

# The Excellent Word, Part 2

John 1:17–18

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## Introduction

Well, we return again to our series in the Gospel of John, where we have come to fix our eyes on Jesus, as He is displayed for us in all His glory. We want to behold, with the eyes of faith, the Savior that the Apostle John presents for us in this God-breathed account of the Lord Jesus Christ—in His glory as the one and only eternal God, consubstantial with the Father; in His glory as the true God-man, who took on a human nature, consubstantial with our own; in His glory as the Mediator between God and men, who has lived, and died, and risen again on behalf of sinners; and in His glory as the bread of life and the fountain of living waters—Himself the only true and lasting satisfaction that is to be found in this world.

And my prayer has been that the sight of His glory revealed herein would strengthen us to follow Him faithfully in this world that He has sent us into to love and to serve.

And John wastes no time in presenting the Lord Jesus in the fullness of His glory. The prologue of John’s Gospel—these first 18 verses of chapter 1—starts in at the deep end of the theological pool. As we’ve taken our time, working slowly through this wondrous introduction to the person and work of our Savior, we have already been ravished by the richness of His beauty. John introduces us to Him as “the Word”—the supreme revelation of God the Father to mankind, the pinnacle self-expression of God to man.

In the first five verses of the prologue, John introduces us to the divine Word. He is eternal God—distinct from the Father, yet consubstantial with the Father—*with* God, and yet *God* Himself. He is the Creator of all things, the self-existent fountain of all life and being. He is the Light of all men: the only hope of those who walk in darkness. And He is the victor over darkness, who triumphed over all the forces of darkness, when He condemned sin by His death, and conquered death by His resurrection.

And then, as if John couldn’t bear to speak of the glory of this divine Word without introducing us to the one who would proclaim that glory, in verses 6 to 8, John introduces us to the Word and His witness. And John the Baptist serves as something of a prototype for all of Christ’s people who are tasked with proclaiming His glory throughout the earth, testifying to the truths of His person and work on behalf of sinners.

And then, verses 9 to 13 speak about the Word in His World. John declares that the true Light has come into the world, and that the world has responded in one of two ways: sinners either

disbelieve Him, and reject Him, and continue to walk in darkness; or God shines spiritual light and life into their hearts, raises them from spiritual death in the new birth, and grants them the gift of saving faith in the Word. And to those who receive Him by faith, this Word Himself sovereignly grants the right for them to become the adopted sons and daughters of God.

And then, in the majestic mountain peak of verse 14, John displays the glory of the Incarnate Word. He tells us that the divine Word “became flesh”—that the eternal Second person of the Trinity took on a full and true human nature into personal union with the unchanging divine nature. John tells us that in Jesus, the eternal, infinite God tabernacles among sinners, and is the nexus of God’s fellowship with man. The eternally-begotten Son—the only begotten from the Father—is the One by whom spiritual orphans are adopted as sons of the Most High God, because they are made to see His glory. And He is “full of grace and truth”—saving us by His grace, and leading us by His truth.

And then, last week, we set our sights upon verses 15 to 18. We had the divine Word in verses 1 to 5, the Word and His witness in verses 6 to 8, the Word *in His world*, verses 9 to 13, and the incarnate Word in verse 14. I said last time that in verse 15 to 18, John presents Jesus as the Excellent Word. John closes his prologue by speaking of how this eternal Word made flesh excels and surpasses all others, even the greatest and most significant figures of redemptive history.

And I mentioned that in these final four verses, John presents **four excellencies** of the excellent Word that set the Lord Jesus Christ far above everyone and everything. **Four excellencies** that exalt the glory of our Savior, that feed our faith, and that strengthen our souls to follow Him faithfully. And we got to two of them last time.

### **Review I: He Surpasses the Greatest Man who Ever Lived (v. 15)**

In the first place, we saw that this Excellent Word **surpasses the greatest man who ever lived**. Look with me at verse 15. “John”—that is, John the Baptist—“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.”’” Literally: “He who comes after me has become before me, for He *was* before me.”

Jesus was born six months after John, and began His ministry after John. And theirs was a society in which “chronological priority meant superiority” (Morris, 96). And Jesus Himself said, in Matthew 11:11, that “among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist.” So **the greatest man who had ever lived** up until that point was John the Baptist, and *John* says, “This One who comes after me has **surpassed** me! He has come to

outrank me! He has excelled me in every way! If He says I'm the greatest up until now, He is greater than the greatest!"

Why? "Because He *was* before me"! "He comes after me, because, according to His humanity, He was born after I was, and began His ministry after I began mine. But He was before me, because, according to His deity, He is the uncreated, eternal God of heaven and earth. My days are the days of yesterday, and last week, and a few years back. '*His* goings forth,' Micah 5:2, 'are...from the days of *eternity*.' I may be the *prophet* of the most High (Luke 1:76), but He is the *Son* of the Most High (Luke 1:32). I'm a *minister* of the New Covenant, yes. But He is the *Mediator* of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15)," This Jesus **surpasses the greatest man who ever lived.**"

## **Review II: He Supplies the Grace Sufficient for Every Sinner (v. 16)**

And then, we came to a **second excellency** of this excellent Word—namely, number two: that **He supplies the grace sufficient for every sinner**. And that came in verse 16: "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace."

And O how we must worship Christ for His fullness! We are spiritually bankrupt, spiritually destitute. We have no resources to commend ourselves to God or save ourselves from His just condemnation. We are spiritually empty. But He is *full* of grace—full of unmerited favor to be bestowed upon poor sinners! His fullness **supplies the grace** for our emptiness.

And it is "of *His* fullness" that we all receive. He and He alone is full of the "grace upon grace" that we so desperately need. And so if we seek it anywhere but by faith in Him, we will find ourselves just as poor, just as destitute, just as bankrupt as we were before we began. There is no other way to fill the emptiness of our spiritual poverty except through faith in Him.

But in Him, drawing from His fullness, we find a fountain of "grace upon grace," that is inexhaustible—that **He supplies the grace sufficient for every sinner**. And literally, "grace in place of grace." Like "wave upon wave"—like waves of grace rolling in on the seashore. When one wave of grace breaks onto the shore and washes back out, there's just another wave right behind it, in its place, with a fresh **supply** of grace. It's the language of abundance, of limitlessness and boundlessness.

And so, though our heads hang in shame over committing the same sins against the same Lord who deserves better from His people than we give Him, nevertheless we don't keep our distance from Jesus until we feel bad enough about our sin. No, we don't let our spiritual emptiness drive us away from His fullness. The recognition of our bankruptcy propels us to flee *unto* Him, where we may draw once again from the fullness of His grace!

You may drink, and drink, and drink from the fullness of that fountain of grace and you will never exhaust His **supply**! He is more full of grace than we are of sin! He is Bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, Light for the blind, healing for the sick, and life for the dead. And when we fly to Him for fresh grace, we glorify Him as the One whose **grace** is so **sufficient** that it **supplies** our every need. We magnify His fullness, by trusting that He is strong enough to rescue us when we call! And so, as Newton said, “The best return for one like me, / So wretched and so poor; / Is from His gifts to draw a plea, / And ask Him still for more.” The best praise from unworthy sinners who need so much grace is to go to Him, trusting that His fullness will **supply** even more grace.

This Excellent Word excels all others, because He **supplies the grace sufficient for every sinner**. Everything we could ever wish to have is in Him! And so, the old hymn counseled us: “Draw and win and fill completely, / Till the cup o’erflow the brim; / What have we to do with idols / Who have companied with Him?”

### **III. He Supersedes the Glorious Mediator of the Old Covenant (v. 17)**

Well, that brings us, now, to a **third excellency** of this Excellent Word. Number three: **He supersedes the glorious mediator of the Old Covenant**. Look with me at verse 17: “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”

“The law” that “was given through Moses” is a reference to the Torah—to the laws and instructions of the Mosaic Covenant, starting with the Ten Commandments in Exodus 19 and 20, to the various laws for day to day living in the rest of the Book of Exodus, to the laws of the sacrificial system and ceremonial purity in Leviticus, including the instruction of the Book of Numbers, and all the way through the second giving of the Law in the Book of Deuteronomy.

And this Law was a wonderful gift from God to His people. We see that in a number of ways, but especially in how the Psalms teach us that the law of God is the delight of the child of God. In Psalm 1, and verse 2, we learn that the blessed man is the one whose “delight is in the law of Yahweh; and in his law he meditates day and night.” In Psalm 119:97, we read, “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day!” And in Psalm 119:72: “The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.” The law of God is the delight of the child of God!

In Deuteronomy 32:47, as Moses concludes this second giving of the law for the second generation of Israel (those about to enter the promised land), he says to the nation that this covenant law was “not an idle word for you; indeed,” he says, “it is your *life*. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land.” There is a sense in which the promise of life attended

this law! In Leviticus 18:5, God says, “So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may *live* if he does them.” In some significant sense, the giving of God’s law to Israel through Moses was gracious. Not that we confuse law and grace; Romans 11:6 says if we fail to distinguish law from grace, we make grace no longer grace. But in the sense that it *is* a gracious gift for God to reveal His mind to direct our steps. Surely that’s what Psalm 119:29 means when it says, “Remove the false way from me, and *graciously* grant me Your law.”

It’s what Moses says when he says the nation’s obedience to the law is, Deuteronomy 4:6, “your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For ... what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?” “What nation has a law so righteous as this? What nation has a God so near them as to give them such a law and guide them in holiness and wisdom?” The law is a privilege! It would be no mark against the justice of God to judge all peoples by the moral standard of His own character and not reveal that standard to them in His law. God is under no obligation whatsoever to reveal His mind to His creatures in that way. He’s already revealed Himself in creation and in the conscience of man. But the fact that He goes beyond that—the fact that He doesn’t leave us guessing at the standard of moral righteousness—but instead reveals His mind and directs our steps out of the path of judgment and into the path of blessing is *grace*.

And so, while it’s certainly true that the Apostle John is drawing a contrast between the Law given through Moses and the grace that has come through Jesus Christ, it’s not true that we must so push that antithesis as to evacuate any grace from the law! Again: “*Graciously* grant me Your law.” There was plenty of grace in the Old Testament! In Jeremiah 31:2, God says, “The people who survived the sword found *grace* in the wilderness.” Or Psalm 84:11: “Yahweh gives *grace* and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” So then why the sharp contrast in John 1:17?

Well, even though the law “is holy and righteous and good,” as Paul says in Romans 7:12, and even though the promise of life attends obedience, *we* are sinful. We are fallen. We come from our mothers’ wombs with hearts of stone. Because we are sinful to our very core, we can’t keep the law. No one can. And for that reason, the righteousness that God requires for salvation could never have been bestowed by the law. Paul says in Galatians 3:21: “For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.” The law was not able to impart righteousness. The law was not ever, nor is it now, able to save anyone. It could only ever bring the knowledge of sin, show us the standard, and prove to us that we don’t have the righteousness that God requires in ourselves. It could never change our sinful hearts. It could never provide the power for the obedience it demanded.

And so Galatians 3:10 says, “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.’” James 2:10 says, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.” And so, in 2 Corinthians 3:7, Paul calls the law “the ministry of *death*.” He says in Romans 7:10: “This commandment, which was to result in *life*, proved to result in *death* for me.” The Law kills, because when it is confronted with sinful human nature that fails to meet its standard of perfection, it pronounces upon us a sentence of death, a sentence of “condemnation,” he says again in 2 Corinthians 3:9.

And so the Law, while a gracious revelation of God’s will to sinners, could not minister the righteousness that God required for sinners to gain access to fellowship with Him. For that, only the grace of the New Covenant would suffice. Paul goes on to say in Galatians 3:22: “But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise”—that is, the New Covenant promise—“by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” And verse 24: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” in Christ’s works, and not by the doing of our own works. The Law points to the need for grace. But grace and truth come in the person and work of Jesus.

The ministry of the Old Covenant, points us to the ministry of the New Covenant, whose great promise is, Ezekiel 36:26: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” And it is this New Covenant promise that Jesus has come to institute, because, John 1:13, those who believe in His name have been born again. Born of God! Their hearts of stone have been transformed and brought to life by the grace of regeneration!

So that now, under the New Covenant, God’s commandments are not merely pressure from without—only informing you of the duty which is impossible for you to do. Now, they are power from within! One writer said, “The distinguishing feature of [the New Covenant in Christ Jesus] is that for every precept there is power and for every statute there is strength” (Storms, 2 Corinthians, 86). By the power of the Holy Spirit working in your heart, you, dear Christian, are empowered to live a life of joyful obedience to God, with eagerness and gladness, so that you can say with David, “Your law is my *delight*” (Ps 119:77).

So you see: “grace and truth were *realized* through Jesus Christ.” The grace that the Law of Moses could not impart was realized in the work of the Mediator of a new and better covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth that the Law of Moses revealed—even that was revealed in shadows and figures: the Passover lamb, whose blood shed in the place of God’s people, covered and protected them from God’s wrath against their sin; the scapegoat, which bore in itself all the guilt of God’s people and was banished from His holy presence, so that His sinful people might

maintain fellowship and communion with Him; the manna from heaven that fed God's starving and complaining people in the wilderness. All of those pictures were *shadows* of the truth that is now *realized* in the person of Jesus. He is the true Passover Lamb, who has been sacrificed in our place, 1 Corinthians 5:7. He is the true scapegoat, who suffered outside the camp, Hebrews 13:12. He is "the true bread out of heaven" from the Father. "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world" (John 6:32–33; cf. Henry).

And so this Excellent Word **supersedes the glorious mediator of the Old Covenant**. And the Old Covenant was glorious! And its *mediator*, Moses, was *literally* glorious! Second Corinthians 3:7 says, "The ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with *glory*, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face." Aside from the fact that, at the giving of the Mosaic Law, Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, and Yahweh descended on it in fire, and that there was thunder and lightning, and the mountain quaked, and that the glory cloud covered the mountain for six days—aside from all of that: when Moses went up to the mountain to speak with God, from the sheer reality of being in the holy presence of God Himself, Moses' own face reflected the radiance of God's glory, so much so that he had to put a veil over his face so as not to terrify the people! This was a glorious ministry, with a glorious mediator!

In fact, in Numbers 12, verses 6 to 8, God says, "If there is a prophet among you, I, Yahweh, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of Yahweh." God speaks to Moses, literally, "mouth to mouth"—or we might say, "face to face." God even says Moses beholds the form of Yahweh! We're going to hear in a moment that no one has seen God at any time! But here we're told that Moses beholds the form of God. It's unbelievable!

The **mediator** of the **Old Covenant** was **glorious**. But John's point in verse 17 is the same as Paul's point back to 2 Corinthians 3, verses 7 to 11: "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory! For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory." The "ministry of condemnation" was glorious. The Israelites could behold the glory of God Himself reflected on the face of Moses. But Moses couldn't justify his people. Moses was not the mediator of a ministry of righteousness.

Oh, but the Lord Jesus Christ, friends, He *can* justify His people. Hebrews 8:6: Christ "has obtained a more *excellent* ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a *better* covenant,

which has been enacted on *better* promises.” The glory of the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth—the one in whom grace and truth are realized—His glory **supersedes** and far outshines even the glory of Moses and the Old Covenant. The glory of the law revealed in the face of Moses was no match for the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ!

As one preacher put it, “Moses *points* to grace, but Jesus *performs* grace. Moses *reports* the words of God. Jesus *is* the Word of God. The law *mirrors* the light of God. Jesus *is* the light of God” (Piper, emphases added). And as the author of Hebrews put it, in Hebrews 3:5–6, “Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a *servant*, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a *Son* over His house.” Moses was a faithful servant, but Christ was a faithful Son. This excellent Word **supersedes the glorious mediator of the Old Covenant**.

#### **IV. He Shows the Glory of the Unseen Father (v. 18)**

And that brings us, finally, to a **fourth excellency** of this Excellent Word. Not only does He surpass the greatest man who ever lived, supply the grace sufficient for every sinner, and supersede the glorious mediator of the Old Covenant. He also, number four, **shows the glory of the unseen Father**. Verse 18: “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

“No one has seen God at any time.” This is one of the many categorical statements in Scripture that God is invisible. So many of the historic Protestant confessions of faith go out of their way to affirm the invisibility of God. You see it in the Augsburg Confession of 1530, the Belgic Confession of 1561, the Westminster Confession of 1646, and the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689—among many others. And with good reason! Scripture is replete with affirmations of God’s invisibility. Paul calls Him “the invisible God” in Colossians 1:15. And in 1 Timothy 1:17, he calls Him “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God.” In Hebrews 11:27, the author speaks of God as “Him who is unseen.” And this makes sense, because, as we learn in John 4:24, God is *spirit*, which means He is immaterial, and so cannot be seen. John 6:46: Jesus says, “Not that anyone has seen the Father,” and First John 4:12 repeats John 1:18 exactly: “No one has seen God at any time.” And then, in 1 Timothy 6:15–16, we learn that not only *does* no one see God, but no one *can* see God! Paul says, “the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,” is the One “who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man *has* seen or *can* see.” Seeing God not only does not happen; it’s impossible!

In fact, often in the Old Testament, the prospect of seeing God is attended with the notion of death. In Exodus 33:20, God says to Moses, “No man can see Me and live!” In Genesis 32:30, Jacob names the place where he wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, “Peniel”—literally, “face



of God”—because, he says, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.” In Judges 13:22, Manoah says to his wife, “We will surely die, for we have seen God.” And, of course, they hadn’t seen God in His essence, precisely because, as we’ve seen, that’s impossible. Calvin explains, “They say so with reference to their own time; but they did not see God in any other way than wrapped up in many folds of figures and ceremonies” (54–55). But they had seen just the manifestation of His presence and they were terrified. Sinful man must perish in the unveiled presence of perfect holiness.

All of this testifies to the fundamental infinity and incomprehensibility of God. While God has graciously condescended to reveal Himself truly to mankind in a manner in which finite beings can understand, God as He is in His essence is so infinite—so beyond tracing out—that He remains a mystery to us. As Job says in Job 26:14, what we see of God are “the *fringes* of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him!” God is truly knowable, but He is not comprehensible. In other words, we may know God truly because of what He reveals to us in the accommodations of His revelation, but we cannot know Him fully.

These twin truths—of the knowability yet incomprehensibility of God—are pictured in Moses’ interaction with Yahweh in Exodus 33. And because John has just mentioned Moses in verse 17, we can be certain John’s comment about no one seeing God has reference to Moses. Why? Well, because of texts like Numbers 12:8, which says that God speaks “mouth to mouth” with Moses, and that Moses “beholds the form of Yahweh,” and like Exodus 33:11, which says, “Yahweh used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.” But we know that those are figures of speech, because just nine verses later in Exodus 33:20, God tells Moses, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”

Moses prays that God would show him His glory, and God says, verse 22, “I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.” And, of course, because God is spirit and does not have a body, He does not literally have a back or a face. It is the *shekinah* glory of God that Moses sees—a physical, visible manifestation of God’s presence—His “back,” if you will. But the actual infinite, incomprehensible essence of God—what He calls His “face”—not even Moses can see that!

But this Excellent Word—“the only begotten God”—who stands in the closest possible relation to the Father—He has not only seen Him, but “has *explained* Him.” Back to John 6:46: “Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.” Why? Because He is “the only begotten God.” John uses the same word as he does in verse 14: *monogenēs*, which is rightly translated “only begotten.” As we said in our study of verse 14, this is a reference to the doctrine of eternal generation. What it means for God the Son to be *Son* is that He is eternally begotten from the Father. Just as a son bears the same nature as his father,

and yet *has* that nature *from* his father, so also the eternal Son is consubstantial with the Father, having the identical nature that the Father does, but that He has it *from* the Father.

And so to call Him “the only begotten God” is simply a reference to this reality of the Son’s eternal divine sonship. Obviously, it doesn’t mean that there are several gods and this one, among many, is the only begotten one. No, to speak of “the only begotten God” is to speak of “God the only begotten.” That is to say, “God the *Son*.” And who is more likely to know the Father than His Son? the One who subsists in the identical nature? When the Father acts, He acts by the principle of the divine nature. When the Son acts, He acts by that very same divine nature! If the Father is saying, thinking, doing anything, the Son is right there with Him, subsisting in the identical essence. And who is more likely to know the Father than His Son?

Jesus says this very thing in Matthew 11:27. He says, “No one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son.” We strive and strain to wrap our finite minds around the infinite fullness of God as He’s revealed Himself. Oh, but the Son knows the Father in such comprehensive intimacy, that compared to that knowledge no one else knows the Father at all. The master may choose not to reveal his mind to his servants, but a son knows the heart of his father.

And still further (back to John 1:18), this only-begotten, *homoousios* Son “is in the bosom of the Father.” To be “in someone’s bosom” is to be the object of their special and tender love. The Apostle John calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus *loved*,” and speaks in chapter 13 verse 23 about how he was “reclining on Jesus’ bosom” at the last supper. That’s an indication of a special affection. In Deuteronomy 13:6, Scripture uses this term to describe the tender affection that a husband has for his wife. The King James translates it, “the wife of thy *bosom*”—which the NAS translates, “the wife you *cherish*.” To be “in someone’s bosom,” then, is to be cherished. John is saying the only begotten Son uniquely enjoys the Father’s love and delight—that there is a closeness between them that surpasses that of even the greatest prophet who beheld God’s glory on Mount Sinai. Jesus stands in the closest possible relation to the Father: in His bosom from eternity.

But also, to be in someone’s bosom meant to be privy to their most secret thoughts. The idea is those things that we keep to ourselves, we hide in our hearts, which of course is signified by the chest, by the bosom. And so Calvin observed, “The breast is the seat of counsel” (55). Matthew Henry noted, “Our most secret counsels we are said to hide in our bosom.” And so, again, when Jesus says in Matthew 11:27 that no one knows the Father except the Son, He’s saying the same thing as John in verse 18 here: that, again quoting Henry, “Christ was privy to the bosom-counsels of the Father.” He says, “The prophets sat down at his feet as scholars; Christ lay in his bosom as a friend.” The only-begotten Son knows the Father’s mind because the Father’s mind is

the self-same mind as the Son's mind! *And* the beloved Son knows the Father's mind because He is in His bosom—aware of the most hidden and unseen counsels of His heart.

Which means what? That He is the most qualified One there can be to reveal the God that no one has seen at any time, the *infinite, incomprehensible* God, whose gracious revelations of Himself in His Word and in His world are only the fringes of His ways! Matthew 11:27 doesn't stop by saying, "No one knows the Father except the Son." Jesus says, no one knows the Father except the Son, "and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Jesus is the **revelation** of the God who would otherwise remain unknown to men!

"No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has *explained* Him." "*Exegeomai*." The word from which we get our term *exegesis*—which means to read out of a text (as opposed to reading into a text). Jesus is the exegesis of God! Which is to say: This Jesus **shows the glory of the unseen Father!** He is, Colossians 1:15, "the *image* of the invisible God." He is "the *exact representation* of His nature," Hebrews 1:3.

This is not a fading reflection of the shekinah glory on the face of Moses—as marvelous as that was. This is, 2 Corinthians 4:4, "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." It is, 2 Corinthians 4:6, "the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Moses caught a glimpse of the back of God's glory; Jesus is the embodiment of the fullness of God's glory (cf. Piper). And so Jesus Himself can say to Philip in John 14:9, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Not because Jesus *is* the Father, but because Jesus is everything *that* the Father is! Because He is *in* the Father and the Father is in Him! Because the only-begotten of the Father is of the same nature as the Father! He is the perfect, visible exposition of the invisible Father! "No man can see My face and live!" In *Christ*, we behold the face of God and now can do nothing *but* live—nothing *but* rise from the dead! Because "everyone who *beholds* the Son and *believes* in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will *raise him up* on the last day" (John 6:40).

And so the great commentator, John Gill, wrote: Jesus "has clearly and fully declared [God's] nature, perfections, purposes, promises, counsels, covenant, word, and works; his thoughts and schemes of grace; his love and favour to the sons of men; his mind and will concerning the salvation of his people; he has made, and delivered a fuller revelation of these things, than ever was yet; and to which *no* other revelation in the present state of things will be added." If you want to know what the **unseen Father** is like, you look at Jesus. He is God incarnate! He is the *Word* of God: the ultimate and pinnacle self-expression of God.

And so when you see Jesus turn water into wine (2:9), you can know that God is the omnipotent Lord of all creation. When you see Jesus make a whip and overturn tables in the temple (2:15), you know that God is holy, and hates blasphemy, and desires to be worshiped in spirit and truth.

When you see Jesus go out of His way to meet the Samaritan woman at the well (4:1–26), you know that God seeks and saves that which was lost. When you see Jesus healing the nobleman’s son (4:46–54) and the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1–8), or when you see Him feeding the thousands who followed Him (6:1–14), grieved because the crowds have nothing to eat (cf. Matt 15:32), you can know that God is a God of compassion upon sinners.

When you see Him silencing the mob ready to stone the woman caught in the adultery (8:1–11), you can know that God delights to forgive the worst of sinners. When you see Him weeping over Mary and Martha’s grief (11:34), you can know that God hates sin, and that He cares for His children who groan under sin’s curse. When you see *Him*, “the Lord and the Teacher,” washing His disciples feet (13:5ff), you can know that God loves His unworthy servants, and delights to serve them as an expression of His overflowing fullness. When you see Jesus comforting His disciples throughout His upper room discourse (John 14–16), you know that God is committed to pursuing the full and everlasting joy of His people in Himself.

And when you see Him betrayed (18:3), and arrested (18:12), and bound (18:12), and interrogated (18:19, 28–38), and disowned (18:25–27), and crowned with thorns (19:2), and mocked (19:3), and slapped in the face (19:3), and condemned (19:16), and crucified (19:18), you can know “the breadth, and length, and height, and depth” of the love of God for hell-deserving criminals like you and me! a love that “surpasses knowledge”! And when you see Him risen from the grave (20:16), and ascending into heaven (20:17; cf. Acts 1:9), and seated in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority (Eph 1:20–21), you can know that God has conquered sin and death, and rules the world in uncontested majesty and sovereign blessedness, and *will* keep His promises to bring every last one of His children safely home to Him!

### Conclusion

This Jesus, dear friends—this Excellent Word—**shows the glory of the unseen Father**. He **surpasses** John the Baptist—the greatest of all the prophets. He **supersedes** and excels Moses—the lawgiver himself. He is the substance and the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. What does Philip tell Nathanael, chapter 1 verse 45, “We have found Him of whom *Moses* in the *Law* and also the *Prophets* wrote.” What does Jesus say in Matthew 5:17? “Do not think that I came to abolish the *Law* or the *Prophets*; I did not come to abolish but to *fulfill*.” And what does Paul say in Romans 3:21–22, a passage that is the beating heart of the Gospel? That in Christ Jesus, “the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by *the Law and the Prophets*, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.” The Law and the Prophets point us to faith in Jesus!

Dear friend, do you believe? If not, today is the day of salvation! Turn away from sin and self—abandon all confidence and trust in yourself for righteousness, and put all your trust, all your

hope, all your confidence in this Excellent Word to avail with you in the courtroom of God. God Himself, come near to you in the assumption of your own human nature! Greater than the greatest man who ever lived! Sufficient to meet every need you have! Greater than the mediator who saw God on the mountain! Perfect revelation of Almighty God! I can assure you: you'll never find a Savior with better credentials! Dear sinner, come to Christ, and find life in this Word made flesh.

And to my brothers and sisters: behold your Savior. Feast the eyes of your soul upon your Excellent Lord. And worship Him for His excellencies. Load your heart and your conscience with the beauty of His glory, so that you will be able to praise Him as you ought; so that you will be able to resist temptation when it comes; so that you will be able to follow Him faithfully in obedience; Dear people: enjoy Jesus, this matchless King; for as you enjoy Him, you glorify Him.