

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

Our Lamb and Our Lord!

Enhanced digital photography is sometimes able to uncover the tiny reflections of faces hidden in the eyes of a person looking at that face because the pupil of the eye serves as a black mirror. Researchers say that in crimes where the victims are photographed, such as hostage taking or child sex abuse, reflections in the eyes of the photographed individual could help to identify perpetrators. Such research brings to mind the old nursery song, "Oh, be careful little eyes what you see." In a very literal sense, our eyes reflect what they take in. What do others see when they search our eyes? Hopefully, others see the reflection of God's glory in us.

John 1:14-16 (ESV) ¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* ¹⁵ *(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")* ¹⁶ *For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*

John the Baptist was Jesus' earthly cousin. The scripture records that John was born a few months before Jesus. The Son of God as a man, came after John in His birth and public appearance; however, the Son of God, was also before John because He is eternal. This is why John said: *He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me* – At the conception and birth of Jesus, the Eternal Word became a human being – flesh and blood and bone through the miracle of the virgin birth.

What the Glory of God Means to Us

John said, "*we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.*" In the Old Testament, Moses' face literally reflected God's glory.

Read Exodus 34:28-29 (ESV) ²⁸ *So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights... Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.*

The glory of God could be an in-depth study by itself. However, at this point, I will just simply say that as we spend time in God's Word and seeking Him in prayer, we will reflect the glory of God on our faces, in our eyes, and in our lives. **Psalm 19:1 (ESV)** *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.* Since the heavens declare the glory of God, how can we do any less?

The grace of Jesus is the reason why we can see the glory of God. This seeing is not a natural seeing. It is supernatural. When we receive supernatural grace and it opens our blind eyes through faith, we can see the glory of Christ. Jesus said to Martha just before He raised her brother Lazarus from the dead, "*Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?*" (**John 11:40**) Many people

saw the raising of Lazarus as a physical fact, but only some saw the glory God in the resurrection of Lazarus. That is a work of grace.

The Emphasis Falls on Grace

John Piper of Desiring God explains, “He could have said we received “truth upon truth.” But he said “*grace upon grace.*” In fact, after this verse the word *grace* never turns up again in this Gospel, but the word *truth* or *true* or *truly* will occur 55 times. In other words, there is no minimizing of “truth” in this Gospel. Truth is the way grace works. **John 8:32 (ESV)** ³² *and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* We get to know God by looking at the glory of Jesus – His glory is full of grace!”

Read John 1:17-18 (ESV) . ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* ¹⁸ *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*

John is contrasting Christ with Moses. The contrast is that Moses points to grace, but Jesus performs grace. Moses reports the words of God. Jesus is the Word of God. The law mirrors the light of God. Jesus is the Light of God.

The Testimony

Read John 1:19-23 (ESV) ¹⁹ *And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”* ²⁰ *He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”* ²¹ *And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”* ²² *So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”* ²³ *He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”*

The ministry of John the Baptist is a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. He is prominent at the beginning of Jesus’ story. Over and over in this Gospel, John the writer defines Jesus in terms of the Old Testament. Jesus the Son of God did not step into this world out of the blue. Historically God had made much preparation. In fact, God had been at work since the beginning of time to create the historical backdrop that would pave the way for the Messiah – the Savior of the World who would come to earth and become the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

John’s narrative begins with John the Baptist being confronted by priests and Levites sent by the Jewish leaders to ask, Who are you? John had been preaching and baptizing, so they wondered if he thought he was the Messiah. But he denied it: *I am not the Christ.* Remember the word Messiah is Hebrew, Christ is Greek – both words mean the Anointed One.

They continued to interrogate him, asking if he was Elijah. These men knew that the scripture foretold that the LORD would send Elijah before the great and awesome day of the Lord. (**Malachi 4:5-6**) John

the Baptist did take on the prophetic role of Elijah but John the Baptist did not become Elijah of the Old Testament re-incarnated. The Bible does not teach reincarnation.

The questioners still did not give up. Next, they referenced the Prophet – the Prophet the LORD had mentioned to Moses. **Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)** *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— A prophet is someone who reveals God. We now know that Jesus is the Prophet. In fact, He is Prophet, Priest and King!*

The Pharisees missed the point. They wanted to know who John was, but John wanted to prepare them to recognize who Jesus was.

The Baptist says in verse 23, *“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’”* That is a quote from **Isaiah 40:3-5** He was doing what he had been called by the LORD to do even before his own birth – that is to prepare the way for the Messiah, the Christ, the Glory of God to come literally to earth.

J. Vernon Mc Gee comments, “Notice that John the Baptist is a voice. **Jesus Christ is the Word!** John is the voice! A voice is all John wants to be. He has a grand message to give, a message much greater than he is. Frankly, we should be satisfied to be only a voice because certainly the message we have to give is greater than the individual. And that voice should, of course, declare the glories of Christ.”

Read John 1:24-28 (ESV) ²⁴ *(Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.)* ²⁵ *They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”* ²⁶ *John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know,* ²⁷ *even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”* ²⁸ *These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

The questioners asked that since John was not the Christ, nor Elijah nor the Prophet, why in the world was he baptizing people? He answers simply by saying the One I am preparing for is so superior to me that I am not worthy to untie His sandals. The Life Application Bible Notes explain, “John was baptizing Jews. The Essenes (a strict, monastic sect of Judaism) practiced baptism for purification, but normally only non-Jews (Gentiles) were baptized when they converted to Judaism. When the Pharisees questioned John's authority to baptize, they were asking who gave John the right to treat God's chosen people like Gentiles. John said, "I baptize with water"—he was merely helping the people perform a symbolic act of repentance. But soon one would come who would truly *forgive* sins, something only the Son of God—the Messiah—could do.”

Read John 1:29-30 (ESV) ²⁹ *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* ³⁰ *This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’*

John the Baptist's Word from God told him that Jesus is not only the Lamb of God but also the Son of God. That was the message that he was to **voice** after 400 years of silence from God in Israel. This

testimony would cause two disciples of John the Baptist to leave him and become followers of Jesus. That is what John's witness was supposed to do.

Every morning and every evening, a lamb was sacrificed in the Temple for the sins of the people (*Exodus 29:38-42*). This way of making sacrifices for sins was about to change. The prophet Isaiah had prophesied in *Isaiah 53:7 (ESV)* *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.* The Messiah, God's servant, would be led to the slaughter like a lamb as a one-time sinless sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins. *Hebrews 9:22 (ESV)* *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.* The perfect sinless Jesus was coming to earth to give His life's blood for us.

Verse 30 repeats verse 15: *This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.* Once again, John is emphasizing Jesus' rank. He is absolutely before John. Jesus is from eternity. *John 1:1 (ESV)*¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John's message, "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" meant two shocking things for the Jews—and both of them are relevant for us today.

First, it meant that the God-man would die. And not just die, but die like a lamb dies—be *slaughtered*. Second, it meant that the whole world would benefit from this and not just Jews. This God-man was the Jewish Messiah. But his death would take away the sin of the world, not just the sin of Israel.

Jesus: Our Lamb and Our Lord

*John 3:36 (ESV)*³⁶ *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.* This means that when John says, "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,*" he does not mean that every person in the world is saved. He means every person in the world—Jew or Gentile—will be saved if we believe in Jesus and follow Him.

There is no race, no nationality, no ethnicity, no socio-economic status excluded. *John 1:12 (ESV)*¹² *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Everyone is a sinner deserving of God's wrath. There is only one way to have our sins taken away and find favor with God – it is by accepting Jesus the Lamb of God as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. It is not working for God, not cleaning up our life first. That comes later. That's fruit, not root. The one way to escape the penalty of sin and go to heaven is by accepting Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away our sins. Then, Jesus will be our Lamb and our Lord.