



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

The apostle John makes it clear that Jesus came to this earth “not of his own accord but to do the will of the Father” (cf. 5:43; 7:16, 28; 8:42). Christ’s unmitigated purpose for life and ministry is our example of living in this world with a singular focus. In fact, he taught his disciples to pray with their eyes upon the Father’s will (Matt. 6:9–10). What does this look like? F. F. Bruce writes of an elderly Scottish Bible teacher who had been teaching for over 70 years. When asked of his objective for life, this teacher wisely replied, “The Lord is keeping me alive for His purpose. My prayer is that I may rise to His purpose.” I pray that we will rise to God’s purpose today, praying not for our own will, but for the will of our Father!



Nathan and Christie were sweethearts at Appalachian Bible College and married after graduation in 2011. They moved to Virginia Beach to begin training at VBTS and forged a testimony of joy and godliness on campus. Upon Nathan’s graduation (MBS, 2015), they accepted a call to pastor Sutter Salem Bible Church in Warsaw, IL. After pastoring there for over four years (2015–20), God burdened their hearts to plant a church in Five Points, one of the fastest growing areas of Buffalo, NY, near Buffalo State University. They have partnered with Faith Baptist Church (Camp Point, IL) and Continental Baptist Missions, and by God’s grace have already raised about 30% of their needed monthly support. Nathan shares, *Our desire is to see a body of believers, formed from this church in Buffalo, dedicated to making disciples in their homes, their neighborhoods, and around the world.* We pray that God will bless the Robbins family and prosper the work of their hands.



John's Prologue & The True Meaning of Christmas (John 1:1–18)

John's Gospel is striking. Readers of all ages are captured by John's ability to relay profound theological information in simple language. Though John purposely *omits* certain events in the life of Jesus (i.e. virgin birth, baptism by John, the wilderness temptations, transfiguration, and agony in the garden of Gethsemane), his christology is pregnant with theological material not found in the other three gospels. John's innovative writing style is immediately displayed in his Prologue (1:1–18), which a former professor of mine declared to be "the most profound collection of words anywhere in the world." Though we cannot review all 18 verses in this short essay, let's trace three of John's distinctive ideas about Jesus by framing each with a question.

Question 1: Who is Jesus? The answer to this oft-repeated question is found in the opening to John's gospel: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (1:1). Whether John was using this first verse to combat a christological heresy in his day, or just clearly marking the direction of his Gospel, we do not know; however, John calls Jesus "the Word" three times in this verse. F. F. Bruce says that by using the term *logos* ("word") John is recalling for his readers the OT phrase, "the word of God," which describes "God in action, especially in creation, revelation, and deliverance" (29). In sum, what God is, Jesus is; and what God does, Jesus does. John glories in Jesus' identity as the "pre-existent One" (existing before his birth, 1:1a), and the "co-existent One" (distinct yet equal, 1:1b) with the Father, and "of the same substance" as God (1:1c). This verse, Mounce writes, "is one of the most theologically terse statements one could ever find" (*Basic Greek*, 29).

Question 2: What did Jesus do? The answer is found in the middle of John's Prologue: *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* (1:14). The marvel of John's theology resides in this simple fact: the *logos* became human. By using the verb "became" (*ginomai*), John is testifying that in eternity past "the Word" was not flesh, but at a moment in time he entered human history born of a woman. While his divine nature remained intact, Jesus took our human nature without our sin. As John's gospel unfolds, he explains the significance of this miraculous act of humility; but in this Prologue, he states that the God-Man "lived among us" and "we looked upon his glory." According to John, Jesus' glory had two aspects: it was a one-of-a-kind glory making him the "unique Son," and it was an accessible glory for all humankind to view and adore. Sadly, the world was blind to him who radiated divine glory, as seen later in John's gospel (cf. 9:40–41). In Jesus' own words, "the people loved the darkness rather than the light" (3:19).

Question 3: Why did Jesus come? The final verse of John's Prologue addresses this question: *No one has ever seen God; the only ("unique," same word in 1:14) God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known* (1:18). Since God is invisible to the human eye, Jesus came for this specific purpose: to explain (*exhegeomai*) God to humanity. This is a rather startling statement since the human world that Jesus entered "did not care to know him" (1:10) and "refused to receive him" (1:11). However, he (the Son) who was dwelling in mutual love and eternal satisfaction with the Father, left his heavenly glory "to publish the divine secret" of God's love for the world (3:16; Barrett, 170). The Son's incarnation did not just reveal this divine secret but demonstrated it through his substitutionary death on a cross (1:29; Rom. 5:8). With this revelation of God's plan for his Son's humanity, John closes his Prologue. John's words are distinct, but his ideas were prophesied in the OT and explained throughout the NT. His message unfolds the true meaning of Christmas—in Jesus, God's love for all of us is made known!