

# The Word Became Flesh

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Preacher: Joe Hall

[ 0 : 0 0 ]      gracious father how we praise you and we thank you that you have made yourself known to us we confess that apart from you apart from your word we couldn't know you and we could not even imagine a god like you and so we thank you for your revelation of yourself through your son the lord jesus christ and in your word written before us about him and so we pray lord in these precious moments as we have that word open and as we hear it together that you would reveal yourself to us that we would know more of you that we would see your glory and that we would know your grace for we pray in jesus name amen well we're at the end of our christmas study in these opening words of john's gospel i personally have really enjoyed taking our time through these verses they're such a rich feast for us aren't they and i hope that you've enjoyed that as well christmas day is behind us but if you didn't know today is the 12th day of the 12 days of christmas technically it's still a feast day and so i hope you've still got a bit of room for more of john's gospel this morning because we have reached the climax and the conclusion of john's prologue words that have been held dear by generations of christians and indeed some of the most beautiful and powerful words ever to be written john has been introducing us in his gospel to the person at the center of his gospel who it turns out is the person at the center of everything he is the very word by which god created the universe his life is the light by which all people see and understand he is god himself and in case it wasn't obvious to us already john confirms in verse 17 that he is talking about none other than jesus christ not a philosophical idea or a principle but a real person who is god from eternity but came into time and space as a man in history as john puts it simply and profoundly the word became flesh at last time together on a sunday you saw that when he came into the world that he'd made incredibly the world stared blankly at him we did not know him and even his own people turned away from him but some people did receive him and to those people he gave the right to become children of god born again into a new relationship with our creator and this morning john brings these glorious truths to a crescendo by bringing in the words glory grace and truth as we'll see those are really important words in the history of god's relationship with his people and john wants us to know that those words and those truths come to full fruition their fullest fulfillment if you like in the incarnation of the son of god in the coming into the world of jesus christ and so firstly then let us see his glory let's see his glory let's have a look again at verse 14 of john chapter 1 and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory glory as of the only son from the father now it's really unusual for bible authors to

repeat words back to back when they don't need to even for john he loves repeating words that the sentence would make perfect sense wouldn't it if he just said glory once but he makes his point by repeating the word he wants us to notice we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father so why is that point worth repeating well the way this little block is put together tells us i think that this idea goes with verse 18 bible writers love sandwiches okay two bits on the outside and something juicy in the middle so look at this on the very outside in verses 14 and 18 we get the idea of seeing god we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father verse 14 verse 18 no one has ever seen god but the only god who is at the father's side has made him known so you see that verses 14 and 18 are like the slices of bread on the sandwich they're made out of the same stuff it's the idea of seeing god and john's point in these verses is that when people looked at jesus they saw god in all his glory and friends that is a mind-blowing a jaw-dropping thing to say that is an incredible thought that we can say with john we have seen god but it's even more amazing when we see that john's comparing jesus with what moises saw in our first reading from exodus so just keep your finger in john's gospel and just turn back there please exodus chapter 33 page 74 of your bible exodus chapter 33 and verse 18 what does moises ask god please show me your glory but how does god reply i will make my goodness pass before you and will proclaim my name the lord so he'll hear something but verse 20 you cannot see my face for man shall not see me and live now there's a bit in verse 23 that's hard to translate about seeing his back but the idea i gather is that it's something like the afterglow of his presence so as you look up you might see kind of vapor trails in the sky after a plane has flown over but not the plane itself that is what moises will glimpse of god moises asked to see god's glory and god says no you can't see me and friends this is the high point of the biggest event in the old testament it is the mountaintop moment after the biggest rescue that the world had ever known we could hardly overestimate how significant this conversation is between moises and god in the history of god's people but it's an anti-climax because what moises asked for to see god in his glory god says access denied now listen again to what john is saying the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory what glory a lesser glory a reflected glory no glory as of the only son from the father

no one has ever seen god yet not even moses saw god ah but the only god who is at the father's side he has made him known see what he's saying what moses longed to see he never saw but we have seen what moses longed to see because he sent jesus into the world we have seen god in all his glory because his one and only son became flesh and lived among us and if that hasn't blown you away yet let me put it like this you know if we had a time machine right and you could choose right now either to go back in time to mount sinai when god came down and passed by moses and moses glimpsed the afterglow of his presence and he and he heard god speak these words about himself or you could stay sitting where you are with john's gospel open in front of you and see jesus and hear him say things and see him do things which would you choose but john it's a no-brainer because where do we see god in all his glory and we struggle to get our heads around that don't we if we're honest we actually don't believe it that the time that you spend at home or in church with a bible open seeing jesus in the gospels is worth more than a hundred thousand visits to the top of mount sinai you what would you pay to get in that time machine friends moses would give his right arm to get back in the time machine with you and sit where you are now with the gospel open in front of you when john says the word became flesh and lived among us it's not just the climax of his prologue it's the climax of world history it's what moses asked for and didn't get well brothers and sisters guess what god got you for christmas god gave you the gift of seeing him in all of his glory he gave you his son the word became flesh and he has pulled the curtain back for us to see and know god in a clearer and fuller and closer way than has ever been possible before than anyone has ever seen god before the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father you know i wonder do you know what you're missing when you only ever glance at jesus but never actually gaze at him when you only look long enough to check that he's still there but never actually long enough to to take him in you know i wonder if our christian lives aren't actually more like moses on the mountain than we think we we catch him in passing but we don't ever actually see his glory even what he did see and what he did hear brought moses to his knees in worship friends god gave us his son to be born as a man so that we could see and know him as never before god in all his glory how much more awestruck should we be how much more should our heart soul mind and strength bow before him in worship and adoration of the word made flesh

he came and lived among us so have you seen his glory happy have you seen his glory how do we see his glory well it's quite simple you don't need a mountaintop moment you only have to read on i don't know if you've got a bible reading plan for 2025 already if you're already stuck into something that's great you just crack on but if you don't yet that's fine just keep going with john you've had a decent introduction tomorrow morning get up open john again and begin at verse 19 and the day after that carry on the next bit and talk to each other if others of you are doing that speak to one another what are you seeing have you seen his glory what are you learning mums and dads husbands and wives you can do this at home do it together if you've got kids you might need to do it in smaller chunks but all the better it'll last longer friends make a plan to see his glory don't miss his glory for want of looking imagine what moses would do if he had a bible like yours if he had a church like ours gaze at the only son of the father the word made flesh drink him in the glory of the lord jesus christ and as you see his glory receive his grace this is our second point this morning receive his grace and now remember our sandwich the layers leading into the middle well we're just moving one layer in just if you haven't already keep your finger in exodus and just flick back to john one if you haven't just look at the end of verse 14 and verse 17 and you'll see this phrase repeated grace and truth see that verse 14 he is full of grace and truth and verse 17 grace and truth came through him and verse 16 tells us he that that is grace upon grace if you're feeling a little bit dizzy trying to keep up with this what simply john wants us to get again by repetition is that the coming of jesus brought god's grace as we have never known it before so that we can receive god's grace to the full and i'll ask you to keep a little finger in exodus and there is a reason and i hope this time it's obvious why that is have a look again at verse 17 from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace for the law was given through moses grace and truth came through jesus christ so john's picking on moses not me all right and john's point is that god showed grace to his people when he gave them the law that was grace to them god gave them a distinctive way to live to live in relationship with him and actually that bit of exodus that we turn to if you if you flick back there is all in the context of god writing out the ten commandments a second time because the first time moses took them down the mountain and found the people worshiping a golden statue and in his anger he threw the tablets down the mountain and they smashed hence the instruction in chapter 34 verse 1 cut for yourself two tablets of two tablets of stone like the first and i will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke they had broken god's law in every sense and so chapter 34 moses has gone back up the mountain and pleaded with god not to destroy his people as he had a right to do but instead to show

grace and take them back as his people to renew the covenant and to rewrite for them the law that they had broken and so it says moses cut two tablets of stone like the first and he rose early in the morning and went up on mount sinai as the lord had commanded him and took in his hand two tablets of stone the lord the lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the lord the lord passed before him and proclaimed the lord the lord a god merciful and gracious slow to anger abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin see it's an expression of his grace towards his people but if giving the law was an act of grace says john then sending jesus was grace upon grace like do you want some grace with your grace god just cannot help showering grace on his people grace and more grace law was grace and the fulfillment of the law was still more grace because the law while it was a gift in itself weighed heavy on god's people it was grace for god to take them as his people but it was impossible for them to live as god's people and so they were a people waiting for an even greater showing of grace in fact a fulfillment of the grace that god had promised the grace and truth of the lord jesus christ see those words grace and truth they're an echo of god's words on the mountain in chapter 34 of exodus verse 6 the lord says about himself there that he is a god abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness that's how god loves to be known in the old testament hesed and emmets covenant love and unending faithfulness and john is using that same pair of words but in greek grace and truth love and faithfulness and faithfulness and where are they found the only son from the father full of grace and truth grace and truth came through jesus christ it's tempting to think when we read those words that john's saying that jesus brought some really hard truth but he said it in a really gracious way but that's not what john's saying he's saying something much bigger much more than that he's saying the ultimate expression of god's identity who he is his very beating heart is jesus christ jesus is the incarnation of that steadfast covenant love and that unending faithfulness that god abounds in so that the law while it was an expression of the grace and truth of god it wasn't the fullest expression of his grace and truth but the fullest expression of god's words to moses on the mountain is the coming of his son the lord jesus into the world it's through jesus that we can receive god's grace to the full because he is overflowing with steadfast love and he is abounding in faithfulness full of grace and truth if you wouldn't call yourself a christian here this morning the start of a new year is a chance to look forward to what this year might hold for you

[ 20 : 21 ] i don't know what plans you have if any but receiving god's grace through jesus should be one of them you might not feel that you know enough to set out with that decision and that choice but that's okay this is just the start of john's gospel there's loads left which i or others would love to look at with you or another gospel to try and help you answer some questions if that's where you are that's what our course christianity explored is for that's for you to come and do that with us but you might not feel and maybe this is the bigger the bigger thing you might not feel that you're the right kind of person for jesus and that's okay too because none of us are and you know part of the grace of the ten commandments is that they show us that and they show up our flaws and our failings they do us a great job of showing where we lack they're a gift to us in showing us we're not the right kind of people for jesus we sure we fall short on every count and we fail in every possible way we get angry with people wrongly and we want what isn't ours and we lust in our hearts and above all we don't give god his proper place in our lives we think less of him than he truly is but john wrote these words to tell us that jesus came for the wrong sort of people because we read here not once not twice not but three times that jesus came full of grace full of grace full of never stopping never giving up unbreaking always and forever love he is overflowing with undeserved kindness and forgiveness so whoever you are he came for people just like you and my hope for you if you've started the year without having received his grace is that you would end the year having received it that you would come to him with empty hands and an open heart and simply receive from him his love and faithfulness his grace and truth and receive him freely in all the fullness of his grace because that's what he came for so that you could receive god's grace to the full and brothers and sisters if you do know his grace personally you you have received him my prayer for you is that you would keep receiving him you do so often we talk about jesus don't we as if he's the way into being a christian the kind of door that we go through to get into heaven you do i believe he died for my sins and that he rose again yes i do i'm in and then we pretend that being a christian is something else you being a christian means living the right sort of way or he's being seeing to do the right things knowing the right people speaking the right language having the right opinions as if the most gracious thing that god had done for us was to give us a way of life to follow rather than give him give us himself in all the fullness of his love and grace in the person of his son but later in this gospel jesus is going to say say abide in me abide in me abide in me that's his way of telling us that he is not only the door that we go through but the forever home that we live in so whatever you do don't come to him with open hands and then clench them back again and keep trying to live life under your own steam keep your hands

empty keep your heart open practice that at the start of each day as you pray consciously empty your hands of whatever it is you think will make you a better worker a better friend a better husband or wife a better mom or dad a better christian a better person unclench your fists let go of that stuff that you're holding on to and give it all over to him abide in him and receive from him his love and his grace afresh you might find you need to do that throughout the day too and actually you'll find that you can be a better person than you thought possible because you're not hanging your worth and identity on what you can do anymore because you're receiving it freely from him which leaves you free to do your day for him and for others and not for yourself do the same before you go to bed and you might find that you can sleep a bit better because you're giving it all over to him and you're emptying yourself before him instead of trying to hang on and and juggle to thing and juggle things that you can't control abide in his grace and truth in his love and faithfulness and you won't go through life constantly trying to find a place and a home to rest in because you already have it in him in him brothers and sisters my hope and prayer for you is that that is how you spend this year receiving his grace with empty hands and an open heart resting the whole weight of your life upon him because he is the fullest and the final expression of god's wholehearted love for his people and he is full of grace and truth let's see his glory and let's receive his grace and let's pray that we would do that together now let's pray lord jesus christ word become flesh we praise you and we are awestruck by ye as we have seen your glory lord we worship you as the god who spoke on the mountain long ago we worship you as the god who brought all things into being by your powerful word we worship you as the god who came near to us the god who became flesh and became man for us that we could see you truly and know you truly and personally and so lord at the beginning of this new year we pray from the bottom of our heart let us not miss your glory let us not glance at you now and then but lord we pray by your holy spirit help us to fix our eyes upon you to gaze upon you and to drink you in father we pray that we would know all of your grace for us in the lord jesus this week and this year father we pray that whatever it is that we're clinging on to you with clenched fists that you would prize out of our hands lord by your spirit help us to let go of our own vain attempts to make a life for ourselves and help us to simply receive from you the love with which you have loved us from before the beginning of the world father we pray for friends those we know and love those here with us today who as yet have not done that and don't know you in that way and haven't received your grace

father we pray that even now by your spirit you would do that for them open their heart we ask free up their hands to receive from you all the grace and love that you have for us your people we pray in jesus name amen amen