May the peace the angel proclaimed, the peace the Christ-child brings, fill your hearts and lives today and every day! Amen.

Christmas Day — John 1:14-18
December 25, 2021 — 55-37-63/68/42/56-62

Ponder Christmas with John and See the Glory!
I. The glory of God's Son in the manger.
II. The glory of God's grace and truth.

Dear Christian friends,

When we think of Christmas **most of us** probably think of LUKE'S ACCOUNT of Christmas. It's Luke's who TELLS US about ***"Caesar Augustus' decree"*** – about **Mary and Joseph** making that trip **from Nazareth** to **Bethlehem**. Luke INFORMS US about ***"the swaddling clothes – the manger – the no room in the inn."*** Luke TAKES US OUT to those ***"shepherds keeping watch over their flocks"*** and with those shepherds we SEE ***"an angel of the Lord and the glory of the Lord shining around"*** them – we HEAR with them that ***"good news of great joy"*** – we JOIN the shepherds as they ***"hurry off and find Mary and Joseph and the Baby, lying in the manger."*** THAT'S Christmas!

Do you remember how **Luke's account** of Christmas ends? ***"Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart."*** John invites us to DO THE SAME THING with these **awesome** verses. John assumes we're FAMILIAR with **Luke's account** of Christmas so he doesn't REPEAT those **details**. Instead John here ***"ponders"*** Christmas – MULLS it over – looking at this – thinking about that. **This glorious** Christmas morning PONDER CHRISTMAS WITH JOHN and 1)see the glory of **God's Son** in the manger and 2)see the glory of God's ***"grace and truth."***

I. See the glory of God's Son in the manger.

Let's join John at the manger. WITH JOHN see ***"the firstborn Son"*** of the virgin Mary ***"wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in that manger."*** SEE that familiar sight and PONDER it **with John**. John is awe-struck. ***"The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen His glory, the glory He has as the only-begotten from the Father."***

To the human eye there IS NO GLORY to **see here** just a baby who looks like **every other** newborn baby EXCEPT He's ***"lying in a manger."*** But to the EYE OF FAITH what glory to behold – ***"the glory of God's only-begotten Son."*** That Baby is our ETERNAL GOD born our **flesh-and-blood** brother – our almighty Creator born a **helpless creature**. That Baby is ***"Immanuel"*** – God Himself with us.

PONDER that as you hear again what John had just written about that Baby. ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him everything was made, and without Him not one thing was made that has been made."***

According to God's command Mary's Son will be named ***"Jesus – for He will save His people from their sins."*** John has ANOTHER NAME for Jesus – ***"the Word."*** PONDER that name as you kneel at the manger **with John**.

"The Word." We use words to COMMUNICATE with each other. We can't read each other's **minds**. YOU can't really know me if I DON'T TALK to you. You can make some guesses about me BY WATCHING me but FIRST IMPRESSIONS are **often totally wrong**. A person we thought was an ALOOF SNOB turns out to be a **really nice, caring** person. You can watch me but you CAN'T REALLY KNOW me – know what I'm like – what I'm thinking – UNLESS I TALK to you.

In a FAR HIGHER WAY that is also so true about God. PONDERING this marvelous world that God has made we can see God's **wisdom**, His **power**, **kindness**. As we observe the MESS the world is

now in some might THINK WRONGLY that God is nowhere to **be found** – that God doesn't care about us. We CAN'T REALLY KNOW God – know what God is like – what God is thinking or doing or **planning** – UNLESS GOD TALKS to us.

Kneel at the manger and PONDER **with John** that name ***"the Word." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh."*** That Baby is the ULTIMATE REVELATION of God. In Hebrews 1 we read, ***"In the past, God spoke to our forefathers by the prophets at many times and in many ways. In these last days, He has spoken to us by his Son."*** Unlike everybody else Jesus is THE EXPERT on God because He is God. AS the eternal Son of God Jesus enjoys a UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP with God the Father. ***"No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is close to the Father's side, has made Him known."*** So God the Father tells us, ***"This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him."*** To refuse to listen to Jesus – to think WE KNOW BETTER than Jesus – that just makes no sense!

Kneel at the manger **with John** and PONDER Christmas – ***"the Word became flesh."*** DO AS MARY did – ***"treasure up all these things, pondering them in (your) heart"*** – MULLING CHRISTMAS over **again** and again – looking at this – thinking about that. It's AWESOME!

"The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen His glory, the glory He has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Kneel at the manger – PONDER Christmas with John and…

II. See the glory of God's *"grace and truth."*

God has so many **Christmas presents** for us at the manger – ALL WRAPPED UP in ***"the Word made flesh."*** PONDER **with John** two of those presents – God's ***"grace and truth."***

"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." PONDER how carefully and exactly John wrote that. ***"The law was GIVEN."*** The ***"law"*** – the 10 Commandments – didn't evolve over time – people generally deciding it's NOT GOOD to disobey your parents – kill people – rob banks. GOD GAVE us those commandments and He did that ***"through Moses"*** at Mt. Sinai.

PONDER that! God gave us the commandments – we HAVE NO RIGHT to change them **in any way** – to ignore – overrule – **disobey** them. When God gave those commandments He didn't first ask the Israelites for their opinion – IF THEY APPROVED of the commandments or not. God didn't ask them to CONSIDER OBEYING the commandments – or at least to DO THEIR BEST.

"Be holy," God said, ***"for I the LORD your God am holy."*** With those ten commandments God SPELLED OUT exactly what He meant with ***"holy." "Holy*** covers every area and every minute of our lives – our personal relationship WITH GOD – our relationships with our **parents** – **spouse** – **children** – **government** – **neighbor**. Or to use Paul's words in the epistle reading – we are to ***"reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives."***

God gave us those commandments but WE HAVEN'T GIVEN God the obedience He **expects** and **deserves**. That's not just a MISTAKE or **poor choice** on our part. That's rebellion and defiance of our Creator. That has its CONSEQUENCES – eternal consequences. Christmas will NOT BE ***"good news of great joy"*** if we're not honest about our sin and guilt and the eternal rejection and punishment WE DESERVE because of our sins. The only thing GOD OWES you and me is a life that's a **living hell** followed by an eternity in the real hell. That we today hear the angel instead proclaim, ***"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a SAVIOR"*** – WOW! That is PURE GRACE!

Kneel at the manger and PONDER Christmas **with John**. ***"The Word became flesh."*** God's Son was born Mary's Son in Bethlehem TO BE THE SAVIOR of the world! Today we see Jesus a **little Baby**. Just watch Jesus GROW UP. He lives a life PERFECT **in every way** – perfectly loving and

obeying and **trusting** His heavenly Father – EVERY MINUTE of His life. Jesus lived that life FOR US – IN OUR PLACE. We get **all the credit** for Jesus' holy life.

Today we see Jesus **in the manger** but we know the DAY IS COMING when we'll see Jesus nailed to the cross – hanging dead on His cross. God doesn't shrug off our sins with a "NO BIG DEAL – **don't worry** about it." God took all our sin **off of us** and He put it all on His own INNOCENT Son. ***"The Word became flesh"*** so that He could TAKE OUR PLACE on that cross and endure the punishment we had coming – shed His blood and sacrifice His life as ***"the Lamb of God (to) take away the sin of the world."*** We CAN'T SEPARATE Christmas from **Good Friday** and we dare not separate **Good Friday** from Easter. Our Savior who died for us rose triumphant from the dead that first Easter morning!

Kneel at the manger! PONDER Christmas with John! WHAT GRACE! Trusting in Jesus we now enjoy **God's forgiveness** of all our sins – we have a **whole new relationship** with our Creator – we are going straight to heaven when we die. ALL BECAUSE ***"the Word became flesh!"***

Kneel at the manger and PONDER this - ***"Out of His fullness we have all received grace upon grace."*** Jesus is ***"full"*** of grace – a NEVER ENDING – NEVER USED UP supply of grace – wave-afterwave of grace **washing over** us every day of our lives! ***"Out of the fulness"*** of God's grace we have DAILY FORGIVENESS of all our sins – the PRIVILEGE of prayer anytime, **anywhere**, **about anything** – the COMFORT of God's promises - His presence - His **power**.

Kneel at the manger – PONDER Christmas with John – and see the glory of God's ***"grace AND TRUTH."*** We live in a CYNICAL, **politically correct** world. ***"The truth"*** is RELATIVE to how I feel about things – how you see things – EVEN IF we see the **same** things in **different** ways. Our world embraces Pilate's SNEERING, ***"What is truth?"*** as if NOBODY can ever really be sure of what's true.

Kneel at the manger – PONDER Christmas with John and learn GOD'S ***"truth."*** There at the manger – in ***"the Word become flesh"*** – is THE TRUTH of how much God **really does** LOVE us – the ***"truth"*** that God ALWAYS KEEPS His promises – the ***"truth"*** that God is ALWAYS IN CHARGE and in control ***"working all things"*** according to His **plans** and **schedule** and for our eternal good. We DON'T ALWAYS SEE those ***"truths"*** with our eyes. Sometimes those ***"truths"*** look like EMPTY LIES. The devil wants us to DOUBT and QUESTION those ***"truths."*** But kneeling at the manger – PONDERING Christmas with John – our doubts and fears **disappear**. There in the manger is ***"the Word become flesh."***

Kneel at the manger and PONDER Christmas **with John**. Keep mulling it over – looking at this – seeing that. PONDER with John ***"the Word become flesh"*** and SEE THE GLORY of God's ***"grace and truth."*** Amen.

EXPLANATION TO THE 2nd ARTICLE