

## **JOHN**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to the Gospel of John. We have looked at, so far, three of the four Gospels in our study through the Bible. And we have seen in our studies of Matthew, Mark and Luke that they pretty much cover the same territory and thus, they are called the synoptic Gospels which mean to *“see together.”*

Now, as we move into the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, the focus is different. He focuses on Jesus ministry primarily in Jerusalem while the other Gospels focus on Jesus ministry primarily in Galilee.

John focuses on who Jesus is, the Son of God; while the other Gospels focus on what Jesus taught.

And as we will see, John builds his Gospel around 7 miracles and 7 *“I AM”* statements made by Jesus with his whole purpose of writing this Gospel is given to us in John 20:30-31, which says **“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”** John 20:30-31.

There are two main reasons why John wrote this Gospel. The first reason is that you would ***BELIEVE*** that Jesus is the Son of God, the Anointed one. In fact, the word **“believe”** ΠΙΣΤΕΥΟ in the Greek, is used by John some ninety-eight times in this Gospel!

What a great book for someone who is searching for God because John paints that picture for us so that we would believe! In fact, Charles R. Erdman said that this fourth Gospel “has introduced more persons to follow Christ, it has inspired more believers to loyal service, it has presented to scholars more difficult problems, than any other book that could be named.”

The second reason is that you would have “life” and that life is found in His Name! The world “life” is used some thirty-six times by John in this Gospel!

What a wonderful book this is because we will not only see Jesus as Almighty God but that He has given to us eternal life to those who believe!

Now when did John write this book or Gospel? John probably wrote this Gospel in Ephesus around 80-90 A. D. The John Rylands papyrus fragment 52 of John’s gospel dated in the year 125-135 contains portions of John 18, verses 31-33,37-38. This fragment was found in Egypt.

It is the last of the gospels and, like I have said, it appears to have been written in the 80’s to 90’s. Most scholars say it was written in the early 90’s. This means that the time span between the original writing of John and its earliest copy (fragment) is approximately 35-45 years.

Now some scholars, and I use that term loosely, about 150 years ago or so, said that this Gospel was written some 150 years after John was around.

Why the change in their thinking? Because John gives clear testimony, without a doubt, of the deity of Jesus and they didn’t like that because they reject the deity of Jesus, so they said it was written much later to build up the Christian faith.

The only problem with that logic is that a piece of John chapter 18, a fragment, was found in Egypt back in 1920, like I have said. And thus, there must have been wide circulation of this Gospel to make it to Egypt by the 80’s or 90’s!

And the author of this Gospel was John, written probably from Ephesus. Daniel B. Wallace notes that, “the unbroken stream suggests recognition (or at least acknowledgment) of Johannine authorship as early as the first quarter of the second century. Indeed, John’s Gospel is unique among the evangelists for two early papyri (p66 and p75, dated c. 200 A. D.) attest to Johannine authorship. Since these two [manuscripts] were not closely related to each other, this common tradition [of Johannine authorship] must precede them by at least three or four generations of copying.” (“The Gospel of John: Introduction, Argument, Outline” [Biblical Studies Press: www. bible.org, 1999])

Now, remember that each writer of the Gospel had a specific view of Jesus and the audience they were writing to.

Matthew presented Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of regarding the Messiah. Matthew quotes or alludes to the Old Testament 129 times in His Gospel. Thus, the genealogies in Matthew show us He is a descendant of David and the right to the throne. Matthew wrote primarily to the Jews.

Mark presents Jesus as the suffering servant as Mark 10:45 tells us, “**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**”

Interestingly enough there are no genealogies of Jesus in Mark because the genealogies of a slave or a servant are not important. Mark wrote primarily to the Romans.

Luke shows us the humanity of Jesus, the Son of Man. Thus, in this genealogy we are taken all the way back to the first man, Adam, showing the humanity of Jesus. Luke wrote primarily to the Greeks.

Lastly, John portrays the deity of Jesus, that He is God. In a sense, the genealogy of Jesus is given to us in John 1:1, which speaks of His eternal existence and we will cover that more in a few minutes. John wrote primarily to the church, which is interesting because there is nothing mentioned of the coming Tribulation Period, the Antichrist and-so-on. Why? Because the church won't be here during the Tribulation Period but will be with the Lord!

My prayer as we go through the Gospel of John is simple, it was John's desire, "**. . . that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**" John 20:31.

With that said, let's begin reading in John chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

## **JOHN 1**

### **VERSES 1-2**

Now we are going to take our time here because this is so important for us to understand. This is the groundwork, the foundation and if you miss this, then the foundation will be weak and the structure will not stand. And the foundation is always built upon Jesus, the Rock, and John is showing us that Jesus is Almighty God and that He is not a created being but has always existed!

John starts out by saying, “**In the beginning was the Word.**” And the idea here is that the Word, Jesus, existed before creation or even time! The verb “**was**” in the Greek is EN and it is in the imperfect tense and it means that the Word always existed. There was never a point when He came into being! In other words, what John is saying is this, “*When all things began, the Word already was.*” What about when the earth was created? The Word existed! What about when the angels were created? The Word existed. I may not understand how that can be, but it is what the Scriptures teach!

Now I realize that there are those who try to deny the deity of Jesus and say that He was a created being, but that is not what the Scriptures tell us. You see, no matter how far back in time you go, Jesus was there, He was there before time began!

And that goes along with what the Scriptures teach. We see that in Micah 5:2, in speaking of the birth of the Messiah, “**But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The one to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.**”

That phrase, “**from everlasting**” speaks of being beyond the vanishing point or that He is eternal! The Word is eternal for He is Almighty God. I know I am going to say that a lot tonight, but it is important, it is foundational for us to understand that Jesus is Almighty God!

Now this Greek word that is used for “**word**” is LOGOS and it speaks of a collection of ideas or words. For example, ancient Hebrew editions of the Old Testament change Exodus 19:17 (*Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God*) to “Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet the word of God.” In the mind of the ancient Jews, the phrase “the word of God” could be used to refer to God Himself.

In saying that, look at how John 1:1 could be translated here. “In beginning was continuing the Word, and the Word was continuing with God, and the Word was continually God.” Jesus is Almighty God, that is what John is trying to show us!

And, not only is Jesus eternal, but He has always been with God the Father. You see, there is only one God who is manifested in three distinct persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

That phrase, “**and the Word was with God**” can be literally be translated, “*the Word was continually toward God.*” They were equals, God the Father did not create the Word because the Word always existed as does the Father and they saw eye to eye! They were equals!

Also, not only is Jesus eternal, not only has He always been with the Father, but He is also God, as I have said and we need to deal more with this issue because it is controversial. And it really should not be unless you want to twist the Scriptures to believe what you want.

One group that tries to do this is the Jehovah Witnesses. They try to negate this fact by translating the last part of John 1:1 like this, “**And the Word was a god.**” You see, they don’t believe in the Trinity, they don’t believe Jesus is God, but just a god, and thus the reason for their translating this verse like this. It is not Scripturally based as we will see.

You see, the only problem with that is there is no Greek scholar who would agree with the way they translated this verse, Christian or non-Christian.

Now to try and make their point they quote Dr. Mantey, a Greek Scholar, but he wrote them a letter back in 1974, which I have a copy of, saying that he requests not only their apology for misquoting him for the past 24 years, but to remove this from their material!

He wrote, “A GROSSLY MISLEADING TRANSLATION. It is neither scholarly nor reasonable to translate John 1:1 ‘the Word was a god.’ But of all the scholars in the world, so far as we know, none have translated this verse as Jehovah’s Witnesses have done.”

Another Greek scholar wrote, “I can assure you that the rendering which the Jehovah’s Witnesses give John 1:1 is not held by any reputable Greek scholar.” (Dr. Charles L. Feinberg)

And lastly, one commentator wrote, “The deliberate distortion of truth by this sect is seen in their New Testament translations. John 1:1 is translated: ‘. . . the Word was a god,’ a translation which is **grammatically impossible**. It is abundantly clear that a sect which can translate the New Testament like that is intellectually dishonest.” (Dr. William Barclay)

But do the Scriptures teach us that Jesus is Almighty God and not just “*a god*” as the Jehovah Witnesses try to tell us? You bet they do and we will look at a few of them so you can see what the Bible says of the deity of Jesus!

In Isaiah 42:8 we are told, “**I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.**” God is not going to share His glory with anyone, not even a lesser god, if there was such a thing, and there isn’t!

And, of course in Deuteronomy 5:7 we are told, “**You shall have no other gods before Me.**” Do you see how foolish it is to say that Jesus is a lesser god? I hope so. God says that He will not have any other gods before Him and thus, if Jesus was a lesser god, which the Jehovah Witnesses say that He is, then God the Father would not recognize Him!

I think those two verses we just read and what John says in the first two verses of his Gospel are very clear. The Son is distinct from the Father and the Father from the Son, and yet they are equally God, one God manifested in three distinct persons!

So, Jesus can't be "*a god*" but is He Almighty God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity?

I do love what we are told in Isaiah 44:6. We are told that there is only one God manifested in two distinct persons, and in other parts of the Bible we see that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity. What does Isaiah say that makes Jesus Almighty God?

We read in Isaiah "**Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.'**"

This is so clear to me and hopefully to you. First, we see God the Father or Yahweh the King of Israel. And then we see Jesus, the Word, God the Son as we are told, His Redeemer the Yahweh of hosts! You see, not only Yahweh of Israel, but there is the Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts!

I think it is very clear that it is not saying that God the Father is the Redeemer as it reads, "**And his redeemer, the LORD of hosts.**" I do love how clear that is unless you reject it and then you have to come up with all kinds of crazy ideas of what this means! And believe me, they do!

In Titus 2:13-14 we are told, "**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**"

Jesus can't be "*a god*" for the Lord said that we are to have no other gods before Him. Thus, Jesus must be Almighty God and He is and we are awaiting His return!



In Matthew 1:22-23 we are told, **“So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’”**

Did you see that? Who is with us in the Incarnation? It is God. Jesus is Almighty God!

Then, in II Peter 1:1 we are told, **“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

Who is our God and Savior? Jesus Christ! I hope this is clear to you because we are living in the day when even the Protestant church has begun to deny the deity of Jesus and many other foundational doctrines!

And remember what Thomas said as he saw the risen Lord, in John 20:28, **“My Lord and my God!”**

Not *“a god”* but God!

And if you are still struggling with this or are unsure, we see God the Father call Jesus God in Hebrews 1:8-9. Paul put it like this as he quotes out of the Old Testament, **“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’”**

Now if you want to deny that God the Father has called Jesus God and not *“a god”* you have bigger problems! You see, in John 8:24 Jesus said, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”**

The “*He*” was added for clarity but it is not there in the original. It should read, “**if you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins.**” In other words, for those who reject the deity of Jesus Christ, they will die in their sins. Thus, this is very serious, it is a matter of life and death!

I don’t see how you can come to the conclusion that Jesus is not God unless you come with preconceived ideas or you have other material besides the Bible to deceive you down that path. It is very clear; Jesus is God, the second person of the Holy Trinity!

As one writer put it, “The simple sentence of verse 1 is the most compact and pulsating theological statement in all Scripture. Jesus was always existing from all eternity as God, in perfect fellowship with God the Father and (though not mentioned) the Holy Spirit.” (R. Kent Hughes, John, p. 17)

#### VERSES 3-5

Here we see Jesus actively involved in creation, just as Paul tells us in Colossians 1:16-17, “**For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**”

Not only did Jesus create all things, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1-2), but He also holds them all together.

Now what happens when He let's go? You might say that there is a ***BIG BANG!*** Listen to what Peter tells us in II Peter 3:10, **“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”**

Now before I share with you the immensity of our universe, let me show you what evolution has to say in regard to how things got started, or their version of the Big Bang! We are told,

The **Big Bang** is a scientific **theory** about how the universe started, and then made the groups of stars (called galaxies) we see today. The universe began as very hot, small, and dense, with no stars, atoms, form, or structure (called a “singularity”).

**At its simplest**, it talks about the universe as we know it starting with a small singularity, then inflating over the next 13.8 billion years to the cosmos that we know today.

In the first second after the universe began, the surrounding temperature was about 10 billion degrees Fahrenheit (5.5 billion Celsius), according to NASA. The cosmos contained a vast array of fundamental particles such as neutrons, electrons and protons. These decayed or combined as the universe got cooler.

- Rishabh Bishnoi

So, you have this very dense singularity that explodes and bingo, we have the universe, the earth with all life forms? “Oh, but you need billions of years to have this happen!” Were you there, did you see it happen? And when does an explosion cause order and life? It causes destruction and death!

I realize that many people, even Christians believe in evolution, not sure how, but they do. Let me share this with you to show you what the heavens are like, the enormity of it all. We are told,

There are about 100 billion stars in the average galaxy, and there are at least one hundred million galaxies in known space. Einstein believed that we have scanned with our largest telescopes only one billionth of theoretical space. This means that there are probably something like 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars in space (ten octillion). How many is that? 1,000 thousands = a million; 1,000 millions = a billion; 1,000 billions = a trillion; 1,000 trillions = a quadrillion; 1,000 quadrillions = quintillion; 1,000 quintillions = a sextillion; 1,000 sextillions = a septillion; 1,000 septillions = an octillion. So ten octillion is a 10 with twenty-seven zeros behind it. And Jesus created them all! [In fact, He knows them all by name, the stars He created!]

Not only is he the Creator of the macrocosm of the universe, but also the microcosm in the inner universe of the atom.

- R. Kent Hughes, John, p. 17

That is our God, that is our Jesus, He created all things and in Him all things consist or are held together!

Not only that, but we are told that “**In Him was life.**” And keep in mind that the life spoken of here is not just *BIOS*, or biological life, but *ZOË* or “the life principle” or abundant life we might say, it is not just existing forever.

And not only is life found in Him but so is light! Not only physical life but spiritual light is found in Him as well. That is what John is telling us, that this life and light are found in Jesus!

It is as John says in I John 5:11-13, **“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”**

Thus, apart from Jesus we are dead and in darkness just as the Scriptures teach us. We are told in Colossians 2:13, **“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”**

And in Ephesians 5:8 we are told, **“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”**

Now in verse 5, when John said, **“And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it”** is a little difficult to translate. You see, that word **“comprehend”** can have two meanings to it, and I think that both do apply.

As the light of God was shining many did not understand it, their eyes were blind to the truth. Thus, God will give light to those who seek the light and for those that don't, they shall remain in darkness.

Also, the word **“comprehend”** can mean to extinguish. In other words, the light has come into the world, Jesus Christ, and the darkness will try to put it out, but it will not succeed. The Word will be victorious despite the opposition.

And think about this. In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus tells us, **“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

We are to be a light in a world that is in darkness, just as Jesus was. Don't let the darkness put out your light or dim it, but let it shine.

And think about it, when you turn on the light what happens to the darkness? It is extinguished by the light! You don't really have to do anything but shine and the darkness will flee!

#### VERSES 6-8

As you look at people today they love to toot their own horn, to build themselves up like they are the greatest thing in the world and instead of pointing people to Jesus, they focus on themselves. John the Baptist came on the scene to bear witness of Jesus, the light of the world!

And the purpose of the witnessing is that people would be drawn to the light, they would receive the life that is found in Jesus, they would believe in Jesus! We too are to bear witness of Jesus in all we do and say, our lives should be light and not darkness.

And in the days we are living in, many are afraid to be a witness, they try to hide their light because of the persecution and the repercussions of shining for Jesus!

Think of it like this. You see, a witness “does more. It commits a man. If I take my stand in the witness box and testify that such-and-such is the truth of the matter I am no longer neutral. I have committed myself. John lets us know that there are those like John the Baptist who have committed themselves by their witness to Christ.” (Morris)

May we be like John and take a stand for what we believe in, being a witness for Jesus, one who gives life to those who are spiritually dead and light to those who are in spiritual darkness!

#### VERSES 9-11

Here we see how deeply fallen human nature really is. God came into the world to reveal Himself to man, the creator showing Himself to creation, and they did not recognize Him. Even His own people, the Jews, refused Him, rejected Him. They had the Scriptures to testify of who the Messiah will be, what He was to do, and Jesus fulfilled those things but they still rejected Him.

You see, if salvation was based solely upon intellect, all would be saved. It is not a matter of the intellect but a matter of the heart. Paul makes that point very clear in Romans 1:18-25 where he says, **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”**

And we see that very thing today where people suppress the truth of God, they don't want to be accountable to God, and they worship themselves, the creation instead of the creator and their lives reflect that.

And Paul goes on to say in Romans since they have said no to God, God gave them over to do all the evil that is in their heart. And look at us today, we flaunt sin and snub our noses towards God!

Now as dark as that is, never forget that there is light and we see that in the next two verses. Listen to what John tells us.



VERSES 12-13

Who is this gift for? **“as many as received Him . . . to those who believe in His name.”**

In other words, this gift is for everyone, none are excluded. This is not like the Reformed Theology people or Calvinists try to tell us, that God created some for heaven, the elect, and He created the others for Hell, those whom He did not elect!

There is a choice to make on our part and thus, anyone who goes to Hell goes there by his own choice, you can't blame God! And I do love this and I thank God for this word **“but.”** Yes, some rejected Him, but others received Him, each one had a choice to make, as I have said. And John gives us three ways we can't enter into this relationship with Jesus.

First of all, it is not by blood, that is, it is not through our parents because they were Christians.

Secondly, it is not by the will of our flesh, you can't work your way into heaven, you can't be good enough to get into heaven.

And thirdly, it is not by the will of man or to put it another way, you can't save anyone, you can share the Word of God, but that is as far as you can go, God will do the rest.

Kind of depressing and yet, there is that word again, **“but”** and it says, **“but of God.”** You see, it is God's sovereign will, and the reality is, God desires all to be saved but not all will receive it, that free gift of life that is found in Jesus!

Peter said in II Peter 3:9, **“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”**

And I think Paul makes this very clear when He says in Ephesians 2:8-9, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**”

We are saved by the grace of God, it is a free gift that is extended to us and that gift is wrapped in Christ, all we need to do is receive it by faith.

#### VERSE 14

Here we see humanity added to His deity, God became flesh and dwelt or tabernacled or pitched His tent among us, the Incarnation!

In Matthew 1:22-23 we are told, “**So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’**” Matthew is quoting out of Isaiah 7:14.

Of this word, “dwelt” Clarke tells us, “*And tabernacled among us*: the human nature which he took of the virgin, being as the *shrine, house, or temple*, in which his immaculate Deity condescended to dwell. The word is probably an allusion to the Divine Shekinah in the Jewish temple.”

They beheld His glory! And, I think John is speaking of that Shekinah glory that filled the Temple.

And Paul, in regard to the incarnation, said In I Timothy 3:16, “**And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.**”

Now the Mormons see that phrase “**the only begotten of the Father**” and say that Jesus is a created being, in fact, they say that Jesus and Lucifer or Satan are brothers!

First of all, we already dealt with Jesus being eternal and that He is God, while Lucifer or Satan is not eternal and he is not God, although he wants to be! Also, if they would only read the text, it says, “**the only begotten of the Father.**”

Yes, we are children of God but adopted into the family of God. Jesus was the only begotten of the Father in the incarnation!

Yes, the Word or Jesus is eternal but there was a point in time that He became flesh and dwelt among us! And I am so thankful that He is full of grace, unmerited favor towards us; and truth, I don't have to fear about being led astray by the Word, by Jesus. When He says in John 14:6, “**. . . ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’**” I can believe it because it is truth and that truth is seen in the grace that *HE* extends to us!

One last point before I move on, something for you to think about. First of all, Jesus was not born on December 25<sup>th</sup> as we celebrate. Why? The reason is simple; shepherds would not be out in the field in December. It is very possible that He was born in the fall, possible on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishri or on the Feast of Tabernacles. Just something for you to think about.

#### VERSES 15-18

Keep in mind that John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins. Also, John was born some six months before Jesus was.

Now think about that and compare it with what John tells us here. How could John the Baptist say that Jesus was before him? Is the Bible in error?

Not at all for John the Baptist is speaking of the pre-existence of Jesus, that Jesus is eternal, and thus, He was before John! You see, in the Incarnation Jesus entered the space/time domain, but before He became flesh and blood, He always existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Now keep in mind that for the Jews, there were the rigid laws for them to keep. The problem with these laws is that they could never save a person, they only showed them and us that we were sinners separated from God. It pointed us to a Savior, the law pointed us to Jesus! Thus, Jesus extends to us His inexhaustible grace as we come to Him.

Now don't lose sight of that grace because it is inexhaustible. And as hard as that is to believe, listen to what Martin Luther wrote regarding this grace. He said,

The sun is not dimmed and darkened by shining on so many people or providing the entire world with its light and splendor. It retains its light intact. It loses nothing; it is immeasurable, perhaps able to illumine ten more worlds. I suppose that a hundred thousand candles can be ignited from one light, and still this light will not lose any of its brilliance. . . . Thus Christ, our Lord, to whom we must flee and of whom we must ask all, is an interminable well, the chief source of grace. . . . Even if the whole world were to draw from this fountain enough grace and truth to transform all people into angels, still it would not lose as much as a drop. This fountain constantly overflows with sheer grace.

- R. Kent Hughes, John, p. 21

Now, in saying that, let me deal with the Law because so many people today feel you just have to be good enough and God will accept you. You may feel that way but you are wrong, not because I have said so, but because the Bible does!

Paul makes this point in Galatians 3:23-26 where he says, **“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Sons and Heirs For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

And if you think the law can truly save you, think about this verse in Galatians 2:21, **“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

And if you really want to live by the law you will die by the law, as James 2:10 tells us, **“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”**

Praise the Lord for God’s grace or we would all be in trouble!

Now verse 18 says, **“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”**

Now wait a minute, what about the Old Testament appearances of God, the Theophany’s? I believe John is speaking of God’s inner essence, His nature, and to see that we need to look to Jesus for He is an exact representation of all that the Father is.

I think in the Old Testament, when we see God, it is Jesus, because no one has seen the Father. That is what the Scriptures tell us, that no one has seen God the Father, only Jesus and He reveals to us what the Father is all about.

In John 14:7-11 we are told, **“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.’ Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”**

You see, Jesus is a perfect representation of the Father and thus, to know Jesus is to know the Father!

#### VERSES 19-22

As John the Baptist is out in the wilderness area by the Jordan River baptizing people, calling for them to repent of their sins and turn back to God, he got the attention of the religious leaders back in Jerusalem.

And these religious leaders traveled to see what this long-haired hippie freak was all about. He didn't have their credentials, he didn't go to Old Rabbi University, and they wanted to know who he was and who gave him the authority to do what he was doing!

Today in the church many like to draw people to themselves, but John spoke up and said to them, “I am not the Christ!” How important that is for us to remember, we need to point people to Jesus and not ourselves.

Now keep in mind that “**Christ**” is not His last name, it means “the Anointed One” or “the Messiah.” Jesus, or really Joshua or Yehoshua means, “**Yahweh is our salvation.**” How true that is!

So John, not wanting to draw attention to himself but to focus them back on the One who is greater than John, says that he is not Elijah either. And yet, in the New Testament it seems to say that he is. What is up with that?

In the Old Testament, Malachi 4:5-6 we are told, “**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.**”

So, Elijah will come before the Lord returns, and I believe this is speaking of the Lord’s Second Coming. Now this does also point, in the near fulfillment, to John the Baptist. And we are told in Luke 1:17 what his life would be all about.

In Luke 1:17 we are told, “**He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**”

You see, he was not Elijah but he came in the spirit and the power of Elijah. But before the Lord returns, Elijah will come! Now what was John’s ministry all about? If he is not the Christ, then who is he? Let’s read on and see for John the Baptist will explain his mission.

VERSES 23-28

Again, these men were to report back to their leaders, the Jewish religious leaders, these Pharisees, about what they found out about John the Baptist.

And you have to love the answer that John the Baptist gives them. He quotes from the Word of God, from Isaiah 40:3 to show them that He who is coming is the One that Isaiah said I would speak of, the Messiah!

And the work is simple. Keep in mind that in those days, before a king came to town, they would send a forerunner to prepare the roads, fix things up for the king.

Thus, John came to prepare the hearts of the people to receive Jesus, telling them to repent of their sins and turn back to God; He was preparing the people to receive Jesus!

And this is interesting. In verse 25 these Pharisees want more information. I guess you can say that to them, the Word of God was not enough. They wanted something more and many do that very thing today and it will get you into trouble!

John was baptizing in the Jordan River those who repented, those who turned back to God. And thus, these religious leaders wanted to know why he was doing that if he was basically a nobody. He was not the Christ. He was not the prophet. He was not Elijah. Thus, they could not understand who gave him this authority to do what he was doing! Again, the Word of God did!

And you have to love John because he is humble in that once again he tells them he is nobody but the lowliest of slaves compared to the One who is coming, the Messiah.

Yes, John baptized with water but that was only a superficial cleansing, symbolic, it didn't cleanse you of your sins. But when the Messiah comes, He will cleanse you completely from your sins, casting them as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more!



Of this Leon Morris makes this observation. He wrote, “The point of the quotation is that it gives no prominence to the preacher whatever. He is not an important person, like a prophet or the Messiah. He is no more than a voice (contrast the reference to Jesus as ‘the Word’). He is a voice, moreover, with but one thing to say. . . . ‘Make straight the way of the Lord’ is a call to be ready, for the coming of the Messiah is near.” (The Gospel According to John, 137)

Isn't that what we are in a nutshell. We are nobodies but we are telling people to prepare for the Messiah is coming! And people want to know who has given to us this authority? What school did you go to? What credentials do you have?

And all I can say is that I have the Word of God as my authority and Jesus as my Savior and that is all I need. If you reject the Word of God then you are rejecting the Savior and if you are rejecting the Savior you will die in your sins. Judgment is coming!

Okay, this is getting bad. I am not going to finish tonight and instead of closing with the judgment of God coming, I will leave you with the Words of John the Baptist that we will read next time as he sees Jesus coming

He said, “**Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**” John 1:36. What precious words those are because it is in the Lamb that we find our sins forgiven as He gave His life as a sacrifice for us!