



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

He Made God Known

John 1:9-18

Introduction

1. Although Israel had seen ample evidence of God's might as he delivered them from Egypt, they needed to be taught to respect his holiness. They were given one lesson just before receiving the Ten Commandments. They received directions for preparation in Ex. 19:7-15 and did what was commanded in vv. 16-20. The Exodus text represents a consistent depiction of God throughout Scripture, something we well understand in light of sin's seriousness (see Isa. 6:1-5; 59:1-2; Rom. 3:9-20, 23).
2. The Hebrews writer used Ex. 19 to remind his readers that God still should be respected (Heb. 12:18-19, 25-29). What he does differently is show why new covenant believers can go where the ancients feared to tread (Heb. 12:20-23). The difference is Jesus (v. 24)
3. We see the balance between respect for and closeness of God consistently in the New Testament, most profoundly in John 1:1-18.
 - a. The Word was with God, was God, and created as God; that is his majesty (Jn. 1:1-5).
 - b. But, amazingly, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14).
4. That's a remarkable revelation which calls for the right response.

Body

- I. Revelation (1:14, 18).
 - A. John announced a nearness of God his ancestors would have never imagined: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . ." (v. 14).¹
 1. The placement of "became" (ἐγένετο, *egeneto*)² "expresses that a person or a thing changes its property or enters into a new condition, becomes something that it was not before" (Richter, in Beasley-Murray, 13-14).
 2. Many ancient people believed divine beings sometimes assumed human form; John says Jesus was fully human: "the Word *became* flesh."
 3. There's more: "and dwelt among us."
 - a) "Dwelt" (ἐσκήνωσεν, *eskēnōsen*) is literally "pitched his tent." The aorist tense indicates a specific time in history when this happened.
 - b) *The Message* translates, he "moved into the neighborhood."

¹ Beasley-Murray calls the initial assertion of this verse "the controlling utterance of the sentence" (G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary 36 [Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1987], 13).

² "... in connection with a predicative noun" (Beasley-Murray, 13).

- B. How far into the neighborhood? “. . . and we have seen his glory . . .”
1. “Have seen” (ἐθεασάμεθα, *etheasametha*) could be “gazed on.” The disciples had been able to look at the Word closely and be convinced he was God with us.
 2. “His glory” was what ancient Israel had longed to see (Ex. 33:18-23), but had seen only indirectly in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10ff.).
 3. His glory was unique: “. . . glory as of the only Son from the Father. . .”
 - a) The most important word here is “only” (μονογενοῦς, *monogenous*), “‘the only one of its kind,’ unique in its γένος” (Beasley-Murray, 14).
 - b) It was used in the LXX to translate *yahid*, an only or beloved child (Judg. 11:34, Jephthah), and also as parallel to *avgaphto,j* (*agapētos*), “beloved” (see Gen. 22:2, 16; Heb. 11:17; Mk. 1:11)
- C. We see the significance of this in the last part of v. 14 and the explanation in v. 18.
1. The Word in the flesh was “full of grace and truth.”
 - a) The OT background is the phrase (*chesed* and *emeth*) that referred to God’s covenant mercy, grounded in his firm, stable, consistent and trustworthy character (Beasley-Murray, 14).
 2. This is a view of God never before seen.
 - a) “No one has ever seen God. . .” (See Ex. 33:18ff.).
 - b) The only (μονογενής) God, who is at the Father’s side (in the bosom of the Father, NASB), he has made him known” (ἐξηγήσατο, *exēgēsato*; explain, interpret, describe; “exegesis” comes from this word).
 3. Amazing! For the first time, we really see God, “through Jesus Christ” (v. 17; the only place in the prologue he is named).

II. Reception (9-13, 16-17).

- A. We must consider Jesus in contrast to what came before.
1. “Grace and truth” are set in contrast to “the law given through Moses.”
 - a) Is John departing from his forbears and disparaging Moses’ law?
 - b) That might be true if Moses’ law had said nothing about grace (*contra* Ex. 19:4-6; Lev. 11:44-45); in fact, the law was given as a blessing to show them how to live (Lev. 18:5).
 2. The emphasis is on “full” and “fullness,” not grace and the law (14, 16).
 - a) It’s a contrast in how we see God; in Jesus we see him and experience his benefits as never before.
 3. Grace is now experienced as wave upon wave of grace,³ as “one gift replacing another” (NJB).
- B. Impressive as this is, it is still not forced on us.
1. John says that, despite the revelation of God in Jesus (v. 9), many “[do] not know him” because they do not “receive him” (10, 11).
 2. But, for those who will receive him, “he gave the right to become children of God” (v. 12) by virtue of God’s grace, not human actions (13).⁴

³ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann’s Publishing Company, 1983), 43.

⁴ It is not through bloods (αἱμάτων, *haimatōn*, is plural, a reference to both parents), the will of the flesh (e.g., sexual desire), or the will of any man (ἀνδρός, *andros*, the male; males had ultimate rights as regards child birth in antiquity), but was rather from being born of God (ἐγεννήθησαν, *egennēthēsan*) (see Beasley-Murray, 13).

Conclusion

1. The remainder of John is an elaboration of the claim he makes in his first eighteen verses. He records signs that point to Jesus' uniqueness. He shows how the claim that Jesus is Lord and God was vindicated by his resurrection (see 20:25-28). He also shows how Jesus reassured his disciples.
2. John 14-17 is devoted to that reassurance. A high point is in 14:1-11, part of which is Thomas's question about Jesus' mysterious (to them) destination. "How can we know the way?" Jesus says that the way to the Father is found in him and that to know him is to know the Father (vv. 5-7).
3. Philip then expresses the longing that many who have thought of God have had: "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (v. 8). So, Jesus teaches him one more time. "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (v. 9).
4. That sums it up. In Jesus, we see God. He came to our neighborhood and showed us. God came here. For you, and for me. What matters now is whether we believe in him and receive him.

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