



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. John

Chapter 1

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Introduction

Chapter Outline:

- The Incarnate Word Who Grants Grace 1-18
- A Witness and a Presentation Of the Incarnated Word the Son of God 19-34
- The Presentation of the Son of God to John's Disciples 35-51
 - A. The two disciples talk with Jesus 35-39
 - B. Andrew and Peter talk with Jesus 40-42
 - C. Philip and Nathaniel talk with Jesus 43-51



The Word of God 1:1-13

- The Gospel according to St. John begins with an introduction that is different than that of the other Synoptic Gospels
- The other Gospels begin with Bethlehem; John begins with 'the bosom of the Father'
- Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish high-priests; John dates his *in the beginning*
- St. Mark presents a description of St. John the Baptist



The Word of God 1:1-13

- St. Matthew begins with Christ Genealogy and the story of His birth
- John begins by revealing the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal Word because he wanted to prove Christ's divinity
- With these opening words of John's great prologue he traces the origin of "*The Word*" backward into eternity to where God the Son was present with God the Father before time as we know it began



The Word of God 1:1-13

- It is what Jesus expressed in His prayer in John 17:5, “*And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.*”
- In this opening verse John is teaching the Church that time, the universe and the earth, which was once created through the Word of God, will now be renewed through the same Word, the Word who has come in the flesh-Jesus the Christ, John 1:14
- The threefold utterance of *the Word* in John 1:1 carries us into the depths of eternity, before time or creatures were



The Word of God 1:1-13

- *In the beginning*, in that beginning which Moses mentions, Genesis 1:1, the beginning of all things, when the foundations of the world were laid, Proverbs 8:27,28; the beginning of time; for before that was no measure of time, all was eternity
- The eternal *Word*, the second *Person* of the Holy Trinity, the *only begotten Son* of the Father, as he is here called (verse 14) of the *same nature and substance*, and the *same God*, with the Father and Holy Spirit



The Word of God 1:1-13

- This word *was* always, so that it was never true to say, *he was not*, as the Arians blasphemed
- *with God*, These words express the co-existence, but at the same time the distinction of person
- *was God*, This is the completion of the indicated statement
- It maintains the distinction of person, but at the same time asserts the oneness of essence



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “The use of ‘with’ here conveys the sense of ‘being with Him eternally’; that is the Word shares with the Father His eternal quality without any separation. ‘The Word was with God’ therefore He is as eternal as the Father Himself for there was no Father without the Word. Rather, God (the Word) was with God (the Father), Each having His own Person.” St. John Chrysostom



The Word of God 1:1-13

- "We will begin, then, with the creation of the world and with God its Maker, for the first fact that you must grasp is this: the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word who made it in the beginning. There is thus no inconsistency between creation and salvation; for the One Father has employed the same agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word who made it at first."
St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation



The Word of God 1:1-13

- "When [John] says 'What was from the beginning', he touches upon the generation without beginning of the Son, who is coeval with the Father. 'Was,' therefore, is indicative on an eternity without a beginning, just as the Word Himself, that is, the Son, being one with the Father in regard to equality of substance, is eternal and uncreated. That the Word always existed is signified by the saying: 'In the beginning was the Word.'"
St. Clement of Alexandria



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “In the Greek language, ‘logos’ has numerous meanings: it means the word, the mind, esteem, and the reason of separate things that depend on all this to come to existence. By all this we proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ.” St. Jerome
- Verse 2, The same Logos whom John has just affirmed to have been God Himself, was *in the beginning with God*
- Therefore, as we have seen, eternally in relation with God



The Word of God 1:1-13

- The Logos was not a second God, nor merely Divine or God-like, nor is he described as proceeding out of or from God, nor is he to be called 'the God absolute'; but the Logos is said to be "God" God in His nature and Being
- This second verse reasserts the eternal relation of such a personality "with God," and prepares the way for the statements of the following verses
- The second verse emphasizes the objective validity of the relation



The Word of God 1:1-13

- He is distinctly set apart from all heavenly, human, and material creations
- He is the Creator of everyone and everything wherever it may be
- *All things*, all beings and elements of things visible or invisible, in heaven, earth, and under the earth, Colossians 1:16, came into being through Him, through the Logos, who was in the beginning with God, and was God
- The Logos is the organ or instrument by which everything, one by one, was made



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “Could the Word be made by God? No, Because He too was with God since the beginning. Are the things that God has created different from the things that the Word has created? No, because all things were made through Him. By what means were they created by Him? Because in Him was life and before creating them life existed. What has been created was not done by life but by the Wisdom of God, and before creating them, life existed. That which is created moves on and transpires, whereas that which is found in Wisdom can never transpire. If you say: ‘All things’ then you will not be lying since this Word is called the Wisdom of God; and as it is written: ‘In wisdom You have made them all’ (Ps.104:24)” St. Augustine



The Word of God 1:1-13

- The opening verses of the Prologue have shown us that the Word is both united with and yet distinct from the Father
- Now we address His relationship to created things
- *In him, In this Word, or Son of God, was life;* because He gives life to every living creature
- The Word was always eternally and endlessly life, and from the first existence of any creature became a source of life to others
- He speaks of the Word not just as a living Person but as 'life' as well



The Word of God 1:1-13

- This is what the Lord Jesus indicated when He spoke of Himself as being born before all time: '.... to have life in Himself,' (John 5:26)
- For He is the essence of the incomprehensible life
- The word 'life' is very important in John's Gospel
- He used this word more than 35 times
- *and the life was the light of men*, He, who is essential life, and the author of life to all that live, was also the fountain of wisdom, holiness, and happiness to man



The Word of God 1:1-13

- 'Light' is another important word in John's Gospel
- He used it 21 times
- Jesus called himself 'the light for the world' twice, John 8:12, 9:5
- This *life* is *the light of men*, speaking of spiritual light as well as natural light
- It isn't that the Word "contains" life and light; He *is* life and light
- Therefore, without Jesus, we are *dead* and in *darkness*
- We are lost



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “The Evangelist calls Him both ‘the Light’ and the ‘Life’; for he freely grants us light. It is light that proceeds from knowledge and the life that arises from it. The use of one name, or two, or three, or more is insufficient to teach us about God. We need to be ready to comprehend His mysterious features through numerous means” St. John Chrysostom



The Word of God 1:1-13

- The work of the 'Sun of Righteousness' is to shine with His light upon the world, yet He does not oblige those sitting in darkness to receive His light
- *did not comprehend*, can also be translated *did not overcome*
- The light can not lose against the darkness; the darkness will never overcome it
- It is spiritual darkness
- A man who rejects the light, and holds on to darkness, becomes a darkness that cannot comprehend or tolerate the light



The Word of God 1:1-13

- Whereas a man who accepts the light becomes a light to the world and cannot tolerate darkness
- Darkness is the opposite of God's light, who is Jesus
- Many understand this, that the light of reason, which God gave to every one, might have brought them to the knowledge of God by the visible effects of His Providence in this world
- but *the darkness did not comprehend it*, because men, blinded by their passions, would not attend to the light of reason



The Word of God 1:1-13

- St. John will explain further about the "light" and the "darkness" (verses 9-11) and the struggle between them
- Later in John 12:15-46 Jesus will describe evil and the powers of Satan as a darkness enveloping man's mind and preventing man from knowing God, John 12:15-46 and 1 John 5:4-6
- There is a promised victory at the end of this verse
- The promise that evil cannot overcome good
- It is a promise we need to remember when the world seems full of evil and many innocent people are suffering



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “Briefly, a sinner is no better than a drunkard or a madman. Just as wood, lead, silver, gold, and precious stones appear to be similar at night due to the absence of light and thus hindering the perception of any distinctions among them, so is the one who leads a corrupt life: he is unable to make a distinction and comprehend the grandness of self control or the beauty of philosophy (wisdom)” St. John Chrysostom
- “He who strays away from the true Light, that is moving away from God, becomes blind immediately. Yet, he does not realize the result and his judgment even though it has actually been delivered already.” St. Augustine



The Word of God 1:1-13

- The other Gospels accounts clearly identify John as the Baptist and as the son of Zechariah to avoid confusion between the John the Baptizer and John the Apostle
- However, it was understood that John the Apostle was the author of the fourth Gospel, it was not necessary to distinguish between them
- The Holy Bible does not say: 'God sent John the Baptist' for the focus is on the mission itself: '*...a man sent by God...*'
- The aim of that mission was to bear witness to the divine Word who is the Light shining upon those sitting in the darkness



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “Since you are told that John has been sent by God, then do not think that he speaks of his own words. Rather, he speaks with the words of Him who has sent him; and therefore he is called an angel: “*Behold, I send My messenger...*” (Malachi 3:1). Note that the virtue of the angel is that he does not speak of his own words.” St. John Chrysostom
- John was called a messenger to denote his authority as a witness
- To denote his work, which is the work of every true servant of the gospel



The Word of God 1:1-13

- John was the first witness, and witnessed a thing wholly unknown, before him, to the generality of the world; for though the shepherds, and Simeon, and Anna, had given some testimony to Christ, when he was born and brought into the temple to be offered to the Lord, yet that was thirty years since, and generally forgot; neither could they bear a testimony to him as an actual minister of the gospel
- The apostles were to be witnesses to Christ, Acts 1:8; witnesses of His resurrection, Acts 1:22, 4:33, 5:32, 10:41, 13:31



The Word of God 1:1-13

- All the prophets bore witness to Him, that whosoever believes in His name should be saved, Acts 10:43
- So did John the Baptist also; and John further pointed to Him passing by, and witnessed that it was He of whom the prophets spoke
- *to bear witness of the Light*, John was to give a testimony to Christ the true Light, mentioned before



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “John was a light, yet he was not the true Light. If he had not been enlightened, he would have suffered from the darkness. However, he became a light by his being enlightened.”
St. Augustine
- It is necessary to repeat the statement of John’s position and work to differentiate the ministry of man from the eternal ministry of the Logos
- He (John, and with him all the prophetic, Levitical, ascetic teachers in all ages) was not the Light, but he was or came that he might bear witness of the Light



The Word of God 1:1-13

- The Word is the true light because He is the light from which all other light/ revelation of God comes
- He comes into the world to enlighten all men so that through Him all the world will be transformed
- The true Light was not “true” as opposed to “false,” but “true” as answering to the perfect ideal, and as opposed to all imperfect representations
- *which gives light to every man coming into the world,* He wishes to save everyone and to attract all to the Truth



The Word of God 1:1-13

- *He was in the world*, From the beginning, frequently appearing and making known to His servants, the patriarchs and prophets, the divine will, in dreams and visions, and various other ways
- *He was in the world*, Many of the ancient interpreters understand this verse of Christ as God, who was *in the world* from its first creation, producing and governing all things: but the blind sinful world did not know and worship him



The Word of God 1:1-13

- Others apply these words to the Son of God made man; whom even God's own chosen people, the Jews, at His coming, refused to receive and believe in Him
- *and the world was made through Him* , As has just been shown
- The world that the Lord has created is not the same one that has not known Him
- He created the heavens and the earth



The Word of God 1:1-13

- How is it that the heavens did not know Him whereas the sun grew dark as He suffered on the Cross?
- How is it that the earth did not know Him whereas it rumbled and shook as he hung on the Cross?
- But it is the evil ones and the unbelievers are called 'the world',
"...for the ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in Me"
John 14:30
- Those who love the world, and hate the Lord: this is the world that did not know Him



The Word of God 1:1-13

- *He came to His own*, To those of His own family, city, country
- This regards principally the Jews
- Other meaning is that Christ came into the world, which being made by Him, was in the most proper sense His own
- *did not receive Him*, Would not acknowledge Him as the Messiah, nor believe in Him for salvation



The Word of God 1:1-13

- God has not created man to serve Him for He has no need for the services of mankind
- His love for mankind is so unique, He wants each to be His very own and part of His household
- *did not receive Him*, The rejection was a joint one as it came from the high priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the leaders of the people
- Even one of His disciples joined and rejected Him, and thus these words were fulfilled: '*...and those who hated me wrongfully have multipliedwho hate me without a cause,*' Psalm 69:4



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “Reflect on the words of St. John: ‘He came to His own’: not because the Lord needed them since it is inconceivable that the Divine entity would be in need; but He came to extend goodwill to His own people. St. John emphasizes his admonition to those Jews more poignantly as he says: ‘...and His own rejected Him.’ For although the Lord came for their well-being yet they rejected Him. And not only that, but they also threw Him out of the vineyard and killed Him.” St. John Chrysostom



The Word of God 1:1-13

- *His own* nation as such rejected Him; individuals in it accepted Him; but not individuals of that nation only
- All who accept Him, receive from Him an authority and in Him a moral power, which constitutes them true children of God
- They receive in acceptance the right which others lost in rejection, Romans 9:11
- In the early days, the Lord had called His people '*Israel...My Son... My firstborn*' Exodus 4:22



The Word of God 1:1-13

- And now, through God's adoption, they have become 'partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4
- Those who accept Jesus Christ, as He is offered to them in the Gospel, have, through His blood, a right to this sonship; for by that sacrifice this blessing was purchased; and the fullest promises of God confirm it to all who believe
- The great St. Athanasius says, "The Son of God became man in order that the sons of men, the sons of Adam, might become sons of God.....He [Adam] is the son of God by nature; we, by grace.."



The Word of God 1:1-13

- Then John defines this supernatural birth into divine son-ship in the negative by listing 3 ways we were not born into God's Covenant Family
 - 1) not of the blood of men and women; or, not of the blood of Abraham (which was the boast of the Jews)
 - 2) nor from the lusts of the flesh
 - 3) nor from a power in man's will
- *but of God*, This is purely a supernatural birth from above; a free gift of faith and grace



The Word of God 1:1-13

- “Do not be astonished, O man, that you have become a son through grace, and have been born of God according to His Word. For, initially, the Word first chose to be born of man in order that you could be born of God according to the plan of redemption. Hence, tell yourself: “It is not without reason that God wanted to be born of man, for He considered me so important and desired to make me immortal: for my sake, He was born as a man who is vulnerable to death.” St. Augustine

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- This *word*, or *Son of God*, who was *in the beginning*, from all eternity, *was made flesh*, i.e. became man, by a true and physical union of His *divine person*, (from which the *divine nature* was inseparable) to our human nature, to a human soul, and a human body, in the womb, and of the substance, of His virgin Mother
- From the moment of Christ's incarnation, He that was God from eternity, became also true man
- The Son of God, remaining unchangeably God, was made man

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- Therefore that God was truly conceived and born of virgin Mary, who, on this account, was truly the Mother of God
- That God was born, suffered, and died on the cross, to redeem and save us
- 'He dwelt', or 'resided' for 'skeenoso' in Greek, means constructing a temporary accommodation or tent for a shelter
- This is relevant when speaking of the human aspect of the Lord
- *dwelt among us*, In a material body, like ours, clothed with our nature

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- He is become mortal, and like us in every thing, but sin
- He partook of our weaknesses but not of our wickedness
- *dwelt among us*, by this substantial union with our human nature by a real union, that the same person is truly both God and man
- *we beheld His glory*, Manifested to the world by many signs and miracles; we in particular, who were present at his transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-9

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- This passage expresses the immeasurable fact of the incarnation of the Son of God, Galatians 4:4
- “The Word became flesh to allow us to cross over from the flesh into the living Word. The Word did not cease to remain in Its original state (The Word), just as human nature did not change when He put it on through birth.” St. Jerome

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- John the Baptist identifies himself as the one the prophet Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 40:3
- He will quote this passage himself in John 1:23
- The prophet Malachi also prophesied the one who would announce the Messiah in Malachi 3:1, *“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.”*

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- John the Baptist, whose history was well known to the people to whom this Gospel came in the beginning, *bore witness*
- *cried out*, being deeply convinced of the importance and truth of the subject, he delivered his testimony with the utmost zeal and earnestness
- The forerunner of the Messiah
- The sense, says St. Chrysostom is, that he is greater in dignity, deserves greater honor, and though born after me, he was from eternity

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- St. John Chrysostom and other Church Fathers saw this passage as giving testimony that the Old Testament economy of salvation giving way to the new economy of grace brought by Christ
- When applied to God the term refers to the major manifestations to the world of God's universal will to offer salvation to mankind
- This desire for universal salvation is summed up by St. Paul in his letter to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; and also by St. Peter in 2 Peter 3:9

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- The Lord is not being slow in carrying out his promises, as some people think He is; rather is He being patient with you, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to repentance
- It is our destiny to receive the gift of eternal life; however, whether or not we fulfill our destiny is entirely in our own hands
- God has also given us the gift of "free will" to accept or reject His precious gift

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- grace for grace can also mean that Jesus brings a super-abundance of grace (gifts) which adds on to the existing graces of the Old Covenant and all of which are poured out in superabundance through Christ through which the "waters of eternal life" flow unceasingly
- He who grants us grace has also granted us the Law
- However, He had delivered the Law through His servants, whereas He Himself descended to deliver grace

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- “What does “...grace for grace,” mean? This involves faith; for God once more becomes our defender and seeks our benefit. As we are unworthy to be forgiven we received such a great gift and this is what is called grace. What is grace? That which is granted freely...for you receive a gift from God: a gift of life through faith; with the promise of eternity and life everlasting as a reward. That is grace!” St. Augustine

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- The law, moral and ceremonial, came not by Moses, but was given by Moses as God's minister and servant; that law by which no man can be justified, Romans 3:28
- In this was Moses' honor, of whom you glory, John 5:45
- The Law was necessary to guide the people to a holy life but then no further
- The Law in itself was imperfect and could not offer "salvation" because original sin and other sins could not be removed only "covered" through animal sacrifice

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- Even St. Paul, as an Old Covenant Jew, struggled with the Law, Romans 7:25, *“So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”*
- The grace brought by Jesus has the power to not only to conquer and heal sin but to save those who receive His grace
- No mortal in this life by a perfect union and enjoyment of Him, nor can any creature perfectly comprehend His infinite greatness: none but His only begotten divine Son, who *is in the bosom of his Father*

The Word Becomes Flesh

1:14-18



- In the Old Testament no one could see God and live
- Men saw God indirectly and they could contemplate God's "glory" as it was revealed in the burning bush or the Glory Cloud
- But through the mystery of the Incarnation, God reveals Himself to us, and God the Son dwells among men



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

An Introduction to the rest of this chapter:

- After this wonderful exposition about the Incarnate Word who is the Giver of grace, in the rest of Chapter One St. John the Evangelist presents the witnesses for the person of the Lord Jesus Christ:
- On the first day [19-28] St. John the Baptist witnesses before the priests and Levites
- On the second day [29-34] he witnesses upon seeing the Lord Jesus Christ
- On the third day [35-39] St. John the Baptist witnesses before two of his disciples



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- On the fourth day [40- 42] St. Andrew witnesses before Simon, his brother
- On the fifth day [43-51] St. Philip witnesses before Nathaniel
- On the sixth day: the practical testimony of the water turned into wine (Chapter Two)
- It is similar to what happened at the beginning of the creation- the world was created in six days, and God rested on the seventh day. In the same way, man's nature is renewed and the week ends with the transformation of the water into wine as the Lord fills everyone with joy and renews his life



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- In John 1:6-7 we were told that "John" was sent to witness to the light...now this is his testimony
- This is the third time in this chapter that the Evangelist presents the Baptist as a witness (1:19, 15, 34- 37)
- The Evangelist does not focus on the personality of the Baptist but rather on his testimony
- Therefore the apostolic tradition documents the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work from the moment He is baptized by St. John the Baptist to the day of His ascension (Acts 1:21-22, 10:37-38, 13:23-24)



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- Why did the *priests and the Levites* come to John to demand an answer to the question: "Who are you?"
- The prophetic symbolism associated with John's ministry was so strong that they wanted to see for themselves what the "signs" meant
- The coming of the Messiah was expected
- The term 'Jews' is mostly used in this Gospel to refer to the Council of the Sanhedrin that represents the top authority of the religious leadership



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- This delegation was send to get an answer
- The Romans in most cases allowed conquered provinces to govern themselves
- Only the Roman authority could order an execution because Rome controlled life and death for conquered people
- The Sanhedrin had the power to govern Judea in all matters pertaining to religion and civil law except in the case of executions
- The Sanhedrin had the power to arrest, bring to trial, and to convict offenders of the Law



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- It was comprised of the ministerial priesthood; Priests and Levites (Sadducees), the lawyers/ teachers of the Law called the Scribes (the Scribes were mostly of the sect of the Pharisees), and the elders of the chief families and clans
- It is clear from such passages as 2 Chronicles 17:7-9, 35:3; Nehemiah 8:7, that part of the function of the Levites was to give instruction in the Law, and it is probable that the “scribes” were often identical with them
- He understands their question, then, “*Who are you?*” as expressing the general expectation, “Is it you who are the Messiah?”



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- *He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed*, John uses a triple combination of positive and negative clauses, *He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed*, “*I am not the Christ.*”
- The Baptist, by his negative reply, gave to the priests more than they asked
- John renounces himself, that Jesus may be all in all
- Though God had highly honored him, and favored him, yet he considered he had nothing but what he had received, and therefore, giving all praise to his benefactor, takes care to direct the attention of the people to Him alone



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- *What then?*—Not “What are you then?” but expressing surprise at the answer, and passing on with impatience to the alternative, “*Are you Elijah?*” Isaiah 40; Malachi 4:5
- He confessed that he was not Elijah the prophet even though he possessed his fiery spirit that would prepare the way of the Messiah (Luke 1:17)
- That explains why the Lord Jesus Christ said that Elijah had come and they had not recognized him (Matthew 17:12)



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- “Had he claimed “ I am Elijah” that would have implied that the Lord will actually come in the second time for judgment, and not for the first time to be judged...he had come as a symbol (Luke 1:17). Elijah would come later on and in the appropriate guise for him; as for now; John had come in his likeness.” St. John Chrysostom



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- “They did not ask John: ‘Are you a prophet?’ In other words, if he was one of the prophets; but they asked “Are you the Prophet?” By using a definite article, they meant the prophet that Moses had foretold and proclaimed (Deuteronomy 18:15). And John denied that implication yet he did not deny that he is a prophet. Rather, he denied that he is that Prophet.” St. John Chrysostom



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- They asked him for an answer not in order to believe in him or to get baptized, but rather to provide an answer to those who sent them
- They expected him to give them a clear answer based on his serious character and eloquence
- “Note how they pressured him to give an answer. They pursued him by their repeated questions; while he tactfully removed all their erroneous concepts regarding his identity in order to present them with the truth.” St. John Chrysostom



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- In verse 23 John identifies himself as the preparatory voice of Isaiah 40:3
- Origen finds that the desert mentioned here refers to the souls who reject God
- St. John the Baptist knew how to speak to their hearts as though by a spiritual outcry
- “When St. John the Baptist needed to describe the might and sublimity of the Lord Jesus Christ, he turned immediately to Isaiah the prophet. In doing so, he validated his own words and gave them credibility.” St. John Chrysostom



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- They think of his person and his work
- He thinks of neither
- His eye is fixed on the coming One
- In this presence his own personality has no existence
- He is as a voice, not to be inquired about but heard
- They are acting as men who ask questions about the messenger of a great king who is coming to them and is at hand, instead of hastening with every effort to make ready for Him



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- This seems to be a second group from the Sanhedrim
- The first group was composed of Priests and Levites
- Perhaps they went back to Jerusalem to report on John's responses to their questions and now the theologians are being sent to question John again
- Considering John's previous answers, what are they really asking him this time?
- They want justification for his baptizing



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- Baptism was a very common ceremony among the Jews, who never received a new convert into the full enjoyment of a Jew's privileges, till he was both baptized and circumcised
- But such baptisms were never performed except by an ordinance of the Sanhedrin, or in the presence of three magistrates
- Besides, they never baptized any Jew or Jewess for, as all these were considered as born in the covenant, they had no need of baptism, which was used only as an introductory rite



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- Now, as John had, in this respect, altered the common custom so very essentially, admitting to his baptism the Jews in general, the Sanhedrin took it for granted that no man had authority to make such changes, unless especially commissioned from on high; and that only the prophet, or Elijah, or the Messiah himself; could have authority to act as John did



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- If John the Baptist is not claiming any eschatological role, why is he performing an eschatological action like baptizing?
- By what authority does he do these things?
- They had interpreted such passages as Ezekiel 36:25 to mean that Baptism should be one of the marks of Messiah's work
- None less than the Christ, or Elias, or "the prophet" could perform a rite like this. John is assuming their power, and yet is not one of them



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- John is making a distinction between his baptism and the baptism that will be performed by Jesus
- John is not forgiving sins but is instead preparing the people for a future forgiveness that will come through Christ's sacrifice
- As if St. John the Baptist telling them, “The time has come and He is here among you, yet you do not know Him and that is how you sin. I wish you stopped being concerned with me and my baptism, and be concerned rather with the One I witness to and His baptism!”



A Witness of the Incarnated Word

A Voice in the Wilderness 1:19-28

- “The Jews who could not see Him were those who did not believe in Him. We look up to Him in love and seek Him with faith” St. Ambrose
- This is the end of the first day and John closes this passage with this geographic reference of the name of the site, *These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan*
- As you will notice, closing a section of his narrative with a geographic reference will become common in the Gospel according to St. John

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- John the Baptist let the Jews know who Jesus was, by divers testimonies
- In verse 29 is by telling them he was the *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* who was come to be their Redeemer, and to free mankind from the slavery of sin
- What does John mean when he identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God.“?
- Of which Lamb is he speaking?
- There were 5 kinds of animals used for ritual sacrifice in the Temple of God: cattle, goats, sheep, turtle-doves, and pigeons

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- Origen wonders why the Savior is called a Lamb although the sacrifices in the Old Testament could be of any three types of animals and two types of fowls: a bull, a sheep, a goat, two turtledoves, two pigeons (Leviticus 5:6-7,18)
- He answers by saying that two young sheep were always offered daily: one for the morning offering, and the other for the evening
- [What kind of daily offering can be spiritual and offered to a spiritual Being could be better than the Word that is in the beginning: the Word that is symbolically called 'the Lamb'...He has been sent to enlighten the soul (for this is the morning offering). It is also offered at the end (in the evening) when the mind is preoccupied with heavenly matters?]

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- That is how we are to start from the very beginning of our lives: by the offering of the Lamb so that we might spend our entire days meditating on His redemption
- Consequently, when we near the end of our lives, we will enjoy the same offering, which will carry us into the new day, the uninterrupted eternity
- Then we will see Him with St. John the beloved: “...*a Lamb as though it had been slain*” Revelation 5: 6

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- “The Baptist called Him the Lamb in order to remind the Jews of Isaiah’s prophecy that says, ‘He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth’ (Isaiah 53:7) He reminded them of the shadow under the Law of Moses in order to lead them to that which is better, and from the symbol to the reality.” St. John Chrysostom

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- *“Behold! The Lamb of God”:* He is not a branch extending from Adam; and though He has put on Adam’s flesh, He did not take on his sins. Thus, He is the One who washes our sins away as He has not taken the sin inherent in the dough out of which we are made.” St. Augustine
- In verse 30, St. John the Baptist repeats the testimony that although he came before the advent of the Incarnate Word yet the main reason for that was to prepare the way

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- However, from the perspective of existence, the Word preceded him and existed before all time and hence greater honor is due to Him
- “St. John the Baptist states ‘the basic purpose of my coming is to proclaim the General Benefactor of the whole world and to baptize with water. His coming, in contrast, is planned to purify all mankind and to grant the power of the Holy Spirit. The One who comes after me will appear more gloriously for ‘ He was before me” St. John Chrysostom

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- The purpose of John's own mission was to introduce to Israel the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit
- This verse is best expounded by John 1:33, where the same words are repeated
- *I did not know Him*, John's ignorance of this relationship may be necessary to show that there was no conspiracy between Jesus and John
- That Jesus is the Messiah is purely a revelation from God

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- Lest any should think that Christ and John had compacted together to give one another credit, or that there was some near relation between John and Christ, John says, *I did not know Him*; for Christ had spent his time at home, Luke 2:51, John had lived in desert places
- The providence of God so ordering it, that John should not know Christ so much as by face, until that time came when Christ was to be made manifest to Israel

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- “Although the Baptist had recognized the Lord while He was still in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:41-42), he certainly did not know everything about Him. Probably, he did not know that this is ‘He who baptizes by fire and the Holy Spirit’ until he saw the Spirit descending and remaining on Him.” Origen
- When God by an extraordinary mission sent John to baptize with water, He gave him this token, That He upon whom he should see *the Spirit descending and remaining on him*, as John 1:33

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- That was the Messiah, *the Lamb of God*, that should *take away the sin of the world*; he who should baptize with the Holy Spirit
- And, *therefore I came baptizing with water.*” I did not run without sending, nor introduce a new rite or sacrament without commission
- But being thus sent of God, and that I might give Christ an opportunity of coming to me, that I might see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- In these verses the Evangelist again makes prominent the solemn witness of John, giving the process by which conviction had come to his own mind
- *but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, From this we may clearly perceive that John had a most intimate acquaintance with the Divine Being; and received not only his call and mission at first, but every subsequent direction, by immediate, unequivocal inspiration*

A Witness of the Incarnated Word: The Lamb of God 1:29-34



- *And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.*”, This word points out to us some excellent thing, and makes a distinction between Christ and others, whom Moses and the prophets commonly call the sons of the most High
- “The words that were pronounced at the time of Christ’s baptism could have been intended for the Baptist. However, and in order to avoid any confusion in the minds of those who were present, the Spirit descended and rested on the Lord Jesus Christ.”
St. John Chrysostom

The Two Disciples Talk with Jesus 1:35-39



- The description is of a scene present to the mind, and by one of the two disciples, John 1:40
- The “again” refers to John 1:29
- John had disciples of his own
- They were a group set apart by his form of baptism
- They had their own rules of fasting, Mark 2:18; Luke 7:29-33 and their own prayers, Luke 5:33, 11:1

The Two Disciples Talk with Jesus 1:35-39



- Some of them continued as John's disciples after his death, Mark 6:29; Acts 19:3, while others became Jesus' disciples like St. Andrew, John 1:35-40 and perhaps the other disciple was St. John
- This is the second time John identifies Jesus as a sacrificial lamb

The Two Disciples Talk with Jesus 1:35-39



- ‘...looking at Jesus...’ We are in great need to look and see Jesus. We need to look to Him in order to see Him looking at us and concerned with our redemption. John the Baptist has testified that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. No one listened to his words nor questioned him as to why or to whom he was saying them. He says it again here: “This is the Lamb of God!” Yet their mortal senses did not respond, and he found their nature as that of hard ground that would be softened by his care. He would improve their muddled discernment by his words for he toiled with one purpose in mind: to bring them to the Lord. He strove to make them adhere to Him as he knew that if they accepted his words they would no longer need someone to witness to Him.” St. John Chrysostom

The Two Disciples Talk with Jesus 1:35-39



- When they heard about redemption they adhered to the Savior promptly and without any discussion
- The two disciples who followed Him were eager to receive and accept the words of grace from His mouth rather than from the mouth of the forerunner
- St. John the Evangelist recounts the invitation to two of the Baptist's disciples to follow the Lord
- These are Andrew and (most probably) John the Evangelist himself

The Two Disciples Talk with Jesus 1:35-39



- The majority of scholars, ancient and modern, identify John the Apostle [or the inspired writer of this Gospel] as the unnamed disciple of the Baptist
- The first went to call his brother Simon Peter
- *Then Jesus turned*, The Lord knew exactly what was in their hearts which was genuine faith and desire for His best gifts
- *What do you seek?*”, St. John Chrysostom explains: [He gave them great attention and indicated that they were ready and qualified to listen to Him]

The Two Disciples Talk with Jesus 1:35-39



- St. John Chrysostom expresses this thought on verse 38 in these words: ‘They did not say teach us about opinions and beliefs or other important matters, but they said: Where are you staying?’ When they asked to stay with Him, His immediate was to invite them to come and see so that they could come promptly and without delay: ‘... now is the accepted time’ 2 Corinthians 6:2
- Origen says that after St. John the Baptist had pronounced his six testimonies to the Lord Jesus Christ, it now was the turn of the Word Himself to witness to Himself before the Baptist’s two disciples

The Two Disciples Talk with Jesus 1:35-39



- The title "*Rabbi*" is natural for them, for it was the then current title of a revered teacher, and one that John's disciples applied to him, John 3:26
- But it was a modern word, Matthew 23:7-8, known to Jews only since the days of Hillel (president of the Sanhedrin about B.C. 30), not likely to be known to Greeks at all, and he therefore translates it, as he does Messiah and Cephas in this same section
- St. Augustine considers that the number 10 indicates the Law as there are Ten Commandments. They went to the Lord Jesus Christ as He is the One who has given the Law and fulfilled it, Matthew 5:17

Andrew and Peter talk with Jesus 1:40-42



- The Evangelist does not report the name of the other disciple, since he is the writer of Gospel
- The Evangelist indicates how Andrew cared for his brother and looked for him so that he would share the new experience he enjoyed after meeting with the Lord
- *We have found*, Implying a previous seeking, and the expectation of the Messiah

Andrew and Peter talk with Jesus 1:40-42



- "Cephas" is the Greek transliteration of Peter's Aramaic name "Rock" = Kepha, or perhaps in Galilean Aramaic "Qepha"
- Only John among the Gospels gives this form of Peter's name but it is also the preferred name that St. Paul uses when he writes about Peter
- His parents had named him 'Simon' which means 'a hearer' or 'obedient.'
- Actually, he met the Lord in a spirit of obedience and so the Lord called him 'Cephas' or 'Peter' since he enjoyed the Rock of faith: the Rock designates the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:4, whom Simon Peter loved

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- The Lord went to Galilee to invite Phillip
- The word 'Galilee' means 'migrating' or 'proclaiming' or 'a circle'
- The Lord wanted to reveal the obligation for disciples to migrate from the sufferings of the present world in order to enjoy the delight of eternal glory
- According to St. Clement of Alexandria, it was said that this disciple, Philip, is the same one who asked the Lord permission to go and bury his father when the Lord asked him to follow Him (Matthew 8:21-22)

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- 'Bethsaida' or 'the house of fishing' was so called because most of its inhabitants were fishermen
- It was an area known for its wickedness, Matthew 11:21
- Yet there were in it a few who remained consecrated to the Lord
- The Evangelist does mention this city intentionally to communicate a symbolic meaning: 'Bethsaida' or the 'house of fishermen' actually indicates that those who accept the Lord's invitation to follow Him become fishers of men, Matthew 4:19

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- Having being enlightened by the light of faith, Philip invited Nathaniel to come to the Lord, get acquainted with the mystery of faith, and be filled with His light
- *Jesus of Nazareth* , He spoke according to common apprehension
- He spoke of him as dwelling at Nazareth, though they might not have been ignorant that he was born at Bethlehem
- He expresses the common belief and it is an instance of St. John's dramatic accuracy that he gives the words as they were spoken, and does not attempt to interpret them by later events or by his own knowledge

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- Nathaniel and Bartholomew are considered the names for one and the same person due to the following:
 - A- The writers of the gospels who have mentioned Bartholomew did not mention Nathaniel, and the opposite is also true
 - B- The word ‘ Bartholomew’ is not the name of a certain person for it means ‘ the son of Ptolemy’, hence his real name is Nathaniel
 - C- St. John the Evangelist speaks of Nathaniel as one of the apostles who went with the others to fish when the Lord appeared to them after His resurrection, John 21:2-4

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- These words do not come from an unbeliever, nor from someone who deserves to be blamed. He is to be praised...why? And in what manner? Because Nathaniel was interested in the writings of the prophets even more than Philip. He had learned from the Holy Scripture that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem; from the city of David...the character of Nathaniel makes him a person that cannot be deceived easily. Yet he did not dismiss the Person who came to him and he came to the Lord with that great desire that he felt towards Him. Inwardly, he felt that Philip might have been mistaken about the place (and not about the Person) St. John Chrysostom

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- *no deceit*, He is really what he professes to be - a Jew, a descendant of the patriarch Jacob, fearing and serving God
- He does not say that Nathanael was without guilt or sin, but that he had no disguise, no trick, no deceit - he was sincere and upright
- This was a most honorable testimony
- St. John Chrysostom believes the dialogue between Philip and Nathaniel occurred under the fig tree
- “May Jesus look at me while I am still under the fruitless fig tree, and may my fig tree give forth fruit after three years, Luke 13:6” St. Ambrose

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- The Jews, before the coming of Christ, were convinced that He was to be the Son of God for they interpreted these words of Psalm 2:7, *The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'* and this is what Nathanael here confessed
- According to St. John Chrysostom, this recognition is incomplete
- Nathaniel said: "*You are the King of Israel*"; and he did not comprehend that He is King and Savior of the whole world

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- Some believe that Nathaniel was in the habit of sitting under a fig tree, and do what some Jewish teachers did: sit and read the Holy book, meditate calmly, speak with God, pray for the redemption of his soul and of all Israel
- What the Lord intended to convey is this:
- 'Do you think that it is a great issue that you, Nathaniel, confess that I am the King of Israel?
- So what would you say about Me if you saw the angels ascending and descending for Me?

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- By these sayings the Lord confirmed to Nathaniel that He is Lord over the angels for they descend and ascend as the servants of the Son of their true God
- *heaven open* , St. Chrysostom thinks at Christ's ascension
- The title "Son of Man" is Jesus' favorite title for Himself
- In this statement of Jesus, Nathanael would have realized that Jesus was linking two visions from Scripture

Philip and Nathaniel Talk with Jesus 1:43-51



- One from Genesis 28:10-16 when Jacob/Israel dreamed and saw angels ascending and descending from heaven as God stood beside him
- And the prophet Daniel's powerful vision of the Messiah, "the Son of Man," in Daniel 7:13-14, *"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed."*



Discussion

- Suppose a friend asks whether Jesus was eternal or was a created being. How could you use John 1 to answer the question?
- How did the world react to “the light”? Why was this an improper reaction?
- What was John the Baptist’s mission?
- Who questioned John the Baptist, and what did they ask (v19)?



Discussion

- What was it about John the Baptist's dress that would have symbolic meaning for the people? Please read this passage from Matthew 3:1-6, compare the Matthew passage with the description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:7-8
- In the sacrificial system with what was a dove connected?
- How does John know that Jesus is "the Lamb of God"?
- What lessons can we learn from observing what Andrew did for Peter?