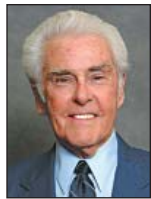


# Saved by God's grace

An overture for symphonic music gives a brief introduction to the musical composition that the orchestra will perform including the amplification of the overture. Scholars say that the overture to William Tell is like a mini-symphony designed to entertain the audience.



**John Howell**

The prelude or overture for our lesson in the first chapter of John's Gospel is called the prologue to the larger scope of the full Gospel. In an older Studies of John's Gospel, John L. Hill provides an overview of the prologue:

"In this Prologue the inspired writer [tells us] that Jesus was and is God, that he came from God and dwelt among men, that the world did not know him, that his own people did not receive him, but to some who did receive him he gave power to become the sons of God because they believed on him, and were born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh or of man, but of God" (p. 2).

The prose of this description is authentic to the Greek text but it does not thrill us in the way that reading the entire prologue stirs our spiritual awareness. When we pray over John's description of Christ as the Word of God, his explanation challenges our imagination. "The Word [logos] became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

**Jesus is God who created us and gave us life (John 1:1-5).** "In the beginning was the Word" ties John's Gospel to its Hebrew source in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The Word was God in his pre-existent existence and was the Creator of all that was made.

Two powerful realities of the

creative purpose were life and light. These two qualities are mutually desired by all men, and John attributes their origin to the Christ. In the text, the life being described could be material life but it appears that John is focused in this case on the spiritual life coming from Christ.

The other significant emphasis of this section is "the darkness" or evil. Herschel H. Hobbs points out that the "picture in verse 5 is that of darkness chasing light, but never able to overtake it or put it out. Evil did/does its best to distinguish the Light. But He keeps on shining" (The Gospel of John: Invitation to Life, p. 8).

The creative ministry of Jesus is exemplified in our familiar hymn, "For the Beauty of the Earth:" "For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies... Lord of all to Thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise."

**Jesus came to earth to make us God's children (John 1:9-13)** Our Dec. 6 lesson focused on God's plan for adopting children into his family. Adoption symbolized for John, and for the Apostle Paul, God's love and grace in accepting believers as intimate members of his family. John makes it clear in our text — "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision nor of a husband's will, but born of God."

Bill Gaither's testimonial hymn celebrates our joy in becoming part of God's family by faith. "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God — I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood! Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, for I'm part of the family, the family of God." Just as in our physical nature we can become part of a family either by birth or adoption, in our spiritual nature we can become part of God's family by new birth or by

## Bible Studies for Life

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Scripture: John 1:1-5, 9-14

adoption through the work of the Holy Spirit. "It is interesting that John's Gospel does not make use of the nationalistic kingdom language so characteristic of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; instead we have the language of the family" (Earl F. Palmer, *The Intimate Gospel*, p. 20).

**In his humanity, Jesus revealed God's glory and grace in truth (John 1:14).** Jesus becoming flesh is designated by the term "incarnation" in theological studies but you will not find this term in any concordance of the Bible. It is not a biblical term but is one of the most important theological concepts about Jesus. As a theological teaching, "incarnation refers to the affirmation that God, in one of the modes of his existence as Trinity and without in any way ceasing to be one God, has revealed himself to humanity for its salvation by becoming human" (Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 693).

During the first five centuries of Christian history, four major conferences worked on interpreting what it meant to define the person of Jesus Christ in terms of being the incarnation of God. While the scholarly discussions continue, the present doctrinal statement is that Jesus is one person in two natures — fully divine and fully human. We look to him in order to know how God's nature in love, glory and grace can be known in our lives.

Thus we can rejoice in singing Isaac Watts great song: "Joy to the world! The Lord is come. Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room.... He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love."

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