



SERMON TITLE: God in the Flesh
SCRIPTURE: John 1:1-18

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"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his own biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust Him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow Him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

Just curious...did you create space in your life this past week to read through the Gospel of John? ... Were you able to make it through twice? I want to make you aware of a couple of tools that can help you dig into the Word for yourself. The first is called the *ESV Scripture Journal*. Basically, it looks like a paperback Moleskine journal, but it has the Scripture text on one side and a lined blank page on the opposite page for you to take and make notes. There's another version of this same journal idea that's called the *ESV Illuminated Scripture Journal*. It's more decorative and it has a blank page opposite the Scripture text. They are both \$6.00 on Amazon and they have them on every book of the Bible. Also, another tool I recommend is a video entitled "The Gospel of John" done by The Visual Bible Project. If you are an *Amazon Prime* member you can watch it for free and I think it's even on YouTube. The neat thing about this video is that it is only the text of the Gospel of John. They use the very easy to understand translation of the Good News Bible, but it will bring the text and the story alive for you. It may be something your community group could watch or you might watch it with your family or friends.

If you have ever been to a Broadway play like *Phantom of the Opera*, you may remember that before the curtain rises and the action begins on stage, you'll usually hear the orchestra play an "overture." The overture introduces you to the major song tunes that you will hear throughout the play. That's how John begins his biography of Jesus; with a poetic prologue that introduces us to the major themes he will unpack as he unfolds his unique re-telling of Jesus' story. Themes like Jesus' deity, light/darkness life/death, believing/rejecting, bearing witness, new birth, glory, grace and truth.

READ 1:1-4 — Jesus is the Eternal, Creator God —Last week we looked at 1:1-4 where John states in no uncertain terms that *Jesus is Eternal God*—one with the Father, having the same "God-essence" as the Father—God, the Father/God, the Son. The Word (Jesus) was with God before the beginning of time and he was God full of life and light. And get this, John tells us that Jesus is the One who actually created all things. Other religions and spiritualities put Jesus in the category of a "created" being not the Creator. But John says everything and everyone comes from Jesus, belongs to Jesus, and will give an account to Jesus. But there was a problem—there was a negative reaction to this Word, this light.

READ 1:4-11 — Three times in these verses John makes the point that when Jesus, the light of the world, came into the world there was resistance, rejection, and an unsuccessful attempt to extinguish the light. One thing we need to see about Jesus and his claim to be the Son of God is just how polarizing that statement would be to the Jewish people. John is saying, *Jesus is a matter of life and death*. There is no bigger issue than that. *Jesus is a matter of death*. And not just life and death but *eternal* life and *eternal* death. Apart from Jesus, you die and you experience eternal death apart from God. It's a bold claim. *Jesus alone is the source of life and apart from Jesus there is no life*. And that is still a controversial claim, just as much a polarizing statement today as it was in John's day. The prophet Isaiah talked about how people resist and reject God's life-giving light when he said, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who call light darkness and darkness light, who call bitter sweet and sweet bitter" (5:20). This is the world we live in today. I have to ask you, *Is there anything in your life that's in the darkness?* It's secret. It's shameful. It's hidden. It's rebellious.

It's unloving. It's unforgiving. It's self-righteous. Whatever it is, it's death to the life God wants you to experience. Everything in darkness brings death and not life. Everything in the darkness separates you from God and the life Jesus died to make possible for you. Bring it into the light of God's grace right now. *Confess it*—"Dear Jesus, you know who I am and what I've been doing. Thank you for exposing this darkness in my life. I renounce it. It is sin and I repent of it right now. Jesus, I now ask you to bring life where there is death. I'm asking you to show me the way forward. Amen."

READ 1:14-18 — *How did the eternal God come into the world?* "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." Jesus, the Word, the Eternal, Creator God became flesh and blood. Jesus' humanity was made possible by his humility. Jesus did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he *humbled* himself, taking on the role of a servant, taking on flesh, and he dwelt—literally, he *tabernacled* among us. In the days of the Exodus, God dwelt in the midst of his people in a tent, in the tabernacle in the wilderness. The tabernacle was where God and his people met together and the glory of God was visible to the children of Israel in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. John says here that Jesus, the eternal, creator God, pitched his tent among us and we saw his glory—God's OT tabernacle, shekinah glory manifest in him. Jesus shows us God's glory. Jesus is the place where God and people meet. So in Jesus, the *Creator* God enters into *creation*. In Jesus, the *invisible* God becomes *visible*. In Jesus, the *eternal* God enters into *time and space*. In Jesus, the *spiritual* God comes in human *flesh*. The main point is, by coming in the flesh, Jesus shows us what God is really like. But John is not finished making that point. He goes on in vv16-18—almost like the 4th of July with fireworks going off in rapid fire succession at the end—*boom, boom, boom*—one thing after another about Jesus—making the point that Jesus *alone* shows us what God is like. He says that Jesus shows us the glory of God. That means he's weighty, he's prominent, he's preeminent and no one should weigh more heavily in our minds and hearts and lives than Jesus. John tells us that Jesus' glory is "glory as of the only Son from the Father"—the only Son who sat at the Father's right hand in heaven. Again, there's no one like Jesus. There's no one comparable to Jesus. There's no one who has or will ever walk the earth that is anything like the goodness and the glory found in Jesus. He's not just the Son of God, He is the *ONLY* Son of God—full of grace and truth. The *truth* is that we are lost in the darkness of sin and the *grace* is he's come to rescue us even though we run away from him. The *truth* is we need him. The *grace* is he's there for us. But John is still not finished—v16—For from his fullness we have all received, *grace on top of grace*. *That would make a good tagline for a song*. Jesus brings lavish grace—grace that never runs out no matter how many times we have to go back to the well to draw it out—¹⁷For the law was given through Moses—that's how most people try to relate to God—through law—through rules and rituals and regulations—trying to make ourselves acceptable to God by being good and doing good—but that's not Christianity—Christianity rests on the "grace and truth *that* came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. Jesus is God—Jesus explains God. That is what this *opening overture—this prologue*—is all about. Jesus is God—Jesus explains God. John has made this clear twice in these 18 verses—"In the beginning, Jesus was *with* God and Jesus *was* God, and now, Jesus, *is* the only God who is *with* God at the Father's side.

Jesus is God—He is the only God who is at the Father's side. And that being true—You've got to decide what you're going to do with him. There are two choices—you can receive him or you can reject him.

READ 1:12-13 — What's your decision? If you would like to receive Jesus as your God, your Lord, your Savior today, you can pray a simple prayer like this: "Jesus, I now understand that you are the only God who came in human flesh to bring me out of the darkness of my sin into the light of your life. Thank you for opening my eyes to this great truth. I am a sinner that needs your forgiveness. Thank you for living the life I could never live, for dying in my place, and for rising from the dead to make new life possible for me. I take you at your word to forgive me, and right now, I'm turning from my sin and I am trusting you to give me a brand new life as a child of God."

Discussion Starters:

- Describe a time when you had a conversation about Jesus that was challenging and maybe even controversial.
- Read John 1:1-18 — Highlight all the ways that John makes the point that Jesus was and is God?
- Why do you think he begins by calling Jesus the logos (the Word) rather than using his name?
- Looking at John 1:4-11 — How does John make the point that when Jesus came into the world, he was met with resistance and rejection?
- What three things does light do?

- Has God's light exposed an area of darkness in your life that you can share with your group?
- Looking at John 1:14-18 — What does it mean that "The Word became flesh and 'tabernacled' among us? What difference does that make in your daily life as you remember that Jesus, the eternal creator God, has come to us
- Read 1:12-13 — What does it mean to "receive" Jesus?
- How does what you believe about Jesus shape/flavor how you think and the choices you make?

OR Try this approach ... (John Piper's suggestions for a small group discussion.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/six-questions-to-ask-when-studying-the-bible-in-a-group>)

- After reading John 1:1-18, ask...
- What "shines" out in this passage? What stands out to you in this passage? Something you hadn't really thought about before?
- Did these verses raise any questions for you as we read them or as you heard them taught in the worship service or online?
- What are all the things we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- As a result of our study in this passage, what do you sense the Spirit might be leading you to do in obedience to this text?