

## **Jesus is God! (John 1:15-51)**

Last time (God is Here!), we saw how John proclaims Jesus to be divine: fully God. John does this in chapter 1 by giving seven names/titles of Jesus. Last time we looked at the first two: Word and Light-Life. In this edition of Sermon Series we explore the other five: Son of God, Lamb of God, Messiah, King of Israel, Son of Man. Jesus is God! O come let us adore him.

### **1. Jesus: Son of God (1:15-28)**

***<sup>15</sup> John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" <sup>16</sup> From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.***

Here we encounter John the Baptist—one of the most important persons in the New Testament (mentioned at least 89 times). He had the special privilege of introducing Jesus to the nation of Israel. He also had the difficult task of preparing the nation under the Old Covenant to receive their Messiah and his New Covenant. He called them to repent of their sins and prove that repentance by being baptized and living changed lives. Here is a summary of what John the Baptist had to say about Jesus:

- a. *Jesus is eternal*** (15) “He was before me” says John the Baptist of Jesus. Actually John was born six months *before* Jesus (Luke 1:36); so in this statement he refers to our Lord’s preexistence, not His human birth. Jesus is eternal (uncreated God).
- b. *Jesus has fullness of grace and truth*** (16-17). Grace is God’s undeserved and unearned favor and kindness. If God dealt with us according to law, none of us would survive; but He deals with us on the basis of the grace and truth found in Jesus. That ARE Jesus. Jesus met the demands of the law for us, obtained forgiveness for us, and became righteousness for us. He did all this through his

incarnation, life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension. Through these he drew us (humanity) up into the inner life and love of the Trinity of God in his own person. And now we share Jesus' love and life—grace and truth—as we abide in him through faith in him. It's all about Jesus.

We should note that John is not saying here that there was no grace under the Law of Moses. There was! The exodus of Israel out of Egypt was an unearned, undeserved gift to Israel. Each sacrifice of the Law was a celebration of that grace. The Law also revealed (in a shadowy way) God's truth. But in Jesus Christ, the grace and truth only foreshadowed in the law reached fullness—their ultimate end and fulfillment; and this fullness is available to us. We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8–9), but we also live by grace (1 Cor. 15:10) and depend on God's grace in all that we do. We receive one grace ('blessing') after another, for "He giveth more grace" (James 4:6).

In John 1:17, John also hints that a whole new order had come in, replacing the Mosaic system. With John the Baptist—the last in a long line of Old Covenant prophets—the Old Covenant ends by pointing to its fulfillment—Jesus, the New Covenant. Grace and truth.

**C. *Jesus reveals God to us (18)*** Though God is invisible in his essence (1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27), we see him revealed in nature (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:20) and in His mighty works in history. But it is in Jesus alone that we see God in his fullness, for he is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and "the express image of His person" (Heb. 1:3). The Greek word translated in verse 18 "made...known" gives us our English word *exegetis*, which means "to explain, to unfold, to lead the way." Jesus Christ explains God to us and interprets Him for us. We know and understand God when we know his Son, Jesus Christ.

In verse 18 Jesus is "God the one and only" (NIV). This may be translated as "God the only Son" (NRSV) or "the only begotten God" (NASB), or "the only begotten Son" (KJV). The phrase "only-begotten" means "unique, the only one of its kind." It does not suggest that there was a time when the Son was not, and then the Father brought Him into being. Jesus Christ is *eternal* God. He has always existed.

At least 9 times in John, Jesus is called “the Son of God”. You will recall that John had as his purpose in writing to convince us that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). At least 19 times in John, Jesus is referred to as “the Son.” He is not only the Son of God, but he is God the Son. Even the demons admitted this (Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41).

***19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" 24 Now some Pharisees who had been sent 25 questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" 26 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. 27 He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." 28 This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.***

John the Baptist is one of 6 persons named in John who gave witness that Jesus is God. The others are Nathanael (1:49), Peter(6:69), the blind man who was healed (9:35–38), Martha (11:27), and Thomas(20:28). If you add our Lord himself (5:25; 10:36), then you have seven clear witnesses.

Here John records four days in the life of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the first disciples. He continues this sequence in John 2 and presents, as it were, a week in a *new creation* that parallels the old creation week of Genesis 1. On the first day here in 1:19–28, a committee from the Jewish religious leaders interrogated John the Baptist. They asked him several questions:

“Who are you?” was a logical question. Was he the promised Messiah? Or perhaps the Prophet Elijah who was supposed to come before the Messiah appeared? (Mal. 4:5). Great crowds had gathered to hear John, and many had been baptized. Though John did no miracles (John 10:41), it was possible the people thought that he was the promised Messiah. But John

denied being either Elijah or the Messiah. (In one sense, he was the promised Elijah. See Matt. 17:10–13.) John had nothing to say about himself because he was sent to talk about Jesus. Jesus is the Word; John was but “a voice”. John pointed back to Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 40:1–3) and affirmed that he was the fulfillment.

“Why are you baptizing?” was their next question. John replied that his authority to baptize was not from men but from heaven (Matt. 21:23–32). The Jewish religious leaders in that day baptized Gentiles who wanted to adopt the Jewish faith; *but John baptized Jews!* John explained that his baptism was in water, but that the Messiah would come and baptize with a spiritual baptism. Again, John made it clear that he was not establishing a new religion or seeking to exalt himself. He was pointing people to the Savior, the Son of God (John 1:34).

## **2. Jesus Lamb of God (1:29-34)**

***29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."***

This is the second day in the New Creation week, and this time John calls Jesus “the Lamb of God,” a title he would repeat the next day (1:35–36). In one sense, the message of the Bible can be summed up in this title. The question in the Old Testament is, “Where is the lamb?” (Gen. 22:7). In the four Gospels, the emphasis is “Behold the Lamb of God!” Here he is! And after you have trusted him, you sing with the heavenly choir, “Worthy is the Lamb!” (Rev. 5:12).

The people of Israel were familiar with sacrificial lambs. At Passover, each family had to have a lamb; and during the year, two lambs were sacrificed

each day at the temple altar, plus all the other lambs brought for personal sacrifices. Those lambs were brought by men to men, but here is God's Lamb, given by God to men! Those lambs could not take away sin, but the Lamb of God can. Those lambs were for Israel alone, but this Lamb would shed his blood for the whole world.

What does John's baptism have to do with Jesus as the Lamb of God? In the New Testament, baptism is by immersion and pictures death, burial and resurrection. When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, Jesus and John were picturing the "baptism" Jesus would endure *on the cross* when He would die as the sacrificial Lamb of God (Isa. 53:7; Luke 12:50). It would be through death, burial, and resurrection that the Lamb of God would "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

Perhaps John was mistaken. Perhaps John was not sure that Jesus of Nazareth was the Lamb of God or the Son of God. But the Father made it clear to John just who Jesus is by sending the Spirit like a dove to light on him and remain. What a beautiful picture of the Trinity.

### **3. Jesus: Messiah (1:35-42)**

***35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" 37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. 38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" 39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. 40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).***

It is now day three of New Creation week. The seventh day included the wedding at Cana (2:1); and since Jewish weddings traditionally were held on Wednesdays, it would make this third day the weekly Sabbath

(Saturday). But for John the Baptist and Jesus it was not a day of physical rest—John was busy preaching and Jesus was busy gathering disciples.

The two disciples of John who followed Jesus were John, the writer of this Gospel, and his friend Andrew. John the Baptist was happy when people left him to follow Jesus, because his ministry focused on Jesus. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (3:30). When Jesus asked them, “What are you seeking?” He was forcing them to define their purposes and goals. Were they looking for a revolutionary leader to overthrow Rome? Then they had better join the Zealots! Little did Andrew and John realize that day how their lives would be transformed by the Son of God.

“Where are you dwelling?” may have suggested, “If you are too busy now, we can visit later.” But Jesus invited them to spend the day with him and no doubt he told them something of his mission, revealed their own hearts to them, and answered their questions. They were so impressed that they found their brothers and brought them to Jesus. Andrew brought Simon (Peter).

“We have found the Messiah!” was the witness Andrew gave to Simon his brother. *Messiah* is a Hebrew word that means “anointed,” and the Greek equivalent is “Christ.” To the Jews, it was the same as “Son of God”. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed and thereby set apart for special service. Kings were especially called “God’s anointed” (1 Sam. 26:11; Ps. 89:20); so, when the Jews spoke about their Messiah, they were thinking of the king who would come to deliver them and establish the kingdom.

There was some confusion among the Jewish teachers as to what the Messiah would do. A few saw him as a suffering sacrifice (as in Isa. 53), but most saw a splendid king (as in Isa. 9 and 11). Jesus had to explain even to his own followers that the cross had to come before the crown, that He must suffer before He could enter into His glory (Luke 24:13–35). Whether or not Jesus was indeed the Messiah was a crucial problem that challenged the Jews in that day (John 7:26, 40–44; 9:22; 10:24).

Simon’s interview with Jesus changed his life. It also gave him a new name—*Peter* in Greek (*Cephas* in Aramaic that Jesus spoke)—both mean “a rock.” It took a great deal of work for Jesus to transform weak Simon into a rock, but he did it! “You are...you will” is a great encouragement to all who

trust Christ. Truly, Jesus gives us as his disciples, “power to become” (John 1:12).

#### **4. Jesus: King of Israel (1:43-49)**

***43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote— Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." 48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."***

Jesus called Philip personally and Philip trusted Him and followed Him. We do not know what kind of heart preparation Philip experienced, for usually God prepares a person before He calls him. We do know that Philip demonstrated his faith by seeking to share it with his friend Nathanael.

John 21:2 suggests that at least seven of our Lord’s disciples were fishermen, including Nathanael. Fishermen tend to be courageous and persistent. But Nathanael started out a doubter: he did not believe that anything worthwhile could come out of Nazareth. Our Lord was born in Bethlehem, but He grew up in Nazareth and bore that stigma (Matt. 2:19–23). To be called “a Nazarene” (Acts 24:5) meant to be looked down on and rejected. So when Nathanael hesitated and argued, Philip adopted our Lord’s own words: “Come and see” (1:39). Later on, Jesus would invite, “Come and drink!” (7:37) and, “Come and dine!” (21:12) “Come” is the great invitation of God’s grace.

When Nathanael came to Jesus, he discovered that the Lord already knew all about him! What a shock! By calling him “an Israelite in whom there is nothing false” (KJV: “no guile”), Jesus was likely referring to Jacob who used guile to trick his brother, his father, and his father-in-law. Jacob’s

name was changed to “Israel, a prince with God.” The reference to “Jacob’s ladder” in 1:51 confirms this.

When Jesus revealed His knowledge of Nathanael, where he had been and what he had been doing, this was enough to convince the man that Jesus indeed was “the Son of God, the King of Israel.” His experience was like that of the Samaritan woman at the well. “When He [Messiah] is come, He will tell us all things.... Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did” (John 4:25, 29).

When Philip witnessed to Nathanael, the evidence he gave was Moses and the Prophets (1:45). Perhaps Jesus gave Philip a quick survey course in Old Testament messianic prophecies, as He did after his resurrection with the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13ff).

“King of Israel” would be a title similar to “Messiah, anointed One,” for the kings were always God’s anointed (see Ps. 2:2, 6–7). At one point in His ministry, the crowds wanted to make Jesus King, but He refused them (6:15ff). He did present Himself as King (12:10ff), and He affirmed to Pilate that He was born a King (18:33–37).

## **5. Jesus, Son of Man (1:50-51)**

***50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." 51 He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."***

“Son of man” was one of our Lord’s favorite titles for Himself; it is used 83 times in the Gospels and at least 13 in John. The title speaks of both the deity and humanity of Jesus. The vision in Daniel 7:13 presents the “Son of man” in a definite messianic setting; and Jesus used the title in the same way (Matt. 26:64).

As Son of man, Jesus is the “living link” between heaven and earth. This explains his oblique yet clear reference here to “Jacob’s ladder” in Genesis 28. Jacob the fugitive thought he was alone, but God had sent the angels to guard and guide him. Jesus is God’s “ladder” between heaven and earth. “No man cometh to the Father except through me” (14:6). Often in John we

find Jesus reminding people that he came down from heaven. The Jewish people knew that “Son of man” was a name for their Messiah (John 12:34).

At the close of that fourth day of New Creation week, Jesus had six believing men who were his disciples. They did not immediately “forsake all and follow him”; that was to come later. But they had trusted him and experienced his power. In the three years that lay ahead, they would grow in their faith, learn more about Jesus, and one day take his place on earth so that the Word might be carried to all people.

## **Conclusion**

The witness of this entire first chapter of John is clear: Jesus is God come in the flesh. God is indeed here. Come, let us adore him.

*Sermon Series* is provided by Ted Johnston. It assists preachers and teachers in preparing expository sermons and Bible studies in series that typically cover whole books of the Bible. This issue begins a series in the gospel of John. It features material from *The Bible Expository Commentary* by Warren Wiersbe with additional material from *The New Bible Commentary*.

## **GROWING in our RELATIONSHIP with the TRIUNE GOD**

### ***John 1:15 “John Testified”***

*How did John know that Jesus was the Messiah?*

### ***John 1:16 “From His Fullness”***

*What is grace?*

*What is truth?*

### ***John 1:18 “The Only Son”***

*What does God look like?*

### ***John 1:22, 23 “I Am the Voice...”***

*What Isaiah passage does John cite?*

**John 1:26, 27 “Why Are You Baptizing?”**

*Why the reference to Elijah in the questions?*

.

**John 1:29, 30 “Here is the Lamb of God”**

*Compare this with Isaiah 53:7.*

**John 1:33 “Like a Dove”**

*What are the characteristics of a dove?*

**John 1:35-37 “Two Disciples”**

*What is a disciple?*

**John 1:41, 42 “He First Found His Brother”**

*Whom have you brought to Jesus?*

**John 1:50, 51 “Nathaniel”**

*What kind of person was Nathaniel?*

***Please study sermon series: John #2***