



1907 previously unpublished study notes on the Book of John.

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN: 1907 Biblical Study Notes on the Gospel of John

by George N. H. Peters

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The TESTIMONY of

JOHN

George N. H. Peters

edited by
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George N. H. Peters

Edited by
D. A. Baltuskonis and P.R. Baltuskonis

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Chapter 1:1-51

I. The Divinity of Jesus (John 1-4,10,14).

In view of the extended and able remarks to be found in various commentaries, it is not needful to dwell on the meaning of the word "Logos," or the eternity, personality and divinity of the Logos, the incarnation of the Logos in David's son, or the preexistence, Deity, creative power, life and light-source, and/or sustaining influence of the Logos. All these have had a multitude of gifted minds and talented pens devoted to their study, explanation, and eulogy. Likewise there is danger in multiplying words on such points and (inadvertently) burying the truth under them.

The ideas of John, presented under inspiration, are so full of grandeur and sublime mysteries, so deep and high, that they exceed human comprehension. No man has yet succeeded in sounding their depths, or in measuring their heights. John was dependent upon the Spirit (who knows "the deep things of God") for what he wrote, and limited by the experience and ability of a common humanity, he could not fathom the depths presented. The efforts made to unravel the profound mysteries, imbedded in the opening of the Gospel, have not infrequently (notwithstanding a show of great learning) darkened knowledge by a multitude of words in attempted mystical and philosophical explanations. The truth is, here are simple grand facts, beyond human perception or ability to recognize, announced by inspiration, because they indicate the majesty of the Son of God. They must be received by faith as true, the truthfulness being powerfully corroborated by the life, works, and teaching of this Messiah. It is therefore, the purpose of these Notes only to direct attention to several points previously mentioned in the Preface.

John, in view of what he designs to say respecting the Messiah and the Divine attributes that he intends to ascribe to him in the unfolding of his life, begins at once (as explanatory of that which is to follow) to ascribe veritable Deity to the Christ, constituting him God-man. It is the Key which opens much to a correct apprehension, and enables us to appreciate, with a higher esteem and more confident trust, His (Jesus') teaching, works, death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation. It gives a substantial reason (founded on the person of

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Jesus) for the extraordinary occurrences that take place, for the superhuman element that constantly appears, for the claims of Divinity and oneness with the Father put forth, for the lofty estimate placed upon his atoning death, and for the expectations (and assurances) excited and encouraged by the professed ability to perform all that covenants and Messianic predictions promise. It is a most admirable Messianic introduction, arresting attention by its sublime ascriptions of Divine attributes and forcing conviction, that if the Christ be such a Being as here described, then indeed is Salvation (including all that the prophets incorporate with it) to be obtained in, through, and by Him. It begins a Gospel designed to prove that Jesus is "The Messiah," and it is strictly Messianic in its production and intent.

The choice of the word "Logos" (or "Word") was purposely made to conciliate Jewish prejudice. Interpreters generally write as if John alone was responsible for its selection and use, but if we consider how John was specially guided and directed by the Spirit, it is best to assume that in such a choice and use the Spirit influenced him and is to be accounted as the originator. This is confirmed by the sublimity of the ideas connected, which far exceeds the mental reach and ability of an uneducated fisherman.

The choice of the word "Logos" is assumed that it will be understood as making him with whom it is permanently united, divine. The Jewish scriptures had already (Gen 1:3, 6,9,11; Psalms 33:6; 107:20; 119:89) employed the term to indicate a revelation of the Divine energy, will and Being in manifestation. The Jew Philo, while almost exclusively impersonal and presenting no incarnation, yet showed how the Solomon view of personified wisdom and word (God), prepared the minds of some to consider and receive the deeper and more decisive utterances here recorded.

But more than this: the Targums (or Paraphrases) of the Jewish scriptures that appeared, clearly evidence that Jewish usage had associated the idea of Deity with the term "Logos" (or "Word"). Frequently where the God-head is directly asserted in the Old Testament, these Targums substituted for Elohim (or Jehovah) the expression "the Word of God," "the Word of the Lord," as e.g., instead of saying "God called unto Adam" they make it, "the Word of the Lord called unto Adam." Scholars affirm, that in a Targum on the

Pentateuch, the phrase "the Word of the Lord" occurs one hundred and fifty times. There was, therefore, an eminent fitness to select a term that the Jewish mind at once associated with God. This familiarity of Divine association is likewise indicated by the personification of the Wisdom of God and the "Almighty Word" of God as given in the Apocrypha.

Hence, evidently, the Spirit, using John as the medium, chose this expression, being so impressive to the Jewish mind, to show forth the loftiest conception of the Messiah.

But the selection of this term "Logos" (or "Word") had a special significance to the Jewish mind because of its relationship to the Theocratic ordering and rule, which the Messiah (according to Jewish faith and hope) was to restore. To illustrate its weight and force, consider what their Targum on Deu 26:17,18, declares, "**Ye have appointed the word of God a King over you this day, that he may be your God.**" The use of the term, in its relationship to the Messiah, was therefore preeminently suitable, because it suggested and presented the Theocratic rulership appertaining to Him. Divine wisdom, owing to its fitness led John to employ it.

We are informed, at the very beginning of the Gospel, that the "Word" (or Deity) was incarnate in Jesus, constituting him a Divine-human personage and thus qualifying him, far above human conception, for the Messianic position or Theocratic rule predicated this characteristic of him. What follows then in the Gospel, is to show that this high estimation can be properly and legitimately applied to Jesus.

Expressly taught, the Incarnation ensured a perfect King, an infallible earthly Ruler, an enduring rule on a restored throne and Kingdom, an actual and real representative of God. In virtue of its reach and preciousness, it deserves the marked prominence that John gives to it. David's Son is the exalted medium through and by whom God's will is expressed and performed.

By the Incarnation, constituting a God-man, human nature is exalted, the infinite and the finite are united, the heavenly and the earthly are intimately connected, the unity of will and rule in the restored Theocracy is secured; above all else it gives the needed assurance that this Messiah can truly fulfill the promises of God. Hence the

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following implicit Messianic truths are imbedded in these first few verses.

Divine attributes belonging inherently to this Messiah; He is abundantly able to verify the promises of complete restitution, a restoration of all forfeited blessings, the realization of which can never be brought about unless there is a direct exertion of supernatural power.

Being the Creator and Sustainer of all things, He possesses the ability to recreate, renew the lost Paradise by a restored Paradise and further augment its glory and blessedness by added beatitudes.

Being the Life and the source of all life, He has the power, (as claimed by himself and exerted in some cases as vouchers or signs) to rise from the dead and bring about an inheriting of his Kingdom.

Being the true Light, having the rich and inexhaustible treasures of Divine Knowledge and wisdom, He can readily introduce into his rule that bright shining forth of splendor, which, as the prophets joyfully predict, shall dispel all darkness.

Numerous writers have laid stress on the fact, that here we are directed to the primal condition of man (before the Fall) when the life of the "Word" was also the Light of man, contrasted with the darkness resulting from the Fall. Now the Incarnation (the union of the Divine and the human in Jesus) is the wonderful plan devised by God to bring this life and light to man and make it accessible to all, making a sacrificial work of inestimable value possible and an acceptable and enduring Theocratic rule available. God is honored, man is blessed, and the world is delivered from its groaning bondage. Jesus, by virtue of this rule, becomes a Messiah indeed of priceless value and unlimited power.

The student, linking this Deity and Incarnation with the promised future, readily sees what the crowning glory of the restored Theocratic-Davidic Kingdom will be. Namely: a visible revelation of the invisible God in the Person of Jesus, the Messiah. It is God again dwelling with man in Theocratic relationship, exerting a rule and dominion that brings all things into subjection to the Divine Will, and makes them instrumental in promoting the Divine Glory.

A peculiarity, designed to meet Jewish objection, is worthy of observation, viz. The concern had to establish an absolute monotheism. For the eternity, distinctness and yet essential oneness with the Father of the "Logos" (or Word) are most plainly declared. Thus avoiding the making of a separate, differing, and independent God. How this unity and complete co-operation is produced, we are not informed, and for a very simple reason: if unable to solve the mysteries of our own being, then much less, (owing to an inherent limitation), are we able to grapple with and comprehend the mysteries of the God-head. The wisdom and inspiration of the scriptures shine forth in the giving of facts without the least effort to explain them. An attempted explanation would, in the nature of the case, betray human ignorance and presumption. We are to receive the facts as given, and consider their importance and relationship to the future. The question that we are to deal with, is the great one, in which we are personally interested, whether the fact revealed is adapted to carry out to a successful completion God's covenanted and predicted purpose of restitution. Now, (in reference to this fact), everyone can see that it consistently and logically forces the conviction, that in the Theocracy restored under such a Messiah, the same God (who is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) rules, and that a single Divine Will permeates the future ordering, ensuring its action, stability and preciousness as a real Theocracy. For this Messiah, (David's Son and Lord), declares God, reveals God, interprets and enforces the Will of God, and reigns as God.

This decided attributing of Deity to the Messiah, to Jesus as David's Son in whom the Word is incarnate, at once heightens the sinfulness and guilt of the Jewish nation in deliberately rejecting and killing him. They crucified "the Lord of glory," a Being of matchless perfection and peerless majesty, the God-man.

Hence the prophets, in strict accord with this union of Deity with man, predict that the nation will reject God himself. No single event, excepting in the rejection of Jesus, can be alleged as a deliberate rejection of God by the nation. In view of the magnitude of the guilt is the greatness of the punishment measured out to the nation, the "days of vengeance" predicted by the prophets (including Jesus).

II. The rejection of this God-man, this exalted and majestic Messiah by the Jewish nation, vs. 5,10,11,26. We must in our interpretation and application be guided by the context. While it is true that this Messiah is also the life and light of the Gentiles, this introduction has special reference to the Jewish nation as is most plainly seen by the immediate appeal made to John the Baptist's mission and testimony introductory to the public ministry of Jesus to the nation.

Let us pass over the references:

In v5 it is said: **"And the light shineth in (the) darkness; and the darkness comprehended (apprehended) it not."** That this non-apprehension of the light primarily refers to the Jewish nation is apparent in the immediate reference to John the Baptist and the rejection of his testimony by the nation's rulers.

In vs. 10,11 there is a (descending) from the general to the particular, which confirms the special reference to the nation **"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own,"** (the Greek is neuter, denoting his own land, or inheritance, or possessions) **"and his own"** (the Greek is masculine, thus meaning his own people) **"received him not."** This is decisive. The same in a milder form is repeated in v26, **"whom ye know not."**

Why is this prominence given in the very opening of the Gospel to the rejection of the Messiah, and what is necessarily implied by its mention? Evidently John, in his efforts to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, had (urged) against him the constant and leading (but superficial) objection, that since the rulers of the nation had rejected Jesus, then that was deemed sufficient proof that he could not be the Messiah. The objection is based on the assumed piety and infallibility of the rulers, (hence the prominence of this matter in the introductory).

The rejection is frankly stated, and if the reader carefully observes, he will see that what follows in the Gospel is designed to meet and refute that (specific) objection. For the contents of the Gospel can be readily grouped into the following divisions:

1. Testimony derived from others respecting the Messiahship of that Jesus who was rejected by the rulers.
2. Proofs of Messiahship drawn from the works, teaching, knowledge, etc., of Jesus, deliberately and willfully rejected by the rulers.
3. The enmity of the rulers stated, and the causes for their hatred assigned.
4. Predictions of rejection given, the condemnation, trial, and death described, and the results portrayed. The whole forms a complete and overwhelming vindication.

Let us consider what is forcibly implied by the mention of this rejection:

- (1) The Messiah is rejected by the nation owing to its sinfulness, expressed by "**darkness**," or a willful and deliberate blindness.
- (2) The rejection implies a tender (offer), or gracious time of visitation. This occurred when the Kingdom was tendered (offered) on condition of repentance.
- (3) The rejection by His own people, indicates His special mission to them, and that this people belonged to Him as to a legitimate Ruler.
- (4) The rejection takes place in His own land (or inheritance), illustrated, predicted, and enforced by the parable killing of the heir and seizing the vineyard, (Matt 21:37-39; Mark 12:7,8; Luke 20:14,15).
- (5) This rejection implies that the Theocratic-Davidic ordering (if ever restored) pertains to the Jewish nation as covenant and prediction demand.
- (6) The fact of rejection implies that the Messiah did not restore the (downfallen) throne and kingdom of David, but that such restoration is postponed.
- (7) This rejection implies, what is afterward stated (John being included in the Council's decision, Acts 15:16), that the restoration is put off until the return of Jesus, at His Second Advent.
- (8) This rejection forms the basis of prediction relating to it, the remarkable references to the call of the Gentiles, the warnings respecting His future Advent and the announcements of departure, absence, coming again, and Jewish tribulation.

III. The reference made to John the Baptist vs. 6-8 and 15-40.

John's testimony is introduced to establish the reality of the Messiahship of Jesus. He is an important witness. John is divinely sent, specially endowed and qualified for his mission. Even the Baptist's name, divinely given (as that of Jesus), is significant: "Jehovah is merciful." This testimony of John is presented in order to explain, that the rejection of Jesus by the rulers was unjustified and unjustifiable.

John's testimony is decisive and cumulative. By coming as a herald or forerunner, he fulfills prophecy (Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3) and gives a sign preeminently pertaining to the Messiah. The lack of a forerunner, and the omission of his testimony, would bring the most serious objections to any Messianic claim. As a forerunner (or herald), John evidences his official calling by preaching the Messianic Kingdom conditioned on repentance. As a prophet, sent by God and divinely inspired, he predicts the speedy public manifestation of the Messiah. As a witness, he beholds and acknowledges the supernatural endorsement of Messiahship given by God to Jesus. Hence we are told, how John, Divinely directed and impelled, singles out Jesus personally - the same Jesus rejected by the Jews, as the true Messiah.

John **"was a burning and shining light"** (John 5:35) testifying to the coming great Light (the Sun of righteousness). He frankly acknowledges his inferiority.

John baptized, and this fact impressed three things:

1. This was a new religious rite, and as the Sanhedrin had the supervision of religion, it explains the sending of the deputation to John and demanding his authority to baptize.
2. Baptism, in view of predictions (Ezek 36:25; 37:23; Isa 52:15) is associated with the Coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom, and therefore (accredits) the Messiah, being a sign.
3. Taking the use of water under the Ceremonial law and certain references of Scripture (Hag 2:14) John's required Baptism was a virtual declaration that the whole nation needed purification. This implicit censure of impurity excited the hatred of the hierarchy who rejected (Luke 7:30) this baptism.

John was interviewed and questioned (vs. 19-28) by the official messengers of the Sanhedrin. Five questions were proposed and answered. The questions (especially the last) reveal the spirit and intent of the Jewish rulers. Opposed to this Baptism and Messianic announcement conditioned by repentance, the deputation sought for grounds to accuse and condemn, and rejected John's testimony.

The answers (given by John) clearly present the humility and unassuming spirit of the Baptist; the self-consciousness of a preparatory mission; the undoubted and sufficient evidence given under divine direction to the Messiahship of Jesus; and the high estimate formed of the majesty, power, and authority of Jesus.

The humility of the Baptist on the one hand, and his exalted opinion of the Messiah, are expressed by his insisting to occupy a very subordinate position as a herald; by his cheerful acquiescence to be superseded and overshadowed by the Messiah; by regarding himself even unworthy to perform a slave's office (to unloose the sandal's string); by regarding his Baptism as insignificant compared with the higher and more glorious Baptism to be conferred by the Messiah; and by making his mission simply initiatory to the higher blessings to be conferred by an all-powerful Messiah.

IV. The reference made to Elijah, v21. The Jewish view, that Elijah would precede the Messiah as a forerunner, is here presented. It is mainly based on the prediction of Mal 4:5,6. The Talmud refers to this belief, (That a forerunner should precede and announce the Messiah) and was regarded as a Messianic sign (Matt 17:10).

John, Divinely commissioned and inspired, expressly denies that he is Elijah, and it follows, therefore, that the prophecy of Malachi is to be understood literally and not merely of an ideal Elijah, (and the prediction not yet fulfilled, pertains to the Second Advent).

How John only comes in the spirit of Elijah's (either as to the time or to the success attending it) has already been sufficiently noted in the remarks on Matt 17:10,12; 11:14.

V. The reference to "that prophet?" v21. Whether this refers to the prophet predicted in Deu 18:15, or to the prophet Jeremiah (John 7:40 compared with Matt 16:14), it demonstrated the Jewish belief respecting a forerunner, so that John's mission, acting as a herald, enforces the Messianic claim of Jesus.

VI. Those obtaining favor, v12. Rejected by the nation, Jesus is received by individuals. (Compare Gal chap 3, 4 with Eph chap 2, 3). God purposes to gather out from Jews and Gentiles a people for His name. (See also Acts 15:14 with Rev 17:14). To those who receive Jesus; believe in His name; appropriate Him personally; He is the true Messiah.

To such He gives **"power to become the Sons of God."** The word rendered "power" denotes the 'right' or 'privilege,' and is so given in meaning, see Heb 13:10; Rev 22:14. To be "Sons of God," indicates not only, like (the phrase) "children of God," but also an intimate relation to and enjoyment of the favor of God. The phrase expresses dignity and rulership in the future Messianic Kingdom. A comparison of the passages in which the phrase is used and its application to Jesus, strongly implies that it included (Gal 4:7) the future relationship and honor sustained by virtue of it, as co-heirs in the Kingdom of Jesus.

It signifies not merely present honor but future exaltation, power and glory. For **"many sons are brought unto glory"** (Heb 2:10), at the blessed period of the manifestation of the Sons of God, being revealed (Rev 19:14) ¹ at the Second Advent of this Jesus. It is in view of this high destiny (Rom 8:16,17,21), that John so expressively refers to it in 1John 3:1,2; and Rev 21:7.

Observe how the phrase "to become" is explained in the scriptures.

1. Gal 3:26 affirms: **"For ye are all, the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"** (and therefore "heirs"). Faith is an essential prerequisite.
2. **"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,"** is the statement of Rom 8:14.
3. In virtue of appropriating faith and the renewing of our minds, we **"receive the adoption of sons"** (Gal 4:5), and under its peace and

hope inspiring influence we can (Gal 4:6) say, **"Abba, Father."** Compare Rom 1:4; 8:15-17.

4. This adoption as **"sons of God,"** to be fully realized and manifested in its intent and exceeding preciousness, is allied by the redemption or resurrection of the body, Rom 8:23. The present is only anticipatory and a faint earnest of that which is to come.

5. The high and noble position of **"sons of God,"** especially designed for, and pertaining to the future Messianic Kingdom, is one predetermined in the Divine purpose, and will be effectively carried to completion, Eph 1:4-6.

6. The position, honor, and dignity of **"the sons of God"** is variously represented as 'heirs and co-heirs, elect, kings and priests, royal priesthood, rulers,' etc., thus impressing the rich and abounding blessings that are allied with the phrase.

To fully apprehend this 'becoming and being manifested' as the "Sons of God," we must consider the statement: **"Which (who) were born (begotten), not of blood (bloods), nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."** The full and comprehensive meaning of this encompasses much more than a moral regeneration as presented in (1John 5:1,4,18) and enforced by Rom 5:4.²

For a peculiarity of the scriptures exhibits itself in this two-fold manner: Future blessings, (owing to the absolute certainty of their realization) are expressed as already present, (Rom. 8:3)³ and Present blessings imply and include associated future ones as well (1Pet 1:8,9).⁴

Three things urge us not to limit (in time to the moment of origin) this 'begetting' or 'being born,' but to extend it to the (time of) resurrection.

1. Paul expressly thus extends it (being born of God) for completed realization to the resurrection of the believer, Rom 8:23.

2. Jesus is **"declared to be the Son of God with power,"** **"by the resurrection from the dead,"** Rom 1:4. Hence Jesus is pointedly designated **"the first begotten of the dead,"** Rev 1:5 and **"the firstborn of every creature:"** Col 1:15, and **"the first fruits,"** 1Cor 15:23.⁵

3. The Jewish view of the resurrection of believers made it, in view of the reanimation, a regeneration (or birth).⁶ Verses like Isa 26:19;

66:7-9; Micah 5:3,4; Ezek 37:1-14 had much to do in suggesting and fostering such expressions. This interpretation is supported by the fact that this begetting is directly and exclusively attributed to supernatural power. It cannot result from, or be produced by, "**bloods**" (blood significant of physical life), or a development of life; or by "**the will of the flesh,**" being an outcome of natural generation; or by "**the will of man,**" possessing ability to bring it forth. It is solely dependent upon God for its existence. Man and nature do not cooperate in its production.

While the aid of the Divine is requisite to change the mind and heart (or, to effect a moral regeneration), yet this is only an "earnest" and pledge given to ensure the still future exertion of the supernatural in the resurrection of the believer. This is strongly stated in Rom 8:11.⁷

In the renewing of the mind it is the Spirit that **quickens** (John 6:63); bestows '**fruitage**' (Gal 5: 22); **leads** (Rom 8:14); **seals** (Eph 1:13); **inspires** (2Cor 3:3) and **strengthens** (Eph 3:16). It is the same all-powerful Spirit that raises the believer from the dead, "**the quickening Spirit.**" Just as Jesus was "**put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit**" (1Pet 3:18), so by the same supernatural power are the saints raised out of their graves, John 5:21-26.⁸

This record incorporates several Messianic signs; E.g. in the personal experience and hopeful "earnests" bestowed upon the believer; the self-consciousness attesting to its truthfulness and power; in the assumption of a future authority and dominion, that is God-like, and yet needful to verify divine promises associated with Messianic prediction; and in the future revelation of honor and glory to be bestowed that is not only inspiring but exalts the grace and majesty of the Messiah.

VII. The condescension of Messiah glory testified to vs. 14-18. Deity is united permanently with (human nature in) David's Son, thus constituting him a perfect Theocratic King. The miraculous conception and birth are suited and preeminently worthy of so exalted a personage. As the Shekinah abode hidden in the Holy of holies of the Tabernacle, so Deity, enshrouded in the human nature assumes

intimate union, and dwelt (or tabernacled) among men. This serves to explain much in the history of Jesus, His wisdom, knowledge, power, treatment, and claims.

The manner of expressing the idea is intensely Jewish. For according to Meyer (Com.) and others: "The Targums likewise represent the Word as the Shekinah, and the Messiah as the manifestation of the latter." This description most accurately fulfills the requirements of various predictions relating to the humiliation, non-recognition, and rejection of the Messiah.

Yet John testifies to a revelation of, and shining forth of the glory that Jesus by virtue of this union possessed. John says: "**we beheld his glory, the glory of the (an) only begotten of the Father,**" A real Shekinah glory, which alone pertains to One so intimately related to the Father. John undoubtedly refers to the glory revealed at the Transfiguration, when he and two others (the "we beheld") witnessed the supernatural transformation of Jesus and gazed, awestruck, upon the majesty of the Messiah. Compare similar testimony of Peter (2Pet 1:16-18).

While the life of Jesus (works, death, resurrection and ascension) all manifest His glory, yet, as the contrast to the human nature requires, special reference is here made to a manifestation of visible glory, showing how even, under a Divine union and power, that human nature is splendidly glorified. A Messiah possessing such inherent glory is fully capable of fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies (Isa 40:5)⁹ and the New Testament predictions concerning the same glory (Matt 16:27).¹⁰

John by such a portrayal of the Messiah describes to us the One who possesses unlimited fullness, the dispenser of Divine grace, and the powerful Bestower of all blessings.

VIII. It is exceedingly interesting and instructive to observe, that John twice (vs. 29,36) designates Jesus as "The Lamb of God." This designation, in view of when it was given, clearly shows, that John the Baptist was inspired. No one, unless Divinely directed, could bestow

such a name upon Jesus, so fittingly expressive His coming atoning work.

John, evidently unconscious of the depth of meaning contained in the phrase (for he had not been informed how this Messiah, whom he so highly eulogized, would be condemned and killed), gives him the name "**Lamb**," which we know, from the sacrificial types and the outcome, strongly implies that Jesus, the Messiah, is a lamb to be slain (Isa 53:7)¹¹ as a sin offering (1Pet 1:18,19),¹² by which appropriating in faith we obtain remission of sin, (Eph 1:7).¹³

He calls him "**The Lamb of God**" for God himself chooses and provides it as a fitting sacrifice. The scriptures declare, that it is utterly beyond the power or riches of man to provide such a Lamb. God's love and compassion therefore provides him to us. Hence the exceeding preciousness of this Lamb is held forth as a self-evident and firmly attested fact, seeing that Divine favor and enduring blessedness are directly allied with His reception and faith in Him.

The emphasis exhibited in which John calls attention to this Lamb indicates that he fully believes the Messiah to be the promised Redeemer and Savior. As to the efficiencies of this Lamb of God to cleanse from sin, to save and exalt, to bless and glorify, it is sufficient to refer to the record given by the writer of this Gospel in the "**Lamb**" of Rev 5:6-14.¹⁴

The great work that this 'Lamb of God' shall accomplish is summed up in totality by the words: "**which (who) taketh away the sin of the world.**" Many who desire to find in these words a reference to the atoning sacrifice on the cross, render "**taketh away**" by the words "**beareth away**," in order to present, as they suppose, an implied allusion. But we are forced by John's very frequent use of the word, translated "**taketh away**," to retain the rendering of our version as correct and in full accord with the usage of John in 2:16.¹⁵

Generally, interpreters apply this as a direct allusion to the atoning work on the cross, but while this is implied by the phrase "**Lamb of God**," it is far preferable to interpret it as descriptive of the completed work of Redemption, which results, as many prophecies inform us, in

delivering this world from sin and its consequences, in restoring the Paradise lost and bringing all things into holy allegiance to Jehovah. This is to be effected through the Messiah. His atoning work on the cross is only preparative to the glorious outcome or predetermined goal. It is the hope set forth in the promised Theocratic-Davidic rule at the Second Advent of this exalted Lamb of God.

IX. The testimony of Andrew, v41. It would be highly interesting to know what took place in this interview with Jesus, by what means Jesus impressed upon the mind and heart of Andrew that He was indeed the Messiah. We can only conjecture. A flash of the supernatural as in the case of Nathaniel (v48) may have aided, while the Spirit honored the Christship by special enlightenment. Andrew, for reasons satisfactory to himself, unqualifiedly testifies: **"We have found the Messiah."**

By Messiah, Andrew undoubtedly held to the Jewish view of Messiahship, meaning the One anointed, set apart, or consecrated as (according to Covenant) the King of the Jews, whose dominion would become worldwide. He believed that the Messiah would restore the fallen down Davidic throne and Kingdom (Acts 1:6; 15:16).

Now if Andrew's testimony is worth anything, we must receive it in the sense in which it is given. We dare not assume that he was mistaken in his views, for while he might be ignorant of the time of the Messianic restoration, he did not, misapprehend its meaning because it was plainly and decisively founded on covenant and prediction taken in their normal sense. We do not doubt that Andrew was similarly guided as Peter (Matt 16:16,17) in acknowledging the Messiahship of Jesus. To question Andrew's comprehension of the title weakens the testimony. A believer ought not to attempt such a weakening process.

X. The brief statement of v42, if correctly apprehended this verse conveys a powerful proof of the Messiahship in the proposed change of the name of Simon to that of Peter (or Cephas), Jesus foretelling the change of name that would be universally adopted. It may also be said, that the changing of Simon's name is acting like Jehovah in changing the name of Abram into Abraham, Jacob into Israel.

XI. The testimony of Philip, vs. 43-46. Philip was thoroughly persuaded, by personal contact that Jesus was the Messiah promised by the Jewish scriptures. He designates him as the One **"of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus, the Son of Joseph, of Nazareth."** In his estimation Jesus fully met the requirements of prediction and promise. Hence the objection alleged by Nathaniel when invited, had no influence whatever upon his mind. In reply to the question, **"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"** The answer is decisive of an assurance, that neither the insignificance nor the corruption of the place invalidates the Messianic claims.

XII. The testimony of Nathaniel, vs. 47-50. Jesus, knowing all things, is perfectly acquainted with the piety and character of Nathaniel, Seeing him approach, He says: **"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."** He gives him the honored title belonging to the people of the Covenant, and declares that he truly deserves it because of his faith and life. He had used the means instituted under the law for forgiveness, lived righteously, was no hypocrite, innocent of deceit or fraud. Whatever sense of humility or imperfection Nathaniel may have had, a self-consciousness of right intention and sincere effort to honor God at once arrested his attention at this saying, so different from what he had anticipated.

Again; Jesus, in reply to the question, v48, **"whence knowest thou me?"** exhibits another Divine attribute, viz. the ability of seeing all things, illustrated and practically demonstrated by His seeing, although personally distant, Nathaniel under the fig tree. It is an attribute that belongs to Him in virtue of the union with the Divine. The manifestation of it confirms the reality of His Deity and preeminent fitness to occupy the covenanted position of Theocratic King.

Nathaniel was profoundly impressed by this astounding exhibition of Divine knowledge. Here was an isolated fig tree; Nathaniel was alone under it; he evidently was engaged in prayer and in a special earnest invoking of God (and his petition may have had reference to the speedy coming of the Messiah); Jesus knows it all, time, place, person, and how engaged. The delicate manner in which Nathaniel is assumed of his pious conduct being fully known is remarkable.

Nathaniel's confession. He accosts Jesus by the honorary title of "Rabbi," (or Master, Teacher) evidencing respect. Impressed by the supernatural knowledge shown, he calls Jesus **"The Son of God."** By this Nathaniel acknowledges, that He is One specially related to God, having divine power and being owned as proceeding from and pertaining to God. Guided by the Spirit as Peter was (Matt 16:17), he gives him this designation as belonging to the Messiah according to the scriptures. As a Jewish believer, he is led to apply to Jesus as the Messiah that which is definitely stated and promised in Psa 2:7¹⁶ For it was a recognized title of the Messiah, John 11:27¹⁷.

That Nathaniel by this phrase intended to indicate a union of the Divine with the humanity of Jesus is apparent from the indignation of the Pharisees and Scribes when Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (John 5:17, 13; 10:30-39). He pronounces him to be **"the King of Israel."**

"Israel," used in the Jewish sense, denotes the descendants of Jacob, with whom Jehovah had entered into covenant relationship. It is so employed in v31. The name expresses faith and hope in Him as the One who will (Acts 1:6) **"restore again the Kingdom to Israel,"** just as the apostles all held and believed (Acts 15:15).

It would be highly unjust to Nathaniel to say, that he misapprehended the meaning of Messiahship, and that Jesus left him and the rest under a gross error on the subject. To affirm this is to weaken Nathaniel's testimony, making him an unreliable witness.

XIII. Messianic authority of Jesus manifested in the promise of v51.
The faith of Nathaniel and the hope that faith conveyed influenced the Messiah to give a promise of future Messianic splendor and glory, which he and the other disciples present were to witness.

The promise is given by way of contrast, as if He had said: now you see me in a state of humiliation, my glory veiled, and myself subject to human conditions, and yet you receive me and believed, but the time is coming when, in virtue of your faith, you shall behold my glory. Hence the promise as a whole declares not only the majesty appertaining to the Messiah, but in the strongest manner implies the

personal salvation and happiness of the beholder of its realization. The particular emphasis attached, "**verily, verily,**" calling special attention to the absolute certainty of its fulfillment.

"I say unto you." Not merely, the Lord saith unto you, but "I say," indicating the self-consciousness of authority to communicate the promise and the power to bring it to pass. (The Revision rejects the word "hereafter," and so do leading MSS. If retained, then Matt 26:64 would show how it is to be referred to an indefinite future).

The promise: "**Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.**" The fulfillment of this promise cannot consistently be referred to the angelic ministrations during Jesus' ministry, for it embraces much more. It cannot be interpreted, as many do, to mean merely "the perpetual intercourse between God and the Messiah during his ministry," for this is not meeting the precise terms of the promise. It cannot be interpreted, as others do, as 'representative' of help and grace from God, or the intercourse between God and man through the Christ, or 'spiritual blessings,' or priestly intercessions and results, etc. Every figurative interpretation, which makes angels representative of something else, must be rejected as untenable. It is, therefore, not a symbol (or figure) of Christianity (or of the Gospel in the present dispensation) because the definite language and the analogy of Scripture promise, forbid such an application.

Received according to the plain sense of the words, the promise has never been realized, we conclude therefore that it relates to the future, to the Second Advent. This view is strongly supported from the following:

1. At the 2nd Advent Jesus comes as "the Son of Man" Dan 7:13¹⁸.
2. At that Coming, angels shall be with him and become associated with him in his Kingdom, Matt 17:27¹⁹.
3. "**Ye shall see,**" reminds one of the promised seeing and time specified in Matt 24:30²⁰.
4. The expression "**heaven open**" at once refers us to the promised revelation from heaven of the Messiah and His saints predicted in (Rev 19:11). It is descriptive of the glorious manifestation of the Messiah at His return from heaven, surrounded by redeemed ones

and accompanied by a splendid retinue of exalted angelic beings. This clearly teaches, that David's Son and David's Lord will be specially honored and revered by the angels in view of His Deity, and thus impressively holds forth His majesty and the homage due. A comparison of Heb 1:6²¹, positively exalts the Messiah as (Col 2:10) **"the head of all power,"** and eminently worthy of angelic homage.

XIV. The phrase "Son of man" deserves marked attention because it is a title assumed only by Jesus, and not given to him by others. All the Gospels are united in this limited use. Jesus employs this phrase (for strong scriptural reasons) as one that would hold forth His Messianic dignity and glory. This designation expresses the Messiah's covenanted relationship in the line of humanity, being the promised 'Man' in David's line, and concerning whom David declares in 2Sam 23:5; 7:19²². It is the 'Seed' promised to Abraham and graphically described Isa 9:7²³. It refers us to His predicted Messianic title as given by Dan 7:13,14, (compare Rev 14:14; and 1:13). Jesus adopts it, thereby showing that He is the One of whom this is prophesied.

Jesus so often employs this phrase to impress upon us the idea that his Messiahship, in the covenanted and oath-bound Purpose of God, pertains to Him as the Man. Consequently the human nature, permanently united the Divine, is an essential factor in the reign of the ages in the restored Theocratic-Davidic Kingdom. Hence Jesus rightfully appropriates this title in order to identify himself with covenant and prophecy as the One to whom the promised Kingdom pertains. The name is linked with the Kingdom as in Matt 25:31-34²⁴.

This chapter gives a singular contrast. Nathaniel (v49) calls Jesus **"the Son of God,"** while Jesus designates himself **"the Son of man."** The two titles combined give us the Divine-Human, or the God-man ship of Jesus. In view of the covenanted relationship expressed, (the use of the title in Daniel, in Revelation, and by Jesus) in connection with His future reign and glory, we cannot receive the views advanced by many, that the name expresses humiliation, or humility, or lowliness, or condescension. It rather declares His being exalted to the high distinction of verifying the predictions relating to the greatness, dominion, and glory of the Messianic Kingdom. By

adopting it Jesus virtually calls attention to himself as the One of whom it is said (Psa 80:17): "**Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom Thou madest strong for thyself.**"²⁵

This phrase indicates the literal, personal, visible coming of Jesus in glorified humanity, and the real, visible manifestation of His Kingdom according to Covenant and Prophecy, a restored Civil-Religious government (Theocratic-Davidic in nature) extending into a world-dominion, and over which this "Son of man" reigns.

XV. The Proofs of the Messiahship and those that serve to exalt it contained in this chapter are the following: 1. The Divinity; 2. The Incarnation; 3. The Forerunner; 4. The Divine Knowledge; 5. The Divine Power; 6. The acknowledgement from heaven; 7. The experience of believers; 8. The Divine authority properly assumed; 9. The teaching presented; 10. The testimony of believers; 11. The covenanted and predicted relationship.

The whole forms a matchless portraiture of the One, who is abundantly able to verify all the precious promises given in Covenant and Prophecy respecting this Messiah.



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