

The Word is Full of Grace and Truth

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The introduction of Jesus in the Gospel of John is striking. Using themes from Genesis, John identifies Jesus as the Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:1-5).

Jesus was the Word

1. The Logos. In John’s day, philosophers thought wisdom existed in the universe/natural world. If a person could somehow tap into this wisdom or “logic” as they called it, the Greek term translated as “Word” in this text is *logos*, one could receive enlightenment. For John, enlightenment does not come by tapping into some abstract concept in the natural world. Enlightenment comes in the human form of Jesus, the Word.

2. The Word is eternal. The Word and God were one. Together, they created the world. What God was doing with the Word in the flesh of Jesus was originally intended by God. This is why we cannot simply look at the Messiah as just one figure in one place at one time. He is far more consequential than simply an important figure of His time. The Messiah was not a piece to a new or amended plan. God’s use of the Word was the culmination of what God purposed to do for creation before He said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:2).

3. Jesus was God. Jesus was not an example in the sense we are to be examples of God or godly. John stresses that God revealed Himself to humanity in the flesh and blood form of Jesus (John 1:18: God has declared Himself to us in the form of Jesus).

4. The Word was the life and light of men. God declaring, “Let there be light” were the first record words of God (Gen. 1:2). God’s declaration has new meaning through Jesus the Messiah. New light coming into the world through Jesus must mean new creation. This is how John and Paul understood these concepts. There may be no more obvious connection to these concepts than what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:6: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The implications of Jesus being the Word are profound. As impressive as this concept is regarding Jesus, John states that the Word became human: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus, the Word, was the physical embodiment of grace and truth.

Grace

Grace is an inexhaustible subject. Grace is the extension of God's love. In a state of sin, God gave us the gift of His love in the form of Jesus. Of course, God's gift was more than a person. God's gift of Jesus was and is our salvation.

The grace of God culminated in Jesus coming to earth, showing people His Father's love and sacrificially dying as an atonement for the sins of the world. This is what Jesus was teaching, when He told Nicodemus, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17).

Truth

In addition to bringing grace, Jesus brought truth to the world. Jesus revealed the truth about...

1. The existence of His Father and our Creator. Jesus and His Father were one. To see Jesus was to see God. This truth revealed that we are obligated to obey God.

2. Our sinful condition. Jesus came to save us from the consequence of our sins: eternal condemnation. There is no denying that we are sinners in desperate need of salvation.

3. Salvation. Jesus revealed that He is our only hope of salvation. He declared, "He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins... So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Joh 8:23-24, 31-32).

What's the Point?

Jesus is often misunderstood and misrepresented. In John's introduction of Jesus, he describes Jesus as the vessel of grace and truth. These two aspects of Jesus are brought together. They are companions. We cannot have grace without truth. The truth points us to grace. If we are not careful, we can emphasize one more than the other.

We typically are drawn to the grace of Jesus. We want to experience the goodness He promises. We want to know His love. But, some want Jesus' grace at the expense of His truth. Particularly, Jesus' truth about our sin makes us uncomfortable. We want to retain our sin while receiving His grace. We cannot have His grace on our terms. His grace can only be received by accepting His truth.

For others, just the opposite may be the case. The truth of Jesus is emphasized at the expense of His grace. Some relish in condemning the world. Constantly focusing on our sin and subsequent condemnation can be defeating. Some may get the impression that they are beyond

the reach of grace. Preaching the truth about Jesus involves preaching about grace: the solution to the problem of sin.

There is perfect balance in Jesus. He brings grace and truth together. By Jesus, we can understand the truth of our sin while knowing we can be saved by His grace. Therefore, our teaching must be balanced in how we convey Jesus to others.