

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages

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“Emmanuel” (The Wonder of the Incarnation)

John 1:14-18

October 4, 2015

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^G Psalm 34:8; Ephesians 3:19, 4:13

^H Hebrews 10:1; 2 Corinthians 1:20

^I Isaiah 55:9; Romans 11:33; 1 Timothy 1:17, 6:15-16

^J Colossians 1:13-15

-{1}. John 1:14-18. "Emmanuel"
(The Wonder of the Incarnation)

A. Great People

1. I have had the opportunity over the course of time to meet and speak with some people of renown
 - a. a member by appointment of the House of Lords in England
 - b. a lady member of Canadian Senate
 - c. a premier of one of our provinces
 - d. the Chief Executive Officer of a major Canadian financial institution

2. in each case I could perceive some of the intelligence and energy that got them to the position they held, and could commend their ability
 - a. but a couple of them, after a few moments of conversation betrayed the same attitude as the man once described by the essayist, Charles Lamb, "He had the air and stoop of a nobleman. ... By stoop, I mean that gentle bending of the body forwards, which, in great men, must be supposed to be the effect of an habitual condescending attention to the applications of their inferiors." -{2}.
 - b. while with the others you could immediately feel comfortable.

3. the reason for this is, I think, pinpointed in an article by Ken Connor:
 - a. "Have you ever noticed how, when it comes to the rich and powerful, the most impressive people are those that eschew the many benefits of their position in favour of a modest, down to earth existence? When those from whom we expect arrogance surprise us with humility, something resonates within the human soul."
 - b. The name of that article is "The Wonder of the Incarnation" -{3}. and he continues, "For Christians, one of the most breathtaking things about our Savior Jesus Christ is that he willingly surrendered the privileges of his Lordship and descended from Heaven to walk among us, as one of us.
 - c. "For us and for our salvation, He came down from Heaven. By the power of the Holy Spirit He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. ...
 - d. "This is the miracle of (the Incarnation) – that in order to reconcile humankind to Him forever God Himself became a man, taking the form of a bondservant and offering an example of holiness and love to the world...."

B. Jesus Christ Is God Incarnate 1:14

1. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. God Came to Live with Us

- a. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, ..."
- b. in verses 1 and 2, upon which we spend some time in order to bring out all the ramifications of those simple words and profound truth, we see that the Word is the eternal God and agent of creation
- c. here we find the other side of that truth, that the Creator God entered into His creation in the form of a man: namely as Jesus of Nazareth
- d. the very word, "dwelt", describes the great humiliation that took place; He "tented" with us – He left heaven's splendours to abide in a tent, as it were, the temporary, mean dwelling place of a human body
- e. we read, and could well read again those words of Philippians 2:5ff, that "Christ Jesus ... emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant"
- f. Oh, the wonder of it all, that the eternal son of God did this for you and for me, born in Bethlehem, destined for Calvary and the cross

3. Shown by His Glory

- a. "... and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father ..."
- b. John says what he and others saw the glory of this same Jesus
- c. our thoughts would naturally turn to that time when Jesus, with three of his disciples – Peter, James, John – ascended a mountain, and there for a few moments was transfigured before them; when the heavenly glory of the Son of God broke through the veil of His human flesh
- d. this is the Shekinah glory of God, which a few of the priests and the prophets of the OT were privileged to witness, but before which they could not stand
- e. so that event is included in John's witness here, but that is not all

4. Nature of His Glory

- a. "... full of grace and truth."
- b. this takes us back to Exodus 33:18-19, "18 Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" 19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."
- c. then came the time when God did show Moses His glory, Exodus 34:6, "Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;"

- d. note that the words used here in John, “[grace and truth](#)” sum up what constituted the glory of God as shown to Moses
- e. the glory that people behold in Jesus of Nazareth, the word made flesh, is that in Him dwells all the goodness of the nature of God: His glory.

C. Proof 1, John the Baptist’s Testimony 1:15

1. [15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”](#)

2. Jesus Born after John the Baptist

- a. [“He who comes after me ...”](#)
- b. the Gospel of Luke goes to some pains to document the births of both John the Baptist, Christ’s fore-runner and of Jesus Christ Himself
 - (A) you will find all this in the first two chapters of that book
 - (B) where clearly the Baptist was Jesus’ senior by six months
- c. thus, as the fore-runner, the Baptist testified that Jesus came after him
- d. but also, the Baptist’s ministry came first; this is recorded in Mark 1:7, [‘And he was preaching, and saying, “After me One is coming ...”’](#)

3. Jesus of Higher Rank

- a. [“... has a higher rank than I,...”, “... is preferred before me: ...”](#)
- b. for in that verse in Mark, the Baptist continues to speak, [“... One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.”](#)
- c. in the Mosaic Law and the Jewish culture, the elder, in point of birth, had a natural precedence over the younger
- d. this is basis of Jesus’ point in which He disputes with the Jewish religious ruler in Matthew 22:41-46, quoting Psalm 110:1 – Christ cannot be merely David’s son, for David gives Him honour that he would not give to a son, by calling Him, [“my Lord”](#).
- e. in like fashion, John gives the greatest precedence, both in power and in worth, to Jesus Christ

4. Jesus’ Eternal Pre-existence

- a. [“... for he existed before me.”, “... for He was before me.”](#)
- b. this is that same word, “was” which we saw repeatedly used by John the evangelist in verses 1 and 2 of this

chapter, bearing with it the meaning of having a continuing existence in the past

- c. the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb." (Luke 1:15), so his testimony here we can know is true

D. Proof 2, Personal Experience of the Disciples 1:16

1. 16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

2. Christ's Fullness

- a. "For of His fullness ..."
- b. this word has a special implication when it is applied to God, and to Jesus Christ as the Son of God
- c. it could be rendered as "the sum total of all that God is"
 - (A) "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him," (Colossians 1:19)
 - (B) "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form," (Colossians 2:9)
- d. and that Jesus Christ possesses this fullness – that He is indeed truly God of truly God – is shown thus: from the source "of His fullness" he can impart blessings to believers

3. The Fountain of All Good

- a. "... we have all received ..."
- b. the testimony now turns from the singular of the Baptist to the plural
- c. now there can be added that of the writer, those who were disciples along with him, and indeed, a growing body of his contemporary Christians who had shared in the same experience
- d. for the word "received" has a much stronger feeling about it than the mere "beheld" of verse 14
 - (A) beholding or seeing is to take note and knowledge of something that is external to ourselves
 - (B) something that may or may not matter to us; may or may not touch and change our lives
 - (C) but receiving is to give a personal acquaintance and experience
 - (D) so David gave this invitation, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; ..." (Psalms 34:8)
- e. and the fullness of Christ makes all this possible
 - (A) "... to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)
 - (B) "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)
 - (C) Christ can share that fullness with His followers

4. Superabundantly
 - a. "... and grace upon grace"
 - b. in verse 14 we were told that the writer and other disciples saw that this Word, who was made flesh – incarnate – God in human form – was full of grace and truth
 - (A) grace: God’s giving unmerited salvation to sinful mankind
 - (B) truth: present reality, God has faithfully kept His promises
 - c. that word "upon" bears with it the idea of replacement or replenishing
 - (A) the grace that we receive from Christ’s fullness, is like the wave upon wave that roll upon the ocean shore
 - (B) one writer has likened this grace to the manna by which God fed Israel in the wilderness, being fresh each morning, new grace for the new day and the new service. ^{–{4}}.
 - (C) perhaps it was this verse that inspired the hymn-writer to pen:

He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater
 He sendeth more strength as our labours increase
 To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
 To multiplied trials He multiplies peace. ^{–{5}}.
 - d. surely we can add our testimony to those already given

E. Proof 3: Christ Surpasses Moses 1:17

1. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
2. The Mosaic Law: Typology
 - a. "For the Law was given through Moses, ..."
 - b. the typology of the sacrifices
 - c. the typology of the feasts
 - d. the typology of the tabernacle
 - e. by these things, the Law revealed
 - (A) the holy nature of God
 - (B) the sinful nature of man
 - (C) that God determined to reconcile these two, so that the chosen could be His own special people
 - f. combined with this typology were promises
 - (A) to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – to Israel

- (B) great and precious promises
- (C) yet, still awaiting fulfilment after a span of about 1,500 years

3. Jesus Christ: Reality

- a. "grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."
- b. all those great and precious promises; all of those types in the law
- c. were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the great Antitype
- d. the Law is described in Hebrews 10:1 as "... only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things ..."
- e. in Christ we move from the shadow to the substance
- f. "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him (i.e., Christ) they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." (2 Corinthians 1:20)
- g. "grace and truth", as was noted earlier, are the substance and summary of the goodness of God that is His real glory – and all of these which the Law pre-figured, are made reality – realised – in Jesus Christ

F. Conclusion: In Christ Man Meets God 1:18

- 1. 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

- 2. The Transcendence of God
 - a. "No one has seen God at any time, ..."
 - b. that word simply means that God exists far above and beyond all that we can understand or think or imagine
 - (A) God Himself says this is the case: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9)
 - (B) and it is the experience of mankind: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33)
 - c. while God has revealed Himself in His word, and has manifest His glory from time to time such as to Moses, to Israel at Sinai, and to various of the prophets, He is Himself unapproachable and imperceptible to us
 - d. Paul's two exclamations of praise in his first letter to Timothy
 - (A) "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17)
 - (B) "15b ... He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone

possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honour and eternal dominion! Amen." (1 Timothy 6:15-16)

- e. "You teach," said the Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117) to Rabbi Joshua, "that your God is everywhere, and boast that He resides among your nations: I should like to see Him." "God's presence is, indeed, everywhere;" replied Joshua; "but He cannot be seen: no mortal eye can behold His glory." The Emperor insisted. "Well," said Joshua, "suppose we try to look first at one of His ambassadors?" The Emperor consented. The Rabbi took him into the open air at noon-day, and bade him look on the sun in its meridian splendour. "I cannot," said Trojan; "the light dazzles me." "Thou art unable," said Joshua, "to endure the light of one of His creatures; and canst thou expect to behold the resplendent glory of the Creator? Would not such a light annihilate thee?" ^{6}.

3. Jesus Explains God

- a. "... the only begotten ... He has explained Him."
- b. it is this same One: the begotten, the one and only, the unique one of a kind Son of God
 - (A) not son of God such as we are, by adoption
 - (B) not sons of God as the angels, created to reflect God's majesty
 - (C) but Son of God, eternally in the bosom of the Godhead– the closest possible relationship beyond all human comprehension
- c. "13b His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (i.e., as having the right of the eldest son) of all creation." (Colossians 1:13-15)
- d. that word which is variously translated "explained, declared, made known, revealed" and meaning, literally, "lead out, draw out (as in a narrative), recount"
- e. so that regardless of the way we attempt to translate it, the thought is the same: the Son of God came to earth in order to reveal the nature of God, who otherwise is unapproachable and unknowable

4. Invitation

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NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 National Council of Churches of Christ; Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM	- <i>Biblical Museum</i> , Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
EBC	- <i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> , © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, MI: <i>John</i> , by Merrill C. Tenney
EGT	- <i>The Expositor's Greek Testament</i> , Hodder & Stoughton; 1903 <i>John</i> , by Marcus Dods
RWP	- <i>Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament</i> , by Dr. A. T. Robertson

2. From '*The South-Sea House*,' by "Elia.", 1823
3. '*The Wonder of the Incarnation*,' by Ken Connor, in the Christian Post, December 24, 2009, with minor changes – <http://www.christianpost.com/news/the-wonder-of-the-incarnation-42416/>
4. RWP *in loc*.
5. '*He Giveth More Grace*,' by Annie Johnson Flint (1856-1932)
6. BM *in loc*.