

## GOD REVEALED

John 1:1-18

Sometimes as we try to learn about a particular subject, we may experience a realization that “the more we know, the less we understand about the subject.” Actually, we do understand more as we learn more, but we also realize that there is so much more to know than we had ever imagined about that subject. When we were young and first learning about God and Jesus and religious things, it seemed fairly simple and we had probably formed some images about these things. If we were to ask a five-year-old to draw a picture of God, he or she would come up with a sketch in very little time. If you were to ask us as adults who have learned about God and who have studied the Bible for a long time, we would find that it is practically impossible to do draw or create a “picture” of God.

We find ourselves in a physical world and we experience and try to understand physical things and yet we come to a realization that, at the same time, there is a spiritual world in existence and we are part of that world. Understanding the spiritual world is very difficult, but it is very important since our time in the physical world is limited and finite, but our existence in the spiritual world is eternal. If we think about mankind’s situation before “the fall” when Adam and Eve sinned, they experienced fellowship with God on a regular basis and they had a spiritual awareness as part of who they were. When they sinned, that part of them died and all the succeeding generations have struggled to know and understand God. We find throughout the first four thousand years of Biblical history and the accounts of God dealing with mankind, that those dealings or interactions were part of a plan for God to reestablish the broken relationship and to reveal Himself and the essence of His being to mankind. This revelation culminated in the coming of the Messiah Who was and is God Revealed.

The first eighteen verses of John’s gospel are used to introduce words and topics that will be more fully developed throughout the course of the unfolding of John’s account of the life of Jesus from the view that He is Deity. According to Walvoord and Zuck (The Bible Knowledge Commentary) the key terms include “life” (v. 4), “light” (v. 4), “darkness” (v. 5), “witness” (v. 7), “true” (v. 9), “world” (v. 9), “Son” (v. 14), “Father” (v. 14), “glory” (v. 14), “truth” (v. 14). Two other key theological terms are “the Word” (v. 1) and “grace” (v. 14), but these important words are used in John only in this theological introduction. “Word” (*Logos*) does occur elsewhere in the Gospel but not as a Christological title.

### Recognize the Word – 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. <sup>4</sup>In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. <sup>5</sup>The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. John 1:1-5 (NASB95)

The writer of the Genesis account records “And God said, Let there be . . .” It is no coincidence that John saw that the Word (notice the logical connection to “said”) was the agent in creation. By the Word, the worlds were created. “And God said!” and **spoke** (by the Word) the worlds into existence. The mind of man cannot comprehend the magnitude and the majesty of the creation and the Creator. The pre-incarnate Christ is and ever has been identical with God. We see this truth in the statement that the Word was “with” God and the Word was God. The Greek word translated as “with” in the English is “pro” which has a number of possible interpretations such as “unto” or “towards” (as in being favorably disposed to) or “before” (not in time but as in the presence of). The idea is that “the Word” is an essential part of the essence

of Who God is and is, therefore, God Himself. We could state it this way: God the Son is no less God and than God the Father is God.

Creation itself could not exist apart from the Word of God since it was by that essence of Himself that creation came into being. In saying that God spoke the world into existence could be the same as saying that “by the Word” creation came into existence. Since “the Word” is the Agent of Creation, then it logically follows that God’s purpose is that all of creation will come under the Lordship of Jesus Who is the Living Word of God. Consequently, we can view all of history, what is happening now and what will happen in the future as God acting to unite all things in Him, both in heaven and in earth, so that every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father.

It is not unusual to hear or read about something in the news that scientists are examining meteorites or dust gathered from the surface of the moon to “determine the origin of life.” Life is a profound mystery. How can a combination of elements such as carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, etc. come together and form an entity that can not only respond to external stimuli such as heat and light but can also reproduce itself? How does life “happen?” Maybe the scientists have been looking for the answer in the wrong places.

John wrote that the very life Source is the Logos (the Word) and this Life, which when shared with humanity, provides spiritual illumination to man. John would later write (chapter three) that without it, we cannot even “see” the Kingdom of Heaven. That life is accomplished in us by the “new birth.” If we return to the Genesis account of creation we see that the first act of physical creation was the creation of light. Light is visible energy and if the creation of a vast amount of energy was an instantaneous event, then that would indeed be a “big bang.”

The absence of light is darkness. Logically, light eliminates or overcomes darkness. The statement (in verse five) that the darkness did not “comprehend” the light could mean several things. An obvious possibility is that the “darkness” did not understand the “light” or, as we might say in today’s vernacular, it just did not “get it.” The Greek word used here is *katalambano* which can be translated as “fully receive.” This could be taken to mean “completely swallowed up” or simply that the darkness did not “apprehend” or overcome the light. This would be an accurate description of what happens in the physical realm when light shines in darkness. From what we will see in some later verses, John may be using a play on words that describes what happens in a spiritual sense when spiritual light shines on spiritual darkness when he writes (in verse 12) about those who did receive (lambano) the light in a positive sense which transformed them.

#### Point Out the Light – 1:6-8

<sup>6</sup>There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. John 1:6-8 (NASB95)

Have you noticed in your reading and study of the Bible that when God does things in the affairs of the world that are really high in significance, He takes the necessary steps and preparation to make sure that the message is communicated without any doubt as to what is being done? In many instances in the Old Testament accounts, angels and visions appeared to people with messages and prophets were sent on missions to inform people. Such occurrences were **not** ordinary events. While there are many such events recorded in Scriptures, these happened over the course of several thousand years. Think of Moses and the burning bush, God meeting with Moses on Mount Sinai, the pillar of cloud and fire, Isaiah’s vision in the temple, the visitation of the angel Gabriel to Daniel, Zacharias (the father of John the Baptist), Mary, and Joseph, and then the verbal historical declaration of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness.

The importance of the Incarnate Word of God coming to dwell with mankind was such that preparation needed to be made so that those to whom He came could not have any excuse that they didn't know what was happening. God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way, to bear witness so people could have a basis for belief.

If God thought that a verbal witness or testimony from a real live human being was so important that He sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for His coming into the world, then we can have a better appreciation of the Great Commission where Jesus gave instruction to His disciples that they should provide such a witness to the world to prepare those for the entrance of the Savior into their lives.

The preaching of John the Baptist was essentially emphases, reminders, and practical applications of the moral light that was contained in the Old Testament. For example, ordinary people were encouraged to share. "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." He told the tax collectors, "Don't collect ...more [taxes] than you are required to." Soldiers were reminded, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

### Welcome the Light – 1:9-13

<sup>9</sup>There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup>He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup>But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:9-13 (NASB95)

The moral light shed in the Old Testament was evident in John the Baptist's message. This teaching and call for "repentance" set the stage for his words pointing to the Person Who was about to appear (on the stage of world history) and promised a kingdom in which moral light would not be lost (swallowed up) in the darkness, but instead, darkness would be dispelled by light. "The true Light," the Gospel writer said, "was coming into the world." John the Baptist's mission was to make it clear to all that the Man to whom he pointed *is* the Light.

There have been many people before and after Jesus who made claims of being able to shine some light on the mysteries of life. Jesus is the only One Who is presented as the true Light that illumines mankind. Others came to show a way, Jesus came as the Way. Others came claiming to speak truth, Jesus came as the Truth. Others came claiming to help make life better, but only Jesus came as the Life.

The statement that this true Light enlightens every man is not an endorsement of universal salvation, but simply means that this revelation would be available to all. What a person does with the revealed light then determines what effect it has on him.

The world (or kosmos) was made by Him and yet the world system would not accept the One that brought it all into existence. This rejection is the ultimate expression of rebellion of natural man. It is sure evidence of the sinful nature of man and is proof that man needs a salvation that only God could provide. The majority of the Jews, who should have been prepared for the coming of the Messiah, also would not (and still do not) acknowledge Him as the promised Messiah. Because those who were caught up in the values of the world system (which can be described as darkness) they would not "receive" the Light. The word "receive" is from the same Greek root word that was translated as "comprehended" in verse five.

However, some did recognize Him as God's Messiah, the Christ. Those who "comprehended Him" or received Him were granted the right to become the children of God.

Notice that when we receive Jesus we are given (by grace) the authority (the right or

privilege) to become the children of God (those made in His image). So we could argue that by receiving Jesus we are restored to the rightful place to which we belong as if the Fall of Man had not occurred! Yet in this time (after the new birth), we have in us the uncreated life of God (which can never die) dwelling in us by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit which is responsible for our being “born again.” Being born of God is distinct and different from the idea of physical birth. Physical birth results from man initiated actions; however, spiritual birth is a result of action initiated by God Himself. It is not something that we can do. However, we can participate in this gift of His grace by believing Him and trusting in what He has done for us. There is a tendency in secular and some clerical writings to refer to all of humanity as God’s children since God is the Creator. John wanted to make a clear distinction that this (creation - Creator) relation was not what he was talking about in this passage.

### Reveal the Word and the Light – 1:14-15

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ ” John 1:14-15 (NASB95)

This is the proof text for the concept of “the incarnation” of God in human form. Incarnation literally means to take on fleshly form. Since God is spirit, we could not relate to Him in our human condition, so it was necessary for Him to come to us in a manner that we could understand (comprehend). Jesus showed us the Father and the nature of God. He came as the uniquely begotten Son of God (possessing the attributes of God) and in Him we could see the grace (the unmerited favor) of God. In Him we could hear and understand the truth of God’s word that had been given to mankind by the prophets of old and in the law of Moses.

An alternate translation to the word “dwelt” is the word “tabernacled.” This choice of words by John was an attempt to relate what had happened during the time Jesus was living to what had occurred in the wilderness when the presence of God came and resided in and over the Tabernacle. There was physical evidence of the pillar of cloud by day the pillar of fire by night which was a representation of the presence of God among His chosen people. When Jesus came on the scene as God Incarnate, He was not a representation of God, He was God among the people.

Just as the children of Israel saw manifestations of the “glory of God” in the miracles and events in the wilderness experience, the people who saw Jesus were exposed to even greater evidence of the power or awesomeness of God in the miracles that Jesus did among the people. These miracles were acts of grace that were designed to glorify God and to reveal His nature so that people could know for sure what God is like.

In order to help people make the connection, John the Baptist proclaimed the person Jesus of Nazareth to be the Promised One. On one occasion John openly declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God. On another occasion, when questioned by the Jewish leaders about why he was baptizing people he stated in Matthew 3:11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” John (the Apostle) provided a similar quote from John the Baptist that alluded to the fact that he was the forerunner of One who was coming after him, but this One was before him (in rank), because He preceded him in His existence.

### Experience the Revelation – 1:16-18

<sup>16</sup> For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in

the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*. John 1:16-18 (NASB95)

John was obviously writing to fellow Christians who had embraced (received) the light and, as a result, had been experiencing the grace of God that comes to His children in progressive blessings throughout our lives. As one commentator put it, we don't receive this fullness in a single event but it is a progression of gracious experiences. Just as your physical children do not come into the world as mature adults, we (who are born of the Spirit of God) grow and mature and become more and more like Jesus throughout our lives.

The Law which God gave His people through Moses pointed to and was designed to prepare them for the ultimate revelation of God's nature of grace and truth which was revealed in the Incarnation. The implication of the use of the word "seen" (in verse 18) is that no one has ever experienced enough encounters with God to really understand His nature and what He is like. Jesus brought to us what the law and the prophets could never accomplish and that was a clear declaration of the nature and person of God that could be experienced because of His presence among us. If we cannot see God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then we cannot ever know Him. Jesus is as clear a picture as we will ever see of God. He is the Word (the communication) of God to man.