

“The Superiority of Christ”
John 1:14-18
(Preached at Trinity, September 21, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. With these verses John brings to a close the prologue to the Gospel of John. The prologue is a wonderful introduction to the Gospel pointing us to the deity of Christ, His eternality and mighty power as our Creator. It displays the Trinity before us—Jesus was both “with” God and at the same time “was” God.
2. These opening verses also present us with the mystery of the incarnation; the hypostatic union of the human and Divine. The eternal God became man. It doesn't say that God entered into man. It says He became man, and yet remained God. Jesus had two natures within His one person.
3. In **Verses 14-18** John closes his prologue with a grand statement on the superiority of Christ. Although Jesus Christ was a human being, He was like none other.
 - I. He was unlike any other human being – He was far superior
 - A. In **Verse 14** John declares the incarnation of Christ - "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,"
 1. He became a man. He dwelt among us. He was like us. He shared in the human experience. He was conceived, born, and He grew like every human child. He possessed frail, finite human flesh like every other man.
 2. He prayed to the Father. He had the experience of the indwelling Spirit. He acquired knowledge like we do. He was a man.
And yet He was a man like none other.
 3. He knew no sin. He was the incarnate Son of God who had been ordained to take away the sins of the world.
Jesus Christ became flesh that He might be our Savior. He came to deliver us from our sin.
 4. John maintains the unique qualities of the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ.
In His human nature Jesus came after John. He was younger than John. But John also recognized that Jesus existed from everlasting to everlasting.
This could be said of no other man.
 - B. Last time we saw that John declared the *πλήρωμα* of Christ – His fullness
 1. In **Verse 14** John wrote that Jesus was "full of grace and truth."
In **Verse 16** he writes, "For of His fullness we have all received"
 2. John is speaking of that which is particular to Jesus as our Savior. John speaks of fullness known by no other man. In Christ there is grace upon grace—grace piled upon grace.
 3. Jesus Christ is the only Savior who takes away the sins of His people.

C. John reiterates that Jesus must be received.

John 1:16 NAU - "For of His fullness we have all received"

1. The word λαμβάνω means to take or lay hold of or receive
2. John has been maintaining this since **Verses 11-12**
John 1:11-12 NAU - "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,"
3. Jesus must be received.
 In other words He must be apprehended. We must lay hold on Him. In **Verse 16** John is speaking of something already done. He is talking of a fullness received. He came to His own but they would not have Him but there are some who received Him in His fullness. John is referring to the experience of fullness enjoyed by himself and all others who have received Christ.
4. Jesus must be received in His fullness.
 - In the fullness of His person – He is altogether lovely. He is worthy of our life.
 - In the fullness of His work – We must trust in His saving work alone. We must rest in Him.
 - In the fullness of His authority – He must be received as both Savior and Lord.
5. For those who receive Him they find grace upon grace.

II. Jesus was superior to Moses – Jesus has ushered in the New Covenant

John 1:17 NAU - "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

A. "Jesus Christ"

1. This is John's first use of the name, Jesus. As we will see, he is very fond of the name using it 237 times (Matthew uses it 150 times, Mark 81 times, and Luke 89 times). Over a quarter of the total NT occurrences of the name Jesus come from John's Gospel.
2. This is also the first time John uses the title, "Christ." It means "the Anointed One." This designates Jesus as the Messiah. Besides His designation as Lord, it is the most frequently used title for Jesus in the NT - Χριστός used 529 times.
3. The use of Jesus Christ as a compound title occurs only two other times in John. Only once in Matthew and once in Mark but a total of 131 times elsewhere in the NT.

B. The Law had a particular function

1. It held forth the righteousness of God
 It set forth God's perfect standard
2. The Law demanded perfection. It held forth a rigor that no man could keep. And the Law provided no means for keeping it.
3. Through the Law we discover ourselves lawbreakers and discover our total inability to keep it.
4. The problem isn't with the Law. The problem is with us. In our sinful nature we are lawless, we naturally resist the Law.

5. John's point is to set before us the great contrast. In the New Covenant Jesus Christ has fulfilled the Law.
- C. John is describing the superiority of Christ
1. "grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."
Jesus came and fulfilled the demands of the Law. He kept the Law perfectly by His perfect obedience.
 2. In the New Covenant the Law is no longer seen as a taskmaster but as a sweet guide unto holiness. The Law has been written on our hearts.
 3. Through Christ the Law can no longer condemn
Romans 8:1-3 NAU - "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as *an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,"
 4. For those who receive Christ they find the grace and truth that only He can provide. Jesus provides the knowledge that results in intimacy.

III. Jesus is superior to all of the prophets – Verse 18

A. God is infinitely transcendent

1. He dwells in the realm of infinite perfection. Perfect holiness surrounds Him.
 - a. The best way for us to understand the fullness of His splendor and majesty, His infinity glory is to imagine infinite brightness, a brightness that would consume mere mortal man.
 - b. In addition, because God is infinitely holy He abhors all that is not holy. God wrath is a display of His holy anger upon all that is not holy. If a sinful man came into the presence of God's infinite holiness He would be consumed in God's infinite wrath.
 - c. This was Isaiah's fear after his eyes beheld God's holiness.
Isaiah 6:5 NAU - "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
2. John declares this infinite distance between God and man
John 1:18 NAU - "No one has seen God at any time"
 - a. No man ever laid his mortal eyes upon God. Mount Sinai was a fearful place as God manifested His presence in thunder and lightning and smoke but no one was able to gaze upon the person of God. Theophanies have been the closest man has been able to look upon God.
 - b. In addition, sinful man is unable to look upon God with spiritual eyes of understanding.
The word John uses here can refer to the simple seeing with the eyes but can also carry the idea of perception.
John uses the same word in **Chapter 3**. Jesus told Nicodemus:
John 3:3 NAU - "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- B. God can only be known by His Divine revelation of Himself.
1. Creation declares the existence of God and gives us a glimpse of His glory.
Psalms 19:1-3 NAU - "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ² Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard."
 2. God sent forth prophets as a more perfect revelation of Himself.
Hebrews 1:1 NAU - "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,"
 3. But the ultimate revelation of God to man is Jesus Christ
Hebrews 1:1-3 NAU - "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"
 4. This is what John is telling us in **Verse 18**
John 1:18-19 NAU - "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*."
 - a. The word literally tells us that Jesus has revealed God or has made Him known.
 - b. As our great Prophet Jesus Christ reveals God unto us
 5. How is Jesus the ultimate and perfect revelation of God? Because He *IS* God. He has come forth from the Father
John 6:46 NAU - "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father."
 6. **Verse 18** is one of the clearest declarations of the Deity of Christ.
John 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."
 - a. The KJV/TR translates it, "the only begotten Son." One can imagine a Scribe changing the text here from God to Son because it is so shocking.
 - b. It isn't likely, however, that they would change it from Son to God. This is a glorious declaration of the deity of Christ.
 - c. To declare God as being only begotten or eternally generated might cause problems if you didn't put it in the context of all that John has been saying. The Word was with God and was God and has become flesh. He is God's perfect revelation of Himself.

Conclusion:

1. Having completed the prologue, John is now prepared to begin his Gospel of the life and work of Jesus Christ. **Verse 19** opens with the witness of John.
2. In this prologue John wants us to be absolutely clear. The Jesus Christ who was born and dwelt among us is none other than God. He has taken upon Himself flesh and blood that He might be our Savior. He must be received. Apart from Him there is no hope for escape from the wrath of God.