

JOHN 1

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

In the Gospel according to the Apostle John, the Church of Jesus Christ has a fullness of blessings indeed! Surely, every person who has been redeemed by the Savior cannot help rendering unceasing praises to the Almighty Author of every good and perfect gift for such a precious literary treasure given to His people! For here, in this most wonderful portion of the Word of God, we not only have more of our Lord's beautiful discourses than the other Evangelists were inspired to record; but we also have many other glorious truths which were not written down by the other Evangelists, in relation to both Christ's sermons and His miracles. Moreover, by John's inspired record, we have preserved to us those most blessed words of Christ concerning the Person, work, and character of the Holy Spirit – without whose soul-quickenings and life-giving operations, not one person can be brought into a spiritual relationship with the Savior. Let every redeemed son and daughter of the King clasp this blessed Gospel of the ever-blessed Lord Jesus in their arms, and press it to their heart – crying out in words like those of the Apostle, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

John's purpose for writing his Gospel-narrative is indicated in the opening 18 verses, commonly called the Prologue of the Book; and his intention is definitely reiterated in the closing sentences of the 20th chapter: "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye may have life in his name." He wished to show that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, Who came in fulfillment of all the Old Testament pictures and prophecies. Furthermore, he makes it clear that Jesus is a Divine Being; and that He is, in this unique sense, the Son of God. Remember how Matthew portrayed Christ as the Kingly Messiah, Mark depicted Him as the Suffering Servant, and Luke painted His picture as the Son of Man? And now we see that John chiefly focuses on showing the Savior to be the Son of God!

John's style of writing is not that of a logical treatise or a philosophical argument. Rather, he has presented a drama. The life of Christ, which is the substance of his Gospel, is written with the fascination of a play; but as each actor steps upon the scene, some new testimony is given to the fact that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God. And as the testimony is produced, and as Christ makes His claims and performs His miracles, we see the developing faith of His followers and the deepening hatred of His enemies.

There are two great parts to the dramatic action. The first part closes with the 12th chapter, which details the last great miracle that John recorded. Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and now the rulers conspired to put Jesus to

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The prologue or introduction to the Gospel of John – verses 1-18
- ❖ John the Baptizer's public testimony concerning Christ – verses 19-36
- ❖ Jesus' first disciples begin to follow Him – verses 37-51

death. But then Mary appeared, pouring out upon the feet of her Lord her priceless gift of love. The multitudes greeted Him with hosannas, and even some Greeks were eager to see Him. However, in the second part of the Book, Christ withdraws from the world and reveals Himself more clearly to His disciples – first in an act of humble service, then in words of comfort and cheer, then in a prayer which none but the Son of God could have uttered, and supremely in His triumph over pain and suffering and death. When doubting Thomas at last stands before his risen Master and cries out, “My Lord and my God” – the demonstration is complete, and there is no reason why all readers should not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!

How shall we view Jesus Christ? Is He merely to be admired as the best of men, or must He also be worshiped and trusted as God? Was He simply the greatest of prophets, or is He also the Messiah – the predicted Savior of the world? Then, again, does it really matter how we regard Him? Is it true that our attitude toward Him is a test of character, and that belief in Him affects our life and determines our destiny? And has there been sufficient evidence given to us upon which to base our belief? Do we have enough testimony to justify placing our trust in Him?

With these great questions, the Gospel of John is continually concerned; and they find definite answers in the first 18 verses, which form a preface or introduction to his Gospel. Here it is affirmed that Jesus Christ – the “Word” – has always existed as God; indeed, He is the Creator by Whom all things were made. It is also stated that faith in Him results in a moral transformation, which can best be described as being “born of God.” Furthermore, this faith is based on the eyewitness testimonies of persons who were His closest companions during His earthly ministry, and who spoke from personal experience. In these 18 verses, the Apostle presents the theme of his entire message. They compress into a brief summary the essential truths which the following chapters unfold. They declare that the eternal God was manifested among men; they show how some received Him gladly, while others rejected Him; and above all, they teach us of the wonderful life of light, love, and abiding blessedness which comes to us by faith in Him Whom the Apostle proves to be the Divine Son of God!

When John the Baptizer steps upon the scene, the dramatic action of this Gospel begins; and yet his mission and the two events which follow it are really only a preparation for the public ministry of Christ (verses 19-34). The fame of John had filled the land; some persons were even suggesting that the great preacher was the long-predicted Messiah. The rulers could no longer disregard the influence and power of the popular prophet, so a deputation was sent to ask John whom he claimed to be. He immediately declared that he was not the Christ; nor was he the prophet Elijah, whom the Jews mistakenly expected to physically return to earth, as the herald of the Messiah; nor was he “that prophet” of whom Moses had spoken, and who was popularly associated with

the Messiah. To this negative testimony about himself, John now added the positive statement that he was only a forerunner who had come to prepare the way for the Messiah by his call to repentance. This he expressed by a quotation from Isaiah: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.” John humbly called himself a “voice,” which bears testimony to “the Word”; but he was claiming the dignity of fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, by standing as the appointed herald of the Messiah. Christ was already standing in the midst of the people, and John was merely preparing people’s hearts to receive Him. He confessed himself unworthy to even act as the humblest servant of this great Savior, to whom he was bearing witness. We can hardly resist drawing the parallel for today: Christ is still near, and He is still unrecognized by the people of this world; only His messengers and those who repent of their sins will find Him.

On the following day, public witness of an even more startling character was given by the Baptizer (verses 29-34). He points to Jesus and declares of Him, “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” It is totally inadequate to interpret the phrase “the Lamb of God” as merely denoting the meekness and innocence of Christ. As the great Sin-bearer, the Lamb must denote *sacrifice* – for there is no other way by which sin can be taken away. This verse brings us at once to the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, where we see One suffering in the place of sinners. It transports us into the whole realm of Old Testament symbolism; and it cannot be understood except in the light of offerings, expiation, and atonement. This beautiful testimony of “the Lamb of God”



points us forward to the cross, and to the work of the Messiah Who “bare our sins in his body upon the tree.” Men like John the Baptizer are still needed today – men who can stand up with courage and consecration before the multitudes, and who can declare of Christ: “This is the Son of God! Behold, the Lamb of God!”

Those who were the first to become Christ’s disciples were Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and probably James and the author of this Gospel – his brother John. Of the four men who are specifically named here, it is interesting to note how, in each case, faith is awakened by a testimony of a slightly different character. All of them were probably disciples of John the Baptizer, and the story of his witness is logically followed by this account of the first believers.

It is equally interesting to note how these four men, who were called in such different manners, all became witnesses for Christ. John always brings “actors” upon the scene of this great “drama,” so that they may bear testimony. The words of these first followers are arranged in a striking climax. First they addressed Christ as “Rabbi” – that is, Master or Teacher – suggesting that they were willing to at least be His disciples. Then they declared Him to be “the Messiah”; and further, they acknowledged that He had been set forth in the Scriptures by the symbols and pictures of “the law” and the writings of “the prophets.” Lastly, Nathanael declared him to be “the Son of God,” as well as the Messiah and “King of Israel.” But the greatest of all the witnesses is Christ Himself. The testimony reached its climax when He called Himself “the Son of man.” Very commonly, this title is regarded as a term that is contrasted with “the Son of God” – as if it was merely signifying the humanity of Christ. It does indeed signify the ideal Man. But it is also a title that is taken from the Book of Daniel; it is a reference to the Messiah Who was to appear in Divine glory and Who was to receive a universal and everlasting Kingdom.

Lord Jesus, we praise You as the Eternal Word, Who has been one with the Father from eternity past. We praise You also for coming to earth as the true Light, bringing us grace and truth! (Ps. 85:10) Thank You for coming to earth as the Lamb of God, and for sacrificing Yourself and bearing our sins in Your body upon the tree, so that we might be redeemed and reconciled to the Father! Amen.