

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN [PART I] BEHOLDING CHRIST – THE SON OF GOD

TEXT: JOHN 1:1-18 #1. THE MAN WHO WAS GOD

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KEY VERSE JN 20:31

INTRODUCTION:

Have you read a book lately? Do you know how some people read a book? They read the back cover, then skim through the pages, and maybe read the last two pages, or the epilogue, thinking they've got the general idea of the book. The problem with that is that they have missed out on so much of the substance that makes up the book. In a good book, you will generally notice at the beginning something called a prologue. A prologue is an opening to the main story that establishes the setting and gives background details. A prologue helps the reader understand holistically the plot of the book.

Today, we're going to start with a prologue to the Gospel of John. This prologue truly gives us a proper understanding as to who Jesus Christ is in this gospel. To misunderstand the prologue or to neglect it is to distort and misunderstand what the author intended the reader to know. **READ JOHN 1:1-18**

Today we will talk about **The Man Who Was God**. This is primary theme of the Gospel of John, and if we miss this fact, we will miss our salvation. Who is Jesus to you? Some say that He was a good man, a prophet, a religious figure, a moralist. Probably the most important message of the Bible will be looked at right now which goes on to determine how you will live your life, and more importantly, will direct your destiny.

The primary key figure in the Gospel of John is Jesus Christ. And in fact, the sum and culmination of all of Scripture is directed toward Jesus Christ. The task placed upon the Apostle John was to write direct proof that this man who walked the earth 2000 years ago was no ordinary man – He was not only another man in the history of our universe, but that history itself revolves around this man, past, present, and future. He is tasked to demonstrate that this Jesus is no ordinary man.... He is God Himself enveloped in flesh. So let's examine how John establishes five arguments as to why Jesus is, in fact, divine.... or God. Let's examine John's prologue to deity.

1. THE MAN WHO IS ETERNAL (1-2)

Immediately beginning at the very first verse, John alludes to where it all began for mankind – the Creation account of Genesis. Notice I said 'for mankind'? John points in his prologue that this Jesus is no ordinary man because He was there at the beginning of mankind. What John does straight away is go straight for the jugular vein and, like it or not, he wants you to know that Jesus Christ is God. So he begins by giving the reader a glimpse of Him before the foundation of the earth. So right at verse 1, we immediately slide through a time tunnel that transports us to eternity past. And in eternity past – before creation, before time itself – there existed the everlasting, triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Listen to what Moses wrote:

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.

2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
(Ps. 90:1-2)

John introduces Jesus Christ as "the Word", or in the Greek, the *Logos*. Words communicate and that's precisely what Jesus did. The book of Hebrews says that He was the final spokesman for God: *1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Heb. 1:1-2).*

From Alpha to Omega, or A to Z, as stated in Revelation, Jesus was the divine alphabet that spelt out God in such a way that even the most simple of us could grasp His essence. This Word, John reveals to us, was *with* God, face-to-face, in eternity past. Yet, in some mysterious way, this Word was not only *with* God but *was* God. Jesus was not simply the revealer of God – but God Himself revealed.

Jesus speaks of Himself like this:

- *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Rev. 1:13)*
- *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58)*
- *"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." (John 17:5)*
- *John (the Baptist) testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" (John 1:15).*

And so we are immediately painted a picture of the eternality of Jesus Christ: He has always been around, He will continue to be there forevermore no matter what, He is eternal.... And that He is God.

2. THE MAN WHO CREATED THE UNIVERSE (3)

Next, John goes on to expand upon the reality of His Godhood, or His deity, by explaining His role in creation. There are two primary facts regarding Christ's deity being expressed here: (1) Jesus Himself was not created, and (2) all things were created by Him. The best understanding here is that God the Father was the architect, the Master planner behind it all... but Jesus was the primary agent of creation – He spoke the will of the Father and it came into existence. *10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. (John 1:10)*

16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:16-17)

And not only has this God-Man created all things, but He *holds* all things together. This is now coming to a point that is beyond our understanding! This Jesus – whom people don't know, whom people ignore, whom people curse, whom people reject, whom people absolutely hate – is portrayed here in the Scriptures as the very reason why we do not simply separate into smithereens! Think about that for a moment.

>>And not only that, but take this thought.... All of creation has been so well planned out, the amount of thought in every intricacy, in every detail. Take our earth for example – it is known to be tilted at 23 degrees. If it were not so, we would have no seasons. Science also tells us that if the crust of the earth was but a few feet thicker, there would be no oxygen and hence no life could exist. If the sun were much closer, we would roast, if much further away, we would freeze. If the moon were any nearer, the tides would practically sweep over all but the mountains.

>>And then we can also look at a smaller scale, say the honeycomb of the common bee. How is it that of a thousand different hives of bees in various parts of the world, having no communication with each other... they all work to the same accurate scale, in exactly the same way as engineers all work to a standard measure? So accurately do the bees work that if you were to compare a section of honeycomb from each of these 1,000 hives, there would not be the slightest variation. The most skilful draftsman could not reproduce this even on paper without special instruments. How then does the bee accomplish this, and who fixed the design and set the scale? And for some reason, bees choose hexagons. *Always* hexagons. And not just your basic six-sided hexagon. They like "perfect" hexagons, meaning all six sides are *of equal length*. Furthermore, each cell is finished in three square planes at the bottom. Mathematicians have found that the angles of this cube are as perfect as can be worked out to give the maximum space with the minimum material. Who the, was the Master Mind behind all this?

This Jesus was no ordinary man that walked among us. What an amazing Creator we have – and that's not even scratching the tip of the iceberg! John now turns from Christ's creative work to His saving work. Just as Jesus is the sources of all physical life, so He is also the source of all spiritual life.

3. THE MAN WHO GIVES SPIRITUAL LIFE (4-5, 10-13)

John now shows that in Jesus there is something more than just the life we see all around us. There is the unseen life that is within us – this spiritual, eternal life. The Bible calls this ‘the light of men’.

Now, this is where things get very interesting. We are told in verse 4 that in Jesus was life, and that life is a light for mankind (read v.9). A light by which we can see through the darkness. He is speaking about a new life, a spiritual life, saving life, the gift of eternal life... or the opposite of spiritual death now and final condemnation later. He is primarily talking about the life that we do not have... even though we are physically alive. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life”* (John 5:24).

So, the simplest reasoning understands this to mean that if we do not believe upon Jesus Christ, then we are all dead – spiritually dead – and in order to live forever and not come into judgement, we need the gift of life – spiritual life – which is only in Jesus.

- *“God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”* (1 John 5:11-12).
- *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”*(John 10:10)
- *“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.”* (John 10:28)

10-13

What this means is that Jesus is the giver of spiritual life. But we must receive Him into our lives if we are to have our darkness lightened. Verses 10 and 11 speak how the world, in its hardened heart, stands as a defiant piece of sculpture shunning its sculptor and refusing to acknowledge Christ as its maker. Not even His own people, the Jews, received Him. Fortunately, some did... and we have been given the right to become children of God, and everything else that pertains to that awesome privilege. We have been born of God and have the light of life with us. Jesus truly is the Light of the World and when you accept Him as your Saviour, He is able to light up your life no matter how dark it may be. Where there is chaos, He can bring order. Where there is emptiness, He can bring fullness. Where there is darkness, He can bring light. And the darkness – no matter how deep – cannot overpower it!
12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

4. THE MAN WHO MANIFESTED HIS DIVINE GLORY (14-17)

Verse 14 now describes the Incarnation – when this God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. In the Incarnation, deity funnelled itself into humanity; the finest of wines into an ordinary earthenware vessel. And John states that he, and all the others, saw a glimpse of Jesus’ divine glory. They saw it when the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His water baptism. They saw it in His healings and miraculous signs. They saw His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. They saw it when He rose from the dead. They saw it when He ascended back up to heaven.

An interesting point here is that it says He ‘dwelt’ among John and the disciples. The word literally means ‘tabernacled’ which is an allusion to the tabernacle of Israel in the wilderness.

The tabernacle, if you recall, was the special tent Moses had built where God met with His people and where His glory was seen.

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

36 In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; 37 but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. 38 So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels. (Exodus 40:34-38)

Now, when we come to Jesus, John saw the presence and the glory of God 'tabernacling' among men. Jesus had manifested glimpses of His God glory to those who had their eyes open. I think of the story of the Apostle Thomas who, throughout his time with Christ, seemed to have his eyes closed to who Jesus really was. But at the resurrection, he really wanted to catch a glimpse of Christ's glory, but had serious doubts about it all that he didn't believe the others had seen the resurrected Christ. He said, *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."* (John 20:25). And then a week later, Jesus appeared to Thomas and invited him to touch his hand and side to confirm he is alive... Thomas saw his glory and didn't even have to touch Jesus to believe. He simply confessed, *"My Lord and my God!"* ²⁹Then Jesus told him, *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* (John 20:28-29)

Isn't it interesting how many times you hear of people who say, "If I see it, then I'll believe it!" It has always fascinated me to read in Scripture about those who were with Jesus, or saw first hand his miracles, signs and wonders.... and yet did not believe. ³⁷Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. (John 12:37) They had not yet seen His glory.

And yet others, caught a glimpse of not necessarily some great miracle, but rather of the glory of Christ, and they believed:

- ⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶"Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly." ⁷Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?" ⁸The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. (Matthew 8:5-8)
- And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)

John explains in chapter 12:

³⁹For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them." ⁴¹Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. (John 12:39-41)

There are many, possibly even here in this place, that need to have their eyes opened to the awesome glory of Jesus Christ, the resurrected one, King of kings and Lord of lords. If that is you, cry out to God to open the eyes of your heart and to manifest the glory of Christ to you.

5. THE MAN WHO REVEALED GOD THE FATHER (18)

And when the divine sculptor became human clay, all the abstract concepts of God were explained in very down-to-earth, human terms. Jesus Christ revealed to us all what God the Father was really like.

If you've ever asked the question, "I wonder what God is like?".... then the answer is given to us: ¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known. (John 1:18).

- ¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (Col. 1:15)
- ³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Heb. 1:3)

The Scriptures tell us that no-one has ever seen God the Father face-to-face, shared His presence in intimate fellowship, nor known the plans of His heart – except for His One and Only Son, Jesus, the Living Word. Therefore, the life and words of Jesus are an explanation or a revelation of God's attitude toward men and of His purposes for them.

He says, 6 *"I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours; you gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your word. 7 Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You. 8 For I gave them the words You gave Me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me. (John 17:6-8)*

No-one less than God Himself could reveal the Father to mankind. No-one less than God could say, 6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. 7 If you really know Me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him." (John 14:6-7)*

CONCLUSION

And so we see that John ends his prologue on a climactic note. He has carefully presented his evidence and shown that this Jesus of Nazareth, this carpenter's son, can be none other than the Son of God because He is eternal, because He is the Creator, because He is the giver of spiritual life, because He manifested His glory, and because He reveals the Father. Jesus Christ is fully human and fully God. **This Jesus was no ordinary man!**

Let me close with a final question that demands to be asked: Why is the deity of Jesus Christ so crucial to Christianity? I mean, couldn't an ordinary, good man have died for our sins? Why must we maintain that Jesus is eternal and not created? Why must we insist that He is God?

Simply put, we would have no Saviour if Jesus had been less than deity. No-one but God could have lived out God's law perfectly, making Him the spotless Lamb who took our place on the Cross and perfectly atoned for our sins. Only God could grant forgiveness of sins and give us new life. You have to see that it was not enough for Jesus to be simply a good teacher or moral example.... He had to be God.

Is it any wonder why the deity of Christ is one of the first doctrines to be attacked by false cults? Whenever you look at any of the false cults, the door knockers, the Mormons and the JW's – the first thing they do is show you that Jesus was just a man created by God. If they take away His deity, they take away His atonement for our sins. Salvation then becomes a matter of achieving God's favour through good works. And that's exactly what false cults are – systems of righteousness by works.... Which Jesus Himself condemns.

Let us pray.