

December 19, 2010 by Steve Brandon



Growing Up - In Adoration

John 1:1-4,14

1. Jesus is God (verse 1)
2. Jesus is with God (verse 2)
3. Jesus is Creator (verse 3)
4. Jesus is Life (verse 4)

In recent weeks, we have been in a sermon series entitled, "Growing Up." It has been a good series for us. It has been a needed series for us. Because, as a church, we are growing up.

We are growing up – In a facility. God has given to us this wonderful place to worship. With it comes some blessings. With it comes some dangers. And so, three weeks ago, I addressed some of these blessings and some of these dangers. In that message, I called you to be a spiritual people, who would seek great things from God for His glory. We are growing up – In leadership. God has given us more men to fill positions of leadership in the church - two as elders, and one as a deacon. Our hope is to install these men into their positions of leadership in the near future. We are growing up – Into a legacy. We are going to leave something to the next generation. What will it be? My hope and prayer is that we leave something that will outlive us to the glory of God.

This week, I want to continue the series. And it is appropriate this last Sunday before Christmas to focus our attention upon Christ and how we are to grow up into Him. Now, throughout this series, as I have been using this growing-up metaphor, I'm sure that many of you have thought of the imagery of a boy growing up into a man (or a girl growing up into a woman), growing from immaturity to maturity. And this is a right way for you to think about these things. It's the imagery that I have had in my mind as well. Certainly, with a move into this building, we have made a step in maturity, much like a child going off to college. As more leadership is confirmed in this church, it will be another step, much like a child getting married. It's quite appropriate for us to think about growing up like people grow up.

However, as we turn our attention this week upon Jesus, I want for you to think a bit differently about this imagery. Rather than thinking about people growing up, I want for you to think about reptiles. That's right, I'm talking lizards and snakes and crocodiles. Because, the reality is that reptiles never stop growing. And should a reptile live to be a few hundred years old, they would look a lot like dinosaurs. Because, that's what dinosaurs were. They were giant reptiles. And when it comes to Christ, we ought to grow like reptiles grow. In other words, we ought never to stop growing. We ought never to think that we have arrived. We always have need to grow up into Him. We will never arrive.

Paul said it like this, "That I may know Him" (Phil 3:10). It's not that Paul didn't know Jesus; it's not that Paul wasn't mature in Jesus. No, this is the call of every believer in Christ - to press on. I love what David Pryor says: "We never move beyond the gospel – only into a more profound understanding of it." We move into a more profound understanding of knowing Jesus, understanding Jesus, loving Jesus, obeying Jesus. My hope is that we, as a church, will never grow beyond the gospel. But, we, as a church, will always seek to grow up into a greater understanding of the gospel.

And that's how we need to grow up in Christ. We never place Jesus upon the shelf saying, "Been there; done that." No, that's not it at all in our Christian life. Rather, as we grow in our Christian life, we come to realize in a greater and deeper way how awesome is the cross of Christ! We realize this not just cognitively, but in a functional way in our lives.

I want for you to picture a drive into the mountains. As you approach the mountains, you can see them from far away, and they look big. But, as you keep driving, they keep getting bigger and bigger and bigger. It's only when you are right up close that you really realize how large they are. So also with the cross of Christ. When you are first saved of your sins, the cross seems big. But, the closer you walk with Jesus, the closer you come to the cross. And as you come closer to the cross, you see it as bigger and bigger than ever before.

In "The Chronicles of Narnia", Lucy experiences this with Aslan the lion, ...

Aslan: "Welcome, child."
Lucy: "Aslan, you are bigger!"
Aslan: "That is because you are older, little one."
Lucy: "Not because you are?"
Aslan: "I am not, but every year you grow, you will find me bigger." [\[1\]](#)

And in this way, we all need to be growing up in Christ. We need to do so on an individual level. We also need to be doing so functionally, on a corporate level. My message this morning is entitled, "Growing Up – In Adoration."

With this title, I'm thinking about Christmas. Christmas is a time when we direct our attention upon the birth of our Savior. And often our attention is naturally drawn to our worship of Him. We see Mary pondering, the shepherds in awe, the Magi worshipping, Simeon and Anna

rejoicing. My hope and prayer and aim of my message this morning is that we would continue to increase in our worship of Jesus. May we be increasing in our adoration of Him.

In my message this morning, I plan to look at the first four verses of the gospel of John and relate each of them to John 1:14. To help with the context, however, I want for us all to consider the first 18 verses of the gospel of John.

John 1:1-18

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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 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, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

This text tells the Christmas story. Oh, it's not the Christmas story that we are used to hearing. We are used to hearing the story of the angel coming to visit Mary, and the angel coming to visit Joseph, and the difficult trip to Bethlehem, and the birth of Jesus in a manger. This text says nothing of Mary or Joseph or Bethlehem or the manger. But, it still tells the Christmas story. It's merely from a different point of view. It's not the view from earth. Rather, it's the view from heaven.

We begin (in verse 1) with God. We begin with Jesus, who is identified as the Word (verse 1). The climax of the story comes in verse 14, with the Word becoming flesh. This is Christmas: God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Well, this morning, I want to draw your hearts in awe of Jesus, that we might grow in adoration of Him.

By way of outline, I'm merely going to pick out some things that we see in the first 4 verses and relate them to verse 14. My first point comes from verse 1, ...

1. Jesus is God (verse 1)

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

We have right here one of the clearest statements in all of the Bible of the deity of Jesus Christ. John tells us that Jesus was there with God "in the beginning." That is, Jesus did not ever begin to exist. Rather, Jesus was already there in the beginning. This points to the fact that Jesus is eternal. This, in itself can direct us to the deity of Christ. And then, we read, "and the Word was God." There it is, as clear as can be: Jesus is God. This is the one who came and dwelt among us (verse 14).

Now, there are some who will attempt to manipulate the Greek here to deny that this is saying that Jesus Christ is God. For instance, the Jehovah's Witnesses will point out right here that there is no article before the word God, and that it is better to translate this, "the Word was a god," rather than "the Word was 'the' God." Now, it is true that there is no article before the word, "God." But, it is not true that it should be translated, "a god."

I remember when I started learning my Greek, I learned it in a secular college under an unbelieving professor. Since an easy way to learn Koine Greek (common Greek) is by starting with the gospel of John, we began there. And this unbelieving professor went right through this passage without batting an eye, telling us that John was claiming that Jesus is God. Now, he didn't believe it, that's for sure. But, he was faithful to translating the text in the most natural way, "the Word was God." And as we talked about it, there was no doubt in my professor's mind of what John was saying.

Surely, John believed that Jesus was God. The rest of his gospel brings this out. You can't feed 5,000 people if you aren't God (John 6). You can't walk on water if you aren't God (John 6). You can't give sight to the blind if you aren't God (John 9). You can't raise a man from the dead if you aren't God (John 11). Near the very end of the gospel, you have this interchange between Thomas and Jesus. He had doubted that Jesus was alive, saying, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, ... I will not believe" (John 20:25). But, then, when Thomas did so, he cried out in faith, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). This is John's way of identifying Jesus as God.

And the reality of Christmas is that God became flesh. The more you ponder this, the more amazed you will be. May it draw us to worship of our Lord. Consider what Sam Storms said. Read these words slowly. Consider each line carefully. It will help expand your thoughts on the scope of the incarnation.

"The Word became flesh!

God became human!
The invisible became visible!
The unlimited became limited!
The infinite became finite!
The immutable became mutable!
The unbreakable became fragile!
Spirit became matter!
Eternity entered time!
The independent became dependent!
The almighty became weak!
The loved became the hated!
The exalted was humbled!
Glory was subjected to shame!
Fame turned into obscurity!
From inexpressible joy to tears of unimaginable grief!
From a throne to a cross!
From ruler to being ruled!
From power to weakness!" [\[2\]](#)

Such is the mystery of the incarnation. The heart of my message this morning is to think about these things and to grow in your adoration of Jesus Christ. To the extent that we understand, our adoration will grow.

Let's look at my next point, ...
2. Jesus was with God (verse 2)

John 1:2
He was in the beginning with God.

Basically, this is a repetition of verse 1. With repetition comes emphasis and clarity. I want to emphasize this point: Jesus was with God. This verse helps us to see the nature of God. In the beginning, it wasn't merely God, the Father, all alone. Rather, there is another person with Him: Jesus.

Now, again, we are entering into mysterious lands here that are difficult to understand. We are entering the mystery of the Trinity, God in three persons. You have two persons here - God and the Word - and they are "with" each other. My hope is that thinking about these things will draw us to worship Him more!

The sense that you get from the Greek text is that they are face to face with each other. The Father is looking towards the Son. The Son is looking towards the Father. In John 17:5, Jesus described the scene: "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." Before Jesus ever came to earth, He was with the Father, in close communion with Him, possessing the glory of God. The contrast to this comes in verse 14, when the Word became flesh. It was the Son who came to earth and the Father remained behind in heaven.

Now, think about it. It's not that you have two Gods, one in heaven and one on earth. Nor is it that the one God has morphed into a man and left heaven. Rather, you have two of the three persons of the Godhead, temporarily separated from each other, but still one God. Now, which of you understands this? I don't. I don't even begin to understand this. But, it is the reality of Christmas - that God, Himself, has come to visit us! May it lift our minds in worship and adoration of Him!

Look at verse 14, ...

John 1:14
And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we saw His glory.

For the brief decades that Jesus was upon the earth, He dwelt with us, rather than dwelling with the Father. And we were able to see His glory, because His glory came down to be with us.

Isn't there always something special about meeting someone who is famous? From time to time, I read or hear about the Make-a-Wish foundation arranging a visit from a famous person to a child with a terminal illness. Some star athlete or actress or politician comes and visits a child, and makes their day. In many ways, it makes their short life. It's the one thing in the world that these children want: to meet their hero. And the Make-a-Wish foundation makes it happen. It's a great thing!

We see here in verse 14, the Make-a-Wish come true for us all. We have been visited by God! At one time Jesus was with the Father. Then, Jesus came to earth and dwelt among us. People saw Him and touched Him and heard Him. In fact, this is how John put it in his first epistle.

1 John 1:1-3
What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life -- and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us -- what we have seen and heard we

proclaim to you.

When Jesus left the Father above, He left it to be "with us." That is what Christmas is about. It's about God with us, Immanuel. "Im" – with; "anu" – us; "El" – God. To the degree that we grasp this, our adoration of Him will increase. May it ever increase.

Let's move on to my third point.

3. Jesus is Creator (verse 3)

Look at verse 3, ...

John 1:3

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

In this verse, we see a repetition of thoughts. The first part of the verse says the same thing as the last part of the verse. First, the positive: "All things came into being through Him." Then, the negative, "apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

These words make clear that Jesus wasn't a created being. In fact, that's what this verse does. It separates the entire universe into two categories: the created and the creator. Everything created is in one category. Everything that isn't created falls into another category. Jesus falls on the creator side. Perhaps more technically, you might say, that Jesus was the agent of creation. That is, all things were created by Him and through Him. That's exactly how the rest of the New Testament puts it.

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Hebrews 1:2

In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Jesus Christ is the agent of creation. When we read in Genesis 1 that "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," you might ask, "Well, ... how did He do it?" God the Father created all things through Jesus. Both Father and Son were engaged in the work.

And now, again, when we come down to verse 14, we see the creator stepping into creation. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (verse 14). The Word wasn't flesh before. But now, the Word has become flesh. Jesus wasn't a part of creation before, but now, He has come to join in the creation—the very creation that He made with His own hands. And this is Christmas. It is the time when we celebrate God becoming part of His creation!

There was a heresy that was going around in the first century called Docetism. The name comes from the Greek word, dokew (dokeo) which means, "to seem or appear." The Docetists believed that Jesus merely "appeared" to be a man, but in reality, he wasn't; he was a shadow of the reality. They believed this because they embraced the deity of Christ, but they had a difficult time embracing the humanity of Jesus.

But, the apostle John spoke against this heresy (in 1 John 4:2), saying, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God." The creator has taken part of His creation. Jesus came into creation like any of us came.

J. C. Ryle says it well, ...

He really became a man like ourselves in all things, sin only excepted. Like ourselves, he was born of a woman, through born in a miraculous manner. Like ourselves, he grew from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to man's state, both in wisdom and in stature. Like ourselves, He hungered, thirsted, ate, drank, slept, was wearied, felt pain, wept, rejoiced, marvelled, was moved to anger and to compassion. Having become flesh, and taken a body, He prayed, read the Scriptures, suffered being tempted, and submitted His human will to the will of God the Father. And finally, in the same body, He really suffered and shed his blood, really died, was really buried, really rose again, and really ascended up into heaven. [\[3\]](#)

Jesus was born like we were born. He lived and breathed like we live and breath. He died like we died. The apostle Paul says it like this, ...

Philippians 2:7-8

[Jesus] emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus, the creator, came into this creation. God is not a far-off God, who rules us from a distance. No, God has entered His own creation and has visited us. Let's adore Him. Let's grow in our adoration of Him.

Finally, ...

4. Jesus is Life (verse 4)

This comes in verse 4.

John 1:4

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

In many ways, this is the hope of the Christmas season, that in Jesus is life. My hope and prayer as a pastor of Rock Valley Bible Church is that we would see this hope ever-increasing more and more in our lives. Our hope isn't in ourselves. Rather, our hope is in Jesus because He has brought us life.

This is the message of the book of John, that Life comes through Jesus Christ. When talking to Nicodemus, Jesus says, "whoever believe will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:15). When talking to the woman at the well, Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14). When talking with the Pharisees, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). When speaking to the crowds, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Shortly after raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believe in Me will live even if he dies" (John 11:25). This is just to quote a few verses in the gospel of John.

When John comes to the end of the book and tells us why he has written, it is all about life, ...

John 20:30-31

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Life comes through Jesus Christ. Particularly, life comes to those who believe. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Jesus came to give life, because He is life. Do you believe this?

I close with a famous story about a man who learned about Christmas from the birds. Perhaps you have heard it before. It bears repeating.

The Parable of the Birds

There once was a man who looked upon Christmas as a lot of humbug. He wasn't a scrooge. He was a kind and decent person, generous to his family, upright in all his dealings with other men. But he didn't believe all that stuff about incarnation which churches proclaim at Christmas. And he was too honest to declare that he did.

"I am truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, who was a faithful churchgoer. "But I simply cannot understand this claim that God became man. It doesn't make any sense to me."

On Christmas Eve, his wife and children went to church for the midnight service. He declined to accompany them. "I'd feel like a hypocrite," he explained. "I'd much rather stay at home. But I'll wait up for you."

Shortly after his family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window and watched the flurries getting heavier and heavier. "If we must have Christmas," he thought, "It's nice to have a white one." He went back to his chair by the fireside and began to read his newspaper. A few minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. It was quickly followed by another, then another. He thought that someone must be throwing snowballs at his living room window.

When he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They had been caught in the storm, and in a desperate search for shelter had tried to fly through his window.

"I can't let these poor creatures lie there and freeze," he thought. "But how can I help them?" Then he remembered the barn where the children's pony was stabled. It would provide a warm shelter. He put on his coat and galoshes and tramped through the deepening snow to the barn.

He opened the doors wide and turned on a light. But the birds didn't come in.

"Food will bring them in," he thought. So he hurried back to the house for bread crumbs, which he sprinkled on the snow to make a trail into the barn. To his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs and continued to flop around helplessly in the snow.

He tried catching them, but that didn't work either.

He tried shoeing them in the barn by walking around and waving his arms. They scattered in every direction--except into the warm, lighted barn.

"They find me a strange and terrifying creature," he said to himself. "And I can't seem to think of any way to let them know

they can trust me. If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead them to safety..."

Just at that moment, the church bells began to ring. He stood silently for a while, listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. Then he sank to his knees in the snow. "Now I do understand," he whispered. "Now I see why you had to do it." [4]

That's why Jesus became flesh - to give life. Life come to those who believe; do you believe? Over the years, with the increased emphasis upon gifts, we can easily think that Christmas is all about giving. In many ways it's not. Rather, Christmas is about receiving. It's about receiving the gift of Jesus, who gives us life, "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." Do you believe?

O come, let us adore Him!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 19, 2010 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] C.S. Lewis, Prince Caspian (New York: Harper Collins, 1951), 141.

[2] <http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/30-the-most-amazing-verse-in-the-bible>

[3] Expository Thoughts on John, Volume 1, p. 25

[4] "The Parable of the Birds," written by Louis Cassels in 1959.