

We Beheld His Glory

122219

I. Introduction

Well, it is the most wonderful time of the year, the Advent Christmas season. At least that's what we say, but, the reality is – the Advent Christmas time sometimes doesn't feel that wonderful. It can be a time of mixed emotions. Some of us are here and we are weary and stressed and frazzled from the busy-ness of the season. Some of us are here and can't shake the disappointments of our lives or the sadness of loss, or the pain and suffering in our lives. Some of us are here and we've read the newspaper this morning, and we despair over the turmoil and tragedy in our world.

The truth is the joy of the season can be hard to find sometimes. One writer captures this sentiment well when he says, "Even when we shake our head in despair saying look what the world is coming to, we can say in delight, look what has come to the world" (Jones, 183). And, so, this *is* the most wonderful time of the year because we celebrate what has come into the world. Jesus, God's one and only Son, has come.

If you have been with us throughout our four Sundays of advent this year, you'll know that we've been working our way through the prologue to the book of John. "If John is the pearl of great price in the New Testament, the prologue is the pearl within the pearl" (Brown). It certainly is a magnificent piece of literature. It certainly *is* worthy of memorization. Maybe you've memorized it this year? As you know, John doesn't simply tell the Christmas story as the other three Gospels do, John takes us deeper into the meaning behind the Christmas story. What did it all those wonderful events of that first Christmas mean?

II. The Word

Joel kicked us off by looking at verses 1-5, explaining John's use of the Word. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (1:1). When you start a book in the New Testament with "in the beginning," you either have a large ego or you have a large subject. John has a large subject. Even before the stars were singing, Jesus was. "*All things were made through him*" (1:2). In other words, if we had a microscope powerful enough, we would see the imprint "Made by Jesus Christ" on everything, even you and me.

III. The Light

Brian took us into verses 6-13, where we met the central voice of Advent, John the Baptist, the great herald of the good news of Jesus, "the true light" of the world (1:9). This light, Jesus, shines into the darkness of our lives and of our world – all the disappointments, all the sadness, all the loss, all the pain, all the suffering and all the turmoil. He shines into all that darkness, and he overcomes all that darkness. Even though darkness threw all it had at him, he still overcame it, which means we can look forward to him coming again.

IV. The One and Only

Bernard shared about verses 14-18 last week, the majesty of the incarnation. For *“the Word, Jesus, became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14)*. This one, the one and only Son of God, brings the presence of God back to earth, not as an Avenger, but as a vulnerable baby in a manger. Immanuel, God with us. It’s astounding! It’s unbelievable! It’s the most wonderful words ever written. For God so loved us, he sent his one and only Son to be with us.

V. We Beheld His Glory

A. Introduction

And, after John shares those astounding words about the living God putting on flesh, he says, *“And, we beheld his glory” (1:14)*. This is the title of our Advent series, “We beheld his glory.” And, I want to spend the next few minutes sharing about this important phrase by asking two questions: (1) What does glory mean and (2) why does John start his Gospel with this phrase?

B. Glory

First of all, what does glory mean? Bernard touched on this last week. Glory has a few different nuances, such as luminosity or weightiness of something. But most importantly for John, glory has to do with the essence of someone or something. Glory is the essential nature and character of a person or thing. That’s glory.

C. We Beheld His Glory

So, why does John share the most amazing words about the living God dwelling among us, then say, *“we beheld his glory?”*

Did you ever wonder why John doesn’t say –

- *“The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and God and humanity were reconciled.”* That’s a true statement, but John doesn’t say that.
-- OR --
- *“The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and death was defeated? That’s a powerful statement, but John doesn’t say that.”*
-- OR --
- *“The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we received the gift of eternal life.”* That’s what I would have said if I were beginning a story about Jesus.

He says, *“The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.”* Why does John use this phrase in beginning his Gospel? I think for two reasons.

1. Glory is one of the great themes throughout his Gospel, and he is introducing the theme here. If I had time, I would show you how John uses this word throughout his Gospel.

But, more importantly for this morning –

2. John uses this phrase because beholding glory is Jesus' great desire for you and me. We get the same words in chapter 17, the prayer at the center of the universe, when Jesus is praying to the father and says, "*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may ... behold my glory*" (17:24). Since this is Jesus' desire for us, it means beholding his glory is our greatest need.
 - a. Moses exemplifies this. Did you ever wonder why he shows up in the prologue? What was Moses' great prayer? "God show me your glory." That request is the culmination of a conversation where Moses wants to know God. I want to know you God... Please show me your glory." In other words, "God, show me yourself. I want to know you God. Show me who you are." Moses wants to see God for who he is so that he may know him. And, what does God do? God obliges. God shows himself. God wants to be known. Now, what is interesting is that Moses makes this request when he has everything human beings think they need for life:
 - i. He's in the wilderness yes, but he has all the provision he needs: manna and quail everyday and water coming out of rocks.
 - ii. He has quality relationships. He's married and has a family and working with his brother and sister.
 - iii. He has a good job with meaningful work, probably more responsibility than he ever wanted.
 - iv. He has freedom because they've just come out of Egypt after 400 years in bondage.
 - v. He has guidance. He's already been given the 10 commandments. He has a cloud by day and fire by night.
 - vi. He has hope beyond compare. They're on their way to the promised land, a good and spacious land flowing with milk and honey.
 - vii. He has security. God has just told him that he will go with them to the promised land.
 - viii. He has all the fame anyone could ever want. He's a rock star, because he just led the greatest revolution in the history of the world.
 - b. Moses has everything you and I think we need to have life. And, yet, it is not enough! "God I want to know you. Show me your glory." Show me yourself. (Johnson MP3).

VI. Conclusion

"And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." John and those first witnesses beheld the glory of God in Jesus. They beheld the essence of God in Jesus. They beheld the presence, nature and character of God in Jesus. They came to know the living God through Jesus. It's as if John is saying, "And, now let me tell you a story that will meet your greatest need."

This is our greatest need which is why it's Jesus' great desire for us. We all know that we have a longing deep within our souls which all those gifts that are waiting for us under our trees will never fill. Someone has called that longing a "God-shaped hole." And, it is filled by knowing

Jesus. For he is the only way to life. He is the only truth in life. And, he is the only hope for our lives. Which is why our theme here at PBCC is “ Knowing Jesus and Making Him Known. That’s why we’re here. As JI Packer says, “Once you become aware that the main business that you are here for is to know God, most of life’s problems fall into place of their own accord” (Packer, 33). Look what has come to the world.

Amen.

Benediction

May we behold the glory of Jesus this Christmas,
So that we may know him,
And by knowing him,
Come to love him,
And by loving him,
Become more and more like him.
Merry Christmas.

Resources

Brown, Raymond. *The Gospel According to John*
Johnson, Darrell. *Regent MP3 3629A, Introduction and Prologue to John*
Jones, E Stanley. *Abundant Living*
Packer, JI. *Knowing God*