



uncommon
THE HOLY ONE OF GOD IS COMING

LESSONS:

1. Was Jesus just Common? (12/7)
2. He would be Compassionate and Holy (12/14)
3. His Birth would Announce His Kingdom (12/21)
4. His Childhood Among the Religious (12/28)
5. His Life Growing Up Among the Gentiles (1/4)
6. The Challenges of the Jewish Religion (1/11)
7. The Challenges of Gentile Religions (1/18)
- 8. The Creator Among the Created (1/25)**
9. The Lord Against the Deceiver (2/1)
10. The Priest Among the Worshippers (2/15)
11. The King Among the Citizens (2/22)
12. The Hope of the Nations (3/1)

Lesson 8 | **The Creator Among the Created** (1/18)

John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:13-17; Psalm 19, 139.

Objective | If it was “**at the right time**, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 6:6) and “**when the fulness of time came**, [that] God sent His Son.” (4:4), there is something helpful for us to understand the culture and the climate of the times in which Jesus lived. Of course, the most significant was the religious climate in which Jesus was born.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” These words that begin the gospel of John are so common to our ears as maturing Christians. But in the day they were first penned, it would have been scandalous. Greek gods were much more insightful, knowledgeable, and powerful than humans, but not infinitely so. Moreover, their most distinctive quality is not goodness, but power: “The distinguishing quality of the [Greek] gods is, above everything, power” (Bowra, *The Greek Experience*, 58). The Greeks believed in gods and goddesses who, they thought, had control over every part of people's lives. The Ancient Greeks believed that they had to pray to the gods for help and protection, because if the gods were unhappy with someone, then they would punish them. That picture of a God-Man would have been, as was confirmed by Paul as being to the Greeks, foolishness (1Corinthians 1:23). Yet, Jesus told Jews that “before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). And then add to that the perceived folly of the Christian message that this God-man died – and at that He died willingly. And you have the scandal of the Cross and the challenge that awaited Jesus and His ambassadors to preach the gospel of Christ Crucified.

Not only does John say that He was God – but that He was creator of all things (1:3). Paul put it this way in Colossians: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together” (1:15-17). Historian Michael Grant summarized the culture in which the Gospel made its announcement to a Roman world: “Tens of thousands of people were gripped by an unreasonable, dismal, desperate, conviction that everything in the world was under the control of Tyche, Fortune, Chance or Luck” (*From Alexander to Cleopatra, The Hellenistic World*, 214).

But John calls this one “who became flesh” (1:14), the Word. John used a philosophically loaded term, *logos*, in these references to the “Word.” John’s audience probably would have been at least vaguely familiar with the use of the term in Greek philosophical discussion. There were probably also some ethnic Jews in John’s audience who might have been aware of the use of “word” (Aramaic *memra*) in various Jewish traditions. The Word was in the beginning (John 1:1–2). Through the Word the Father created (v. 3). And the power of animation that makes created things alive was in the Word: “In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (1:4). Life was in Jesus. That life is the source for any light perceived by any man.

To the Greek philosophers, the *logos* was the impersonal, abstract principle of reason and order in the universe. It was in some sense a creative force, and also the source of wisdom.

The average Greek may not have fully understood all those nuances but would have paid attention that it had something to do with the power of the universe. John presented Jesus as the personification and embodiment of the logos. Unlike the Greek concept, however, Jesus was not an impersonal source, force, principle, or emanation. In Him, the true logos who was God became a man—a concept foreign to Greek thought. He was the “light of men” (1:3) and would be the “light to enlighten every man” (1:9).

But logos was not just a Greek concept. The word of the Lord was also a significant Old Testament theme, well-known to the Jews. The word of the Lord was the expression of divine power and wisdom. By His word God introduced the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:1), gave Israel the Ten Commandments (Ex. 24:3–4; 34:28 and Deut. 5:5; 9:10), attended the building of Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6:11–13), revealed God to Samuel (1 Sam. 3:21), pronounced judgment on the house of Eli (1 Kings 2:27), counseled Elijah (1 Kings 19:9ff.) and directed the long line of prophets (Jer. 1:2; Ezek. 1:3; Dan. 9:2; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Zeph. 1:1; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1; Mal. 1:1).

To Jews, Jesus came to be the incarnation of divine power and revelation. As the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ is God’s final word to mankind: “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son” (Heb. 1:1–2) because He will initiate the new covenant (Luke 22:20; Heb. 9:15; 12:24) as He ends the first; He revealed God to man (John 1:18; 14:7–9) and was the agent of creation (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). Then John said, in Jesus’ eternal preexistence as the Word, He was with God. The English translation does not bring out the full richness of the Greek expression (*pros ton theon*). That phrase means far more than merely that the Word existed with God; it “[gives] the picture of two personal beings facing one another and engaging in intelligent discourse” (W. Robert Cook, *The Theology of John* [Chicago: Moody, 1979], 49).

And that is why John said, “He came to His own but they did not receive Him” (1:11). He was their Creator (1:3); He was their light (1:4); He as the world’s light (1:5). And still, despite the rejection and the ignorance with which He was greeted, He still “gave the right” to any who would believe “to become children of God” (1:12).

“If John had simply written, ‘God became a human being,’ that would have given a false impression, leading one to think that the Lord was no longer filling the universe or reigning in heaven, having abandoned his throne to take up residence here. Instead, John tells us that it was the divine Word that became a human being, and through the Word we know God personally” (Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus – Volume 2: Theological Objections*, 22).

He was an uncommon presence among the world of men – and many would have detected that. But even this Creator could have gazed up into the big, blue sky and saw His creative work. He could have dazed over the seas that brimmed with aquatic life and ate its delicacies after thanksgiving to His Father. And he could have gazed into the eyes of broken men and women and “felt a love for them” as He gently chastised them, His creation. It would have been a uniquely Jesus experience to make our own experience as human

luminaries of His light a calling we would be embolden to follow and a path we could believe we could walk – because He did (c.f. 1Peter 2:21ff).

Yet, here He is – the truly Unique one. He was the Creator – among the Created. What did that look like when He heard Psalm 19 read in Synagogue – or in the Temple reading? Like Psalm 23, most believers – like Jews – regard Psalm 19 as one of the most beloved. It is a poetic and theological masterpiece. Essentially, it’s a meditation on the life’s meaning within God’s creation. It is divided into three distinct sections: a meditation on creation, on the Law, and on the sinful reality of human life. The Psalmist’s first thoughts on creation declare that it is, in itself, a revelation of the glory of God (c.f. Romans 1: 20). In the Psalm’s second section, the poet turns to God’s revelation in the Law. The Psalmist said that Law (or Torah) is the revelation of God in Scripture, which finds its ultimate center in Jesus Christ. Still, an important and indispensable aspect of this special revelation is the law, and that’s the focus of this Psalm and others, such as Psalm 119. The Psalmist emphasizes here that the law of the Lord offers the gift of living our human lives wisely. At verse 11 the focus of the Psalm turns abruptly to the realities of human life in a sinful and fallen world. Not only are the words of the law sweet as honey, but “by them is your servant warned.” The law of the Lord doesn’t merely enlighten us, it also confronts human sin and warn us of its dangers. So what did the Creator consider – when He reflected on these words?

Perhaps He wanted us to remember, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4: 15-16). Jesus our Savior offers us a merciful understanding of the battle we face, and the grace to overcome sin.

The closing verse of this Psalm, memorized by so many, shows the Psalm’s orientation toward God. He asks that the “words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable” to God the creator and redeemer. And the Creator was there – to heal us. The Hebrew words translated “be acceptable” are a technical term for a qualified offering in the temple. In essence the Psalmist sees his whole life as an offering to our creator and redeemer on the altar of burning faith and love to God. Or, as Paul puts it in Romans 12, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Romans 12:1). And the Creator among the Creation – would think for certain – the very same thing.

Next Lesson: 9. The Lord Against the Deceiver (2/1).

Read ahead: Matthew 4:1-11; 23-25; Luke 4:1-13

Compassionate Creator: Becoming Human For Me by Bruce Morton; Chapter 10
Sold on Amazon and 21st Century Christian or other Christian Bookstores.