

Life Group Discussion Guide

The Arrival: Looking at Jesus, Seeing God
Week 4: Veiled in Flesh • John 1:14

Each Christmas, we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, creation's long-awaited Savior. This year, Pastor Jon invited us to look at the birth of Jesus through a new lens: His glory.

"Glory is greatness on display. Glory is why millions of people love Taylor Swift. They find her glorious. If she didn't look like she does, or sing like she does, or perform like she does, those millions would not be Swifties. Same with Harry Styles or LeBron James or Albert Einstein. We are wired to love glory. We're obsessed with it."

Many people live pretty empty lives because all the glory they've seen is the glory of other humans, which—as great as it can be—doesn't compare to the glory of God. When you see the glory of Jesus, you discover that all other glory pales in comparison.

- Have you ever been enamored by the glory of another person? Did that person fulfill and satisfy you? Talk about it.
- Do you agree with Pastor Jon's statement that all other glory pales in comparison to that of Jesus Christ? How have you experienced this, personally?

Glory is all about seeing, so let's explore three things that the arrival of Jesus made visible to us:

1. Visible Flesh

Over the past three weeks, we've looked at the 18 verses that make up the Prologue of John's Gospel. As we experienced, John wastes no time in blowing our minds. He begins by telling us there was an entity with God before there was time, and this entity he calls "the Word." The Word was like God yet different from God, and everything that exists was made through Him. As we come to verse 14, he makes yet another astonishing claim: "The Word became **flesh**." Pastor Jon put it this way:

"The one who was with God before the beginning, who is God himself, whom all things were made through, became flesh. A human."

- Take a minute to reflect on this reality. Push through the familiarity to experience the awe and wonder of God himself becoming flesh. Marvel at it. What does this mean for humanity? What does it mean to you?

Not only did the Word become flesh, but "made his dwelling among us." Here's why that's significant.

The word "made his dwelling" translates the verbal form of the same word for "tabernacle" in the Greek version of the Old Testament. That's why some people translate this verse as, "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us," or "pitched his tent among us." Remember, the tabernacle

functioned as the temporary residence of God among His people, Israel, prior to the construction of the temple. So...what does all this mean?

"The same God that was present with Israel by means of the tabernacle came in bodily form to be with them. Not a tent. Not a stone temple. A human being. The God of the ages, the creator of all things, came in the flesh to dwell among us."

- Desiring to rescue us from our sins, God could have orchestrated our salvation in any way He chose. Why do you think He chose to become human and dwell among us?
- Consider this lyric of the Christmas hymn O Holy Night: "Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till he appear'd and the soul felt its worth." How does God's decision to dwell among us give you a sense of worth?

2. Visible Glory

No human being can withstand the glory of seeing God's face. This is why, when Moses asked pointblank to see God's glory, He responded this way:

"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence...But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live...When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.'" Exodus 33:19-23

- Express in your own words what this passage reveals about the splendor and power of God's glory.

Understanding the perfection and magnificence of God's glory, which had caused it to be veiled from sin-stained humanity, we marvel at John's next claim: "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father."

Jesus was God's glory *here*. God's glory in the flesh.

One way Jesus personified the glory of God was in the acts of power He performed. Nearing the close of his Gospel, John explains the significance of these miraculous works: "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written **that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**" (20:30-31)

"The life John writes of is different than the life you and I receive through our parents. It's a form of life we can only have in Jesus' name. Jesus describes it by saying things like, we will never thirst or hunger again, we will have life to the full, we will have life eternal, we will be free from sin, we will walk in light and truth, we will rise from the dead, we will have God as our Father, we will be saved from condemnation, we will have his joy, his peace, his love. No other philosophy, religion, or way of life

even attempts to deliver this kind of life to us. The life we receive in Jesus' name changes our lives today and for all eternity."

- Which of the statements Jesus made about the life He offers us (listed in the quote above) resonates with you the most? Why?
- Have you received life in Jesus' name? What is the evidence of your new birth?
- If you've yet to receive this life, take time now to pray together in proclamation "that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." In repentance, die to your old life and receive the true life available only in the name of Jesus.
- Receiving life in Jesus not only impacts our eternity, but our today. How do our lives change in the "here and now" when we receive life in Jesus' name?

3. Visible Grace and Truth

When God revealed His glory to Moses at Mount Sinai (as we talked about earlier), He showed him His goodness, and that goodness was revealed in the proclamation of His name. Exodus 34:6 records the encounter: "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.'"

Those last two words (love and faithfulness) translate the words *hesed* and *emet*, which often come through as *grace* and *truth*. John tells us that Jesus came "full of grace and truth." In other words, Jesus is grace and truth in the flesh.

"Jesus is the embodiment of truth—truth in the flesh—so that he lived the truthful life we have not lived. And he also is the embodiment of grace—grace in the flesh—so that he died to pay for our sins. There is no fuller manifestation of God's grace and truth than the cross of Jesus. When you look to the cross, you see truth trampled by man but honored by God. And you see grace disfigured and battered to bring you to Him."

- In your own words, what does it mean that Jesus is truth in the flesh? Grace in the flesh?
- Discuss how the cross is the perfect expression of both truth (justice) and grace (forgiveness).
- Take time now to praise Jesus for the glory He displayed on the cross.

"The arrival of Jesus is the arrival of glory. Glory in his flesh. Glory in his cross. Look to him and you will hunger no more. Look to him and all other glory will pale in comparison."