

Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc.

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JOHN 1:1,14-18 -- The Word Tabernacled Among Us

Notes:

Vs. 14 -- *the Word became flesh* -- Although John has no account of the birth of Jesus, this is a very important truth to communicate for him. In I Jn. 4:2,3 and II Jn. 7, this same apostolic writer records this concept as a key test for discerning deceitful spirits and false teaching. Classically, the heretical teaching that this verse confronts is called "docetism", from the Greek word *dokeō* meaning "it seems, it appears". Docetists taught that God did not really become flesh, He only *appeared* to be flesh. Jesus was like a 3-D, holographic image projected from heaven that was very convincing, but really there was no substance to Him. He was like a ghost or phantom. This false theology grew out of a Greek belief that matter was inherently evil, so if Jesus was God, why would He become physical? It seemed outlandish, even contradictory to them. The Bible is abundantly clear, however, that this physical world *was* created by God, and was initially "very good" (Gen. 1:31). It is also very plainly stated that Jesus was miraculously conceived in Mary's womb, and from that time experienced a very normal process of growth and development (Lk. 1:26-35,42; 2:1-7,21,22,27,39,40,52; Gal. 4:4). Hebrews 2:14-18 declares that since we "share in flesh and blood, He Himself also partook of the same" in order that He might accomplish our salvation. Vs. 17 strongly says "Therefore He had to be (lit., He was obligated/indebted to be) made like His brethren in all things" so that He could be our high priest and could offer an effective, propitiatory sacrifice to remove sin. He was fully human, yet fully Divine. He was God, yet chose to become a man and live within the limitations of human life so that He could truly identify with us. Without this, He couldn't really take our place. Without this, He would also have remained, in our sight at least, a "distant God", one who cannot truly identify with human weakness. Having lived among us as truly human, we can now confidently be assured that He knows what we have to deal with in our everyday lives. Ultimately, because He really *was* flesh, He experienced suffering and He died on our behalf. Cf. Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:5-7; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 10:5,10; I Jn. 1:1-3; I Pet. 3:18; 4:1.

dwelt -- Literally, the Greek word here means "He tabernacled, or lived (as in a tent)". This is the same Greek word as had been used for the Tabernacle in the Old Testament Greek translations of the original Hebrew. In the wilderness, after God delivered Israel from Egypt, He instructed Moses to build a tent that could serve as a portable temple and dwelling place for God's holy presence among His people. (Detailed instructions regarding the design and construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings, etc., are recorded in Exodus 25:1-31:11.) Upon its completion, the glory of God (previously evidenced by the pillar of cloud and fire -- Ex. 13:21,22) came to indwell the tabernacle, only to be taken up again whenever the Israelites were to break camp and travel on. The glory of the Lord was seen by the cloud of Yahweh over the tabernacle by day and the fire within it by night (Ex. 40:34-38).

beheld His glory -- The word "glory" refers to either (1.) reputation or renown that is ascribed to a person or thing; or, (2.) it refers to magnificence or splendor. Glory is like the visible radiance that comes from the sun. It is not the fullness of all the heat, energy, or light that is there in the sun itself, but it conveys to us something of the measure of its brightness, heat, power and beauty as we are able to perceive it with our senses. In the Old Testament, the glory signified God's holiness, His unapproachable, awesome "otherness". Here, the glory to be seen in Jesus' life communicated God's grace (unmerited favor) and truth (faithfulness). *glory as of the only begotten from the Father* -- Actually, the translation "only begotten" would be more accurately conveyed as "unique, or only kind". The same Greek word (*monogenēs*) occurs in Hebrews 11:17 in reference to Isaac as Abraham's "only begotten". It is quite plain from the Scriptures that Isaac was *not* Abraham's only begotten son. He had an older brother, Ishmael (Genesis 16), as well as several younger brothers (Genesis 25:1-10). While not being Abraham's only begotten son, Isaac *was* Abraham's unique son, the son of promise. In the same way, the Greek of John 1:14 is saying that the glory of the Word was "as of an only (or unique) son of a father". Notice that I left out two occurrences of "the" from the translation. They are not in the original Greek. Translators have misunderstood John's intent of this

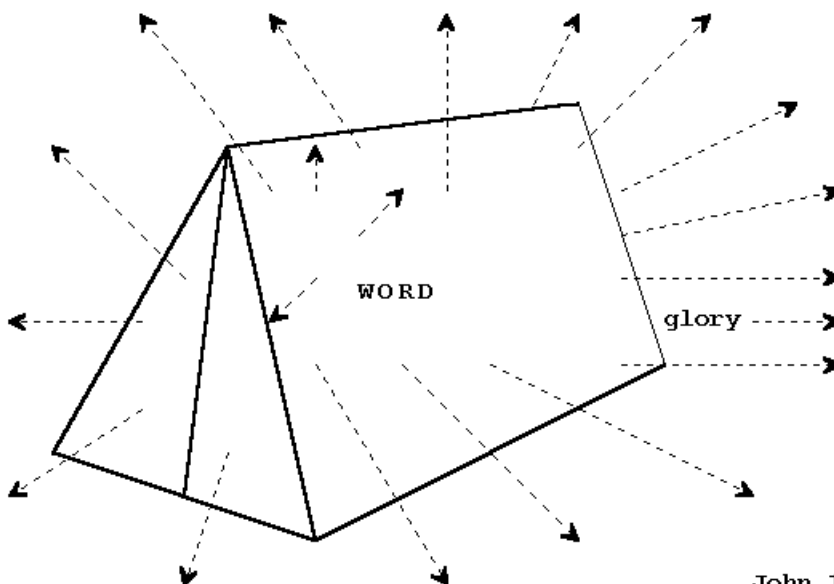
statement. John is not trying to make a creedal statement about Jesus' Sonship here. He is trying to give us a word picture to describe functionally how the Word in human form can communicate to us about the Father. The word picture is that if you know a son who is in a unique, intimate relationship with his father, you will probably be able to learn a great deal about the father by observing this son. You will learn about the family's social status, morality, customs, values, speech patterns, humor, even descriptions and particular stories about the father, by spending time with this special son. *full of grace and truth* -- This phrase delineates what is the nature of the glory that is revealed through the Word. We see something of the grace and truth of the Father as we behold the radiance of it expressed through the Word in flesh. Verses 15-18 expand on the themes contained in verse 14.

Vs. 15 -- John the Baptist's testimony here hints that the greater position of the Word, the one coming after John, is precisely because He *is* the One who was eternally preexistent, the Creator of all. Interestingly, John and Jesus were related and John was the older of the two (Luke 1,2). John was not merely talking about chronological age, as if that had any special weight, but of an entirely different Being, One from outside of time, One who indeed did have a higher rank than John.

Vs. 16 -- *of His fullness* -- The Greek preposition *ek* indicates that the Word is the origin of every grace we have ever experienced. The wording literally is "out from the fullness of Him", implying that there is also much more to Him and His grace than we have knowledge of.

Vs. 17 -- The Greek indicates that the law was given through or by means of Moses. He, the great hero-founder of the nation of Israel was merely a mediator of that which was granted to him from God. *were realized* -- Christ, too, was a mediator (through), but the statement is stronger. Grace and truth "happened", or "came to be" by means of Jesus (The Word finally identified!). Moses could only hand down what was entrusted to him. Jesus actually brought grace and truth into expression.

Vs. 18 -- *No man has seen God* -- Stated numerous times in Scripture (Jn. 6:46; Exodus 33:20; Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 6:16). *The only begotten God* -- The word for "only begotten" is the same as in verse 14 above, therefore it should be rendered "the unique, only God". *who is in the bosom of the Father* -- Literally, the Greek states, the One being into/towards/or unto the bosom of the Father. This is a description of the intimacy of their relationship. This is meant to provide qualification for the last phrase. *He has explained Him*. -- The word for "explain" means to "tell, narrate, put into detail, to make known, and to reveal". Once again, the purpose of the Word coming into our midst is set in front of us. His mission was to express thoroughly the heart and character of the Father.



John 1:14