament, saying, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live” ([Exod. 33:20](#)). There would have been no disagreement at all when John the Baptist declared that

no one could see God. (The Gospel of John : An expositional commentary)

## B. THE POSITIVE

The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

**The only begotten God** ("God the One and Only" NIV) - Some versions read "only begotten Son." (e.g., KJV, NKJV, RSV, HCSB, NLT, NAB, NJB) - The NET Note says "The textual problem "the only God" versus "the only son" is a notoriously difficult one. Only one letter would have differentiated the readings in the manuscripts." (**For more detailed discussion see full NET Note on John 1:18**)

**Steven Cole** sums the arguments up by noting that "The earliest and best manuscripts favor the reading "only begotten God." Since it is a unique phrase and is more difficult to explain than "only begotten Son," a scribe probably changed the original to "only begotten Son" to correspond to [John 3:16](#) & [18](#). Thus translated literally, the verse in the original probably read, "the unique Son, God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." As Jesus will later say (6:46), "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father." And (14:9), "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

**In the bosom of the Father** - Steven Cole explains that "**in the bosom of the Father**" corresponds to "the Word was with God" (1:1) and points to the close and unbroken fellowship that Jesus enjoyed with the Father, as seen in His prayer in chapter 17. It also shows us the horror of the cross for Jesus, when as He bore our sins He cried out ([Mt. 27:46](#)), "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**" This shows that as horrible as Jesus being the Bearer of all mankind's sins was, even worse was the

momentary separation from His Father (a mystery no man can explain, certainly not this writer!). It is interesting that Paul in his description of the judgment of unbelievers does not emphasize the fiery torment but the separation from God ([2Th 1:6-10](#) = "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, **away from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power.").

**D A Carson** - A similar expression is found elsewhere: Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom ([Lk. 16:22-23](#)), and John rests on Jesus' bosom at the last supper ([Jn 13:23](#)). It apparently conveys an aura of intimacy, mutual love and knowledge. (The Gospel according to John).

**Vincent** - The phrase, in the bosom of the Father, depicts this eternal relation as essentially a relation of love; the figure being used of the relation of husband and wife ([Deut. 13:6](#)); of a father to an infant child ([Num. 11:12](#)), and of the affectionate protection and rest afforded to Lazarus in Paradise ([Luke 16:23](#)). (**John 1 - Vincent's Word Studies**)

**He** - **He** is strongly emphatic, and pointing to the eternal Son. This pronoun is used by John more frequently than by any other writer. It occurs seventy-two times, and not only as denoting the more distant subject, but as denoting and laying special stress on the person or thing immediately at hand, or possessing pre-eminently the quality which is immediately in question. Thus Jesus applies it to Himself as the person for whom the healed blind man is inquiring: "It is **He** that talketh with thee" ([John 9:37](#)). So here, "the only-be-gotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father — **He** hath declared Him." (**John 1 - Vincent's Word Studies**)

**Has explained Him** (God) - "From His eternal, infinite, spiritual self-existence, He came out into the open for humans to see with their physical eyes. He came in human flesh, a bodily representation of the fullness of the Godhead." (Zodhiates)

Jesus alone could "exegete God" for only Jesus "is the image of the invisible God." ([Col 1:15](#)) Only Jesus "is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." ([Heb 1:3](#))

**MacArthur** - Jesus is the only one qualified to exegete or interpret God to man, since "no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" ([Matt. 11:27](#)).

**Explained** (1834)(**exegeomai** from ek = out or as an intensifier + **hegeomai** = tell, lead means literally to lead out, then to unfold, declare by making plain, or tell the meaning of something, especially to tell it fully. To make known or thoroughly explain.

Figuratively the idea is to "bring out" the meaning. To "draw out" in narrative form and so to relate ([Luke 24:35](#); [Acts 10:8](#); [15:12](#), [14](#); [21:19](#)). In English **relate** means to give an account of.

In [Jn 1:18](#), John says that the life of Jesus provides detailed information in a systematic manner regarding the character of God. In a sense, Jesus is the "exegesis" of God! He "narrates" or "relates" the full story about God! He is the Word of God and the Word about God! "As Jesus gives life and is life, raises the dead and is the resurrection, gives bread and is bread, speaks truth and is the truth, so as he speaks the word he is the Word." (D A Carson quoting C H Dodd).

**G Campbell Morgan** - "**Declared**" is a beautiful word. ..."**He hath exegeted Him.**" What is **exegesis**? The word means bringing out from into visibility; to bring forth authoritatively into visibility. Exegesis is the authoritative bringing forth into visibility of that which was there all the time, but which was not seen until brought forth. Jesus is the Exegesis of God. He is the One through Whom there is brought forth authoritatively into visibility the things men had not seen." (**The Gospel According to John**)

**A T Robertson** - Exegeomai means to lead out, to draw out in narrative, to recount. Here only in John....This word fitly closes the Prologue in which the Logos is pictured in marvelous fashion as

the Word of God in human flesh, the Son of God with the Glory of God in Him, showing men who God is and what He is.

AS YOU STUDY THE GOSPELS YOU ARE CONFRONTED  
WITH THE VERY CLEAR PRESENTATION OF THE  
CHARACTER OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST  
YOU SEE THAT HE IS

1. SOVEREIGN
2. HOLY
3. OMNIPOTENT
4. OMNIPRESENCE
5. OMNISCEINCE
6. CREATOR
7. LIFE GIVER
8. GRACIOUS
9. MERCIFUL
10. LOVING
11. FORGIVING
12. LONGSUFFERING
13. JUST
14. ....

**The Masterpiece Revealed** - In an article in Moody Monthly, Frank M. Fairchild told of a beautiful fresco on the ceiling of a Roman palace. Painted by Guido Reni in 1614, it was one of the most impressive works of its day. But visitors couldn't fully appreciate the masterpiece because they had to crane their necks to see it. To solve the problem, palace officials placed a large mirror on the floor beneath the painting, enabling viewers to study its reflection and more fully appreciate its beauty.

Fairchild made this observation: "Jesus Christ does precisely that for us when we try to get some notion of God. . . . He interprets

God to our dull hearts. In Him, God becomes visible and intelligible to us. We cannot by any amount of searching find out God. The more we try, the more we are bewildered. Then Jesus Christ appears. He is God stooping down to our level, and He enables our feeble thoughts to get some real hold on God Himself."

Christ came to reveal God to us. But He is more than a reflection of the Father. He is God in human flesh. Hebrews tells us that He is "the express image" of God (1:3). And Jesus Himself said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" ([John 14:9](#)).

As we meditate on the wonder of "the Word made flesh," we will say with the hymnwriter, "O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord."—R W DeHaan