

GOD

Grace and Truth Came by Jesus Christ A look at John Chapter 1, verse 17

December is the time of year when many in the world talk about the birth of Jesus Christ, even though we know from the accuracy of God's Word that Jesus Christ was not born in December, but rather on September 11 of 3 BC. Still, it's a good time to consider his first coming and its significance, especially so that we can share with others who during the annual season might desire to know the truth. Colossians 4:6 tells us: "Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Rather than review the events surrounding the birth of our Lord and Savior, though, we'll focus on what he brought via his ministry and his accomplishments. Look at the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, verse 17.

John

1:17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

We see in this verse that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". We'll consider what this meant to the Israelites, God's chosen people to whom Jesus Christ was sent; then we'll consider what it means to us in this present Administration of Grace in which we live.

This coming of grace and truth can't mean that grace and truth were not available in Old Testament times prior to the birth of Christ. We can see that both grace and truth were already present back in the days of Moses if we turn to Exodus Chapter 34, verse 6:

Exodus

34:6 And the Lord passed by before him (*Moses on Mt. Sinai*), and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

The word "goodness" is from a Hebrew word usually translated "kindness" or "loving kindness", and when referring to God can be understood as God's benevolent kindness, which is God's grace. And "truth" refers to God's Word: in John 17:17 Jesus Christ declared: "Thy Word is truth." God's Word, truth, was definitely available in Old Testament times: it was spoken and written by the prophets, including the Law that was given by Moses. This verse in Exodus also tells us that God, who never changes (Malachi 3:6), is abundant in grace and truth.

To more fully understand what is meant in John 1:17 where it says that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ", let's first take a brief look at this first part of Chapter 1 of the Gospel of John, beginning with verse 1. This will also help to clear up some misunderstandings many people still have about who Jesus Christ really is, even though the Bible emphatically proclaims Jesus Christ to be the only begotten Son of God, not God Himself.

John

- 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Verse 1 contains two major Figures of Speech, God's way of calling our attention to the great truths contained therein. One is *polysyndeton* ("many ands"), the repeated use of the word "and" to emphasize each point. Also, we see the repetition of the words "the Word".

We know that "the Word" in this verse is used to refer to three distinct and separate things. God can be referred to as "the Word" because to know God we must know His Word (God "is" His Word just like you "are" your word). Also, the Word of God, given by revelation and spoken or written, is God's Word revealed in the senses realm. Finally, because Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, spoke and lived God's Word, he can be referred to as the Word in the same sense that he, by his life and accomplishments, represented God's Word in the flesh.

So, in this verse we see that in the beginning there was the Word (God, nobody else), and we see from both verses 1 and 2 (so it's established) that the Word, referring to God's revealed Word and to Jesus Christ who represented God's Word, was with God. The word "with" is very significant. It's from the Greek word *pros*, which means "together with yet distinctly independent from" (in other words, with but not the same as). Both the written Word and Jesus Christ were "with" God in His foreknowledge: neither one was physically present back then! In fact, if you do some simple research, you will find that we, the born-again believers in the Body of Christ, were also with God in the beginning (in His foreknowledge).

Now that we know that we are dealing with three distinctly separate things, each referred to as "the Word", we can now continue:

- 1:3 All things were made by him (*by God*); and without him was not any thing made that was made.
1:4 In him (*in God*) was life; and the life was the light of men.
1:5 And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

We know from I John 1:5 that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." God, this perfect, underived, absolute light, shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot "comprehend" it. From the text, "comprehend" is better understood as "overcome" or "overpower".

Now Chapter 1 focuses on a man sent by God to proclaim that Light (God): a man referred to elsewhere as John the Baptist.

- 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
1:7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light (*God*), that all *men* through him might believe.
1:8 He (*John*) was not that Light (*God*), but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

The word "sent" in verse 6 is from *apostellō*, the same Greek word elsewhere translated "apostle". An apostle is one sent by God to bring new light to that generation (it may be "old

light” but it’s new to the people the apostle was sent to). John the Baptist was sent by God to declare “the Light” (God) by proclaiming His Word. John was the first prophet in more than 400 years, so the Light that he proclaimed was certainly “new light” to them.

1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

God, by way of His revealed spoken and written Word, was “in the world” – available to people - throughout Old Testament times. Verse 10 then tells us that “the world” (a figure of speech referring to the people living in the world) “knew him not”: they didn’t experientially know God. Why? Look at the next verse:

1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

God “came unto his own”, revealing His spoken and written Word to Israel, God’s chosen people, but they for the most part chose not to receive it into manifestation: they didn’t accept it. God’s chosen people as a whole rejected God by rejecting His Word. But there were a few who believed:

1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

The few who accepted God by accepting His revealed Word received the power (“authority”) to become “the sons (children) of God”. An important point to clarify here is that this verse is not referring to people becoming born again sons and daughters of God. Even though John wrote this Gospel late in the First Century, he made absolutely no mention of the truth of the Great Mystery that it would, beginning on the Day of Pentecost, become available for men and women to be saved by grace and become born again of God’s spirit, making them God’s children with spiritual seed. Those people mentioned in verse 12 who received God were made God’s children by adoption, not by seed. It was available to become saved and to become adopted as God’s children, but the Israelites had to believe unto the coming Messiah to become saved. Even so, they were still under the Old Testament Law.

In verse 12 we see that people could become adopted sons of God when they believed “on his name”. This more accurately means “on his namesake” and refers to Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who because he was God’s only begotten Son representing God’s Word in the flesh can be referred to as God’s “namesake”. Here we find the first direct reference to Jesus Christ in this chapter (besides his being one of the three definitions of “the Word”).

1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Many writings based on old manuscripts indicate that the words “Which were” should be singular: “Who (referring back to God’s namesake, Jesus Christ) was”. Jesus Christ was born of God: He’s God’s only begotten Son.

1:14 And the Word (*the revealed Word*) was made flesh (*Jesus Christ represented God's Word on earth*), and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The glory of God was revealed through the life and actions of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Notice the words “full of grace and truth”. We already read in John 1:17 that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”. In verse 14, “full of grace and truth” refers back to “the Word made flesh”, Jesus Christ as he represented God's Word on earth. Jesus Christ was “full of”, or abounding in, grace and truth. We saw in Exodus 34:6 that God is abundant in grace and truth. Here we see that His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, like his Father, abounded in grace and truth. So, he definitely would have been able to bring it and manifest it.

Verses 15 through 17 (including our focal verse) are actually a parenthesis, a figure of speech emphasizing this great truth that Jesus Christ abounds in grace and truth:

1:15 (John bare witness of him (*Jesus Christ*), and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me (*Jesus Christ's ministry began after the start of John the Baptist's*) is preferred before me: for he was before me (*Jesus Christ, as well as we today, were with God in His foreknowledge in the beginning, but John the Baptist was of Israel, first called in Jacob*).

1:16 And (*For*) of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.

We should consider the phrase “grace for grace” in verse 16. Because the Gospels only record events before the day of Pentecost, this “grace” cannot be the same as the grace available to us since the Day of Pentecost. The word “for” here is from the Greek word *anti*, not the usual word translated “for”. This word means “over against” or “on behalf of” and is the same word used in places like “an eye for an eye”. It could be rendered “in place of”.

The grace that Jesus Christ brought to the Israelites, while not the same as the grace in our administration, was a “new” kind of grace compared to God's manifestation of His grace before Christ came. The *Companion Bible* refers to this “new” grace as “continuous and unintermittent, ever fresh according to the need”.

Even though God never changes, and so His grace really never changes, the way He can manifest His grace depends on conditions. In Old Testament times before Christ, God could only show His grace, His benevolent kindness, when people believed and obeyed as they strove to fulfill the Law that came by way of Moses. But, because Jesus Christ came and perfectly fulfilled the Law, God could now manifest His grace in a new way (but still not by making salvation available through grace). In fact, just sending Jesus Christ, fulfilling His plan for man's redemption, was an act of God's grace: He didn't have to do it (and man certainly didn't deserve it!). So, “grace for grace” in verse 16 really refers to the new way God could manifest His grace, replacing the best God could do in manifesting His grace before.

1:17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.) (*end of parenthesis of verses 15-17*)

1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Verse 17 concludes the parenthesis of verses 15 through 17 that refers to Jesus Christ who was full of grace and truth. Verse 18, concluding this introductory section of John, first distinguishes Jesus Christ from God (no man has seen God at any time, so Jesus Christ who has been seen by man cannot be God) and then states that Jesus Christ declared God. The word “declared” is from the Greek word *exēgeomai*, meaning “to make known” or “to lead out”. Jesus Christ made God (Who is Light) known and led people out of spiritual darkness.

Let’s now concentrate on verse 17 and find out more about how “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”.

The word “came” in verse 17 is not from the Greek word usually translated “come”, which refers to moving from one place to another. Instead, it’s from *ginomai*, more accurately translated “become”. True, *ginomai* is translated “come” 53 times, but if you look up the verses you will see that a change is involved. For instance: “When even was come” can be understood as “When it became evening”. *Ginomai* is translated “become” 42 times, but it is also rendered “be” 249 times (referring to something after a change, so again better understood as “become”). It is also translated “be made” 69 times and “be done” 62 times.

What does this mean for our understanding of this verse? Since the word “came” is better understood as “became”, we see that a change was involved. We already saw from “grace for grace” in verse 16 that the way God could manifest His grace changed, and verse 17 tells us that Jesus Christ in essence brought this “new” grace. Jesus Christ would also bring God’s Word (the truth) to His people (the Israelites) in a new way, ultimately condensing all of the Old Testament Law into two: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31).

The word “by” in verse 17 (“grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”) is also significant. It’s from the Greek word *dia*, meaning “through” or “by means of”. How did this “new” grace and truth come? Jesus Christ didn’t just come and drop off a package! They came “by means of” or “through” the accomplishments of Jesus Christ. By living his life, walking perfectly on God’s Word and fulfilling all the Law, Jesus Christ not only brought a new understanding of God’s Word to the Israelites but made it available for God to manifest His grace in a new way.

Let’s briefly take a look at this grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ’s accomplishments, first as they applied to Israel (remember, the Gospels do not reveal the truths of the Mystery); then as they apply to us in our day and time.

The word “grace” is from the Greek word *charis*, which is also translated “favour”. It’s found only a few times in the Gospels, where it is only used in reference to Jesus Christ or to Mary who would believe to bear the Messiah. Even though the Gospels do not directly provide much information on this “new” grace that Jesus Christ came to make available, as you work the records in the Gospels you can see many instances how, by God’s grace, Jesus Christ healed

many, forgave sins, cast out spirits, and loved the unlovable, even those who didn't strive to fulfill the Law or believe unto the Messiah.

We do find, however, that the Gospels record many instances where Jesus Christ proclaimed God's Word as truth, clarifying it in "new" ways to the people he was sent to. Let's take a look at just a few of these:

John

14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.

Here Jesus Christ declared that he was the only means of access to God: Jesus Christ is the Way. He is also the truth, because he represented God's Word (the truth) in the flesh as he lived and spoke God's Word:

John

17:8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth.

John

8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews (Judeans) which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Jesus told the Judeans, those he was sent to, that if they continued in his Word – God's Word since Jesus Christ proclaimed the Word of his Father – they would be his disciples (disciplined followers). As they did this, they would experientially know (*ginōskō*) the truth, God's Word, and this truth would make them free. This true freedom came by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, who represented God's Word in the flesh.

Remember, Jesus Christ was sent to God's chosen people, the Israelites. Because he was God's only begotten Son and not God himself, Jesus Christ did not know about the Great Mystery, the truths that God had kept secret (even from His Son) about the Administration of Grace in which it would be available to be saved by grace. Even so, at the site of the "last supper" shortly before his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus, by revelation, prophesied of things that would apply to us in our day and time. We see this in John chapter 14, beginning in verse 15:

John

14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he (*it*) may abide with you forever;

14:17 Even the spirit of truth; whom (*which*) the world cannot receive, because it seeth him (*it*) not, neither knoweth him (*it*): but ye know him (*it*); for he (*it*) dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

The word “comforter” is from the Greek word *paraklētos*, which is the same word translated “advocate” in I John 2:1 (...if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous). Notice the word “it” (and “which”) inserted in parentheses in verses 16 and 17. The “comforter” is not a person: it is holy spirit, which for us is the gift God gave after all was accomplished, on the Day of Pentecost. This holy spirit would, like Jesus Christ, be our “advocate”. Verse 17 concludes by stating that this “comforter” “shall be in you.” Jesus Christ could not have known about the gift of holy spirit that is not just upon us but in us (“Christ in you”), but he spoke the words God gave him by revelation.

We see more about this, and how it relates to the truth, later in Chapter 14:

14:26 But the Comforter (*advocate*), which is the Holy Ghost (*holy spirit*), whom (*which*) the Father will send in my name, he (*it*) shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

God, by revelation via the holy spirit within, would, in Christ’s absence, teach those with spirit within “all things”. We see this referred to (again, by Jesus Christ by revelation) in John chapter 16, verse 13:

John

16:13 Howbeit when he (*it*), the spirit of truth (*holy spirit*) is come, he (*it*) will guide you into all truth: for he (*it*) shall not speak of himself (*itself*); but whatsoever he (*it*) shall hear, that shall he (*it*) speak: and he (*it*) will shew you things to come.

The “all truth” prophesied of here by Jesus Christ refers to the truths of God’s revealed Word that were recorded in the Church Epistles by the Apostle Paul. We have the “all truth” available to us, including the truths of the Great Mystery. II Peter 1:12 says that we are to be “established in the present truth”, this truth of God’s Word that applies to us in this Administration of Grace.

Of course, since the Day of Pentecost, we live in the Administration of Grace. Now we (unlike those in Old Testament times including when Jesus Christ was present on earth) are saved by grace, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Romans, Chapter 5 expounds on this grace that was made available by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ:

Romans

5:15 But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

5:17 For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded (*increased*), grace did much more abound (*super-abounded*).

5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

We've considered the truth expressed in John 1:17 that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We saw how Jesus Christ, representing God's Word, declared God's Word in a new way and, through his accomplishments, made it available for God to manifest His grace toward His people (Israel) in a new way. But it was because of these same accomplishments of Jesus Christ that God was able to go even beyond the "grace and truth" mentioned in John 1:17. He was then able to make it available for us to become born again of His spirit, making us His children, not by adoption like the Israelites but by seed. We now have a "new" grace and truth available to us, still made available by the accomplishments of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

- Dr. Rick Batt