



Text: John 1:14-18<sup>1</sup>

Series: *Introducing Jesus* – John’s Christmas Gospel

Title: Part 3 – Jesus, Grace We Can See (Part 12 – Life in His Name)

Date: December 12, 2010

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

**“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.”  
John 1:14**

**“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” John 1:18**

“See” is one of the most important words for believers in Jesus Christ. John bookends this paragraph about Jesus with “seeing” words and “seeing” words are immensely important to him. Listen to his introduction to his First Letter and count the number of times in just three verses that John he refers to “seeing” Jesus.

**“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:1-3**

How many references to “seeing” did you count? There are six references to “seeing” Jesus in just three verses. Three of them you can easily pick out. Three times John declared, “we have seen” Jesus. The fourth isn’t too hard to notice. John declared that he had “looked upon” Jesus and that of course involves “seeing” him. The fifth and sixth are a bit hidden but they’re contained in the word, “manifest.” John twice stated that Jesus was “made manifest” to him and to make something “manifest” is to make it visible.

**What is it that John saw?**

**What does John want us to see and  
Why does he want us to see it?**

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.



I want us to notice that John doesn't say "I saw" Jesus. He says "we" saw Jesus. John is speaking on behalf of the community of believers in Jesus and he's laying down a foundation for belief. He is telling us that being a believer in Jesus involves "seeing" Jesus in some way. If we want to join with the community of believers in Jesus, we're going to have to open our eyes and take in the person of Jesus and that is why he wrote this Gospel.

This entire Gospel, from its first chapter to its last, is an invitation for us to take a look at Jesus. What John wrote is an account of the life and teaching of Jesus and in this historical record John invites us to see the One whom he saw in the words he wrote.

You might think, "Well, how can I see Someone simply on the basis of what someone tells me about him?" But that's where this book is different from all other books. This book comes with a Guide. The Holy Spirit of God takes these words penned by John and he opens our eyes to enable us to "see" Jesus *if* we truly long to see him. Whether you read John's Gospel or Matthew's Gospel or the ones written by Mark and Luke, the same principle applies: the Holy Spirit of God will enable you to see Jesus in these words if you truly seek Him.

In fact, Jesus himself promises a blessing to those who seek him without having had the opportunity to witness his ministry in Palestine two thousand years ago. One of Jesus' disciples, a man by the name of Thomas, did not believe the testimony of the other disciples about Jesus' resurrection from the dead. He had told the other disciples...

**"Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."  
John 20:25**

Then one day, the resurrected Jesus appeared to Thomas and invited him to do exactly as he wished; to put his finger in the holes in his hands and side. But Thomas didn't; he just exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

And Jesus said to him...

**"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20:29**

Jesus was speaking about you and me. When we meet Jesus in God's Word, we "see" him. When God's Spirit opens our eyes to perceive the wonder and beauty of Jesus in the Gospels, in the letters of the Apostles and in the Old Testament prophecies of his coming, he is enabling us to "see" Jesus in a way that truly matters. There were many people in Jesus day who locked eyes on Jesus but never "saw" him. Although Jesus passed through their field of vision,



he was never “made manifest” to them. They never “saw” him and they never believed in him.

This past summer Ruth and I travelled to visit family in Ontario. Ruth’s dad lives just a mile or two down the road from the place where we were married. It’s a Bible conference ground called Fair Havens and for as long as I can remember, and I’ve been going there since I was a teenager, there has been a sign as you enter the conference grounds that declares “**we would see Jesus.**” That’s quote from John 12:21. As people come to receive the ministry of the Word, the goal of that Bible conference is to make Jesus manifest to those who long to see him and that sign sets the tone for the entire ministry of that place. And as you leave the grounds, on the other side of that same sign are these words from John 1 verse 14: “**And we beheld his glory.**”

My prayer today is the Jesus will be visible to you in John’s words. My prayer is that Jesus will be “made manifest” to you. I pray that the Holy Spirit of God will open your eyes so that you may be able to see Jesus.

**What does John see in Jesus?  
What does he want us to see in Jesus?  
Why does he want us to see it?**

**First of all,**

***In Jesus John saw God “in the flesh”***

**“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” John 1:14**

Let me remind us that “the Word” is Jesus. He is God’s means of revelation. He is the One by whom God has chosen to speak into our world. In verse 1 John declares that “the Word was with God and the Word was God.” By the word “with” John tells us that Jesus and God are in intimate fellowship with one another and then John declares that they also share deity with one another.

The Word is God and now John tells us that the Word also “became flesh.” John doesn’t use “man” or “human” or “body” to describe the incarnation of Jesus. He uses the word “flesh.”

“Flesh” stands for the whole person. It refers to humanity in all its frailty and vulnerability. The prophet Isaiah declared...

**“All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are grass.” Isaiah 40:6**

Into the word “flesh” we can read the totality of Jesus’ human experience. We can read those long dry roads in Palestine where the dust clawed at his throat,



leaving him parched and thirsty. (John 4). We can read those days of ministry that fatigued him so deeply that he fell asleep in the stern of a pitching boat in a storm. (Mark 4:38) Into the word “flesh” we can read the incredibly human declaration made by Luke about Jesus’ physical and personal growth in his early years...

**“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Luke 2:52**

And we can also read in the word “flesh” Jesus’ experience of love and sorrow contained in the words of the shortest verse in the Bible...

**“Jesus wept” John 11:35**

Although he was the “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), he knew the pain of seeing loved ones and friends die.

He knew the anguish of temptation (Matthew 4) and even though he resisted it successfully the effort left him exhausted and requiring the ministry of angels to refresh and renew his strength. (Matthew 4:11)

For many of us today, its Jesus humanity that causes us trouble – we accept his full deity but we struggle to allow him to be fully human! One of our most beloved carols contains a denial of the “flesh” of Jesus in its words...

**“The cattle are lowing; the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus – no crying he makes.”**

But Jesus is “the Word” who “became flesh” and crying is what babies of “flesh” do because they are weak and they vulnerable. The church sign this week invites us to think about the truth of Jesus’ flesh. It reads...

**Think ... The One who created the universe lay in Mary’s lap**

I should have added the word “helpless” – “lay helpless in Mary’s lap.” The One who spoke the universe into existence by his Word lay in Mary’s lap and could not speak a word; he could only cry! This is the true mystery of the incarnation. If we don’t enter into this immense truth we will never understand the immensity of God’s grace and condescension in Christ that is the foundation for our salvation. This is the amazing miracle of God’s love; that he sent his own eternal Son to become a man in weakness and humility so that he might become our Saviour, taking upon himself the totality of our humanity so that he might also take upon himself the totality of our punishment for sin.

And here’s an even deeper wonder of the incarnation. The “flesh” he took upon himself 2000 years ago in Bethlehem he still bears today in heaven! He is



wearing resurrected, glorified “flesh” but it’s “flesh” all the same. You see the word “became” in Greek tells us that this act of becoming flesh is a definite and complete action. As Bruce Milne puts it: “there is no going back upon the incarnation.”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus united forever his deity with our humanity – Jesus stands today in his risen, glorified flesh, interceding for us before his Father’s throne.

Dorothy L. Sayers, a British author and contemporary of C.S. Lewis, wrote that ‘from the beginning of time until now it is the only thing which has ever really happened ... We may call this doctrine exhilarating or we may call it devastating, we may call it revelation or we may call it rubbish ... but if we call it dull then what in heaven’s name is worthy to be called exciting?’<sup>3</sup>

Jesus came to “dwell” among us as one of us. The word “dwell” translates a word which literally means “to tent.” What it does is point back to the Old Testament tent that God commanded his people to make as a worship centre while they were journeying through the desert on the way to the Land of Promise. God said to Moses...

**“let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” Exodus 25:8**

The tent of the sanctuary was to be pitched in the very middle of the Israelite camp, surrounded on all side by the tents of God’s people. The picture is of God right in the heart of life, right in the centre of activity, right in the middle of the day to day life of his people. And Jesus came to do exactly that by becoming “flesh.”

### **Why does John want us to see God “in the flesh”?**

It’s because we need the words of God to come to us from Someone who knows our lives and can speak into them from a position of understanding. I was speaking with a social worker this week who was describing some of the services he offers to needy families many of whom need financial counsel and have to make hard choices just to make ends meet. As our conversation moved along this worker began to share with me some of the struggles that he faces. He faces the same hard financial choices that many of his clients face and I said to him, “Who else can speak into their lives the way you can? You know their struggles; you face the same hard choices. If they will listen to anyone, they’ll listen to you.”

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Milne, *The Message of John : Here Is Your King! :with Study Guide*, The Bible speaks today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 46.

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in Bruce Milne, *The Message of John : Here Is Your King! :with Study Guide*, The Bible speaks today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 46.



Jesus says to us...

**“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”  
Matthew 11:28**

That invitation comes from Someone who understands what it is to bear heavy physical and emotional burdens and to need rest. Jesus took upon himself the weakness of our flesh and he knows what rest means to our souls and to our bodies.

When we approach God to seek his forgiveness for our failures and to ask for his help to mend our brokenness we can come with full assurance that Jesus understands our struggle with sin because he endured it in the flesh. The writer of Hebrews tells us that in Jesus...

**“we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15**

And in Jesus, not only do we have Someone who sympathizes with us in our struggle, but his example of righteous obedience to his Father’s will gives us hope and encouragement to press on. The writer of Hebrews encourages to “see” Jesus and to...

**“run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith” Hebrews 12:1-2**

As Stuart Townend wrote...

**“Yes, he walked my road and he felt my pain,  
Joys and sorrows that I know so well;  
Yet His righteous steps give me hope again –  
I will follow my Immanuel!”**

In Jesus we see God “in the flesh” and it makes all the differences to us in the daily battle of life!

**Second...**

***In Jesus John saw God’s glory made visible***

**“and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14**

**What “glory” did John “see” in Jesus?**



“Glory” is a word that connects us with God’s visible presence among his people in the Old Testament. When Moses met with God on Mount Sinai to receive the commandments...

**“The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai” Exodus 24:16**

When the Tabernacle tent was dedicated to the worship of God, Moses was unable to enter it because...

**“the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” Exodus 40:35**

And when the priests dedicated the new temple to the worship of God, they were unable to stand even in front of the temple because...

**“the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.” 1 Kings 8:11**

In the Old Testament, the visible presence of God’s glory was represented by a “cloud” or a “pillar of fire” but in Jesus, now and forever, God’s glory has a face! It’s the face of “the only Son from the Father.” The Apostle Paul wrote of...

**“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6**

**How does this touch our lives?** Let’s realize that for us, heaven has a face! God’s glory isn’t a “cloud” or a “fire” or a mystic vapour ... it’s Jesus!

And it’s Jesus prayer that we come to see his face. As he prepared for the cross, Jesus prayed...

**“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24**

On Friday I attended the funeral of our sister, Linda Stone, in Leduc. Her sister shared with us that she had been with Linda the moment she moved into the Lord’s presence and she said to her brother who was with, “She knows what Jesus looks like!”

Larry asked me to read some Scripture at the service and part of one of the passages I read was this verse from 1 Corinthians chapter 13...

**“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” 1 Corinthians 12:12**



The great longing in the heart of a believer is to see Jesus “face to face” and Jesus’ prayer is that we come to see him. And one day our longing and his prayer will meet in perfect completion. One day, whether he comes for us in death or in the clouds at his return, we shall see him and “we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2) Please understand this: Everything in the Christian life is just a prelude for this moment – the moment our faith becomes sight! Everything we know and see and experience now is “dim” compared to the brilliant clarity and reality of that moment.

**Third,**

***In Jesus John saw God’s essential character revealed***

John declares that Jesus is the only Son from the Father...

**“full of grace and truth.” John 1:14**

In Jesus, Paul tells us...

**“the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” Colossians 2:9**

Jesus, the fullness of deity, is the full expression of God’s person and character. If Jesus’ essential character is “grace and truth,” then God’s essential character is “grace and truth.” What does “grace and truth” mean? It’s the New Testament version of the Old Testament declaration of God’s essential character. Let me explain.

Moses was chosen by God to lead his people through a desert and into a land of promise. It was a tough job; they were a cantankerous people who were hard to lead. Moses wanted to draw close to God because his relationship with God was his source of strength to meet the challenges of the task to which God had called him. Moses asked God to teach him about his ways and he asked God...

**“Please show me your glory.” Exodus 33:18**

God said “I can’t show you my face or else you’ll die” (Ex 33:20) The righteousness of God was so consuming that no mortal, sinful man could look upon him. So God said, “I’ll put you in a crevice in the rock, and as I pass by you’ll be able to see my back, but not my face.” And as God passed by Moses, God declared to him his essential character. These were God’s words to Moses as he passed by...

**“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children**



**and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." Exodus 34:6-7**

God is gracious and he extends his care and salvation to people who don't deserve it. God is faithful and true and he keeps his promise to forgive those who come to him seeking his mercy. But he's also true to his word that sin will be punished.

### **Why do we need to see that in Jesus?**

"Grace and truth" is the fullness of God's character. God's judgment is certain on those who reject his salvation in Jesus, but just as certain is his mercy for those who call upon Jesus...

**"For 'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.'" Romans 10:13**

God's promise to save us is an unshakeable and unchanging aspect of his essential character.

**"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22**

**Finally,**

***In Jesus John saw God's heart opened to us***

John's other "bookend" of this passage is that...

**"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." John 1:18**

Bruce Milne notes that the phrase "at the Father's side" is literally "in the bosom of the Father" and he wrote...

*It is as if God has reached into his very being and plucked out his own heart in sending Christ to us.<sup>4</sup>*

In Jesus, the Father wants us to "see" his heart. In the face of Jesus, he wants us to see his eyes. In the words of Jesus, he wants us to hear his voice. In the works of Jesus, he wants us to glimpse his hands. He knows how much we long to see him and so in Jesus, he gives us a glimpse, a look that is intended to hold us until we can see him "face to face." Nothing in this world will fully satisfy that

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<sup>4</sup>Bruce Milne, *The Message of John : Here Is Your King! :with Study Guide*, The Bible speaks today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 50.



longing. God has built into us a desire that matches his desire for us. We long to see him and he desires that we come to see him.

The waiting can be hard. But John invites us to “see” Jesus in the words of this Gospel made real to the eyes of our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit.

The waiting can be hard. We long to “see” with our eyes what we can only now see with our hearts.

Steven Curtis Chapman is one of the most respected Christian musicians in our world today. A little over two years ago, he and his wife Mary Beth suffered the loss of their five year old daughter Maria. She was killed in a collision with a car in their own driveway. They struggled with their loss and for Mary Beth part of coming to grips with her pain involved writing a book. The title of her book is Choosing to SEE: A journey of struggle and hope, (Revell, 2010). The book has the word “SEE” written on the cover in child-like block letters and Mary Beth was asked by an interviewer to explain the cover. She said...

*After the accident, we avoided the house for several days. We were begging God to show us himself in this, because this was clearly the darkest place he had taken us, and we were drowning. We were [asking “]God, please, let us see. Let us see Maria. Let us have a dream. Let us see something so we know that you're here.[“]*

*The day after the accident, some dear friends came with us to the house to hold us up, to walk through, to go into Maria's room and get some things for the memorial service. Steven walked into our dining room, where our two little ones — Stevie Joy and Maria — have art tables. Maria loved to draw flowers. Her signature flower always had an orange center and six petals, and all the petals were usually different colors. On Maria's table, Steven saw a piece of paper with an unfinished flower she had drawn—only one petal was colored in, and it was blue, her favorite color. On the other side, she had drawn a picture of a little orange butterfly and written the word “see” in capital letters. We had never seen her write that word before. When Steven saw that, he [thought, “] Really? Are you kidding me? This is unbelievable. We felt like it was God and Maria at the same time [saying, “], See, Dad? It's everything you told me it would be. I'm okay. I'm here. I left this for you. It's the very word that you were asking for.[“]*

*A week or so later, I told Steven, "She always drew six-petal flowers. It's interesting that we have six children but there's only one petal colored in. It's almost like Maria was saying, [“]My life is complete. I'm home now. I'm with Jesus. And some day you're coming, too, Mom and Dad. Just hang on. I'm going to see you again." And so that flower, the word “see,” the little butterfly — all of it became significant to us.*



*Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." That's hard to say, even two years later. I would rather be holding Maria on my lap and not doing this interview. But we have seen where the Lord has been good, even though things seem really bad. We have seen God's goodness, even at the expense of me not being able to cuddle my little girl this side of heaven.<sup>5</sup>*

Her husband, Steven, wrote an album of songs speaking about their longing to see their little girl again. The title song of the album is "Beauty Will Rise." (2009) Chapman wrote...

**It was the day the world went wrong  
I screamed till my voice was gone  
And watched through the tears as everything  
came crashing down  
Slowly panic turns to pain  
As we awake to what remains  
and sift through the ashes that are left behind**

**But buried deep beneath  
All our broken dreams  
we have this hope:**

**Out of these ashes... beauty will rise  
and we will dance among the ruins  
We will see Him with our own eyes<sup>6</sup>**

Until that day, we **choose to see** Jesus as God's Spirit makes him live in God's Word.

Amen.

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song**
  - Immanuel
- **Benediction**

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2010/septemberweb-only/47-41.0.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.metrolyrics.com/beauty-will-rise-album-steven-curtis-chapman.html>