

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 3]

John 1:14 [NIV] *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

So staggeringly new was this concept of God in human form that it is not surprising that many had and still have difficulty in believing it to be true.

What John is saying is that the Word, Who as God, had no beginning and is eternal, became a finite human being. The Greek word used is “*sarx*” symbolic of what is external of a human being, with the skin stripped off.

Was John using this word as he visualised Jesus Christ after his scourging? [**Psalms 22:14-17; Isaiah 52:14**]

Unless we accept that God became flesh we are under the influence of the spirit of antichrist. [**1 John 4:2-3**]

We can, if we are not careful, be so focussed on Jesus Christ our Saviour being God that we overlook that He was also human, and lived for over 30 years as a fleshly human being, with all the functions and limitations of a human being.

Certain words dominated John’s thoughts as he wrote this gospel message, one of these is grace.

The Greek word is “*charis*” meaning divine favour and has two basic ideas within it.

a) Something completely undeserved and unmerited. Something that we could never have earned, won, achieved or attained for ourselves.

The fact that to administer this grace that God came to earth to live and die for all humanity is **not** something which humanity could ever deserve.

Grace is an act of perfect love on the part of our Creator God.

The word grace emphasises at one and the same time the helplessness of humans and the limitless kindness of the love of our Creator God.

b) The word “*charis*” has always incorporated the idea of beauty, in modern use it means charm.

Before the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ, humans thought of God in terms of majesty, power and judgement, and overlooked within this the love that God had for all humanity, expressed in His patience and forgiveness.

The second word used here is truth –

This word dominated the gospel of John, we will come across it again and again.

The Greek word is “*alēthēia*” meaning what is unconcealed, manifest, hence actual, true to facts.

A brief summary of what the apostle John says about Jesus Christ and the truth –

Jesus is the embodiment of the truth – **John 14:6**.

Jesus is the communicator of the truth – **John 8:31-32; John 18:37**.

Jesus left the Holy Spirit to continue to guide us into the truth – **John 14:17; John 15:26; John 16:13.**

The truth can be resented – **John 8:40.**

The truth can be disbelieved – **John 8:45.**

The truth is **not** something abstract – **John 3:21.**

In this passage of scripture we find another important word that John uses in his gospel message – glory.

Again and again John used this word in connection with Jesus Christ.

The Greek word translated “glory” is “doxa” meaning an opinion, estimate and hence the honour resulting from a good opinion.

The nature and acts of God in self-manifestation, that is what He essentially is and does, in the way He reveals Himself in His glory.

This glory is exhibited particularly in the person of Jesus Christ in Whom essentially God’s glory has and ever will shine forth.

Look at Jesus Christ through His recorded words and actions that were personally experienced by the apostles, one of whom was John. [**John 2:11**]

The glory that Jesus Christ exhibited is the glory of God, because Jesus is One and only, non-created Son of God, and the second person of the one and only Triune God.

To help you understand how the One God can present Himself as Triune in nature please download and study the article ‘*Can We Understand The Trinity Of God?*’ listed under main heading ‘*Trinity.*’

Jesus Christ the human Son of Man did **not** receive this glory from the opinions of human beings but from God the Father. [**John 5:41; John 7:18; John 8:50, 54; John 11:1-4**]

Yet that glory was uniquely personal as the Son of God [**John 17:5**] and Jesus has transmitted His glory to all of His true disciples. [**John 17:22**]

It can be said that the coming of Jesus Christ is the coming of God’s glory to humanity.

What does John mean by this glory of God among humanity?

If we turn to the Old Testament we can see a parallel example of God’s glory,. The *schechinâh* meaning the glorious presence of God dwelling in the midst of His people.

The *schechinâh*, the nearest Jewish equivalent to the Holy Spirit, God dwelling in His sanctuary. [**Exodus 25:8; Exodus 29:44-46**]

Repeatedly in the Old Testament we come across the record that at certain times the glory of God was visible to human beings. [**Exodus 16:10; Exodus 24:16; Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11**]

The glory of God is the splendour of His love and mercy before which we become lost for words in wonder, love and praise.

John 1:15 [New English Bible] “*Here is John’s [John the Baptist] testimony to Him [Jesus Christ], he [John the Baptist] cried aloud ‘This is the man [Jesus Christ] I meant when I said, He comes after me, but takes rank before me, for before I was born, He already was.’*”

In this statement John the apostle and John the Baptist were thinking **not** in time but in eternity.

They were thinking and remembering that Jesus the Son of Man and the only Son of God existed before the creation of the universe and time.

John 1:16 [NIV] *“From the fulness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.”*

The Greek word translated “fulness” is “*plērōma*” meaning the sum total of all that is in God, the totality of the wisdom, power and love of God was found in the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. [**Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9**]

The Greek translated “grace” actually says “*grace upon grace*” meaning that in Jesus Christ we find one expression of love leading to yet another expression of love.

The more we come to know Jesus Christ the more wonderful He becomes and more worthy of our praise, thanks and worship. [The main goal of this website]

I believe that this phrase “*grace upon grace*” is John’s way of expressing the limitlessness of Jesus Christ.

The grace of God never fails to meet the needs of every situation.

John 1:17 [NIV] *“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*

In the Old Testament covenant, life and finding favour in God’s eyes was governed by obedience to a set of laws and statutes.

Humans had to do certain things whether they liked it or not, whether they knew the reason for it or not.

With the coming of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant we have with the Creator God, we no longer seek to please and obey God by keeping a set of laws like slaves.

We seek now to respond to the love of God as children who adore and love a loving, merciful, and compassionate Father.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

This is our response to God because of the love He has for us has been expressed in the birth, life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

We offer our lives to God, willingly sacrificing our own desires to fulfil His will.

Then submit to God’s re-educating our minds through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

John 1:18 [King James] *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”*

When John said that “*no-one has ever seen God*” both Jews and Gentiles of the ancient world would have agreed. [**Exodus 33:20; Deuteronomy 4:12**]

The great Greek thinkers felt exactly the same way –

Plato – never man and God can meet.

Celus – God is away beyond everything.

Glover – whatever God was, He was far from being within the reach of ordinary men.

Yet the keynote of John's gospel is *"If you want to see what God is like look at Jesus Christ."*

The Greek word translated *"only begotten"* is *"monogenēs"*, over time lost its physical meaning of physical birth [one birth] to mean unique and specially beloved.

Obviously an only son has a unique place and unique love in his father's heart.

So John is saying that Jesus Christ is unique.

John also tells us that Jesus is God, that is in mind, character and being Jesus is one with God.

In this Jesus is divine even as the other persons in the one Triune God.

John also tells us that Jesus has the deepest intimacy possible with the Father.

The Hebrew phrase *"bosom"* is used of the intimate relationship between mother and child or husband and wife. [**Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 13:6**]

When John uses this phrase about Jesus, he meant that between Jesus and God there is complete, total and uninterrupted intimacy.

This is how Jesus the Son of Man, but also Son of God, can perfectly reveal God to humanity.

Having set down his central thought and goal, John now begins a detailed account of the first momentous week in the public life of Jesus Christ.

John 1:19-20 [NIV] *"Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Christ.'"*

The first deputation which came to interview John the Baptist were priests and Levites.

Their interest was natural because John the Baptist was the son of a priest, Zacharias. [**Luke 1:5**]

In Judaism the only qualification for priesthood was descent.

Therefore in the eyes of the religious authorities, John the Baptist was a priest, but a priest who was acting in an unusual way.

The Pharisees as part of the Sanhedrin had one of many functions, to deal with any man who was suspected of being a false prophet.

As John the Baptist was attracting such a large crowd of people, the Sanhedrin felt it was their duty to check up on this man, in case he was a false prophet.

Too often the church runs the danger of condemning a new way of doing things, only because it is new.

The Jews were and are waiting for the Messiah as any captive people await a deliverer. The Jews believed themselves to be God's chosen people whom God would sooner or later intervene to take them out from under the oppression of the Roman invaders.

There were many ideas as to what this looked-for Messiah would do.

Bring world peace.

Bring a reign of righteousness.

Champion a Jewish army to world conquest.

Some expected a supernatural being, straight from God.

Some expected a prince to rise from King David's lineage.

Messianic pretenders at times arose and caused rebellions.

So it was natural for religious leaders to ask John the Baptist, who was attracting large crowds, if he was the Messiah.

It was a Jewish belief that before the Messiah came Elijah would return to herald Messiah's coming. [Malachi 4:5]

Before Messiah came a special prophet was expected like Moses. [Deuteronomy 18:15]

John the Baptist emphatically denied all of these looked-for men.

John the Baptist then quoted **Isaiah 40:3-5** to explain who he was and what he was doing.

John the Baptist was telling the people to prepare for the coming King of kings, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God. [Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:11-16]

John the Baptist was what every true preacher and teacher ought to be, only a voice.

Another thing that puzzled the Pharisees was, why was and what right did John the Baptist have to baptise people?

If John had been Messiah, Elijah or a prophet, he might have baptised people. [Isaiah 52:15; Ezekiel 36:25; Zechariah 13:1]

John had denied being any of these.

Also baptism at the hands of men was **not** for Israelites at all.

Baptism was for proselytes, incomers from other faiths to clean them of their past.

John was making Israelites do what only Gentiles had to do.

John the Baptist then gave himself a very menial office, that of a slave, to untie the straps of his master's sandals.

Yet John the Baptist said that he didn't even qualify for that menial office as slave to the One whom he was preparing a path to enter their lives.

John the Baptist's function was to be the preparing of the way, any honour and greatness he had came from the One whose coming he foretold.

John the Baptist was a great example for all true Christians, a person prepared to obliterate themselves in order that Jesus Christ may be seen.

A signpost pointing other people to Jesus Christ as their Saviour.