

## John 1:14-28

*14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

14 The eternal Logos became a man and tented with us. That is the literal meaning of the first sentence. John is pointing back to the Tabernacle when the Shekinah glory dwelt in the Holy of Holies (Exodus 40:34,35). That ball of light was a manifestation of God with them. Now instead of a physical tent, the Eternal God was present in a tent of flesh. That is the Christmas story, Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14). The greatest wonder to me is that He could love us enough to become like us and experience what we go through (Hebrews 4:15).

Then John said that they saw His glory. What does that mean? The glory of God is the outshining or expression of His heart. Jesus was the exact representation of the Father (Hebrews 1:3). What they saw Him do and say was seeing the heart of God. That is glory as much as the Transfiguration was. When Jesus' time on this earth was up, He said it was time for Him to glorified (John 13:31). I don't think He was referring to heaven, but in people seeing the love of God expressed on the cross. That is real glory. That is the heart of God made visible for all to see (John 12:23,24),

That glory they saw was full of grace and truth (1John 1:1). Everything He said and did was overflowing with grace and truth. Being with Jesus daily had to be one experience after another of seeing grace and truth expressed.

*15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")*

15 John the Baptist was born first, but Jesus is the Ancient of Days (Micah 5:2). The Jewish world respected the older person, and though John was older than Jesus, John just wrote Jesus was with God in the beginning. The oldest is due the most respect.

*16 And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*

16 We just receive one blessing after another from the abundant grace of God (1Corinthians 1:5). John the Beloved points to the difference between the Old and New Covenants. The Old was blessing for obedience, and the New is just one blessing after another for those who are in Christ, the obedient One.

*17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

17 The Law was good and helpful, but what man really needed was some way to deal with the fact that he could not keep the Law (Romans 3:19,20). That was the grace and truth revealed in Jesus. That grace and truth came to us through what Jesus did for us. Don't let the liberal, so-called experts try to convince you that atonement is old fashioned and barbaric. Jesus came to die in your place so that through His sacrifice you could receive grace and truth. That is not barbaric, it's justice meeting love (Romans 5:8).

*<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

18 That is what we learn from the life of Jesus, a revelation of the Father's love. The rest of our time in John's gospel is a revelation of God. He is the One who reveals the Father. He is the only One at the Father's side. (God is an invisible Spirit - John 4:24.) To "see" in this case means to comprehend. If you want to know God, there is no other way than Jesus. Mohammed didn't claim to God's side. Buddha didn't claim there is a God. Jesus alone dwells with God throughout eternity. If we want to know God, we must come to Jesus (John 14:6).

This is a revelation of gracious love. We have focused on the doctrinal issues but let's bring it home and let our heart consider what is being said. The Creator of all loves us. You and I are part of the rebellious human race that ignores Him and refuses to recognize Him, but He comes and shines His light into every dark corner of our hearts.

*<sup>19</sup> And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."*

19,20 There had not been a prophet for 400 years. So, when all the people went out in the wilderness to be baptized by John, the priests wanted to know who he claimed to be. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah/Christ. He declared he was not the anointed One, the Messiah.

*<sup>21</sup> And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

21 The Jews believed that Elijah would come before the Messiah to announce his coming (Malachi 4:5). John said he was not Elijah. He was not Elijah reincarnated. He was not Elijah returned from heaven. He was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. But he did come in the power and spirit of Elijah. The anointing that was upon Elijah was upon him. The angel that announced his birth declared, <sup>17</sup> *And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.* Luke 1:17 (NIV) Surely his parents taught him that as a child. So, no, he wasn't Elijah, but he was the predicted one that would prepare the way of the Lord.

They asked if he was the Prophet? Moses had foretold of one that would come similar to himself to whom everyone must listen. (Deuteronomy 18:15,18). It was a prophecy of the coming Savior, the Messiah. John said, "No!" These were there three (some say four) big predictions that worried religious leaders. Some saw the Messiah and the Prophet as different persons. While the people longed for the coming of these ones that were predicted, the religious leaders feared their coming. They would be exposed for their greed and lose their authority and power. Up to this point they heard everything they hoped to hear.

*22 So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"*

22 So what are we supposed to tell the big cheeses back in Jerusalem? What gives you the right to preach without a license?"

There may be another source of tension behind the story. The leaders in Jerusalem were Pharisees and Sadducees. There was a third group that was prominent at the time, the Essenes. John's way of life was very much like that of the Essenes. The Essenes did not respect the other groups and felt that they had not only compromised with Rome but were off base in their religious interpretations as well. The Essenes put their hope in the coming Messiah and in a future war in which the sons of light would overcome the sons of darkness. As long as they stayed in their desert communities and away from Jerusalem, they didn't seem to be a threat. But if John was one of their evangelists, wooing people to the other side in the battle for the minds and hearts of the people, that meant trouble for the religious leaders. It was important to Jerusalem to find out what was really going on.

*23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."*

23 John answered with Scripture which means he must have had access to scrolls, possibly in Qumran which was near the site where he baptized people. Or perhaps he memorized passages as a youth with his priestly father. He was quoting Isaiah 40:3. It was the same Scripture the Essenes applied to themselves. This didn't really answer the concerns one way or the other.

"In the days of Solomon, basalt highways were made so that people would have an easier time on their journeys to the feasts of Israel. Someone in that time wrote that there were three miseries in life, sickness, fasting, and travel. Solomon tried to alleviate the last misery, but traffic and weather would damage the roads. The only time they would be repaired and made smooth was when a letter went out stating that the king was coming that way. John is saying, 'The King is coming, and you better do the work to make the path into your heart a straight and level the road for you are about to see the glory of God.'" From the sermon Big Bad John

John the Baptist was telling them, I'm not who you're afraid of, but He's coming! That was almost as bad, for the religious leaders that is. He was preparing people for the One that was coming, telling them to get the path to their heart prepared for Him to enter. The time was approaching, and John the Baptist was God's warning letter that the King was on His way.

John the Beloved is writing about this to convince people that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh for our salvation. I want to take a sidetrack from that main theme for just a minute to remind us that our message is similar to John the Baptist's message. -The King will return! Just as sure as He fulfilled many prophecies in His first coming, He'll fulfill the rest in His second coming. We are telling people the same thing John preached, "Repent! Change the way you think. It's not all about what will please you! The Lord is coming. Prepare your heart to receive Him. Remove anything that is in the way. When He arrives, you don't want to be caught snubbing Him by your rebellious life. – That is

our message isn't it? The only difference is that we have the rest of the story, the life of Jesus, to tell them exactly how they can prepare the way in their heart for the Lord by receiving the forgiveness He purchased on the cross (Matthew 26:28).

*24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) 25 They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"*

24,25 Didn't they hear him? It's amazing how man can be so set in their way of thinking that they can't really participate in a conversation. John just told them he was baptizing in preparation for the coming Messiah, but the Pharisees just keep trying to tell him he isn't credentialed. The implication is that he had better stop before he gets in trouble. The public was more sensitive to the Holy Spirit in John's message than the religious leaders were! The same scenario will repeat in the ministry of Jesus (Matthew 21:23).

*26 John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know,*

26 John isn't driven off message. He already told them why. They won't hear it if he tells them a hundred times. Instead, he drove the point home from another angle. "The One, the Messiah, that Prophet, is already here and you don't know Him. You are worried about authority to baptize with water. You should be more concerned about another type of baptism, the kind only He can perform."

The other Gospels record John adding that this One that is coming will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11)! The religious leaders couldn't regulate that. They never will because they can't do it. Only Jesus gives the Holy Spirit. We might stand in and pray for the outpouring on a life, but Jesus gives the Spirit. Jesus gives Him to the repentant humble heart that is willing to receive (Luke 11:13).

"...and with fire"; fire was a purifying agent (Isaiah 4:4). It is the fire of the Holy Spirit that cleanses our lives. Lives aren't changed unless the transforming fire of the Holy Spirit sweeps through those areas of our life.

John is as bold as they come. The establishment is challenging his credentials and he is telling them the only credential that counts is God's anointing, and they didn't have it. He said of Jesus, His winnowing fork is in his hand and He will gather His grain but thoroughly burn up the chaff (Matthew 3:12). That is in their face! He was telling the religious leaders that some of them were of no substance and would soon be fuel for the fire. If you saw the encounter in today's setting, you would probably think the guy was stark raving mad and maybe a little dangerous, unless you were sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Then you would shudder at the thought of its fulfillment.

Another time, John the Baptist saw the religious leaders spying on him and he challenged them, "*Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath, you brood of vipers*" (Matthew 3:7). Like baby snakes fleeing from a grass fire! What a description!

*27 even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."*

27 John was humble but bold. He was saying, "You ask me if I'm the Messiah; I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals." We might get some insight into the expression when we consider a quote from Rabbi Joshua b. Levi (A.D. 250). "...all manner of service that a slave must render to his master, the pupil must render to his teacher – except the taking off of his shoe" (b. Ketub. 96a). If the tradition was the same in the first century, this was an expression that the Messiah was unsurpassed in greatness. John actually was his servant, a servant of God.

Sometimes, I think we get a little too familiar with Jesus. We know Him as friend and that is a good thing (John 15:15). We run to Him with every little thing. I think He wants us to. But do we realize that without the gift of His righteousness, we aren't worthy of doing the most humbling job for Him? What an incredible honor then that He would make His home in us and work through our lives (John 14:23)!

John the Baptist was already experiencing a great honor, to be the one who announced the coming of Messiah. He realized that without the Holy Spirit, he wasn't worthy to do the least little thing. Do we realize that? We share Christ with people and in a small way have the same honor that John experienced. Yet we are just as unworthy or more so. What a gracious God! I hope we all have a vision for the honor we have of serving our Lord in any way (Revelation 22:3).

*28 These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

28 Archeologists believe they have found the place where this happened. They have discovered big baptismal pools in the country of Jordan that are believed to have been built for early pilgrims who wanted to be baptized in the same place that John baptized Jesus (Wadi Kharrar). The place is not so important as the message. The message was, "I am nothing. He is everything! You better get ready. Go tell **that** to the powers that be."

#### Questions

What does verse 14 tell us about Jesus?

How are Jesus' claims here different from Mohammed or Buddha?

What identities were the leaders asking John about? Why?

How was John's mission similar to ours?