

The Gospel of John Chapter 1 Part 2

In our last study, we learned the Word, Who is Jesus, is the light of the world. If you received Him, you will be born of God (i.e. born again) rather than being born of flesh (the natural man).

Read John 1:14-34

Vs 14 In light of what we learned about being born of God, what opposite thing happened to Jesus? He who is Spirit, that is, God, actually became flesh and dwelt with man AS a man. The Greeks, who worshipped gods they considered supermen, did not consider their gods equal to God (logos). John was telling them "The Logos you know made and ordered the universe actually became flesh." The Jews generally thought of God too high to lower Himself to become a man. Ancient Jews had a hard time accepting that the great God revealed in the Old Testament could take on human form. John told the Jewish thinkers, "The Word of God became flesh (i.e. a man)." What other thing do we see about Jesus? He dwelt (*to fix one's tabernacle*) among men. Jesus took on man flesh and lived as a man. What was a tabernacle to the Jews? The center of Israel's camp (Num 2:17), the place where the Law of Moses was preserved (Ex 25:16), the dwelling place of God (Ex 25:8), the place of revelation (Ex 25:22), the place where sacrifices were made (Ex 27:21) and the center of Israel's worship (Num 2:1-3:39). Did you know our bodies are called a tabernacle? 2 Cor 5:1 What did man behold when they saw Jesus in His body? John could say, "I saw His glory, the glory belonging to the only begotten of the Father." The word *beheld* is stronger than the words "saw" or "looked." John tells us that he and the other disciples carefully studied the glory of the Word made flesh. What does John say about what he beheld? The glory (*spendor*) was full (*complete*) of grace (*good will*) and truth.

Vs 15 John the Baptist bore witness of Jesus. What do you think this means? He testified of the truthfulness of Who Jesus is. What did he cry (*speak loudly*) out? "This is the One I would come after me yet was before me." This is significant because everyone knew John was born 6 months before Jesus. He is saying this Jesus who was born after me and whose ministry started after mine actually existed before me and I defer to Him as my superior. John the Baptist's testimony was rooted in his understanding of the pre-existence of Jesus. He knew that Jesus was before him in every sense.

Vs 16 What does the Apostle John say now? We (believers) have received the fullness (completeness) of Jesus. This new order has an inexhaustible supply of grace (grace for grace, the figure of speech similar to sorrows upon sorrows) and truth.

Vs 17 What comparison does John make? He is comparing the relationship the Jews had with God through the Old Testament (which was an order of rigid laws and regulations given through Moses) to the grace and truth that came through Jesus. Notice the verbs: the Law was given while grace came (*began to be*). Both Moses and Jesus were mediators between God and man. Gal 3:19-20, Heb 8:6,9:15,12:24.

Vs 18 Has anyone seen (*to discern clearly*) God? No. What about Gen 32:30, Ex 24:9-11,33:11,Is 6:1, 1 Kings 22:19? Clearly Scripture depicts some people seeing God. Since the Bible is always true, there must be more to this verse than it appears. Anytime God reveals Himself and people "see" Him, they are seeing only a partial and approximate sighting. These verses say that God is invisible (Ex. 33:20; Deu. 4:12; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17). What John in particular is saying is that people were able to perceive God by looking at Jesus (John 14:9,Col 2:9), but they certainly weren't seeing God in all His majesty and glory, manifested as light, truth, holiness, and splendor. The meaning is that no human has ever clearly discerned the full essence of God (*deity*). Who has declared (*to unfold, to tell about*) God? John is saying no one as been able to clearly understand all of God, but Jesus (who is the only begotten Son of God) revealed His nature. What uniquely qualified Him? He is in the bosom of the Father. This implies closeness and intimacy.

Vs 19 Notice the segue here. John went from talking about Jesus being a witness to God to John the Baptist being a witness to Jesus. Who sent the religious leaders to question John? The Jews (Pharisees according to John 1:24)! So the religious sect in Jerusalem send their leaders to question John.

Vs 20 What did they ask him and what was his reply? They asked him who he was, and his response implies they thought he was the promised Messiah. Why do you think they asked this? He was talking about the Kingdom of God (Matt 3:2) and was baptizing (Luke 16:16). John completely rejected the claim that he was the Messiah but he rejected it with a certain hint. In the Greek the word *I* is stressed by its position. It is as if John said: 'I am not the Messiah, but, if you only knew, the Messiah is here.'

Vs 21 What did they ask next and why? They asked if he was Elijah or the Prophet. Mal 4:5-6,Deu 18:15-19. The Pharisees, priests and Levites know the prophecies of the coming Messiah (Prophet like Moses) and John was acting in ways that led them to ask if he was fulfilling these prophecies. John was careful to never say of himself that he was Elijah. Yet Jesus noted that in a sense, John was Elijah, ministering in his office and spirit (Matt 11:13-14, Mark 9:11-13)

Vs 22-23 Finally, they ask him to give them an answer they can bring back to those who sent him. How does he answer them? By quoting the Scriptures about himself Isa 40:3. John explained his work – to prepare the way of the LORD. His baptism prepared people, cleansing them for the coming King. The idea was, “Get cleaned up, get ready for a royal visit.”

Vs 24-25 Accepting John’s answer, what do they then ask? “Why are you baptizing?”. In other words, they were questioning his authority to baptize.

A bit about Jewish baptism as known before John came - Before John the Baptist, Jewish water rituals were primarily ritual immersions known as *mikveh* used for purification.

Ritual Purity: The most common practice involved full-body immersion in a ritual bath filled with “living” or running water to restore ritual purity after contact with unclean substances (such as bodily fluids, menstruation, or a corpse) or before entering the Temple for worship.

Proselyte Baptism: By the Second Temple period, Gentiles converting to Judaism underwent immersion as part of the initiation process, symbolizing a transformation and entry into the covenant alongside circumcision. It required a renunciation of all evil, complete immersion in water, and then reclothing as a member of the holy communion of law-keepers.

Sectarian Practices: Radical groups like the Essenes (associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls) practiced frequent, often daily, immersions for penitence and spiritual purification, sometimes viewing it as a substitute for Temple sacrifices or preparation for the “end times.”

John the Baptist’s baptism was distinct because it was a one-time act of repentance for all Jews (not just converts or the ritually impure) to prepare for the imminent arrival of the Messiah.

Vs 26-27 Confirming his authority to baptize, what does he now state? John explained to the religious leaders that **he** was not the focus of his work, but he was pointing to the One who was already among them. This One was among them (alive and a Jew) and they did not know (*perceive*) him. In other words, they were thinking John was the Messiah but the actual Messiah was among them but they were blind to this fact. Again John states Jesus came after him but that He is preferred (*to come into being*) before John. So while everyone knows Jesus was born after John, John is stating Jesus existed before John. What does it mean “whose sandals I am not worthy to loose”? To untie the strap of a sandal (for foot washing) was the duty of the lowest slave in the house. One of the things which was considered “too low” for a Rabbi to expect from his disciples was the untying of the Rabbi’s sandal strap (slaves would, disciples would not). John said he was unworthy to do even this.

Vs 28 According to John, where did this interview take place? The interview took place at Bethany (House of the ferry-boat) on the east bank of the Jordan at the spot called Bethabara (*house of the ford*) — the traditional place of the passage of the Ark and the nation under Joshua (Joshua 3:14-17).

Vs 29 What happened the very next day? Jesus came to see John. This was after John baptized Jesus and after the 40 days of temptation in the wilderness. What did John declare when he saw Jesus? That He was the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. In this one sentence, John the Baptist summarized the greatest work of Jesus: to deal with the sin problem afflicting the human race. Every word of this sentence is important.

- **Behold!** Look and understand what it is you are looking at.
- **The Lamb of God:** John used the image of the sacrificial lamb, represented many times in the Old Testament. This was an announcement that Jesus would die as a sacrifice.
- **Who takes away:** The sense of the original combines the words to bear and to take away. Jesus bears sin, but in the sense of bearing them upon Himself and taking them away (*bearing off*).
- **The sin:** Not the plural sins, but the singular sin – with the sense that the entire guilt of humanity was collected into one and placed upon Jesus.
- **Of the world:** The sacrifice of this Lamb of God has all the capacity to forgive every sin and cleanse every sinner. It is big enough for the whole world.

Vs 30-31 John is repeating the facts that Jesus was ‘born’ and started His ministry after John’s but He came into being before John. What does John confess next? That, growing up, John did not recognize (know) Jesus for Who He is. He then gives another reason for his baptizing – that Jesus would be revealed (*to make visible, apparent*) to Israel.

Vs 32-34 What 4 things did John bear witness to? The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus and remained on Him (as a sign). God sent him to baptize with water. Identified Jesus as the One Who will baptize in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Son of God.