

THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

ADVENT SERIES 2021

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FOR HIS GLORY, HE MADE US SONS OF GOD: JOHN 1:1-18

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Our Advent Series this year is the “Purpose of the Incarnation.” Why did Jesus add to his deity humanity? Why did the God of the universe, the second person of the Trinity, become a human? Right now, I’d like for you to think about this question. I’m even going to give you a few seconds to write down your answers to this question: why do you think Jesus became a man?

Now, the answer to this question is multifaceted and profoundly glorious, and in this advent series, we are going to study four passages about why Jesus did this. The first passage that we’ll study is John 1:1-18, and in this passage, we see that Jesus took on flesh to manifest his glory in saving sinners, and even in making sinners his very own family!

I hope today is that we would celebrate Christmas today with a biblical view of God’s glory, and as we do this, I hope that we would have greater joy in Jesus.

Let’s now investigate this idea together.

Preliminary Details

Since we are not going to study the entire book of John but just this one passage, we must understand a few preliminary details. First, we should know the author. This gospel was written by Jesus’ disciple John. John was instrumental in Jesus’ ministry. He was one of the first disciples called by Jesus and belonged to Jesus’ inner circle of disciples: James,

John, and Peter. John is identified as the disciple whom Jesus loved and the only disciple of the 12 to be with Jesus during the crucifixion (John 19:26).

John was also instrumental in the early church. In the book of Acts, Peter and John were the first to heal someone (the lame person of Acts 3) and get arrested for testifying to the gospel (Acts 4). Still, when the gospel spread to the Samaritans, it was Peter and John who went to Samaria (Acts 8). Acts 1-8 focuses to a large extent on Peter and John's ministry (see also Galatians 2:9). At some point, John relocated to Ephesus, modern-day Turkey, only to be exiled to Patmos, an island on the coast of Turkey. He is the author of the gospel of John, 1-3 John, and the book of Revelation. Finally, he lived into the late 90s (roughly 60 years after the crucifixion). Likely, very late in his life, he wrote the gospel of John, 1-3 John, and the book of Revelation.

Second, to interpret our text today properly, we must John's main point. He is writing the gospel so that his readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ who is fully God and fully man (20:28-31).

Everything that John says aims at this goal: to cultivate in our hearts true saving faith.

The Glory of Jesus: John 1:1-5

Verses 1-5 represent a profoundly glorious description of Jesus so let's see why. First, John describes Jesus as the **eternal Word (1)**. This fact is evident when John states that Jesus was "in the beginning" (1:1). The phrase is the same as found in Genesis 1:1, and this echo back to creation indicates that before creation, Jesus existed.

Second, John describes Jesus as the **divine Word (1)**. Notice in verse 1 how John identifies Jesus as "with God" and "was God" (1:1). Our theology of God as Trinity derives from passages like John 1:1. Here we learn that Jesus is distinct from the Father: he is with God. We see this

same theme throughout the NT such as at Jesus' baptism when the Father announces Jesus' identity and the Spirit dwells on Jesus. Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit are distinct persons. Yet, notice that the Son is God. Although there is distinction in God, there is also unity since there is only one God.

Now, if you have talked to Jehovah's Witnesses, you've heard them say that it is better to translate this phrase as "the word was a god" with a little "g" (1). They reject the doctrine of the Trinity by doing this and we must understand that this view is dead wrong, and it is quite easy to show why. Let's notice two facts among many others that we could discuss here. First, this view fails to consider the OT. In the OT, there was only one true God: the Lord. There is no place for other gods in the OT. Isaiah repeats this idea over and over again in Isaiah 40-52. There is only one God, only one Savior: the Lord. What this means is that there is only one true God worthy of worship. All the other gods with little "gs" are not worthy of Israel's love, devotion, worship, or time. There is only one God. Thus, interpreting Jesus as a god with a little "g" would indicate that he is a no-god not worthy of our time, love, devotion, or worship, and that is wrong since Jesus is worshipped throughout the gospels. We have worshipped him even today.

Second, this interpretation not only fails to consider the OT, but it also fails to consider the conclusion to the book of John where Thomas identifies Jesus as "my Lord and my God" (20:28). The Lord God is not a way to identify little "g" gods in the OT. That is the way you refer to the one true God. John identifies Jesus as God the Son, the second person of the Trinity.

Third, Jesus is the **creator Word**. Notice verse 3: "all things were made through Jesus, and without him, nothing was made that was made."

John identifies Jesus as the agent of creation. How did God create all things? He created through the Word who is Jesus.

Fourth, Jesus is the **life-giving Light** (4-5). The OT describes creation and new creation (salvation) as light overcoming darkness. We see this in Genesis 1 when God said, “Let there be light” and there was light (3). Light overcame the darkness so that humanity might flourish during the day and at night: both times are governed by light. Similarly, we see that salvation in the OT is described in terms of the dawning of a new day (Isaiah 8:20) and in terms of seeing light (Isaiah 9:2). To say that Jesus is the life-giving light says something glorious about Jesus: he was at work in creation to make life and he is at work in new creation to make life.

John begins the book with a glorious description of who Jesus is.

Tragedy and Jesus’ Coming: John 1:6-13

John shifts his focus in verses 6-13, but only slightly. In verses 1-5, John described Jesus gloriously. He told us who Jesus is. Now, John tells what Jesus did: he came to us (6-13). Notice the glory of verse 9: “The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.” John’s description of Jesus makes this statement utterly significant. Jesus is the eternal God who created all things and who works to bring new life. He has forever existed in a loving relationship with the Father and with the Spirit. Think of the glory. Now, think of the humility. That God has come to us (9), and how we need Jesus? We are weak physically. My family has been experiencing some health issues as most of you know. Jeff Dillon is too. Many of us are. We need Jesus. The same is true emotionally. We sometimes feel just worn down and emotionally drained. Spiritually we are lost and dammed. We need Jesus.

Yet, notice the tragedy here. Our natural response to Jesus' coming is not to embrace him, accept him, and worship him. Our natural response is not to say, "I need you, help me!" Rather, our natural response is to ignore him, not see him, and worst, not know him (11). This reality is true of all of us as made clear in verse 11. John says that Jesus came to "his own, but his own did not receive him" (11). Rejection of Jesus is what every human naturally does to the eternal, creator God who is our very life! This point is again highlighted in verses 12-13 when John says,

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but God.

This verse indicates that those who receive Jesus do not do so naturally. John tells us that belief does not originate in our strength, will, or resources. It does not come from man at all. In one sense, that is tragic.

There is an alternative response: the response of faith (1:12). This response is the proper response, but it is not the natural response as John points out in verse 13.

Glory and Jesus' Coming: John 1:14-18

Our natural response to Jesus' coming is tragic, but Jesus' response to our rejection is glorious. John explains this reality in many ways. First, notice the phrases "became flesh" and "dwelt among us" (14). Jesus' coming is not like Jesus driving by and waving to us nor is it like a mere visit. Rather, Jesus' coming to us is about Jesus taking on flesh and dwelling among us. He takes up residence with us, church family, and this is glorious because of our sinful condition. Because of sin, we are separated from God. Access to God is seldom and

dangerous in the OT. Complete access can only be had once a year, by a special person, in a very special way. But now, Jesus whom John just described as the almighty God, dwells among us. Amid the tragedy of our rejection, there is glory.

Second, we naturally reject Jesus, but Jesus is all about his glory, and that is very good for us. It is good for us because the pinnacle of Jesus' glory, as pointed out by John Piper in his resources on this passage, is God's grace. When we think of God's glory, church family, we should think of something very specific. We shouldn't think of the glories of this world: gold, rubies, fancy cars, athletic abilities. Rather, the pinnacle of God's glory is the display of kindness to those who do not deserve his kindness: his grace.

Third, Jesus' grace is rich. Notice verse 16. When we think about grace, it is easy for us to think that there is a limit. Isn't it easy to think that we might exhaust God's grace? Perhaps our sin or another believer's sin might exhaust God's grace? According to verse 16, God's people receive grace upon grace which means that God's grace is infinite for those who believe in him (16).

Fourth, the appearance of Jesus is not like the giving of the law of Moses. That act of revelation lead to condemnation because the law revealed our problem: we cannot keep God's law. The revelation of John 1 though of beholding Jesus is different. It is a revelation of grace and truth! When we look at Jesus in faith, we see underserved kindness that is reliable and true.

Fifth, John affirms the unity of our God when he says in verse 18 that Jesus makes the Father known to us. You see, when we gaze at the glory of Jesus in the gospel and see his grace – him healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out demons from those oppressed by

demons – Jesus is not acting contrary to the Father’s will. Rather, Jesus coming to crush the curse of sin and death is the Father’s will.

Application

John explains to us that the incarnation exists to glorify God by making us his very children, church family. Thus, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas and as we reflect on God’s grace to us in the incarnation, let’s have immense joy. Jesus glorifies himself by saying to us, “My son and my daughter!”

Perhaps there is a non-Christian here. Would you come to Jesus today? Jesus lived the life you were called to live and he died your death. Paul tells us in Romans 10 that if you would confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (which means following him as Lord) and if you believe that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. Would you come to Jesus today? If so, please let us know. We’d love to care for you as you begin your new life in Jesus.

Prayer

O Lord, help us to celebrate Christmas this year with immense joy because Jesus came to rescue us to praise your glorious grace. We pray these things in Jesus’ name, amen.

