

GraceCity Advent Study

Wonder



Study #3

December 19, 2021

“Wonder at Incarnation” (John 1:1-18)

“Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded.

For I am doing a work in your days, that you would not believe if told.” (Habakkuk 1:5 – ESV)

Who is Jesus? For two thousand years people from every walk of life have wrestled with that question. Many people today believe Jesus existed but limit him to being a man whose ethical teachings are worthy of respect. In writing his Gospel, John wanted to make it clear that Jesus is the Son of God and Messiah.

On that night, the first Christmas, God invaded his created order, so to speak. The pre-existent, eternal son of God entered into time, taking on human flesh. As prophesied, he was born of a virgin woman though destined to be killed as an atoning sacrifice for our sin. After being crucified, he did not stay in the grave however, but instead rose and ascended into heaven. What a wonderful gift by God!

Preparation:

- In a time when video calls and text messages have become our most frequent form of communication, how are our relationships different when we are face-to-face in the flesh?

Read: [John 1:1-18](#)

Notes/Definitions:

Incarnation – In the flesh; particularly in Christianity, God in human form as Jesus

Questions:

1. Consider verses 1-5. What facts or descriptors did John use when referring to the Word? What aspects of the Word do you most appreciate?
2. Building off verse 4, look at John 6:35, 11:25, and 14:6. What layers of meaning are involved in the word *life*?
3. Read the first three verses of this gospel of John alongside the first three verses of Genesis. How are the three members of the Trinity seen in both places?
4. How does the light of Jesus make himself known in your life?
5. John 1:9 describes the birth of Jesus as “the true light coming into the world.” The verse marks a shift from verses 1-5, which describes all space and all time, to verses that describe a specific space at a specific time. While this event occurred over 2000 years ago in a faraway region of the world, how does Jesus being God-incarnate affect our relationship with God?

See verse 18. We more fully know God because we can know Jesus through the Gospels!

6. What do verses 10-11 say happened after Jesus came into the world? Why might Jesus not have been recognized or well received by those around him then? Why do people reject the light, which is Christ, today?

This study has been developed for personal reflection and group discussion. To participate in the conversation, join a GraceCity small group. For more information on times and locations, email smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org.

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7. Against that sad reality, how is John 1:12 encouraging?

This is a process of adoption that God alone conceives and initiates in us. Believing in the name of Jesus, as John puts it, is not about giving assent to facts and information. No, this is about believing that Jesus is who he says he is, and what this implies about the choices we make and who we follow. We’re going to see very soon that Jesus invites us into a life of follower-ship.

And, John makes it clear that being children of God is not about being in the right family, or bloodline, or ceremony. Nor is about being a good enough person.

8. How does John say we become children of God?

This is important because there’s a misconception that every person is a child of God. We are all God’s creation, the imago dei. But in our natural state we were at enmity with God because of our sin nature. Jesus bridged the chasm between us and God.

Are you, then, a child of God? Have you been adopted into his family? Could you give credible testimony to that effect? More to the point, would those closest to you testify in your favor?

9. What are the benefits of being a child of God?

Among many answers and scripture references, see Romans 8:14-17. We are co-heirs, and though we share in the suffering, we also share in the glory!

10. In verse 17, what does it mean that Jesus was the embodiment of grace and truth? How do people tend to err to one side or the other?

John 1:14 says the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. A paraphrase translation says he moved into the neighborhood. God took on humanity so that his righteousness could be imputed to us—and both humanly and divinely speaking, he’s the embodiment of grace and truth.

We can emphasize truth at the expense of grace, which can lead to legalism. And we can emphasize grace at the expense of truth, which can lead to moral relativism. Neither extreme honors God.

11. It is easy for us in speech to shorten GraceCity’s mission statement to “reconciling people to God and to one another,” and leave off the introductory phrase, “by the grace of Jesus Christ.” How is understanding and expressing the grace and truth of Jesus a necessity for us to fulfill the mission of our church?

Closing Prayer:

Sit in wonder that God would take on flesh, fully human while fully divine, and walk the very Earth we are on now. Marvel that God sent Jesus to be the atoning sacrifice that our sins required. Cherish those with whom you’ve done this Advent study and share how your time together has made you feel. Ask God to prepare opportunities in advance where you can humbly serve as Jesus with skin on and come alongside a friend, a neighbor, a coworker, or a stranger in need.

For Further Study:

Dig deeper into the passages below and consider these characteristics of Jesus as light.

- Inclusive (Isaiah 49:6; Luke 2:30-32)
- Infinite (Col. 1:16; Rev. 1:17-18)
- Incorruptible (Heb. 4:15)
- Invincible (John 1:5)