

CHAPTER ONE

The first eighteen verses of the Gospel according to John contain an abridgment of what John intends to record in detail in the body of his Gospel. First he describes the pre-existent nature of the Word with the Father. Then he briefly relates how the Word became flesh and manifested Himself among men. Some men hated and rejected Him, while others loved and accepted Him. We shall outline the Prologue thus:

- I The Prologue, 1:1-18, an abridged history of the earthly ministry of the Word
 - A. The Pre-existence of the Word described, 1:1-5
 - 1. Co-existent, v. 1, 2
 - 2. Co-equal, v. 3-5
 - B. The Word manifested to the Jews, and their rejection of Him, 1:6-11
 - 1. John the Baptist's witness for Him, v. 6-8
 - 2. His own witness rejected, v. 9-11
 - C. The Word manifested to others, and their acceptance of Him, 1:12-18
 - 1. The spiritual reborn made children of God, v. 12-13
 - 2. These beheld the glory of God in Him, and recognized the grace of God in Him, v. 14-18.

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE WORD DESCRIBED

Text 1:1-5

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 The same was in the beginning with God.
- 3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made.
- 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
- 5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

Queries

- a. Who is the Word?
- b. What relationship does the Word have to God?
- c. Is the Word a created person, or is He Creator?
- d. In verse 4 John uses the past tense, "was". Does this mean that "life" and "light" no longer exist in the Word?
- e. What is the darkness?

Paraphrase

When the cosmos was created, the Word was already existent, and the Word was equal, intimate, and face to face with God. This same person was existing eternally in the bosom of the Father. All things came into existence through him, and separate from him not one thing was created that has been created. In the Word was the very essence of all life; and the life was the source of illumination for men. And this light is shining in the darkness and the darkness appropriated or perceived it not.

Summary

The Word (the expression of God), Jesus Christ, existed eternally with God. The Word was co-equal with God. The co-existent and co-equal Word was the agency with the Father in the creation of the universe. In the Word is the source of Life and Illumination. The Darkness does not wish to appropriate the True Light.

Comment

Our finite minds cannot comprehend eternity. John is condescending to our level of understanding. He gives us a point in time (the beginning) from which to reflect upon the eternal existence of the Word. All other things came into being, but the Godhead has enjoyed timeless existence. Jesus said the same thing in John 8:58 . . . "before Abraham came (*genesthai* — was begotten), I am (*eimi* — timeless existence)." Jesus also laid claim to pre-existence with the Father in His high priestly prayer, John 17:5.

The discerning reader will notice that John makes no argument for the existence of God. He boldly assumes that God does exist — just as the writer of Genesis (Gen. 1:1) begins by assuming the existence of God. Either God exists and is Creator of the cosmos — or the universe just happened!

What is the *Logos* (Word)? Probably the best way to define the Word is to say that in the Word we see the expression of the mind and the thought and the purpose of God. Just as our thoughts and purposes are made known when we communicate through words (Matt. 15:18), God's ageless purposes are made known through His Word. cf. Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 11:25-30; John 5:19-20.

How is the Word "with God"? The Greek word translated "with" is the word *pros*. As John used it here and other places it represents equality and intimacy. The *Logos* was "face to face with God"; He was "in the bosom of the Father" (v. 18), and was "on an equality with God" (Phil. 2:6). There was perfect fellowship (sharing) by the Father and the Word. The same Greek word *pros* is used in I John 2:1 . . . "we have an Advocate (face to face, intimately, etc.,) with the Father."

"And the Word was God" means that the *Logos* is of the very essence and nature of God. As the writer of Hebrews expresses it . . . "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance," (Heb. 1:3a). Paul wrote to the Colossians that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," (Col. 2:9).

When we understand that Jesus existed eternally in such a state of oneness with the Father, we begin to understand that God *was* and *is* always like Jesus Christ (minus His earthly body, of course). Certain sects would teach today that Jesus Christ did something to change God's attitude toward men. Jesus changed a God of wrath in the Old Testament, they say, to a God of love in the New Testament. Nothing could be more foreign to the entire Bible. God has always been, and still is, a merciful, graceful and loving God (Heb. 13:8). Jesus Christ came to change men's hearts and attitudes toward God!

In verse 3 of our text we have the astounding information that the Word was the exclusive agent in the creation of our universe. Whether John wrote this Prologue to combat Gnosticism or not is a moot question. Be that as it may, this Prologue does refute Gnosticism and many other "isms." The Gnostics were an heretical sect arising at the very time some of the Apostles were still alive. They believed and taught that matter is evil, and only spirit is good. God is spirit, therefore God Himself could not have created the world. Their philosophy was that God, at some time or another, sent forth successive emanations from Himself. Each successive emanation was further away from,

more ignorant of, and more hostile toward the Eternal Being. At long last there came an emanation (the "Demiurge") far enough removed from God that it could create evil matter, and God would be free of the taint of evil. Accept their absurdities and one must conclude that this world was created by a being who is ignorant of and hostile to, the One True God!

On the other hand, John's doctrine of the creation is the most reasonable. The *Logos* is the expression of the purposes and mind of God. The *Logos* enjoyed perfect fellowship with the Father. The *Logos* was the exclusive agency in the creation. Therefore, creation is an expression of the mind of the One True God. Jesus manifested the attitude of God . . . an attitude of infinite love. Matter is *not* evil! This universe is *not* antagonistic toward God! Of a truth, man's sin turns God's beauty into ugliness; man's foolishness turns God's gifts into instruments of his own destruction. This world was designed for man's good, but alas, man has abused it.

Other Scriptures testify that Jesus was Creator and is now Sustainer of our universe. Cf. Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-4; Gen. 1:26. **JESUS IS THE GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP!** Any church or organization that does not honor Jesus Christ as Deity does not honor the One God! "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him" (John 5:23b).

Verse 4 informs us that in the *Logos* was, and is, that unfathomable essence called LIFE. The Greek word *zoe* means "the very principle or essence of life." Jesus Christ not only created the universe, but He imparted to it life. This Life also includes "eternal life." Here is one place where science must humbly acknowledge its limitations. Science may be able to synthesize the elements until it comes near to composing a body — human or animal. But it cannot give that body life. It was the Godhead that created the body of man from the dust of the earth, and it was also the Godhead that "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Paul said, "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28a). There is the answer to that impenetrable substance called LIFE. Science cannot furnish the answer. The famous Theory of Relativity and Einstein's formula revealed to us that our universe was created and does now subsist from the power or energy that is within the atom. But where does that power and energy come from? Hebrews 1:3b tells us that the Son is "upholding all things by the word of his power." As the Psalmist also said, "By the

word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Cf. *Psa.* 33:6-7; 148:5. Philosophy, history and science cannot search it out. God's Word reveals it, and this is all that anyone can know about Life!

Jesus gave many discourses on the Eternal Life that was His to give to men and how He would give it. Cf. *John* 5:21, 26; 6:50-65; 10:1; 11:25-26, etc. The Lord also attested His authority to dispense this inscrutable substance when He reinvested the decaying body of Lazarus with life. Cf. also His raising of the widow's son at Nain (*Lk.* 7:11ff) and the raising of Jairus' daughter (*Mk.* 5:2ff).

In the phrase "the life *was* the light of men," John uses the Greek Imperfect tense for "was," which means continued action in past time. The best commentary on this would be Peter's indication that Christ by His Spirit illuminated the prophets of the Old Testament period (and consequently all Israel), cf. *I Pet.* 1:10-11.

One author says that this phrase is interchangeable. "The *light* was the *life* of men" is also true. Life, when it is revealed, becomes light. Power turned into electricity and made manifest becomes light. Christ, the Power of God and the Word of God manifested for us truth, love, knowledge, life and light. His light is a revealing light. It reveals man as he really is. It also reveals the love of God which is able to change man into what he ought to be. His light is a guiding light that leads man through the darkness of sin, ignorance error and death. Cf. *Psa.* 119:1, 2, 105; *Prov.* 6:23.

In the fifth verse, as may be noted from the paraphrase, the word "shining" is in the present tense . . . continuing action. The Light which illuminated men of old keeps on giving light. John wrote in his first epistle, ". . . the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining" (*I Jn.* 2:8b). The Life and Light existed when the Spirit of Christ abode in the prophets of old and shone forth. It existed in Jesus of Nazareth when God became incarnate, and it shone forth. Life and Light is now shining forth through the inspired Word of the apostles, and the lives of men and women who have this Word "written and engraven on their hearts."

There seem to be two schools of interpretation on the fifth verse. Darkness, in John's writings, is synonymous with ignorance, hate, error, sin and death. So light is synonymous with knowledge, love, truth, holiness and life. Here John records that

the Light is shining in the darkness and the darkness did not apprehend (*katelaben*) it. Some would translate the Greek word "overcome or overtake," while others say it means "apprehend or appropriate."

The first interpretation would have John mean that the darkness warred with the Light and made strong attempts to overcome the Light (John 12:35). Yet the Light kept on shining in spite of the darkness.

The second interpretation, which we have chosen in our paraphrase, seems to fit the context better. John seems to be speaking of the same Light and the same rejection and failure to appropriate in 1:9-11. Evil and darkness will, by its very nature, actively oppose truth and light and thus refuse to perceive it.

If darkness is opposed to all truth, opposed to all good, love and holiness, what then shall be the lot of those who are going to be sentenced to ETERNITY in "outer darkness"? For the redeemed, "the glory of God will lighten" the heavenly city . . . there will be no more sin, pain, tears, mourning or death. "And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). What do YOU want for yourself and others? Eternal LIGHT with God, or eternal DARKNESS with Satan and his angels?

Quiz

1. When was the Word in relationship to time?
2. What is a good definition of *Logos*?
3. How does v. 1-3 refute the Gnostic philosophy?
4. Where does life, in essence, originate?
5. Name two things light does as "the light of men."
6. How do you think the darkness "apprehended not" the light?

THE WORD MANIFESTED TO THE JEWS — THEIR REJECTION OF HIM

Text 1:6-11

- 6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.
- 7 The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.
- 8 He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.

9 There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.

Queries

- a. Which John is meant in verse 6?
- b. How could "all . . . believe through him"?
- c. Who is the "true light"?
- d. Who are "his own"?

Paraphrase

There came a man with a commission and message from God; this man's name was John. John came for the purpose of giving testimony to what he had heard and seen concerning the Light. John's witness was given in order that all might come to believe on the Light through him. John was not the Light, but came for the express purpose of pointing out the genuine Light. The perfect Light, which reveals God to every man who will receive the revelation, was coming into the world. The Light was in the world prior to His incarnation, and the world which was made through Him testified to Him, but the world would not recognize Him. He came incarnate unto His own nation, and they that were His own peculiar people rejected Him.

Summary

John was not the Light, but was sent purposely to point out the Light. Even when the Light was manifested in the flesh, those who should have received Him rejected Him.

Comment

The Greek word for "sent" used here is *apostello*, from which we get our word "apostle." It usually means "one sent with a commission." *John* is a Hellenized form of *Jonathan*, which means gift of God. There is a great similarity between John and his Old Testament namesake. Both he and Jonathan gave up a great glory that could have been theirs in order that God's Anointed might have the pre-eminence. With Jonathan, it was David; with John the Baptist, it was Christ. Whenever the name John is used in the fourth Gospel it is always used to refer to

John the Baptist. The name of "John the son of Zebedee" is never mentioned.

Do you wonder why the Gospel writer would have to point out that John the Baptist was not the True Light? John had a tremendous following (Matt. 3:5). Many persons believed John to be the Christ (Lk. 3:15; Jn. 1:19). John even had disciples long after Christ had ascended, and in Ephesus, the very city where John was writing his Gospel account (Acts 19:1-3). In spite of the Baptist's continual affirmation that he was not the Christ, it was necessary to emphasize that Jesus Christ was the True Light. There were "preacher lovers" when John the Evangelist wrote his Gospel (I Cor. 1:12-13). John the Baptist's unfeigned humility in seeking to decrease and let Jesus increase prompted Jesus to remark, "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). Every Christian ought to study intently the life of this "greatest of all born of women" and emulate his humility, self-denial and courage.

The grammar of the original Greek language in verse 7 indicates that John came for the very purpose of testifying. John was to point out the True Light and give what evidence he had that this was the Light. The object of belief was Jesus Christ—the agency or instrument through which the object is revealed was John. Faith still comes through the agency of the preached Word, (cf. Rom. 10:14-17; Jas. 1:21; I Pet. 1:22-25). The first disciples won by Jesus were of John's training (Jn. 1:35-42). Thus John was instrumental in bringing faith to all who subsequently believed on Jesus through the preaching of these apostles. John was *a* light (Jn. 5:35) but not **THE** Light.

In verse 8 we have repeated what was said in verses 6 and 7. What an opportunity John had to pass himself off as the Christ! John showed more unselfishness, perhaps, than any man that ever lived. More preachers today need to pattern their ministry after John the Baptist's. It is imperative that all Christians heed the injunction of these verses that no preacher or teacher, however great, is to be worshipped or followed . . . only Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Verse 9 is said to be the "Quaker Text" because they use it to substantiate their "Inner light" theory. Every verse of Scripture *must* be interpreted in the light of other Scriptures. The Bible nowhere teaches that every single person is enlightened whether he wants to be or not. Even here in this context (1:1-11), both

before and after verse 9, the writer speaks of men rejecting this illuminating Light. Luther says of this passage, "There is only one light that lights all men, and no man comes into the world who can possibly be illumined by any other light." This interpretation takes account of the rest of the New Testament. Just as Jesus is the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," He is also the "light of the world." But just as all the world will not avail themselves of His purifying blood, neither does every man receive His Light of Life. The word "true" in this verse could be better translated "genuine" or "perfect," as opposed to unreal and imperfect.

There is some disagreement among commentators as to *when* the Light was in the world (v. 10). In the Greek text, "was" is in the imperfect tense (continuous existence in past time). The world was made through Him, and He gave it Life and Order. This should have been enough evidence to direct men's minds toward One Eternal Being (Rom. 1:20-23). Yet the world (men) "refused to have God in their knowledge."

Verse 11 shows the extreme perversity of men in that even when The Light became Incarnate, His own (generally speaking) rejected Him. The pathos of the situation comes out in a literal translation of the text — "he came unto his own nation and they that were his own people did not receive him." He came to a nation that should have prepared itself for Him. He should have been welcomed like a king — but He was rejected. Israel, her people and all her institutions, existed only for His glory and His eternal purposes (cf. Zech. 2:12; Hosea 9:3; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Lev. 25:23; Ex. 19:5; Psa. 135:4; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18 32:9).

They knew Him all right! The whole history of Israel was a training school (Gal. 3:24) to prepare the Jews to receive the world's Messiah. But they didn't want a meek, unmilitaristic and uncorruptible Messiah. The Jewish leaders wanted a Messiah that would help them in their graft — the Jewish people wanted a King that would put bread on their tables, and plenty of it. The parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21:33ff) represents the Jews as killing the Heir, not in ignorance, but because they *did* know who He was.

Here is the great tragedy: A people that had so long been nursed, disciplined and prepared to present the Messiah to the world for salvation, scorned and finally shamefully crucified the Incarnate Word. This is why Jesus' body was racked with great

sobs over the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41ff) . . . this is what caused Him to wish agonizingly that He could give them His protecting love, but "they would not" (Matt. 23:37ff). What pathos there is in this verse "he came unto his own home — and his own people gave him no welcome." It happened to Jesus long ago with Israel — and it is still happening today within New Israel, the Church!

Quiz

1. Why should it be emphasized that John the Baptist was not the Light?
2. Was John a light in any sense? Are we lights (Matt. 5:14)?
3. What is meant by "the light which lighteth every man"?
4. Can we see the evidence of a Creator in nature (cf. Rom. 1:20; Psa. 19:1; Job 12:7-10)?
5. Why is Israel's rejection of Christ so pathetic?
6. Do you think the Jews knew that Jesus was the Messiah (cf. Acts 3:17; I Cor. 2:8)?
7. Is Christ still rejected by "His own" today?

THE WORD MANIFESTED TO OTHERS AND THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF HIM

Text 1:12-18

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

15 John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me.

16 For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Queries

- a. What is meant by:
 - (1) "born not of blood"?
 - (2) "nor of the will of the flesh"?
 - (3) "nor of the will of man"?
- b. Why is there emphasis upon "grace and truth" in these verses?
- c. Has any man ever seen God (cf. Ex. 33:17-23)?

Paraphrase

But as many as received the Light and trusted in His name and obeyed His commandments, He gave them the privilege and authority to become children of God; that is, those who have been born of God by spiritual rebirth and not physical birth. Physical lineage — blood descent, whether of the baser desire of the flesh or the nobler purposes of man — cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. And the Logos-Light took the form of a physical body and dwelt temporarily amongst us (and we saw with our own eyes His glory which is the same glory as of the Only-Unique Being from the presence of the Father) full of favor, mercy and truth. John bears witness of Him and has cried aloud, saying, This is He of whom I said, the One coming on the scene later than I, really comes before me, for He outranked me from eternity. For from His abundance all, including John the Baptist, received; and all give gratitude in exchange for that grace. For the Law, which was not merciful, came through Moses; but mercy and truth through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time, the Only-Unique God, the One residing in perfect intimacy with the Father, That One has interpreted the mercy and love of the Father for us.

Summary

Those who received the Light were given the privilege and shown the way to become children of God. The Light became flesh, temporarily, to show them the way to the Father. The ultimate of grace and truth came only through Him. Neither the Law of Moses nor John the Baptist could reveal the way. The Only Son who enjoyed perfect union with the Father must alone show the way.

Comment

In verses 12 and 13 John puts "as many as received him" in opposition to them that were his own who did not receive Him. To those who received Him, He *gave* the right to become children of God. To "receive Him" is to "believe on His name." To "believe on His name" is to trust Him and obey Him. God offers us sonship of His own free love — we can never merit sonship by our works. What God offers, however, man must appropriate if he is to enjoy. As in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32), the prodigal merited disinheritance by his self-willed rebellion — the father *gave* him back his sonship — the son had to "come to himself" and return to an obedient walk with his father to appropriate this sonship. Oh, what a joy it is to be sons of our Heavenly Father (I Jn. 3:1-3)!

Some would have verse 13 refer to the virgin birth of Christ, but the best contextual rendering would indicate that it refers to "as many as received him." Verse 13 is a climactic arrangement to show that it is utterly impossible for physical lineage to inherit the Kingdom of God. The Jews were sure that their descent from Abraham gave them sonship in the Messianic kingdom, but they were wrong (cf. Mt. 3:8-10; Jn. 8:31-44). For explanation of each phrase of verse 13 see the paraphrase of this section.

To become sons of God, we must be born of God. Without doubt, John is talking of the New Birth here. Jesus talks to Nicodemus of the same subject (Jn. 3:1-15). In essence, the New Birth is ours when we surrender our will to the will of Christ as revealed in the New Testament (read carefully I Pet. 1:17-25 in this connection). We cannot be born anew, or from above until the Spirit of God abides in us. The New Testament is explicit as to how this is initially accomplished. Jesus said, "If a man love me, *he will keep my word*: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23). The Word of Christ which offered the life-giving Spirit was preached by Peter and the other apostles on that great day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Some 3000 people were convicted of their sins and believed the testimony concerning a risen Lord. Having been convinced of their sin in rejecting God's Son, they cried out for forgiveness. Peter then told them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38; cf. also Titus 3:4-7). We shall deal more

fully with the New Birth in the notes on John 3:1-5. Suffice it to say here, the new-born babe in Christ is to be continually led by the Spirit else he forfeits his sonship (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:1-17). The new creature must either grow, or wither and die (cf. I Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14).

The next verse (14) might be considered the greatest single verse in the whole New Testament. In the grammatical construction of the Greek language here John makes a point of saying "the Word became flesh". Since he does not use an article with *sarx* (flesh), this sentence cannot be translated "flesh became the Word". Many modern cults would have us believe that our Lord began from a human birth, like all mankind, and rather evolved into someone divine. This verse also refutes the Docetists (ancient and modern) who theorize that Jesus was only a phantom. His human body was not a real body, they say He could not really feel hunger, weariness, sorrow and pain. He was rather a ghostly apparition, and not flesh. They are loathe to apply the word *flesh*, with its connotations of weakness and frailty, to God.

It is even a weakness of many Christians today to emphasize so strongly the deity of Jesus that they tend to forget that Jesus Christ was fully a man as well. What a glorious meaning this has for us — "the Word became flesh". Since we are flesh and blood, and enslaved by the fear of death, Jesus shared with us this nature in order that He might relieve us of this terrible fear which chains all humanity. He conquered Satan and took away his power of death! Furthermore, Jesus shared in our fleshly nature, without sin, that He might become our Eternal High Priest. We have a High Priest interceding before God on our behalf Who has been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . . tempted in all points like as we are . . ." (cf. Heb. 2:14-15; 4:14-16). Manifold are the blessings we partake of through the incarnation. We see God's power *demonstrated* — to forgive sins (Mk. 2:9-12), over death (Jn. 11:43-44), over disease (Lk. 17:11-19), over the elements (Mt. 14:22-33).

This Word "became flesh and dwelt among us". The word "dwelt" is translated from *skenao* which means literally "tabernacled or tented." John goes on to say parenthetically that "we (the disciples) beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father . . ." This phrase would be full of meaning to Israelites. When the "glory of God" dwelt with Israel, He dwelt in their tabernacle and in their temple in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 40:34; I Kings 8:11). The "glory of God" means simply the

presence of God. God's presence was among men in bodily form — he ate, drank, conversed, slept, prayed with them. These twelve men, in particular, saw and "handled" the "Word of life" for approximately three years (cf. I Jn. 1:1-4). What the *Shechinah* had been in the tabernacle (the dwelling of God in the midst of God's people), the Word was then in human flesh — and the Holy Spirit is now in the Word written on the hearts of men and women (II Cor. 3:2-3; Heb. 8:10). Jesus says that His disciples are given this glory — this presence of God (Jn. 17:22-23).

There seems to be a reference in "we beheld his glory," etc., to the transfiguration of Christ. John was one of the three privileged to be an eyewitness to this glorious event (cf. I Jn. 1:1-4; II Pet. 1:16-18). This glory which the disciples beheld (throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus — Jn. 2:11; 5:41; 11:4) was so awesome and magnificent that it could be nothing less than divine glory. Glory that an ONLY UNIQUE (*monogenes*) SON has from His divine Father. (See *Special Study* on "He Gave The Only Son He Had," pp. 125.)

Endless application could be made concerning verse 14. But we shall never drink of its sweet nectar to the full until we "know as we are known." It can be accounted for on no less than divine inspiration that John could express this great profundity in such terse and simple words — a mystery on which the greatest philosophers have spent lifetimes — "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"!

Verse 15 is a quotation from John the Baptist. It has already been pointed out in verse 8 that John the Baptist was not the Light. It was necessary for the Gospel writer to make sure that the *Voice* not be mistaken for the *Light*. Time and time again John the Baptist cried aloud that he was not the Christ; he pointed to the Nazarene, Who began His ministry after John. He emphatically stated that Jesus of Nazareth outranked him because Jesus was the Lamb of God, the promised Messiah, the One Who was eternal. John preached that he was merely a "way-preparer," and that his ministry would give way to that of the Christ.

The phrase in verse 16 seems to be partly explanatory on behalf of the quotation from the Baptist. It is strange that John the Evangelist would interject a quotation in the middle of such a profound dissertation on the Incarnation. The author of this Gospel, however, wants to show that *all*, including the "greatest born of women (John the Baptist) received of the fulness of the Son. Yea, even he who was "more than a prophet" needed grace

from the Lamb of God. The word for "fulness" is *pleroma* and is the same word Paul uses in Colossians 2:9. There Paul says that in Christ dwells all the fulness (*pleroma*) of the Godhead (Deity) in a bodily form . . . and in Him are *all* made full. In Christ dwells the ultimate of wisdom, power and love. His grace is inexhaustible. We "have not because we ask not" (cf. Jn. 15:7; 16:23-24).

The next phrase, "and grace for grace," is one of varied interpretation. The most prevalent interpretation is "grace upon grace," or "abundance of grace." One writer puts it, "like manna fresh each morning — new grace for the new day and new service." It can also mean "grace in exchange for grace." The same Greek preposition *anti* (for) is used in Luke 11:11 "a serpent *for* a fish," and in Hebrews 12:2 where Jesus *in exchange for* the joy set before Him endured the cross. Such an interpretation would not be contrary to the tenor of New Testament teaching. We give loving gratitude by our obedience in exchange for His loving favors. The New Testament does teach that we only love Him because He loved us first (cf. I Jn. 4:19).

We ask ourselves now, what is the connection between the foregoing and verse 17? To some of his readers, John's statement that the fulness of God was in the incarnate Word would disparage the Law of Moses. John explains — the Law was given through Moses, and it was good and holy. Yet it was a law of condemnation. Its purpose was to bring men to a trust in God and not in themselves. The Law was given to demonstrate to men that they did not have the ability to be righteous enough to earn salvation (cf. Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10-11; 3:21). On the other hand, through Jesus Christ came "grace and truth." Jesus brought the favor of God which man *could not nor cannot* earn; The Law said, "Do all this and live", Man could not do it (Jas. 2:10); therefore, man merited the Law's penalty, death, eternal death. Jesus says, "I *give* you life, eternal life; accept it by trusting and obeying My words". (See Jn. 6:63). We have in Christ *grace*, without which we stand condemned by the Law; we have in Christ *truth*, which is the reality of all the shadows cast by the Law of sacrifices and ceremonies.

The closing verse (18) to the Prologue is very well chosen. It is a resume of the entire Prologue. John simply declares that apart from Jesus, the incarnate Mind, no man has seen God (cf. I Jn. 4:7-14). Not even the great lawgiver and prophet, Moses, has had immediate knowledge of God. No man can ever see God

physically, for God is spirit. Moses merely saw the fading glory of God as God passed by him. Paul was blinded by that glory (Acts 9). But Christ has declared, revealed and interpreted God to us. John uses an interesting word in the Greek for "declared". He uses *exegesato*, from which we get our English words *exegesis* and *exegetical*, meaning literally to lead out, or interpret. In other words, Christ, through His incarnation, has interpreted God for us. The Prologue is simply describing the interpretation which the Word gave concerning the unseen Father (cf. Jn. 14:8-9).

This One, who has declared the Father for us is continually in the bosom of the Father. To be "in the bosom" of someone is an ancient way of saying "in perfect intimacy." It is used of husband and wife, father and son or two friends who are in the closest of communion with each other. There is perfect, continuing communion between the Father and the Son. He knows whereof he declares. Proverbs 8:30 speaks of the close, intimate relationship between God and Wisdom: "Then I was by him (during the creation) as a master workman; And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Compare also the intimate contact between Jesus and the Father in John 12:27-30.

Notice, in closing this great section, the awe-inspiring boldness with which John writes concerning things that are beyond human comprehension. Could we say that John claims inspiration for his account of the Gospel? Indeed we could — indeed we *must!*

Quiz

1. What must we do to receive the sonship which God gives us?
2. What is a simple definition of the New Birth?
3. Which heretical sect in the early church denied that God came in the flesh?
4. Give at least two things which the Incarnation means for us.
5. How does the presence of God dwell in the church today?
6. What is the connection of verse 17 with the rest of the Prologue?
7. How may we say from the Prologue that John claims inspiration for his Gospel?

We come now to the second main division of the Gospel of John. From 1:19 through the last verse of the twelfth chapter (12:50), John the Evangelist shows how the Word was manifested in the flesh to His own and how they rejected Him. Jesus is still in the "preparational phase" of His ministry (cf. Map No.

1, p. 17). We shall outline the remainder of Chapter One in this manner:

II The Word Manifested to the Jews and their rejection of Him. 1:19 — 12:50

A. Preparation, 1:19-2:12

1. Ministry of John the Baptist, 1:19-34

a. The Jews investigate John's identity, 19-22

b. John's answer, 23-28

c. The Baptist's evidence for the Lamb of God, 29-34

2. Gathering of His first disciples, 1:35-51

a. Andrew, Peter and an unnamed disciple, 35-42

b. Philip and Nathanael, 43-51

THE JEWS INVESTIGATE JOHN'S IDENTITY

Text 1:19-22

19 And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No.

22 They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

Queries

a. What are Levites?

b. Why ask John the Baptist about Elijah and "the prophet"?

c. Why would the "committee" need an answer?

Paraphrase

Now this is what John testified, when the Jewish Sanhedrin sent priests and Levites to John to obtain an answer from him concerning his identity, and they asked him, Who are you? And John vigorously and fully declared, I am not the Christ. Then they asked him, What then is the case? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not Elijah as you look for him. Are you the prophet like unto Moses? And he answered, No! Then they said to him, Tell us then just who you are, for we must have an answer to

take back to them that sent us. Tell us, what do you say about yourself?

Summary

The Jewish leaders demand to know whether John the Baptist is the Messiah, Elijah or the prophet. John denies all three identities.

Comment

The Sanhedrin, largely controlled by the Pharisees, was the religious authority of that day. It was a council of 70 or 71 learned and influential religious leaders. The council was a mixture of Pharisees (strict law-keepers — traditionalists), Sadducees (skeptics, worldly, politicians), and Scribes (interpreters, lawyers). In the "committee" that was investigating John there were also Levites. The Levites were a sort of secondary priesthood. They performed the more menial tasks of the temple service, baking bread, leading temple music, etc. One of their main functions was to enforce the Law. They were the temple police force, and they carried out the sentences of the Sanhedrin when punishment was to be inflicted.

This great, magnetic, eccentric character was attracting multitudes. Crowds were trekking into the wilderness just to hear him preach. The whole nation was on tiptoe expectation because of his powerful message (Lk. 3:15). Thus the rulers of the Jews felt they must take this matter in hand before certain religious and political repercussions occurred. There had been certain religious fanatics before who claimed to be the Messiah (cf. Acts 5:36-37). These had mustered a small force of followers and revolted against their conquerors, only to suffer disastrous results to themselves and the nation at large. A revolt now, touched off by John the Baptist against Rome, would be disastrous. The Sanhedrin might be deposed! In fact, some of them might even lose their heads! This is what Caiaphas had reference to when he said of Christ, "it was expedient that one man should die for the people" (Jn. 18:14). Basically, this is why the rulers crucified Jesus. They feared that the popularity of Jesus might cause revolt and subsequent Roman intervention (Jn. 11:48). They would lose their hold on the nation's purse strings.

In addition to the fear of revolt, the rulers were interested in questioning John because of his frankness. He had said some very candid and revealing things about Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt. 3:7). Sending the Levites along indicates this committee would stand for no more attacks upon the character of the illustrious Doctors of Divinity of that day.

So they began their questioning by asking him if he was the Messiah. John emphatically stated that he was not the Messiah. The word used for "confess" in verse 20 is *homologeō* which literally means "to speak the same thing; to agree." Thus John's denial that he was the Christ was in perfect agreement with the truth. When we learn that we must "confess" Christ in order to be saved (Mt. 10:32-33), it means that our lives and our words must "speak the same things, or agree with," the commandments of the Lord (cf. Rom. 10:9-10). To confess Christ is not the mere mouthing of Scripture, formula or creed, but a profession by both word and action! (cf. Jas. 1:22; I Jn. 3:17-18).

What a man of God this John was! He willingly and joyfully kept himself in the background in order that all might see the only Son of God. The Baptist was what every true follower of Christ ought to be — a servant willing to lay all the acclaim and honor given him of men at the feet of Jesus.

"If you are not the Messiah, then you must be Elijah!" This was the next conclusion of the investigating committee. The Jews had a tradition that Elijah was to precede the Messiah and that he, Elijah returned in the flesh, was to set all matters aright. He was even to settle disputes between property owners and money lenders. They taught that anything disputed must wait "until Elijah comes". Of course, this is merely tradition, but is probably based on Malachi 4:5. They expected a literal, flesh-and-blood Elijah to come and prepare the way for the Messiah. Therefore, John's denial here does not contradict Matthew 11:14 and 17:9-13, or Luke 1:17, where John the Baptist is said to have come "in the spirit and the power of Elijah."

COMPARISON OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND ELIJAH

	<i>Elijah</i>	<i>John</i>
1. Place of abode	"Hide thyself by the brook" (I Ki. 17:3).	In deserts (Mt. 3:1).
2. Food	Ravens fed him (I Ki. 17:6).	Locusts and wild honey (Mt. 3:4).
3. Appearance	Hairy man (II Ki. 1:8).	Raiment of camel's hair (Mt. 3:4).
4. Message	Calamity to nation; call to Repentance (I Ki. 18:39).	Judgment to come; call to Repentance (Mt. 3:4).
5. Influence Over Multitudes	Personality tremendous and compelling (I Ki. 18).	Brought whole nation into wilderness (Mt. 3:5; Lk. 3:15).
6. Firey wrath on Enemies of True Religion	(I Kings 18:40).	(Matthew 3:7).
7. In the presence of Kings	Ahab and Jezebel (I Ki. 21:19).	Herod and Herodias (Mt. 14:4).
8. Rage of an Evil Woman	Jezebel (I Ki. 29:2).	Herodias (Mt. 14:5-8).
9. The Dark Hour	(I Ki. 29:4).	(Matt. 11:2).
10. Extraordinary End of Career	(II Ki. 2:11).	(Matt. 14:11).
11. Loyalty of Disciples	(II Ki. 16:17).	(Matt. 14:12).

The next question by these Jews was, "Are you *the* Prophet?" Moses had promised them *the* Prophet, like unto himself (cf. Deut. 18:15). This was a promise that the Jews taught their children as soon as they were old enough to understand. It was a promise no Jew ever forgot. Moses was their great deliverer, and ever since the captivities of the Jews they longed for *the* Prophet, Who they prayed would deliver them from their oppressions. Maybe the Jews thought the Prophet was another forerunner of the Messiah (Jn. 7:40) — maybe they thought he was to be the Messiah Himself. Whatever their ideas, John denied being *the* Prophet. It seems that even John himself was later puzzled as to whether Jesus was only a forerunner, and questioned whether he should look for another (Lk. 7:19).

This delegation from Jerusalem was getting nowhere fast! Their mission thus far was a failure. John's flat denial will not satisfy the "powers that be." They must bring an answer or suffer censure and embarrassment. The manner in which they ask, and the admitted purpose of their questioning shows they were not at all interested in the message of John and what it should mean to their spiritual condition. All they ask is, "What do you claim to be — the Sanhedrin wants to know?"

Quiz

1. Name three religious parties that make up the Sanhedrin?
2. Why would the Jewish rulers fear revolt against Rome?
3. What is the full import of the word "confess"?
4. In how many ways does John the Baptist compare with Elijah?
5. Give the Scripture references for Old Testament promises of "Elijah that was to come", and "the Prophet like unto Moses".

JOHN'S ANSWER

Text 1:23-28

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet.

24 And they had been sent from the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why then baptizest thou, if thou are not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize in water: in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not,

27 even he that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Queries

- a. What would the prophecy which John applies to himself mean to his questioners?
- b. Why do the Pharisees ask him about the fact that he is baptizing people?
- c. Why does John emphasize that he baptizes in water — does he imply that the “one coming after him” will *not* baptize in water?

Paraphrase

John answered his questioners by saying, I am a voice of one crying loud and forcefully in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, just as the prophet Isaiah has prophesied. Those who had been sent to question John were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, Why then are you immersing if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the Prophet? John answered them, saying, I am immersing in water: in your midst is standing One Whom you have not recognized, the One coming after me, Whose sandal thongs I am not worthy to untie. These things came to pass in Bethany which is on the eastern side of the Jordan river where John was immersing.

Summary

John's answer to the Jew's question is: “I am the prophesied ‘way-preparer’ for the Lord.” Then John intimates that the Christ they seek stands unrecognized in their midst.

Comment

John takes Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 40:3-5) and applies it to himself. The prophecy is given more fully in Luke 3:4-6; in Matt. 3:3, John the Baptist shows that the prophecy definitely foretold his ministry (cf. also Mk. 1:3). This committee undoubtedly interpreted Isa. 40:3-5 as Messianic, but they would hardly accept such a religious fanatic as John for the forerunner of their ideal Messiah. Their Messianic fancy was that of a king of military, political and economic grandeur. The custom of the country at that time sheds light upon the prophecy. When a conqueror was

about to travel through his province, the roads were leveled and made straight and put in order for his journey. A delegated subordinate always preceded the monarch to take care of this preliminary preparation. Thus, John the Baptist was the appointed "road preparer" for King Jesus. But the Jewish rulers hardly looked for either a spiritual king or a spiritual "way preparer."

It is interesting to note the word used by John for "one crying." It is the Greek word *boao*, an onomatopoeic word (a word formed by imitating the sound associated with the thing described, i.e., the name "Whippoorwill" to describe the bird), which came to describe the bellowing of oxen. In John's case it indicates that he was in the wilderness crying out with a strong, forceful and arresting voice, "*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

John was literally in the wilderness of Judea doing his preaching. But there seems to be a spiritual application to the phrase "a voice of one crying *in the wilderness*." Especially is this true considering its prophetic background. This herald of God was also crying in a *wilderness* of wasted souls. "The wilderness" (a pathless, fruitless waste) fitly describes the spiritual condition of Jehovah's people. John sought to prepare the way by preaching, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8).

It is still true today! All the preaching and teaching in the church must be done toward this end; that is, toward preparing the way for the Lord's entry into the heart of individuals. Genuine conviction of sin, a need for the Saviour, and a submissive will is preparing the way for the King of kings. That is what John the Baptist preached, and that is what the world needs preached today!

Verse 24 seems to be furnishing the reader the reason why the next question (v. 25) was asked of John. It would be within the realm of the Pharisses to ask such a question. Further, it is doubtful that the Sadducees would be the least bit interested in why John was baptizing.

Most critics hold that John merely adapted the Jewish "proselyte baptism" to his ministry. Ecclesiastical history, however, gives no clear-cut evidence that the Jews practiced proselyte baptism. To the contrary, ancient records seem to indicate that the Jews appropriated baptism to the ceremonies of making proselytes from the practice begun by John, and later from Christian baptism (cf. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 985). It lends more force to the question of the Jews to John if we assume John is doing something foreign to religious custom and practice of that day.

Here was this desert hermit attracting the whole countryside to his preaching. And he brazenly set aside all the present customs and traditions of the ecclesiastical heads and commanded, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins" (cf. Mk. 1:14; Lk. 3:3). Only as important a personage as the Messiah, Elijah or the Prophet would dare assume such authority as to introduce a new religious doctrine.

Furthermore, the Jews expected a general purification at the coming of the Messiah. At least they were inclined to interpret some of the Old Testament prophecies in this vein (cf. Zech 13:1; Ezek. 36:25). If John were not the Messiah, why then did he demand purity of life and practice baptism?

In studying verses 26 and 27, one must also consider parallel passages such as Mt. 3:10-12; Mk. 1:7-8; Lk. 3:15-17; and the next few verses of John (Jn. 1:29-34). John the Baptist emphasizes that he will baptize only in water because the One coming after him will have authority and power to baptize whom He will in the Holy Spirit and unquenchable fire. The Baptist does not imply that Christ will disregard water baptism. The New Testament plainly records that Jesus Himself was baptized in water, that He and his disciples taught water baptism, and that Christ commanded baptism for all subsequent believers (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Mt. 28:18-20; Jn. 4:1-2; Acts 2:38).

It would be well to pause here and define the word *baptize*. Every Greek Lexicon of any repute defines *baptizo* as having a primary meaning of "dip, plunge, immerse, submerge." In the Greek language (the original language of the New Testament) this word *baptizo* can never mean sprinkle or pour. It is to be feared that the translators of our English versions of the Bible have allowed religious prejudices to guide their translating. It is interesting to note how these translators contradict themselves. In II Kings 5:14 our English translators have rendered the verse thusly: "Then went he down and *dipped* himself seven times in the Jordan . . ." (speaking of Naaman and his cure of leprosy). The amazing fact is that they interpreted the word *baptizo*, here used in the Septuagint, to mean *dipped*. When these scholars came to the New Testament they merely transliterated (change of characters of one alphabet to corresponding characters of another alphabet) the word *baptizo*. "Consistency, thou art a gem!"

When John baptized, he immersed men and women in the

Jordan River. When men and women were told by the apostles that they must "repent and be baptized," the apostles meant that they must "repent and be immersed" in water. (Cf. Acts 2:38; 2:41; 8:34-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15; 15:33; 18:8; 22:16, etc.) No man or group of men has ever had nor will ever have authority to alter the scriptural plan of salvation (cf. Gal. 1:6-10). No "latter day prophet," no "earthly vicar," no, not even an "angel from heaven" is permitted to preach a revised gospel. Everyone who names the name of Christ as Lord is committed to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all time delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

John the Baptist said, "I immerse in water: but in your midst is standing One whom you do not recognize." In verse 28 John humbly explains that the multitudes are recognizing and acclaiming the wrong person. The One they are not recognizing is so far above John that John is not even fit to perform the lowliest servant's task for Him. The Eastern custom of taking the sandals from a guest's feet and bathing his feet was delegated to the lowest of the servants.

No man is a fit messenger of the Lord until he is able humbly to recognize his unworthiness. Let us remember the words of the Master, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do" (Lk. 17:10).

The next matter for consideration is one of geography. Verse 28 speaks of "Bethany beyond the Jordan" as the location for these momentous events. Almost all the ancient manuscripts have "Bethany beyond the Jordan" here in place of the King James translation "Bethabara". One of the early Christian writers (Origen) could find no place in Palestine named Bethany when he visited there, but was directed to a village called Bethabara east of the Jordan. Origen is accused of taking the liberty of changing the original text. It is impossible, this far removed, to determine the definite geographical location. The attendant circumstances, however, point to a place on the east side of the Jordan, immediately north of the Dead Sea, in the vicinity of Jericho. There is a ford in the Jordan there, presumably the one used by Joshua and the children of Israel in their crossing (Josh. 3:16). For a more detailed presentation of this matter see Andrews, *The Life of Our Lord*, pages 146-151; McGarvey, *Lands of the Bible* pages 341-343.

Quiz

1. What does the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3-5 indicate of the nature of John the Baptist's ministry, i.e., how John could "prepare the way for the Lord"?
2. Why does John mention that it was the Pharisees that had been sent (verse 24)?
3. Was John's baptism an adaptation of Jewish proselyte baptism?
4. How must the Greek word *baptizo* be translated?
5. Must all who believe in Jesus be baptized? Give 3 Scripture references.
6. How do we know the Scriptures cannot be changed?
7. Where is the most probable location of "Bethany beyond the Jordan"?

THE BAPTIST'S EVIDENCE FOR THE LAMB OF GOD

Text 1:29-34

29 On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!
 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water.

32 And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit.

34 And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

Queries

- a. Why does John call Jesus the Lamb of God?
- b. Did the descending Spirit really look like a dove?
- c. Why does John emphasize "I knew him not"?

Paraphrase

The day following the questioning by the Jews, John sees Jesus coming toward him and says, Look! There is the Lamb of God, Who is taking away the sin of the world! This is the One

of Whom I said, a Man is coming on the scene after me Who outranks me because He existed in eternity before me. I did not know He was the Messiah at first; but in order that He might be made manifest unto Israel, so Israel might know Him, I purposely came immersing in water. And John testified, saying, I have seen the Spirit coming down as a dove out of heaven and abiding upon Him. And I did not know Him, before this incident, as the Messiah; but the One who sent me to immerse in water, that One said to me, the One upon Whom you shall see the Spirit descending and abiding — this is the One Who immerses in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have testified that this One is The Son of God!

Summary

John the Baptist points the multitudes to Jesus of Nazareth as The Lamb of God. John then sets forth the God-given evidence for his testimony.

Comment

It would be well to remark here that the author of the Fourth Gospel bridges a gap of almost thirty years between verse 18 and 19. The boyhood, baptism and temptation of Jesus in the wilderness are all omitted between the account of the Incarnation and that portion of John's ministry here recorded. Therefore, when John the Baptist sees Jesus coming toward him, Jesus is returning to the scene of His baptism after having been in the wilderness of Judea for the temptation. It is only natural that Jesus would come here to link up His ministry where that of John was beginning to fade. Jesus took up "preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe in the gospel, (Mk. 1:14-15)" where John left off.

There are a number of inferences connected with John's utterance, "Look, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." (a) That John was thinking of the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:13; I Cor. 5:7; I Pet. 1:19) since the Passover was near; (b) that, being the son of a priest, he thought of the daily offering of a lamb (Ex. 29:38-42; Num. 28:4); or (c) that the Baptist was reminded of the lamb in Isaiah 53. We must agree with Hendriksen when he says, ". . . why is it necessary to make a choice?" Was not Christ the antitype of all three (I Pet. 1:19; Acts 8:32-35)?

In the Old Testament, the priests were to place their hands on the head of each lamb offered, thus signifying that the lamb was suffering God's penalty upon sin which the Jew had merited by his disobedience. The lamb bore the sentence of death in place of the Israelite who deserved it. Amazing grace! This was the atonement of the Old Testament. It was typical of the atonement of the Lamb of God and the New Covenant. The atonement of the Hebrew was accomplished by the grace of God and the ransom of a lamb's blood. The Hebrew, however, had to appropriate that atonement to himself. He appropriated God's mercy through faith — a faith that caused him to obey God's plan of atonement. He might not understand fully the "how and the why" of placing his hand upon the head of the sacrificial lamb (Lev. 1:3-5), but trusting and believing in Jehovah to fulfil His promises, the Israelite obeyed.

When John the Baptist said that Jesus was the Lamb of God that makes atonement for the sin of the world, he did not mean irresistible or universal atonement. Such assumption contradicts plain scriptural teaching (cf. Mt. 7:14, 20-23, etc.). When, by faith, we are obedient to the plan of atonement or salvation ordained in God's New Testament, we are promised complete and eternal atonement. When we obey Christ's commands, we, like the Israelite of old, "lay our hands upon the Lamb of God" signifying that He pays the ransom for us — He suffers the penalty in our stead. We may not understand all the reasons for His commands, i.e., immersion in water (Acts 2:38), but if we TRUST Him, we will OBEY Him.

The atonement is a subject of "unsearchable riches." No commentator has yet fathomed its depths. As one reads the Scriptures concerning the subject, it becomes both awesome and beautiful. Christ took away our sin by bearing in His own sinless body the penalty of the Father upon sin (cf. Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 6:23 — Heb. 5:7-9; 10:1-39; Isa. 53). Christ bears away, potentially, every sin that shall ever be committed (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15).

In verse 31 John says that he did not "know" Jesus. Whether John knew Jesus as he would a kinsman, or whether he knew Him as a fellow Israelite, we do not know. The emphasis which the Baptist wishes to place is that he did not know Jesus as the Messiah — did not know Him thus until after the baptismal experience and the dove descending upon Him. At the baptism of Jesus the Spirit descended upon Him "in a bodily form as a dove and a voice spoke from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved

Son; in thee I am well pleased" (cf. Lk. 3:22). John really saw a dove descend upon Jesus. These (the dove and the voice) are the Divine manifestations which John saw and heard and which he now bears witness to.

John also explains in verse 31 that one of the purposes of his baptizing was that Jesus of Nazareth should be made manifest to Israel as the Lamb of God — the promised Messiah. That Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of the world was not the private idea of John the Baptist, but He who sent John to baptize gave him the signs of the dove and the voice from heaven. The testimony of John is that of an eyewitness, and rests upon miraculous revelation. The fact that John was not aware of the deity of Jesus beforehand precludes any possibility of collusion or agreement between Jesus and John to deceive the people.

Some comment is in order here regarding John's apparent contrast between his water baptism and the baptizing which the One following him shall perform. In the Synoptics, when John is preaching to the public in general and the Pharisees in particular, he says, "I indeed baptize you in water . . . but he that cometh after me . . . he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire, etc.," Mt. 3:11 (cf. also Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16-17). There are those today who claim John meant that he baptized only in water, but that Jesus would baptize (immerse) all believers in the Holy Spirit and in fire. We believe that the Scriptures teach a baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire, but neither one are to be administered to all believers. By reading Luke 24:49, and by further connecting it immediately with Acts 1:1-5 it becomes plain that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is that which Jesus promised and administered to the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). This was also administered to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), signifying that the Gentiles were to be accepted into the kingdom of God by the heretofore prejudiced Jews (cf. Acts 10:47; 11:16-18; 15:7-11). These are the *only* instances where the Scriptures definitely speak of immersion in the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Christ. Others received special gifts of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the apostles, but there were no other baptisms in the Holy Spirit.

As for the baptism in fire, the context demands that we interpret John the Baptist's statement as referring to eternal punishment. In both Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17 John interprets his foregoing statement concerning baptism in fire by saying, "the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." This is also true

of the verses preceding the mention of baptizing in fire. John first tells the Pharisees that "every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire"; then he goes on to tell Who is going to do the "casting into the fire" (cf. Mt. 3:10-11; Lk. 3:9-10). John is saying, "I am not the anointed One you are asking about — I merely baptize in water." The Baptist wants it emphatically understood that the One coming after him "is mightier than the forerunner," that it is He Who has authority to immerse in the Holy Spirit and in fire!

Quiz

1. What portion of Jesus' life is omitted between John 1:18 and 1:19?
2. How is the atonement provided for by Christ (the Lamb of God) appropriated to our souls?
3. Give two reasons why John "came baptizing."
4. What is the baptism in the Holy Spirit? in fire?
5. Only.....has authority to administer these two baptisms.

ANDREW, PETER AND AN UNNAMED DISCIPLE

Text 1:35-42

35 Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples;

36 and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), where abidest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see. They came therefore and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).

42 He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and aid, Thou art Simon the son of John; thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).

Queries

- a. Was the place where Jesus stayed near there?
- b. Why did the two disciples say they were following Jesus? Was this really their purpose?
- c. What did Jesus and these two talk about all that day?

Paraphrase

Again, on the next day, John and two of his disciples were standing near where John was immersing and John gazed intently at Jesus as He was walking near by. And John said, Look — the Lamb of God! And two of his disciples heard him speaking and they followed Jesus. Having turned suddenly, Jesus beheld them following Him and said to them, What purpose have you in following Me — what are you seeking? And they said to Him, Rabbi, (which is interpreted, Teacher) Where are You abiding? Jesus said to them, Come and see! And at about ten a.m. they went and saw where He was abiding, and they were with Him for the remainder of that day. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two disciples who heard John speak and followed Jesus. Andrew was the first of the two disciples to find his own brother, Simon, and say to him, We have found the Messiah (which is interpreted, anointed One). Then Andrew led his brother Simon to Jesus. Jesus gazed into his heart and said, You are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas (which is interpreted Peter — meaning Stone).

Summary

Two of the Baptist's disciples set about investigating the One whom he points out as "the Lamb of God." Having conversed with Him they are convinced that He is the anointed One of Israel. They allow no delay in leading their brothers to Him.

Comment

Again we marvel at the self-denial of John the Baptist. Did he not know that once he pointed out the Messiah he invited disaster to his own popularity? Did he not realize that once he proved Jesus of Nazareth to be the anointed One that his disciples would be likely to leave him and follow the King of Israel? Cer-

tainly he did; and yet he pointedly showed Jesus to his disciples! There is nothing harder than to willingly take second place when one has enjoyed first place.

Verse 38 shows an apparent hesitancy on the part of the two disciples to join themselves rudely to Jesus uninvited. The tense of the Greek word *strapheis* indicates to some commentators that Jesus turned suddenly. When He turned, He asked them an important question, "What seek ye?" Notice that He said "*What,*" not "*Whom* seek ye?" It has also been pointed out that Jesus met these searchers halfway. It was God Who took the first step in wooing man back to Himself. We still love God because He first loved us (I Jn. 4:19). For those following Jesus today, the Lord's question still rings true: "What seek ye?" — a good reputation? a set of religious rules? a Sunday club? or is it Jesus Christ, the Son of God to be Lord of your entire being? (See Gal. 2:20).

There are two interpretations of the disciple's reply, "Teacher, where are you abiding?" One meaning behind the question might be that they were caught unawares when Jesus turned suddenly, and that was the only reply they could think of on the spur of the moment. The other interpretation is that the disciples sincerely sought His lodging place in order that they might go aside with Him, away from the crowds into quiet and earnest conversation concerning His messiahship.

The Lord was eager to satisfy their sincere and honest search after the Christ of God. Lenski contrasts the ardent, "Come, and ye shall see," of the King of Heaven and earth with the postponements and procrastinations of earthly potentates. He did not invite them merely to see His lodging place, but to "behold" the One for Whom their hearts, as well as the hearts of their ancestors, had longed (I Pet. 1:10-12).

If the world could know where Jesus stayed, it would build a shrine of stone and mortar. No one knows where it was. Perhaps it was the home of a friend, perhaps an inn — it may even have been a booth (tabernacle) made of palm leaves. This day and its revelations *were enshrined*, however, in the hearts of the disciples who were there. For John (the other disciple), as he writes this Gospel, remembers even the hour they arrived and just how long they stayed with Him. John seems to use the Roman mode of counting time, which would mean that 10 a.m. was the hour of their arrival. Others contend that John uses the Jewish notations of time, which would make the hour of

arrival 4 p.m. We refer you to the various works listed in the Bibliography for a more extended study of the Evangelist's method of counting time.

The Greek word *para* is the word used by the author to describe the visit of these two disciples. This word means primarily "by the side of," and reveals the intense conversation that must have been carried on.

In verse 40 the author finally mentions the name of one of the two disciples. Andrew will always be known as Simon Peter's brother (cf. Jn. 6:8). Almost immediately we ask, "Who was the other disciple?" We are given no definite statement from Scripture, but there is strong inference that it was John, brother of James, son of Zebedee and author of the Fourth Gospel. It is a trait of the author of this account never to mention his own name or that of his relatives (cf. our Introduction, section on "Authorship").

We are introduced to an outstanding characteristic of Andrew in verse 41. Andrew was a personal evangelist. He was always leading others to Jesus (cf. Jn. 6:8-9; 12:22). This is a characteristic that Jesus would have *all* His disciples cultivate (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). What a man this was that Andrew led to the Lord! We shall never fully know the fruit we bear indirectly through those we lead to Christ until we "meet them in the air." Andrew shares in all the subsequent fruits of Peter's labors!

In the phrase, "He findeth his own brother . . ." are also two possible interpretations. The most prevalent one is derived from the word *proton*, which means that Andrew sought his brother *first*, before he did anything else. Some manuscripts, however, have *protos* which means, perhaps, that Andrew was the "first" disciple who went after his brother, and implies that John also went after his brother James. We have chosen the latter interpretation in our paraphrase, for it fits the later call of the fishermen at Capernaum more readily (cf. Hendriksen on John, pp. 105-106, Vol. 1).

Andrew and John had made the greatest discovery of the ages — they had found the Messiah of the Jews, the Son of David. Andrew was excited, but the text seems to indicate that he could not excite Peter with this news. The Greek word *egagen* implies that Andrew had to coax Simon Peter — had to "lead" him to where Jesus was. The zeal of Andrew is often found in new converts. It is to the everlasting shame of the Church that this

zeal is often quenched by the pessimism and lack of faith of those older in the faith.

Jesus, with a searching gaze, looked on Peter's heart. The word John used to describe the Lord's manner of looking here is *emblepsas*. It is the same word used by Luke to describe Jesus' "look" at Peter in the courtyard after Peter had denied Him (Lk. 22:61). When Jesus looked upon Simon Peter, He saw not merely a fisherman from Bethsaida, but He saw the future steadfast "Rock" (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:41). In the Greek language, *petra* was used for a "massive ledge of rock," while *petros* was a "detached fragment of the ledge, smaller." Simon is first nicknamed *Cephas*, which is Aramaic for Rock. Cephas is in turn interpreted in Greek as *Petros*, meaning small rock. The reader is referred to Matthew 16:17 where the distinction between the two Greek words is very clear. Simon is there (Mt. 16:17) called *petros*, but the truth contained in his confession is called *petra*.

Thus far we are told that Andrew, his brother Simon Peter, John, and probably his brother James, are the only disciples following Jesus. We shall see next how others join themselves to this little band. The conversation these first four had with Jesus becomes even more important, however, when one considers the Synoptic's account of their call (cf. Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11). It is rather difficult to understand how four fishermen would leave their livelihood and immediately and unquestioningly follow an obscure Galilean as is pictured by the Synoptical accounts. This passage in John shows that there was a period of inquiry and association with Jesus before the Galilean call.

Quiz

1. Why did the two disciples following Jesus ask where He was abiding?
2. What was the time of day when they arrived at Jesus' lodging place?
3. Who was the "other disciple" with Andrew?
4. Give the basic characteristic of Andrew as shown in v. 41.
5. Give two possible interpretations of the phrase, "He findeth first his own brother" (v. 41).
6. How could Jesus know Simon's future character enough to call him "Rock"?
7. What bearing does this first call of the four fishermen have on the later Galilean call?

THE CALL OF PHILIP AND NATHANAEL

Text 1:43-51

43 On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip: and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Queries

- a. What did Moses write of Him "in the law and the prophets"?
- b. What did Nathanael mean when he said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? (v. 46)?"
- c. What is the meaning of verse 51?

Paraphrase

The next day Jesus decided to go north to Galilee. Before leaving, however, He discovered Philip and said to him, Follow me. (Philip was from Bethsaida, the same city that Andrew and Peter were from). Philip, the same day, found Nathanael and said to him, We have found the One of Whom Moses wrote in the Pentateuch and of Whom the prophets also wrote. This One is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph the carpenter. But Nathanael said, The Scriptures do not say, do they,

that the Messiah shall come out of Nazareth? Philip answered, Come and see for yourself. As Nathanael was coming to Jesus, Jesus said, Look! A true son of Jacob in whom there is no deceit nor guile! Nathanael said to Jesus, How do you know what my character is? Jesus answered him, saying, Before Philip found you, when you thought yourself concealed under the fig tree, I could read your heart. Nathanael said to Jesus, Teacher, you are indeed the Son of God — the King of Israel. Jesus said to Nathanael, You believed when I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than these. I tell you truly, You shall see the way into Heaven and a measure of its glories revealed through the Son of man.

Summary

Jesus gathers two more disciples. Philip, neighbor of Andrew and Peter, and Nathanael, a true Israelite. Nathanael's quick faith is to be rewarded by visions of Glory.

Comment

This is the fourth day from the time the Jews questioned John the Baptist. Jesus has spent almost a week in the vicinity of John's place of baptizing. Time is drawing near for Him to commence His public ministry. The Lord has decided to go north into the province of Galilee. It may be that while He is preparing to go Philip comes to Him. It may be that Philip had called Andrew and Peter aside and was talking to them when Jesus approached him with the challenge, "Follow me." The two from Bethsaida (Andrew and Peter) had probably told Philip, their fellow townsman, the Messianic news. Philip seems to be the type of man who always wants to "get to the bottom of things" (cf. Jn. 6:5-7; 12:21; 14:8-9), and was probably seeking Jesus when Jesus found him.

Philip, too, is a personal evangelist. We cannot help noticing a strong emphasis on personal evangelism in this first chapter of John. Each one wins one. *Now* it takes more than one hundred to win one.

Who is Nathanael? The best answer is that he is the Bartholomew of the Synoptical Gospels. The name Nathanael means gift of God. His home town was Cana of Galilee (Jn. 21:2). We assume Nathanael and Bartholomew to be the same man since Bartholomew is never mentioned in John's Gospel, and Nathanael is never named in the Synoptics. It is amazing that Nathanael

lived his youth at the same time Jesus lived His, in Cana of Galilee — only about 3 miles from Nazareth the boyhood home of Jesus — yet he had never heard of Jesus. This fact shows how perverse the wild fantasies of the Apocryphal Gospels are.

These two men, Philip and Nathanael, were undoubtedly students of the Old Testament Law and Prophets. Nearly every male Israelite studied them from childhood through old age. When Philip told Nathanael of finding the One of Whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Nathanael's heart must have pounded as he recalled the words of Deuteronomy 18:15, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:24-27, Jeremiah, the Psalms and a host of other references. There is an invaluable lesson here for students of God's Word today. The Old Testament cannot be properly understood without seeing Christ as the very core and substance of the Law and prophets (cf. Lk. 24:27, 32, 44; Jn. 5:39, 46; Acts 3:18; I Pet. 1:10).

Verse 46 has always been one of varied interpretation. Three interpretations are usually offered: (a) that Nathanael was expressing civic pride and rivalry since he was from the neighboring village of Cana, (b) that Nazareth was notoriously evil and Nathanael was uttering a proverbial denunciation, or (c) that Nathanael is questioning, what seems to him, a wrong interpretation by Philip of the Messianic prophecies. The third interpretation seems to have the weight of the context in its favor (cf. Jn. 7:52). Philip does not try to argue Nathanael into his position but bids him, "Come and see!"

Nathanael, being a man with an "honest and good heart" (Lk. 8:15), comes to see. Jesus, seeing him coming, tells His other disciples, "Look! a true son of Jacob." The word Jesus used for "guile" here is *dolos* which means "bait, snare, deceit, or guile." It is evident that throughout the entire conversation with Nathanael Jesus keeps referring to the history of Jacob, father of all Israelites. He contrasts the guileless character of Nathanael with the deceitful practices of Jacob. Such trickery was also found in most of the descendants of Jacob (cf. Gen. 34; Mt. 23:16-22). Many of the Jews of Jesus' day had no scruples against cheating and deceiving in their business transactions. Few of the rulers had guileless characters. Nathanael's moral excellence caused Jesus to exclaim, "Look! a true Israelite, in whom is no deceit" (cf. Rom. 2:28-29, 9:26).

Nathanael is surprised that Jesus knows how he thinks and how he lives. Those who seek to follow Jesus now would do well

to remember that He still sees the most hidden recesses of their hearts (cf. Jn. 2:24-25; Psa. 139). The guileless Israelite frankly asks Jesus where He received His information. Perhaps Nathanael silently wonders if Jesus had learned of him through Philip. The Master quickly shows that this would be impossible for He saw Nathanael's heart before Philip found him.

Jesus even names the place where Nathanael thought he was hidden from the eyes of strangers. It seems to have been the custom of the Jews to seek the shade of the fig tree as the most peaceful and obscure place to sit and meditate and pray (cf. I Ki. 4:25; Micah 4:4). Was Nathanael praying and meditating under the fig tree? Did he often pray that the Holy One of God should soon come? From the Lord's estimate of his character these things could not be far wrong. Now Nathanael is face to face with One Who knows his secret longings — Who has heard his prayers — Who reads his heart. This must be the Son of God — the King of Israel.

Most of our English versions have translated verse 50 as a question. This interrogative form tends to disparage the value of Nathanael's unhesitating faith. We might get the idea from a question that Jesus doubts that Nathanael could believe so soon — or that Jesus doubts the surety of his faith. To the contrary, Jesus praises the man's faith by promising to reward it with even greater manifestations of His glory.

Verse 51 is hard of interpretation. The best exegesis is that Jesus means He is the antitype of Jacob's ladder. In other words, He will be revealed to Nathanael as the Way to Heaven (Jn. 14:1-6). He will be shown to His disciples, and eventually the world, as the Mediator between God and man. The Lord could hardly have reference to a literal ascent and descent of angels upon His Person. There were times when the angels did literally minister unto Him (cf. Mk. 1:13; Lk. 22:43; Mt. 28:2-4; Jn. 20:12, 13), but Nathanael was not sufficiently close to Jesus at any of these incidents to see the angels.

"This record of the actual opening of Jesus' ministry is full of victory. He does not declare Himself in spectacular fashion to the multitude, but a little group of select and eager men begin to have an insight into His glorious personality. They recognize Him as the Lamb of God, the Messiah, The Son of God and the King of Israel. He declares Himself the Son of man, and opens up an absorbing vista of His coming ministry." (R. C. Foster in *Studies in the Life of Christ*, Vol. 1).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Quiz

1. What type of man was Philip?
2. Who was Nathanael? Where did he live?
3. What is the necessary relationship of Christ to the Old Testament?
4. Who does Jesus think of as He talks to Nathanael?
5. What is the teaching of Psalm 139?
6. What do we assume Nathanael was doing under the fig tree?

EXAMINATION

(Introduction and Chapter One)

1. Who wrote the Fourth Gospel?
2. Give 4 evidences to substantiate your answer to question one.
3. Name the two papyri which are so important to the Fourth Gospel.
4. How near to the original manuscript of the Fourth Gospel do these papyri take us?
5. Give two reasons for saying that the Fourth Gospel is not "silent" about the virgin birth of Christ?
6. How is the Prologue (1:1-18) an abridgment of the entire Fourth Gospel?
7. What does the author mean by saying that the "world was made through" Christ (cf. Jn. 1:10)?
8. Name two heretical sects whose doctrines are refuted by the Prologue.
9. Give the scriptural limitations for the second main division of the Fourth Gospel.
10. What was the essence of the preaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus (cf. Mt. 3:1-2; Mk. 1:14-15)?

Fill in the blanks:

1. John the apostle has been called "the apostle of....."
2. John's purpose in writing his Gospel is to show that Jesus is
3. "In the.....was the Word, and the Word wasGod, and the Word was....."
4. God.....and.....always like Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:8).
5. "He came unto his....., and they that were his..... received him not."

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

6. Every verse of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of the entire.....
7. "And the Word became....., and..... among us."
8. "For the..... was given through Moses;..... and..... came through Jesus Christ."
9. To become sons of God we must be..... anew of God.
10. "Behold,, that taketh away the sin of the world!"

True or False?

1.Our finite minds cannot comprehend eternity.
2.John the Baptist was very unpopular.
3.The baptism of fire is promised to believers.
4.Nathanael was Andrew's brother.
5.James was Simon's brother.
6.Philip was Andrew's brother.
7.The four fishermen received only one call from Jesus.
8.The Old Testament may be very clearly understood without a knowledge of Christ.
9.Nathanael was the brother of Bartholomew.
10.Jesus declared Himself in a spectacular manner to all of Judea immediately after His baptism.

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. 1

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST INTERPRETED

John 1:1-18

Introduction

- I. TELL BIRTH STORY BRIEFLY (Luke 2).
 - A. John's Prologue gives the definition of Christmas.
 - B. Especially consider verse 14.
- II. WHO IS THIS CHILD BORN 2000 YEARS AGO IN A STABLE IN BETHLEHEM?
 - A. Who is He, that men have celebrated His birth for 2000 years?
 - B. Who is He of Whom thousands of books have been written?
 - C. Who is He in Whom all of history centers, past and present?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

III. JOHN STATES THREE THINGS ABOUT THIS CHILD IN HIS PROLOGUE

- A. He is the eternal Word of God.
- B. He was made flesh to bring life to men.
- C. He is the complete and final opportunity for man's salvation.

LITTLE DID THE SHEPHERDS OR THE WISE MEN KNOW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CHILD . . . EVEN WE DO NOT REALIZE THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS BIRTH BECAUSE MANY DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE FINALITY OF HIS REVELATION!

Discussion

I. HE IS THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD

- A. *Logos* is defined as "the thought, purpose and expression of the mind of God."

Just as our thoughts and purposes are made known when we communicate by words,

SO GOD'S AGELESS PURPOSES ARE MADE KNOWN THROUGH CHRIST (Eph. 3:9).

- B. "The Word was with God" — the Word was of the very essence and nature of God.

1. Heb. 1:3.

2. Col. 2:9.

3. GOD WAS, AND EVER SHALL BE, ALWAYS LIKE JESUS REVEALED HIM — merciful, graceful, loving, yet wrathful against sin and hypocrisy.

- C. The Word was an equal agent in creation (v. 3).

1. Heb. 1:2-3.

2. JESUS IS THE GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP! HE WAS THE CREATOR COME IN THE FLESH!

- a. Let that knowledge burst afresh on our minds.

- b. We cannot deny the divinity of Jesus and still honor God (cf. Jn. 5:23).

- c. WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ALL RELIGIONS THAT BELIEVE JESUS TO BE A PROPHET . . . A GOOD MAN, BUT NOT DIVINE?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

II. HE BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US TO BRING LIFE AND LIGHT

A. Blessed word! . . . "He *tabernacled* among us."

1. Our God is not aloof . . . not unsympathetic.
 - a. Every heathen concept of gods is of unsympathetic gods always seeking to do harm and hurt to man.
 2. God could have sent Logos into world and then quickly withdrawn Him.
 - a. BUT HE CAME . . . HE KNEW WEARINESS, THIRST, SADNESS, TEARS, TEMPTATION, PERSECUTION, YEA — DEATH.
 - b. He is not a high priest that cannot be touched with our infirmities.
WE ARE DRAWN CLOSER TO HIM BECAUSE HE DID COME AND TARRY IN THE FLESH.

B. In Him was life.

1. It was necessary for Him to come in the flesh . . . in order to condemn sin in the flesh.
 - a. MAN COULD NOT FULFIL THE LAW OF GOD . . . THUS THE LAW BECAME A CONDEMNATION TO MAN.
 - b. THEREFORE, GOD SENT HIS SON . . . IN FLESH . . . TO CONQUER SIN AND SUFFER THE PENALTY OF SIN.

C. Many rejected Him . . . and still do . . . BUT TO ALL WHO RECEIVE:

1. HE GIVES THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD.
Notice that He gives — we do not earn.
2. YET WE MUST ACCEPT HIS GIFT.
 - a. This we do by being born of God (new birth).
 - b. Compare Jn. 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 1:22-23, etc.
3. Jesus gives both authority and power to live this new life . . . faith, hope, prayer and obedience.

III. HE CAME AS A COMPLETE AND FINAL REVELATION OF GOD

- A. In times past God spoke partial revelations (Heb. 1:1).
1. But at the end of the ages; in the fulness of time He spoke to man in His Son (Heb. 1:2).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- a. The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- B. The Law was only a shadow of the reality of God's truth.
 - 1. It was all realized in Christ.
- C. He is the only opportunity for men forevermore.
 - 1. "Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."

THIS MEANS THAT MEN WILL BE SEPARATED FROM GOD, AND THE WHOLE WEIGHT OF THE PENALTY FOR THEIR SIN WILL FALL UPON THEIR OWN SHOULDERS . . . THEY WILL PAY THIS PENALTY FOR ETERNITY.

- 2. All men will eventually live eternally — either in heaven or hell.
 - a. But Jesus gives Life with a capital L. He brings life and immortality to light through His resurrection.

HIS BIRTH WOULD MEAN LITTLE WITHOUT HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION!

OUR HOPE AND FAITH AND POWER TO LIVE A CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ALL BASED UPON HIS VICTORY OVER DEATH!

JESUS HAS COME . . . AND GOD IS LIKE JESUS . . . WE OUGHT TO SHOUT WITH THE MULTITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST: "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!"

Conclusion

I THUS WE SEE THAT THE BABE BORN 2000 YEARS AGO WAS:

- A. He who put the stars in the heavens ;
He who created our delicate bodies from dust and breathed life into them ;
He who upholds all creation by the word of His power.
- B. It means that:
We no longer need to fumble and miss the way ; HE IS THE WAY.
We no longer need to grope for the truth ; HE IS THE TRUTH.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

We no longer need wonder how life ought to be lived;
HE IS THE LIFE.

II BUT WE ONLY BELIEVE THIS ON THE BASIS OF
HIS RESURRECTION.

- A. IF THERE WERE NO KNOWLEDGE OF RESURRECTION TO INCORRUPTION, there would be very little sense to life on this earth. It would then be sensible to adopt Solomon's philosophy.
- B. Jesus has proved that there is an eternal life beyond the grave. Thus we see that all his statements about heaven and hell are true!

SOME MAY LAUGH AND SCOFF NOW, BUT WHEN DEATH COMES, WHO IS GOING TO TAKE THEIR HANDS AND LEAD THEM ACROSS THE DARK, BLACK CHASM WHERE NONE BUT HE HAS RETURNED TO TELL ABOUT?

SURRENDER AND TRUST HIM . . . JESUS WILL LEAD YOU ACROSS! THAT IS THE REASON WHY THE CHILD WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM 2000 YEARS AGO.