

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark green color, framing the central text.

**A Layman's
Commentary on
John**

T.O.D. Johnston

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A Layman's Commentary on the Gospel of John

Religious Non-fiction

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A Layman's Commentary
On the Gospel of John:
Composed In 40 Lessons

1st Edition - 2006

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Dedicated for knowledge, understanding, and inspiration as we seek to follow Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ.

Preface

After reading many scholarly commentaries on different books of Scripture, it became my mental habit to sift through the minute discussions of individual words and/or phrases, and the quoting of various scholars of the past of many differing opinions, and center on the most logical and inspirational truths that remained. Thus I relied on the studied scholarship of those who had learned the original languages and had read all the previous scholars that had written to get the best possible understanding of Scripture that I, as a non-scholar, could. It seemed that most church members would not attempt to read scholarly works - but would benefit from their knowledge if presented in a plain and straightforward manner, the truths they had perceived. The following commentary is my attempt to do this. May God bless my efforts to the extent that they increase the understanding and faith of the reader.

T.O.D. Johnston
2005

Lesson I

John 1:1-14 - Background.

Authorship - the early Church universally accepted the work as written by the Apostle John. The internal evidence held within the Gospel includes the following: the author was Jewish in language, following Jewish opinions of the time, the firm foundation in the Old Testament. He was clearly familiar with Palestine of the first century - many details of places and distances that are not mentioned by the other Gospels but obviously familiar to the Author. Many of the places in and around Jerusalem described were destroyed by 70 A.D. and no later writer could describe these locations. John mentions the names of those who asked important questions, and names uniquely Nicodemus, Lazarus, Simon the father of Judas Iscariot, and Malchus - and the relationship between Annas and Caiaphas.

Time - John mentions the specific feasts and Passovers, and certain days and even times of day, details of only an eyewitness. He also mentions details of number - six waterpots, five loaves, and two fish - 25 furlongs, four soldiers, five husbands, 38 years of illness.

Place - places are mentioned in connection with special acts and communications - as part of natural recollection

Manner of writing - with vivid touches of what was seen and heard by an observer.

The writer was an apostle - he intimately describes the feelings of the other disciples as well as the thoughts and feelings of Jesus.

He describes the writer as the disciple Jesus loved. Also, the close connection with Peter is recorded. The apostle John is not mentioned by name in this Gospel - the nameless disciple is in the place where John's name would have been.

The greatest direct evidence of John's authorship is found in John 21:24 where the writer records: "this is the disciple who witnesseth concerning these things, and who wrote these things; and we know his witness is true.", all referring back to "the beloved disciple".

What we know about John:

He was the younger son of Zebedee, James being the older son. His mother was Salome (Mark 15:40, 16:1). From John 19:25, it appears that Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Thereby Jesus and John were cousins. John was younger than Jesus and the other apostles.

Nothing is recorded about Zebedee except that he was a fisherman in the neighborhood of Bethsaida and was doing well enough to have hired servants (Mark 1:20). Later Salome appears as one of the women who followed Jesus and "ministered to Him of their substance" (Mark 15:40, Luke 8:3).

With the exception of Judas Iscariot, all the apostles were from Galilee. It is significant that this region was distant from the factions of political power struggles and the traditional speculations and opinions of the Pharisees and scribes of the religious schools centered in Jerusalem. Galileans had remained more grounded in simple faith and following the written Laws of Moses. We will learn a great deal more about John as we study His Gospel. (He is mentioned in Acts in Chapters 1, 3, & 8.) Tradition records him as staying at Ephesus to extreme old age.

In his introduction to Revelation, John writes of being on the island of Patmos. There are no firm traditions of his death - or of any dates recorded of when he left Jerusalem onward.

An interesting note - during the time John looked after Jesus' mother, he certainly talked to her concerning all of her memories about Jesus, thereby giving him a fuller

knowledge of His earlier life - and many details that confirmed and fleshed out the things John had seen and heard himself.

This all adds up to a reliable witness of what he wrote: "We have seen and do testify." His words are trustworthy to confirm our faith in the life and words and finished work of Jesus the Messiah of God the Father.

John writes as the Witness to the Truth: Jesus is the Truth, revealing by His words and deeds the true nature of absolute love of the only true God.

To Pilate, Jesus revealed that He had come to bear witness to the truth. John the Baptist bore witness to the Truth. The work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the Truth about Jesus - thus being the Spirit of Truth and is still the only source that man has to know and understand the whole and complete knowledge of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior, the Redeemer, Who brings inward power to the believer.

The certain witnesses to the Truth include the Father, Christ Himself, His works, the Holy Scriptures, the disciples, and the Spirit of Truth. The study of John will show the way and manner of all these witnesses.

John also brings out the concept of Light - Love being the way of illumination. Jesus came to bring the light to the life of men, that they may become sons of light - the end of which is judgment. Jesus is the Judge and His judgment is true. Judgment is the same as condemnation. Jesus' coming into the world forced all men to choose - to choose Jesus is life, to reject Him is judgment.

The way in which John follows his purpose shows how the divine nature of Jesus was revealed a little at a time to those who closely followed Him. They, by the teaching of the Spirit, came to understand that the Word had become flesh.

John records Jesus revealing His true divinity by 7 "I am" statements.

I am: The Bread of life
The Light of the world
The Door of the shop
The Good Shepherd
The Resurrection and the Life
The Way, the Truth, and the Life
The True Vine

In those days, the training of the disciple or pupil was to memorize the sayings of his teacher. John was such a pupil of Jesus. His experience in the life of the Early Church fulfilled the meaning of much of what Jesus had done, and said, and prophesied. The promised Holy Spirit had come to bring to his remembrance all things which Christ had spoken, and taught him all things.

In the discourses of Jesus, three main themes are seen: the mission of the Holy Spirit, the fact of Jesus' leaving the earth, and His coming again, and the relationship of the Church to the World. These teachings would only be truly understood in the time after the persecutions of the Jewish leaders, and after the fall of Jerusalem.

The Final discourses emphasize the commandments, the main one - to love one another. This comes from Christ's self-sacrifice - showing what the true relationship between people is supposed to be as originally designed by Our Creator. This is the foundation and the pattern to be followed.

To love Jesus is to keep His commandments. To keep His commandments is to love Him - Thereby abiding in Christ's love as He abides in the Father's love by keeping His commandments.

In relation to the Old Testament, John records the special privilege of the Jews as the inheritors of the Scriptures and their many prophecies and traditions, sacrifices and celebrations, that point to the coming Messiah; the foundation of faith as seen in Abraham,

Moses and Isaiah. All things to train the nation to be prepared for Christ's coming. Also recorded are the misconceptions of the Jews when Christ came - about the Messiah and literal heritage of birth.

The New Dispensation as prophesied by the Old Testament was essentially a spiritual one. The reunion of man with God in Christ and the Gift of the Holy Spirit through Him.

Lesson II

Origins of the Word

In the first three verses of the Bible we are introduced to God. The word "God" is Elohim - the plural form, meaning more than one. The verb "created" is singular. This reveals the Trinity working as a single unit. God the Father, the conceiver and planner of the universe - from before the beginning until after the end of time as we know it. When God speaks - the Living Word of God (Jesus) becomes the spoken Word "God said". When the spoken Word of God was recorded, it became the written "Word of God" - the Holy Scripture.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Lord spoke to people, particularly the prophets. When they proclaimed their messages they began "Thus saith the Lord".

In the New Testament, John's Gospel begins with the same words at the beginning of Genesis. We are told in dramatically simple terms who the Word of God is - Jesus is the Living Word of God. He brought into existence all of creation. He came into a world of the darkness of sin and death. He brought life and light. The world, and creatures He created did not recognize Him. They had turned each to his own way, choosing darkness, for their deeds were evil.

Those who received Him, were given the adoption to become sons of God, joint heirs with Christ.

The eternal Son who called into existence all that is, and maintains it by the Word of His Power, lowered Himself to be born as a human child. His purpose - to bring to all people the message of the true desires of the Heart of the Father, to show by word and deed what the Father offered the world - love, forgiveness, adoption, reconciliation, a new and eternal relationship with Him through the Gift of His Son as the Suffering Servant who would die the death we deserved, so that we might live.

By means of the Spirit, the Living Word of God was recorded as the Written Word of God.

Throughout time, God has made Himself known throughout the beauty and complexity of the created universe, and by working out His will throughout human history. But above all, He has exalted the recording and preservation and dissemination of His Written Word. Why? Because it reveals His heart of love through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. The greatest ministry of the Holy Spirit was to cause the Bible to be written. With the recording of the New Testament, the ministry became that of revealing Jesus to us through that Written Word - thereby making the Written Word spiritually discernable to people. The Holy Spirit imbues the Word with life and power. Jesus promises a life-union with anyone who keeps His words, by the Spirit of love which unites the Father and the Son.

Chapter 15:7 - "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Do you have confidence in prayer - you can - just as the body needs food every day - so also does the spirit need the nourishment of spiritual food, which is the Word of God. How do we abide in Christ - by spending time every day with Him in His Word, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, this increases our knowledge, our understanding, our faith, our hope, and a deeper realization of how much God loves us.

This should naturally lead us into a life that glorifies the Father, the bearing of much fruit.

Chapter 15:8,9. How do we continue in Christ's love for us?

15:10. "If ye keep my commandments (or Words), ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

15:11. "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

For all who wish to find happiness, and remain happy - these words show the only way on this earth to achieve it. It is the complete opposite of the world's ways. The world proposes that the almighty Self must be the center of the universe, and that money, position, power, possessions, and the various lusts of the flesh being gratified will bring happiness. You could call this "The Big Lie". It sounds strangely like the offer of the serpent to Eve - "eating the forbidden fruit - it is good to eat, it looks good, it will bring you knowledge, to be like God."

Or as commonly expressed, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Or in one word, sin, the end of which is not happiness, but death.

The final commandment - Verse 12: "This is my commandment, that ye might love one another, as I have loved you."

Love here is an action word, not a mushy feeling in the tummy. It is an act of the will. To choose to love someone means to do and say things that are for the best interest of that other person, to give, to share, to build up, to help fulfill their needs and desires.

We must look at others through the eyes of Jesus. While we were yet sinners, and unlovable, Jesus chose to love us by fulfilling our greatest need - forgiveness for our sins. So also we are called up to give, reach out, share our faith with even those that are yet sinners, in sadness, illness, with the hungry, the homeless, the criminal, or any person whatever their circumstance. What is the greatest gift we have to share. The gift we have received - salvation through Jesus. That is not to say that we should neglect sharing whatever else is needed - by that sharing, a way is opened for them to be receptive of the greatest gift - the only one that lasts for eternity.

Thus is shown the truth, the way, and the Life as recorded in Scripture - by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Written Word of God is brought to life in our hearts - revealing to us the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ Our Lord. This begins a relationship of love - between us and God the Father, through the gift of the Son and the indwelling Spirit. The bond is unbreakable, eternal, closer than any other, and more certain than anything on this earth. How do we know?

The Word of God tells us. This word is truth, this word is life, this word is love.

This we must share with all those we come in contact with. It is the most important thing we have - therefore, the greatest gift we can give, as was freely by grace given to us.

Lesson III

John 1:1-18. Part 1 - Summary Statements. (Part 2 will be the details.)

- 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 by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
- 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
- 6 ¶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.
- 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
- 9 ¶ That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
- 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
- 13 which 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 was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
- 15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.
- 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.
- 17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
- 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

In these opening verses John states what he understands to be the whole truth about Jesus Christ the Son of God. All that follows gives the evidence that proves the veracity of these declarations.

Verse 1. In the beginning was the Word - The Creator thought; His thought is expressed in Words; the Words become things. This Word 'was' with God and was God. The verb 'was' signifies the imperfect tense or time. It describes something that began in the past and is continuing and constant - not something existing in the past, or present, or future, but completely outside of time.

This statement we have to accept on faith, because our finite minds are not able to understand the spiritual vastness and complexity of its true nature. When we are all with Jesus and the Father in Heaven, then all will become clear. This verse has been described as the law and nature of all existence.

A major change in the description of the Word comes in verse 14 - The Word 'became'. This explains that the already existing Word changes in manifestation. The Word became and dwelt. The Word became flesh - covering the whole nature of man and that flesh lived among us - yet a new thing is seen in that life - "full of grace and truth."

Paul describes this as Jesus "Emptied Himself, taking the form of a Servant, made in the likeness of men - from timeless existence to a fleshly existence.

All of the things intimated in verse 1 now became visible and more understandable. The truth of God was now observable in Jesus, "full of Grace and Truth."

Without this revelation, no one could really discover what God was like or what God desired toward man. Jesus declared God to man, He the only begotten Son - in the very heart

of the Father, hath shown the Father. Not the Wisdom or the Power or the Majesty of God - but the will and desire of the love of the Father hath Jesus shown. He brings forth (declared) to be visible that which was already existing but not seen or understood before.

It is Jesus and only Jesus who could and did show the truth about God to man. It is only Jesus who has been with the Father that can show us what the Father is like.

The details: verses 2-13, 14, 15-17

Part 2 - The details.

Verses 2-17. Outline I. 2 Creations and the Word. (2-5)

II. How the Word was looked at. (6-13)

III. 2 Witnesses to the Word.

Through the action of the Word, all things were created and all progression from that creation also was through Him, and He also holds all things together both now and forevermore. In Him is All life, therefore all life is from Him. Only man, out of all this worldly creation, has the ability to see this light, to comprehend and communicate with God.

The word "darkness" describes the fact of human sin as seen all through human history. However, the light shines everywhere and the darkness will never affect the light.

Men choose to walk in darkness. God places in us all a consciousness of things as right or wrong; this is described as the Lamp of God, and it is never extinguished.

Verse 6. John then proceeds to the next stage - "There came a man" sent from God, named John. He was sent as a witness to the light - to call people to believe in the Light - the Light coming into the world as visible, observable, to be sought and followed. He came into the world, He created and yet the world knew Him not. People He created would not receive Him.

John's preaching went beyond the nation of Israel and their pride of descent from Abraham and their privileges and traditions. He preached repentance, that all men might believe. The object of faith - God made known in His Son. John called attention to the Light.

Verse 9. Men had manifestations of the Light in the world around them and in them (a conscience and need for pure love and forgiveness). From the beginning, He was on His way to be born into the world. He prepared His way in type lessons, prophecy, and judgment.

Verses 10,11. The world's reaction shows its inability to recognize or accept Him as either the Creator or the Preserver or Redeemer.

He came to His own home, and His own people received Him not. The nation of Israel had been called out to be a holy people, God's people.

They had the Law, the prophecies, the promises of the Coming Messiah. It was the announcement of the Baptist that the promised Messiah came as Jesus. The leaders of the people refused to accept Him.

Verse 12. But those who believed Him from among the Jews did so individually. Those among the Gentiles who believed were accounted equal - individuals forming the Church - who Christ gave the right to become children of God.

Once we are born again, we are brought into a close relationship with God - this gift must be developed by use - to grow by continuous exertion of faith in Christ, the Son of God.

Verse 13. The new life to which the believer has a "right to" comes only from God. It is not brought about by descent, by a man's desire, or by human power.

Verse 14. This states the progression: verse 1 - the beginning - creation, now the Incarnation - And the Word became flesh. The eternal entered time, the divine became human.

The use of the word tabernacle points to a temporary dwelling - and also points back to the Old Testament Tabernacle where the Lord visited His people. The one foreshadowed the other.

Then John becomes eyewitness and declares that he among others had seen evidence of Christ's divine nature - in word and deed and compassion, in death and resurrection.

The divine presence in the Old Testament tabernacle had been described as "glory", and so also the divine presence of The "Word Incarnate" among men showed "glory". This glory also shows forth as evidence of the relationship of Jesus to His Father. Jesus is the Only Son and He is the Son sent from the Father to fulfill a mission, "full of grace and truth"

Verse 15. The testimony of John the Baptist is introduced in the same way as before - as the last prophet of the coming Messiah. He also describes His true position in relation to Christ. Christ is the One that he had been proclaiming as coming. Now that He had come, John proclaims that Jesus is more important than he is - that Jesus was the eternal Son of God, before He was born among men. That is His pre-existence - as one with the Father in essence and being.

To think of Jesus as only a good man, or great teacher, and example to follow, completely misses the Truth about Him.

Paul puts it clearly in Philemon 2:5-8: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Everything Jesus said and did originates in this fact, and flows from it.

Verse 16. Of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace. All material and spiritual blessings come from God through Jesus. This suggests that all things good come from God, whether or not you recognize Him as its source or not.

But this statement goes much further. His fulness indicates Jesus as the Source, of the full measure of all divine power, and of love in Christ as the Incarnate Word. Each Christian, because of their relationship with Him may draw from that fulness what is needed for a productive life as part of Christ's body - the church. The use of the word "all" reaches beyond just those who were eyewitnesses, to everyone who has accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The first grace we receive only begins the blessings, understanding, gifts, and ministry that each Christian will receive, one after another, all adding together "grace" for 'grace'. All for our growth and maturity - of becoming more like Jesus in our journey through this life.

Verse 17. The law was given for the special purpose of teaching and training God's chosen people, to prepare the way for His promised Messiah. The Gospel is the fulfilling - the working out in history of the divine plan of redemption, the only way to reconcile man to God. Jesus brought the showing forth of God's deep love: so the acts of giving God's grace, and truth reveals God's plan clearly and leaves no doubts about it.

The law still has a purpose - it shows the sinful nature of all men. But it only pointed to the fulness of the redemption to come in the sacrifice of Jesus - the true and complete grace of God.

Verse 18. Because of our human nature, it is only possible to comprehend a limited amount of divine and spiritual realities. We cannot see God or know the extent of the spiritual

realm. But so far as it is possible, we may know Him as revealed in Christ. He who is the Word of God, has continual and complete fellowship with God; He came to this world as the only begotten Son - unique in relationship - the very closest possible - from the beginning and continuing beyond eternity.

The knowledge of God, which Christ had as God, He revealed to men as a man. The primary message Jesus revealed of God was as the Father. The relation of the Word to God is like that of the Son to the Father from everlasting to everlasting.

This Jesus declared, once and forever. This completes the prologue of John's Gospel. Now begins Christ revealing Himself to the World: Part One - The Proclamation (1:19-4:54), Part Two - The Conflict (5:1-12:50).

Lesson IV

John 1:19-34. John the Baptist - background.

"19 ¶ And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

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

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Eli'jah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered, No.

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

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

24 ¶ And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Eli'jah, neither that Prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoelatchet I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethab'ara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 ¶ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Since the Gospel of John focuses on the Baptist's witness after Jesus was baptized - a brief overview of His ministry will be helpful.

We recall his parentage and upbringing from righteous parents - his mother descended from one of the daughters of Aaron - her name - Elizabeth. His father Zacharias was a priest of the course of Abijah.

He was prophesied as one great in the sight of the Lord - who would be filled from his mother's womb with the Holy Spirit. He would abstain from strong drink; he rejected all the pleasures of goods and riches - one in rough clothes, eating honey and locusts in the wilderness of southern Judea.

His message was simple - he was the herald of the coming Messiah. He was preparing the way for Him. He called upon Israel to repent - that the Messiah would bring judgment on the nation only those who turned to God would be spared - only destruction would the ungodly receive.

The axe is at the root of the trees; those that do not bring forth good fruit will be cut down and burned.

The leaders expected the coming Messiah to deliver the nation from Roman oppression and set up His victorious kingdom.

The leaders in Israel remained confident in their heritage from Abraham and the merits they believed they earned by following the Law.

Nevertheless they were first curious, later seriously concerned, with this one crying in the wilderness, drawing more and more people and so many calling him a prophet from God.

The rite of Baptism was a continuation of the many washings and cleansings proscribed in the Old Testament - ceremonial purification.

John's baptism went further in preparing the way for a completely new condition - which would be fulfilled by the Baptism of Jesus.

John 1:19 - 4:54. The Proclamation.

The message of the Gospel was to be revealed to the world not only in word but also by deeds. This was to be offered to all those of the house of Israel. He is met with misunderstanding - not yet hostility. The Proclamation begins with the Testimony to Jesus by John (1:19-34).

The witness of the prophet - how Jesus is related to the preparatory dispensation, the revelation by direct divine communication.

Next the witness of the disciples, Jesus relative to individuals - and through spiritual insight (1:35-51). The third is the witness of deeds - the relation of Christ to nature (2:1-11) then closes with joyful confirmation of believers (2:11).

These incidents are recorded only by John and are those of an eyewitness.

John testifies of the coming Messiah. (Verses 19-28.) Then he recognizes Jesus as the Christ as He begins His public ministry (29-34). By this time, Jesus had already been baptized, therefore John already knew Jesus as the Christ - all this happened before the mission from Jerusalem.

They had come from the priests, and Pharisees to find out who John claimed to be.

John begins by readily telling them that he is not the promised Messiah. Then they ask if he is Elias who had been mentioned in Malachi 4:5.

Verse 21. As the forerunner of the Messiah. They apparently thought that Elija was to bodily return. He denied being Elias. When asked if he was "that prophet" meaning one like unto Moses which Moses predicted in Deuteronomy. He likewise said no.

Verse 22. They repeated that they needed an answer to take back with them - "Who do you say you are?"

Verse 23. He answers by quoting Isaiah 40:3 - "one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord." The Herald, or preparer of the way the Lord was to take in a spiritual sense.

Verses 24,25. By mentioning they were of the Pharisees, they show why they were so interested in this new rite - "baptism" - something startling and solemn. The symbolism of the rite represented a repentance from sin and a turning to God. Those in authority would naturally not like the implication that they needed to take such a step, thereby publicly admitting that they did anything that would require them to repent.

Ezekiel 36:25, Isaiah 52:15; Zechariah 13:1 connects this rite with the work of the Messiah.

Verse 26. John replies that he baptizes with water - explaining that his baptism is not the same as the one of the Messiah, but it points to and prepares the people to recognize the Christ who is already among them. Whom John had recognized but they had not.

Verse 27. Christ, although coming after him, will nevertheless be preferred more than John. John describes his own worth compares to Christ as less than a servant, whose job it was to take off his master's shoes or sandals. These answers would certainly not be helpful to those who could only repeat what John said to those who sent them.

Verse 28. The name Bethabara meaning "house of the passage" - the site of a ferry or ford across the Jordan. This also indicates that John had left the wilderness of Judea, and retired beyond Jordan (Matt. 3:1), where he continued to baptize.

In the following verses (29-34) Jesus is revealed as the One who fulfilled all of John's preparatory ministry.

Verse 29. The following day, Jesus is seen coming to John - here John openly states that Jesus is the promised Savior by calling Him, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." (Coming from Isaiah 53:7.)

The lamb had always been the meek and innocent victim of sacrifices unto God - this especially seen in the Passover Lamb - the act which had delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. Later Jesus identified Himself as the true Paschal Lamb at the Last Supper.

Also emphasized is that this Lamb was provided by God, not man.

Using the present tense emphasizes that this work begins here but continues and the end result is certain. The use of the word "sin" singular relates to the common nature of fallen man that Christ's life and death is powerful enough to atone for and remove the punishment of all sin.

Verse 30. John pronounces Jesus as the One whom he was the prophetic messenger for, who would be preferred more than he, and that Jesus was coming from the beginning of time.

Verse 31. John did not know Jesus until he had begun his baptizing ministry. As part of his calling, he recognized his purpose as forerunner and witness to the coming Messiah. This, to the nation of Israel, was a special and spiritual privilege of God's chosen people. These were the reasons for his ministry of repentance and baptism with water.

Verse 32. John bare witness of what he saw - he gazed intently as the Spirit came down from heaven in the form of a dove that stayed upon Jesus.

Before this, Jesus had lived a perfect and righteous life. Now, at the beginning of His public ministry, the Spirit visibly descends upon the Word made Flesh, to reveal God the Father to men.

The dove, a symbol of tenderness, of innocence, of gentle and tranquil movement

In the Old Testament, the Spirit visited the prophets but only from time to time. With Jesus it remained.

Verse 33. Though John had not known Jesus as the Christ - yet he had been told that one would come to his water baptism - and that he, John, would see the Spirit thus descend, and remain upon Him who God had sent, and who would subsequently baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus became the giver of the Spirit who revealed Him, even as the Spirit enabled Him to reveal the Father. All this consecrated Him - set Him apart for this work of redemption.

Verse 34. The Baptist emphasizes that he has seen the things that confirmed his true mission as the forerunner and gave his prophetic witness to The One God had sent as His only begotten Son, the Messiah.

The other Gospels describe Christ's receiving of the Spirit

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