

The Gospel of John: Incarnation

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I remember when I was a small kid; my parents took me to the Hanover Theater close to the square to see Walt Disney movies. I remember seeing The Fox and the Hound movie. It was an animated film like many of Walt Disney films were. Walt Disney's first animated movie was Snow White which aired in 1937. I remember watching that movie (not in 1937). I didn't care much for Snow White, but I liked the Seven Dwarfs and the old Witch. Maybe you liked the Snow White movie or maybe you liked another animated movie by Walt Disney called Cinderella. Kids like animated movies because you kind of already know it's going to be fiction and you can let your mind go into the world of make believe. What's your favorite animated movie? Snow White and Cinderella came from Grimm's fairy tales. Two brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm from Germany, penned about 200 German folk stories into a book in 1812 and keep adding onto it some years later. They wanted to make sure that the German folk stories would continue to live on and they succeeded in their task.

Today, we will be starting a sermon series on the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is different from the other Gospels. When a sinner allows Jesus into their heart and they want to start studying the Bible, we usually tell them to start with the Gospel of John first. We say this because John does a great job while being inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us a portrait into the real Jesus. This is needed to be done because this Gospel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by Rome. Plus, many of the original disciples were now dead. The disciples were with Jesus and knew all about Jesus and could give a personal account of who Jesus was. Most of them were gone and questions started to be asked by new converts about how human was Jesus and if He was human, didn't that take away from Him being God. So, John was lead by the Spirit to write this Gospel to set the record straight about Jesus. Plus, we know from Scripture that John was a close friend to Jesus. John would be a good author of Jesus' biography with Jesus theology woven through it. John was like the Grimm brothers, John

didn't want the story of Jesus to go away. Let's take a look at the beginning of this letter.

Let turn to John 1: 1-5 where we read this, "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it. (NIV – www.biblegateway.com)

John sets the tone for this Gospel by stating that at the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Now, we need to first pick at the term "Word" if we're going to understand what John is saying here because at first sight, this looks confusing. For a moment, we need to go back to John's time. In Hebrew, this term would be used to describe God's messages to the people through the prophets and the word was the agent of creation. In Psalm 33: 6 we read, "The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. (NLT)" Jesus was part of the Creation at the very beginning. The Hebrew tradition put a strong view on the "Word". Also, this term has a meaning in Greek as well. Let's remember that John would be writing to the Jew and to the Gentile with this Gospel. In Greek, "Word" would mean the principle of reason that governed the world. If you could put both together, it sounds like "Word" here means the Jesus was part of Creation and part of all the prophecies of the prophets. Also, Jesus is the principle of reason that governed the world. This is very important what John is saying here. Jesus was not just a human being; He never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things we see. Jesus was always part of all the Old Testament time. He was with God His Father in the Old Testament which means Jesus always existed. Some may say this is very hard to believe. We'll see a couple of sermons later that this is why faith is so important. As the writer of Hebrews would say about faith: It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see.

Since Jesus was the Word, He was part of Creation and through Him all things were made. This lets us know that Jesus has great authority. Plus, since Jesus was

at the beginning, Jesus was the light of life in the Garden before sin entered the picture. It's hard for us to think about Jesus being there at the Garden, but He was. He was the light of life. When original sin came into the picture, darkness entered the picture as well. John tells us that Jesus' light shines in the darkness. Jesus' light is stronger than darkness and darkness can't overcome it. In other words, Jesus is our light and life for today in this sinful world. Jesus is God and He was with His Father at the Beginning.

John continues and let's read further, ⁶“There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NIV – www.biblegateway.com)”

Now, John gives testimony about Jesus. John talks about John the Baptist who was kin to Jesus because both mothers were related. John the Baptist was not the light, but he preached about the light that was going to be revealed and that would be Jesus. In verse 10, John tells us that Jesus was “in the world” and the world was made through Him. This is very important. Jesus was in the world but not of the world. John records Jesus saying this in John 17: 14, “I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. (NLT)” Again, Jesus is in the world, but not of the world and we are not to be of the world as well. Even though Jesus was human, being Son of God kept Jesus being of the world. Jesus is all righteous and holy without sin like His Father. Since Jesus was not of the world, the world had a hard time recognizing Him and they still do today. The sad thing is the Church in some areas is trying to fix this by taking away the holiness and righteousness of Jesus so He can be more

recognizable to the world. This can't and must not be done. If we do, we have made Jesus like a character in one of Grimm's fairy tales. Jesus did not lower His standards to become of this world. If He did, then verse 12 of John 1 could not happen. We could not become the children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God if Jesus was not God. By faith we must believe Jesus walked this earth as a human, but by being also the Son of God, He did not sin. Since this was the case, John tells us in verse 14 that Jesus is full of grace and truth. Jesus was human enough to not taint His relationship with His Father and to make sure He would become the perfect sacrifice on the cross. John adds to this in 1 John 3: 5, "And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, for there is no sin in Him (NLT)". If there was sin in Jesus, Jesus could not be the Son of God and the event at the cross and the grave would not have been possible. John also makes sure to let us know that he too was a witness to the glory of Jesus in verse 14. One of the best documentaries I've seen was shown a few years ago and it came from England. England had interviewed many WWI veterans before they passed away in the 1970's I believe. Anyway, this show showed old film from WWI while the old veterans stated what they saw and how they felt during the war. Since they were witnesses to the action, it was hard to dispute it. John was a live witness to Jesus and to His glory and truth.

Finally, let's finish up on John 1: 15-18 where we read this, "¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, 'This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and^[a] is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. (NIV – www.biblegateway.com)"

John the Baptist wanted to make known that Jesus was greater than he. Not only that, but Jesus was greater than Moses. Moses would be like a folk hero to the people during John's day. Moses gave them the law that God had given to him on the mountain. This was the law Israel was to follow able to be a holy people.

Now, Jesus came to give much more – grace and truth. Jesus makes this statement in Matthew 5: 17-20,” ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (NIV – www.biblegateway.com)”

Jesus gave grace to be able to live out the law of God by the help of His Spirit which will lead to God’s Truth. John finishes here by again letting us know that Jesus has the closest relationship with His Father. Again, Jesus was fully human, but also was fully God. We can never forget this. Our Jesus is very special. There has never been any like Him and there will never be anything like Him in the future.

All of this points to the “incarnation of God”. This is an English term we use to describe what John is trying to tell us in chapter 1. The definition of “incarnation” is invested with flesh or bodily form, especially with human nature or form (Webster Dictionary). In Latin, the term means embodiment in flesh. The Son of God came on this earth and was invested with flesh or bodily form which did not take away from His perfect holiness and righteousness – there was no sin in Him. John wanted to make sure his readers knew this first off before he went into the Jesus story. So, when we study John for the next few months, we must keep this in mind. The incarnation of God is so important to our salvation and you’ll see that as we continue with this series. Do you know Jesus as your Savior today?

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc: Wheaton, 1996