

BEHOLD WHAT MANNER OF LOVE : Ps. Ron Matsen

This is a well known verse, but like many others in the Bible, we can miss out on its full meaning, if we just read it and pass on. So let's look at it carefully, slowly, word by word.

Behold :

This word in Greek is a command, an imperative – it means, stop and think, what follows is a very important statement. Like the word 'therefore', we need to stop and take notice of what it is there for.

What manner:

An exclamation expressing utmost amazement. Stand in awe! What peculiar, out of this world thing is this, that I should consider? Wow!

This expression is used 13 times in the New Testament. It is saying, this is the most exciting thing you have ever heard.

The term is used of Jesus by the disciples after he calmed the sea. What did they say? Matthew 8.27 – translated in various ways, but with the same term 'what manner' in Greek. What kind of man is this?

Mark 13.1, the disciples comment on the huge, impressive stones in the temple building.

Luke 1.29, Mary wonders who this could be, who greeted her so strangely.

These events were astonishing to those involved. And so we should be prepared to be astonished at what follows in John's letter.

How often are we astonished as we read God's word? Or is it all so familiar that we no longer feel any amazement at what God says?

Of love:

This is agape, the sacrificial love expressed in the commitment of God to us – it isn't superficial, it doesn't change, it is shown in the giving of his own Son to die for us. Is that incredible enough to astonish you?

The Father:

The word indicates a pro-created relationship, Jesus refers to God as his Father until he is on the cross, then he says, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

'Father' expresses the sense of origination, transmission, the beginning of something, None of us are born without a father.

John 3.3-8, Jesus tells Nicodemus about the need to be born again, and Nicodemus can't quite get it, How is the Father involved in this miracle of being born again?

He is the first mover, the creator. The Father originates this birth. Father also has the sense of 'authority'. If God didn't originate this birth, then there wouldn't be a birth.

Has bestowed:

This is the ultimate act of benevolence, This is something the recipient cannot earn. It is bestowed, endowed. We can't pay for it, and if we tried to do so it would insult the giver, and devalue the gift, To attempt to earn it would diminish both the giver and the gift.

That we should be called:

We are given a new name and a new relationship. We don't name ourselves, God does.

Children:

Who wants to be called a 'child' or 'childish', when they are adult? Children also want to be considered 'grown up' as they mature, But this word refers to new born babes – helpless, utterly dependent on the parent for everything. We have a new name and relationship like a newborn baby.

Most people wouldn't see that as a compliment. What do you think is positive about it?

John 1.12. What has God given? To whom has he given it? What does it mean to have this right/authority? Verse 13 continues the theme – whose will is in control here?

Of God:

Theos – God. God is seen throughout the Bible, at work, creating, promising, judging, rewarding... What about the 'gods' that humans create?

Isaiah 46.5-7. How powerful are these idols?

If we ask someone, 'Do you believe in God?' and they say 'Yes', does this mean they are a Christian? What is it that they believe? That there is an Almighty Something out there?

John is writing his letter in a world where there are many gods. Is today any different? What gods do people worship these days?

Our God is seen in Genesis 1. He created everything, no one created him. He is the all powerful one, who came to earth to save us.

John 1.3. Who is being spoken of here?

Hebrews 1.1-3 Who is the one who upholds all things, and how does he do it?
What is said of God is also said of Jesus, for they are one.

An atheist **knows** there is no God. (In Greek the 'a' means no/not, and theist obviously refers to God, so atheist means 'no God'). The atheist is absolutely sure. But what is this 'knowledge' based on? How clever is he/she really?

An agnostic doesn't know for sure. The word in Greek simply means one who is ignorant. (a = no, and gnostic = knowledge, so agnostic means no knowledge, = ignorant.)

In Acts 17.24-28 Paul tells who our God is, and verse 29 tells us who he is not. Verse 30 speaks of the ignorance of those who do not know him, and worship other things,

God has authority over every aspect of our lives. Read Psalm 139.7-12. Where do we go to get away from God?

How does the atheist suppose our bodies are formed? How does the organization and management of the cells in our bodies happen? Every aspect of every living thing on this earth depends on the creator God.

God is omnipotent, all knowing, loving. The Bible tells us hundreds of things about God. Think of as many as you can,. How does he describe himself? What is his character? Moses wanted to see God's glory, and God simply described his character - that is his glory, Exodus 34.6-7. When Jesus was on earth, the disciples saw his glory, says John in John 1.14. What did they see? What he did and said showed his glory.

If we want to know God, we need to study his character, learn to know him and trust him. We know he is trustworthy, but do we always trust him no matter what happens to us? He promises he will never leave us nor forsake us, but do we 'feel' forsaken at times? Does this mean he has forsaken us, because if it does, it means we can't trust him. We need to not only know his promises, but believe them. The first half of 2 Chronicles 16.9 is what God says he does - he looks for those whose hearts are loyal, his eyes are always on them, he shows himself strong on their behalf. But if we don't trust him, we miss out - he doesn't give up on us, though, he never stops looking, he is always there for us.

Expanded version of the verse

See if you can expand the simple words of 1 John 3.1, according to what we have just discussed.

When John talks about the love of God, does he mean our love for him, or his love for us? It is the love **from** God that transforms us and we receive it and let it

transform our lives. It is always there for us, we simply have to believe it and receive it.

In Psalm 8, the psalmist looks at the heavens and wonders why God bothers with mankind, The stars show his great power and majesty. The creation of the heaves is a great work – but his greatest work is right here, in those who receive his loving sacrifice,

We will be with him forever. Paul prays, in Ephesians 3.17-19. What does he want for his readers? If we could understand the fullness of God's love, Christ's love, our lives would be transformed. Romans 8 35-39. How secure are we in Christ's love?

The world doesn't know God, their eyes are veiled. When we know God, he removes the veil and we see the truth, but the world doesn't see.

Knowing God is encouraging, exciting – but it should also continually increase our desire to love him, as we learn more about who he is and what he has done for us.