

The Glory of Christ: Lessons from John's Gospel
“The Word Made Flesh” (John 1:1-18)

1. Introduction to the Week.

- a) *The theme of this week is ‘The Glory of Christ.’ Why? At least 3 reasons.*
- i) *1st: No subject/person more important than our Lord.*

 - ii) *2nd: No topic greater for our Christian growth in grace.*

 - iii) *3rd: No topic greater given the times we live in.*
- b) *How are we going to go about looking at ‘The Glory of Christ?’*
- i) Obviously a lot of places we could go. In truth, we could go to all of Scripture! But we are going to focus our attention on *John's Gospel*.
 - ii) It is an understatement to say that at the heart of John's Gospel is Christ.
 - iii) We are going to have to limit what we look at, so I propose to look at these texts: (1) John 1:1-18 – ‘The Word became Flesh;’ (2) John 6 – ‘I Am the Bread of Life;’ (3) John 10 – ‘I Am the Gate, Shepherd;’ (4) John 11 – ‘I Am the Resurrection/Life.’
- c) *What are some of the goals of our study?*
- d) *Before we begin, let us make some comments regarding John's Gospel.*
- i) *Author.*
 - a) Historically, the church has viewed the author as the *apostle John*. This is right.
 - b) But it is important to note that the titles – ‘according to John’ – are later. But the church has agreed from the earliest time that the author is the apostle John.
 - c) John = one of ‘sons of thunder (=other was James);’ exiled on the isle of Patmos; author of 1, 2, 3 John, and Revelation.
 - d) In the gospel, the author identifies himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).
 - e) *Importance?*
 - (1) John was with Jesus from the beginning. He was an ‘eyewitness’ of the great events of Jesus’ life, ministry, transfiguration, cross, resurrection, etc. See John 19:35-37; 21:24-25.
 - (2) As 2 Peter 1:16ff reminds us – these things were not done in a corner, but in real history, testified to by individuals, given to us under the sovereign work of God's Spirit so that we have accurate recording and interpretation of Jesus!
 - ii) *Date.*
 - a) John's Gospel was probably the last of the 4 gospels. Probably written in the 80s.
 - b) John's work *complements* the work of the other gospel writers.
 - c) The Christ he presents is exalted, but it is the same Christ presented elsewhere (=gospels, Paul [Phil 2:5ff; Col 1:15-20], Hebrews).

iii) *Unique contribution.*

- a) John doesn't write about Jesus' baptism, calling of the 12, the exorcisms, transfiguration, the parables, institution of the Lord's Supper. But he does give us famous signs and discourses (=lengthy teaching) on such subjects as: the new birth (=Jn 3); the bread of life (=Jn 6); the light of the world (=Jn 9); the good shepherd (=Jn 10), lessons from the upper room (=farewell discourse).
- b) This is not to say that John is saying things differently than the Synoptics. They have a lot in common for they are unpacking the same Lord and Savior. Each gospel has a specific point to contribute – complementary – and John's is certainly his focus on the 'glory of Christ.
- c) John, from beginning to end, is thoroughly Christ-centered; Christ-glorifying. In our Lord Jesus, we have all the hopes and expectations of the OT fulfilled. In him we have light, life, salvation, and judgment.

iv) *Structure of John's Gospel.*

- a) The Prologue (1:1-18)
- b) Jesus' Self-Disclosure in Word and Deed (1:19-10:42)
 - (1) Prelude to Jesus' Public Ministry (1:19-51)
 - (2) Early Ministry: Signs, Works, and Words (2:1-4:54)
 - (a) 1st Sign: Water into Wine (2:1-11)
 - (b) 1st Discourse: Born Again (3:1-3:36)
 - (c) 2nd Discourse: Living Water (4:1-42)
 - (d) 2nd Sign: The Official's Son (4:43-54)
 - (3) Rising Opposition: More Signs, Works, and Words (5:1-7:52)
 - (a) 3rd Sign: Healing the Paralytic (5:1-15)
 - (b) 3rd Discourse: Imitating the Father (5:16-47)
 - (c) 4th Sign: Feeding the 5000 (6:1-15)
 - (d) 5th Sign: Walking on Water (6:16-24)
 - (e) 4th Discourse: Bread of Life (6:25-71)
 - (f) 5th Discourse: Light of the World (7:1-52)
 - (4) Radical Confrontation: Climactic Signs, Works, and Words (8:12-10:42)
 - (a) 6th Sign: The Man Born Blind (9:1-41)
 - (b) 6th Discourse: The Good Shepherd (10:1-21)
 - (c) 7th Discourse: Oneness with the Father (10:22-42)
- c) Transition: Life and Death, King and Suffering Servant (11:1-12:50)
 - (1) 7th Sign: The Death and Resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-44)
 - (2) The Judicial Decision to Kill Jesus (11:45-54)
 - (3) Triumph and Impending Death (11:55-12:36)
 - (4) Theology of Unbelief (12:37-50)
- d) Jesus' Self-Disclosure in His Cross and Exaltation (13:1-20:31)
 - (1) The Last Supper (13:1-30)
 - (2) The Farewell Discourse (13:31-16:33)
 - (3) The Prayer of Jesus (17:1-26)
 - (4) The Trial and Death of Jesus (18:1-19:42)
 - (5) The Resurrection of Jesus (20:1-31)
- e) Epilogue (21:1-25)

2. 'The Glory of Christ' in John 1 – 'The Word Made Flesh.'

a) *Introduction.*

- i) *Probably no greater place to see the 'glory of Christ' presented than in John 1:1-18.*
As most of you know John 1:1-18 is considered the 'prologue' to John's Gospel. As the 'prologue' it serves as the *introduction* to the entire Gospel. It sets us up for later themes to be unpacked (=e.g. life, light, new birth, glory, truth, etc.). It lays down truths/structures of thought that were crucial to communicate in order for the gospel to make sense in the diverse world of the 1st century.
- ii) *But supremely the 'prologue' summarizes who the Word is and how he became flesh.*

b) *1st: Our Lord is first spoken of as 'the Word' (vv 1-18).*

- i) This title, 'Word,' is *unique* to John (=also in 1 John 1). What does it mean? It is best to understand it in light of its OT background.
- ii) *Old Testament). What is 'Word' associated with in the OT?*
Most people probably associate the expression 'Word of God' = Bible. But in the OT it is more than this. 'Word of God' = *God himself in action*: creation, revelation, and redemption. *Definition: God's powerful self-expression* – in all of these areas.
 - a) *Creation.* Speech of God and acts of God are closely associated in Gen 1. The heavens were created by Word of Lord (Ps 33:6; 147:15-18; 148:5).
 - b) *Revelation.* This is present in Genesis [3:8; 12:1; 15:1; 22:11] and is formalized in the Psalter. The Word not only sheds God's light upon our path, giving us permanent disclosure of his will (Ps 119:9, 25, 28, 41, 58, 65, 76, 107, 116, 140, 160, 169, 170) but it is also personalized. "The Word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him" (Ps 18:30; cf. Ps 107:20; 147:15). The 'Word' is closely identified with God himself.
 - c) *Redemption* (=Ps 107:20; Isa 55:1).
- iii) *Why does John use this title for Jesus?* In the rest of the book, many titles – e.g. Son. Probably because 'Word' is a summary title that includes all the other ones. It speaks of the deity of Jesus (=identification with God), yet distinction (=personified). It speaks of God in creation, revelation, and redemption. It speaks of the fact that in Jesus, we come face to face with God. And in v 14, we come face to face with the God who has joined himself to our flesh. In Jesus, we find the permanent and final unveiling of God (=revelation) – v 18. In Jesus, we have God made known in terms of his character, will, and ways (cf. Jn 14:6).

iv) *Application Point.*

c) *2nd: The 'Word' is Nothing Less than God (vv 1-4).*

Here we find a staggering yet carefully crafted statement about the identity of the 'Word.' John 1:1 is clearly triadic. Each of the 3 clauses has the same subject – 'Word' – and an identical verb – 'was.' Although Jesus is not explicitly mentioned until v 17, John clearly assumes that the 'Word' is none other than Jesus Christ, the 'only Son' (Jn 1:14, 18). The verse makes 3 separate affirmations about the 'Word:'

- i) *1st*: He already existed when creation and time began (v 1a).
- ii) *2nd*: He was always in active communion with God the Father (v 1b).
- iii) *3rd*: He was always and continues to be God (v 1c).

- iv) *Summary*. John 1:1 moves from eternal pre-existence to personal intercommunion to intrinsic deity. Here are the crucial building-blocks of a full-blown doctrine of Trinity, tied to the deity of Christ. John intends that his gospel should be read in light of this verse. But, John will amazingly also stress that this Word took on flesh!

- v) *Further proof of the Word's Deity* (vv 2-4).

- vi) *Application Point*.

- d) *3rd: The Word is the One Who Confronts, Exposes, and Judges Us* (vv 5-13).

- e) *4th: The Word Incarnates God and Supremely Reveals Him to Us* (vv 14-18).
 The language that John uses is graphic and the implications of the incarnation are utterly earthshaking. It is an understatement to say that these verses are packed and loaded with a lot of truth. John leaves us with no doubt of who the 'true light/life' is. The Word, he stresses, is no phantom man – he *became* flesh.
 - i) The incarnation is one of **addition**, *not subtraction* (=see Phil 2:5-11). Forever, he is now the God-man (=2 natures in 1 person forever). *Application*: Everything hangs on this – kind of Savior he is; all of his promises, his sympathy (see Heb 4). Here is true comfort, encouragement, incentive.
 - ii) *To understand this text even better we need to note its contrast with an OT episode* (=see Exodus 32-34).
 - a) 'Glory theme.'
 - b) Contrast with 'Moses.'
 - iii) *V 18*. This incredible affirmation takes us back to v 1 (=known as an *inclusio*).

3. Concluding Reflections.