

The Word Became Flesh

John 1:14-18

August 24th, 2025

1. When the eternal Word became _____... (1:14a)

2. We saw His _____ (1:14b-15)

3. We received His _____ (1:16-17)

4. He explained _____ (1:18)

5. Applying the Word

a. Respond to His grace by _____ it.

b. Respond to the glory of His explanation of God by _____ Him.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 1:14-18

1. What might be some incorrect understandings of what it meant for the Word to become flesh?
2. Verse 14 speaks of the “glory” of Jesus. Read Exodus 33:18–23 and Deuteronomy 5:22–27. What do these passages teach us about what glory is, and about what John is communicating with his words, “we have seen his glory”?
3. How do the following passages in John further elaborate the glory of Christ? (Read as much context around each verse as necessary) 2:11; 7:39; 8:50; 8:54; 11:4; 11:40
4. In what way was Jesus “full of grace and truth?”
5. How does John the Baptist’s statement about Jesus in v. 15 highlight the nature of Christ? See also John 8:58
6. The main alternatives for how to translate the phrase at the end of v. 16 are “grace upon grace” (statement of accumulation) or “grace instead of grace” (statement of replacement). Both are legitimate translations. Which fits best in the context? Is there a significant difference between the two ideas?
7. How does v. 17 compare and contrast Moses and Jesus? What is superior about Jesus’ ministry over Moses’ ministry? What did Jesus accomplish that Moses did not—could not—accomplish?
8. How has Jesus “explained” the Father? (v. 18) See also John 6:46 and 14:9

Some questions partially adapted from *Knowing the Bible: John* by Crossway

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Big idea: When the eternal Son became human, we saw His glory, we received His grace, and He explained the Father.

Intro:

Bruce Shelley in *Church History in Plain Language* relates the story of a woman touring Europe in the days of telegraphs. She found a bracelet she wanted and messaged her husband. “Have found wonderful bracelet. Price seventy-five thousand dollars. May I buy it?” He wrote back “No, price too high.” Cable operator who transmitted it missed the signal for the comma and sent “No price too high” so she bought it! The man sued and won.

Shelley used that as an illustration for how one small change can make an enormous difference in meaning, which was the case in the 4th century when the early church debated the language in the Nicene Creed.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

The debate was over the phrase “of one substance with the Father” – The two factions differed over the exact phrase:

homoousios – same substance as the father

homoiousios – similar substance as the father

The little iota made the difference between a Christianity with one God in three persons or at least two Gods.

The prologue of John played a key role in these debates. The Nicene creed did not create the doctrine of the Trinity. That is found in scripture. What the Nicene creed did was attempt to use precise language to explain what scripture taught.

What is meant by “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”?
John 1:1

In what sense is He “begotten”? (John 1:14, 18) Well, it doesn’t mean “created” because we’ve already seen He created all things (v. 3) and so the Nicene creed states “begotten, not made.”

Three effects of the incarnation of the eternal Son

1. When the eternal Word became **flesh**...(1:14a)
 - a. He was born, grew, and developed normally
 - i. **Luke 2:6-7** describes his birth and we usually read it at the Christmas eve service.
 1. He didn’t come down from the sky or appear as a full grown man. He was born as a helpless, dependent infant.
 - ii. **Luke 2:40, 52** The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . . And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
 1. “Amazingly, what both of these verses indicate is that Jesus’s wisdom is not a function of his divine nature but is the expression of his growth as a human being.”
Bruce Ware
 2. “The fact that Jesus ‘increased in wisdom’ (Luke 2:52) says that he went through a learning process just as all other children do – he learned how to eat, how to talk,

how to read and write, and how to be obedient to his parents. . . This ordinary learning process was a part of the genuine humanity of Christ.” Wayne Grudem

3. Parallels His growing wisdom with growing strength and stature. Was He a toddler who knew everything? Apparently not.
4. His divine wisdom didn’t grow. It’s complete, perfect. But in taking on the limitations of humanity, He learned and grew as a human.

b. He experienced hunger, grew tired, and required sleep.

- i. **Matthew 4:2** And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.
- ii. **John 4:5-6** So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; ⁶ and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.
- iii. **Mark 4:38** Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

c. He submitted to his parents and other authorities.

- i. **Luke 2:51** And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart.

d. Some have suggested alternative understandings of this (adapted and modified from Carter):

- i. “He came to dwell *in* a man” – but the passage says the Word became flesh
- ii. “He appeared like a man” – he didn’t actually become a real man though. But the passage says the word became *flesh*.
- iii. “God chose a man and made him His son” – but John says that the same Word that was God and was with God and created all things became flesh – there is continuity.

e. He came and dwelt among us

- i. He dwelt among us – literally – he tented/tabernacled among us
- ii. Exodus 25-30 includes detailed instructions for the tabernacle, the elaborate, portable tent that would serve as the precursor to the temple.
- iii. **Exodus 25:8** "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.
 1. And the tabernacle was set up in the middle of their tents – God’s tent was among their tents.
 2. And John says, that’s what Jesus did – He set up His tent among us – He lived among us.

f. He didn’t become flesh by no longer being God. That’s often the way we use the word “become.”

- i. I am actively in the process of becoming an old man by ceasing to be a young man. (Sanders)
- ii. **Colossians 2:9** for in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,
- iii. But Jesus continued to be “The Word” while He became “flesh.”

2. We saw His **glory** (1:14b-15)

- a. Moses asked to see the glory of God and the Lord hid him in a rock and showed him a glimpse of His glory.

- i. **Exodus 33:22** and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.
 - b. “In the temple, everything says, ‘Glory!’” Psalm 29:9
 - c. John said, “We saw His glory”
 - d. Carter - In the Old Testament the glory of the Lord was the “visible manifestation of the excellence of God’s character” (Grudem, Systematic Theology, 221). In other words, the glory of God was the greatness of God seen visibly. When Jews looked at the tabernacle, they would see a partial and incomplete picture of the glory of God (this visible display of his goodness, greatness, and holiness) emanating from it. John’s point in verse 14 is that when Jesus came to earth as a man to dwell with men, the glory of God was seen in its fullness.
 - i. Only begotten – develop in v 18 where it reoccurs
 - e. What was this glory like that Jesus displayed? Did he glow and shimmer? Only once at an event we call the transfiguration. The rest of the time He looked normal and many people failed to appreciate His glory.
 - i. When he performed a miracle, a sign, he revealed his glory (2:11), but only his disciples put their faith in him.
 - ii. **John 2:11** This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.
 - iii. DA Carson - ...there is a hiddenness to the display of glory in the incarnate Word.
 - f. John the author summarizes the way in which John the Baptist highlighted this glory (v. 15)
 - i. He comes after me (John’s public ministry preceded Jesus, John’s birth preceded Jesus)
 - ii. But He has a higher rank
 - iii. Because He existed before me
 - 1. Another description of Jesus’ existence before birth.
3. We received His **grace** (1:16-17)
- a. In John 1:14-18, as it describes the coming of Jesus into the World, one of the key words that it uses is “grace.”
 - i. He was full of grace and truth (v. 14)
 - ii. We received grace upon grace (v. 16)
 - iii. Grace and truth were realized through Jesus (v. 17)
 - b. God is free and lavish and overflowing in His goodness to sinful creatures. This is grace. (Piper)
 - i. Fullness – like a fountain brimming over, spilling over, full
 - c. “Grace upon grace” can mean accumulation (one gracious blessing after another) or more likely, replacement - “grace in place of grace.” “Grace instead of grace.”
 - i. Another throwback to Moses – the law was given through Moses.
 - 1. Don’t hear “law” and think “bad.”
 - a. It revealed God’s righteous standard that would have been fuzzy and unknowable.
 - b. It established it more just society.

- c. Paul says in Romans 7 that the law is holy, righteous, and good.
 - d. This isn't to talk bad about Moses. People who talked bad about Moses in Exodus got leprosy, and we don't want to take our chance with that.
 - 2. But the law did expose need. And the need was for grace.
 - a. God has always been "compassionate and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin" (Ex 34:6) and it came to full expression in the coming of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. The giving of the law and the coming of Christ are decisive events in the history of salvation.
 - ii. Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
 - 1. "realized" is the same word translated "became" in v 14 – The Word became flesh and grace and truth came through Jesus.
4. He explained **God** (1:18)
 - a. No one has seen God – but Jesus has explained Him (v. 18)
 - b. The only begotten God
 - i. Here's where we began in the intro. What does it mean that He is the only begotten?
 - ii. Monogenes – some translations say "one and only"
 - iii. "Only begotten" – only one of a kind – used of an only child, whether a son or daughter – the idea is uniqueness
 - iv. We hear "Son of God" and might interpret that as "less than God" but that's clearly not how it was understood.
 - v. **John 5:18** For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.
 - vi. CS Lewis describes it this way in an imperfect analogy, because all analogies when we are using them to describe God are going to be imperfect,
 - 1. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes a wireless set - or he may make something more like himself than a wireless set: say, a statue. If he is a clever enough carver he may make a statue which is very like a man indeed. But, of course, it is not a real man; it only looks like one. It cannot breathe or think. It is not alive." ([Mere Christianity](#), 157)
 - 2. Piper - That's an essential part of what the doctrine intends to preserve: the Son is not a creature; he's not made; he's not different from the very essence and nature of God.
 - 3. The emphasis is not on origin (He had no beginning) but on nature.
 - c. In the bosom of the Father is a term that describes relational closeness.
 - d. "Explained" or "revealed" or "made known" translates the word we get our term "exegesis" from. Exegesis means to clarify the meaning inherent in a text. Jesus Christ, John says, is the exegesis of God, the "exposition of his hidden reality"

- e. This means that what we have in Jesus is not an ambassador from God, not an emissary, not a messenger, not a prophet – we have God Himself who came down, took on flesh, and brought us the fullness of grace.

5. Applying the Word

- a. Respond to His grace by **receiving** it.
- b. Respond to the glory of His explanation of God by **worshipping** Him.

THE WORD BECAME

FLESH

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Price seventy-five thousand
dollars. May I buy it?

No, price too high

No price too high

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Nicene Creed

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