

Christmas Day

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 52:7-10

The LORD's Coming Salvation

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” 8 The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. 9 Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

52:7 *How beautiful.* St Paul quotes from this verse to show the necessity of proclaiming the Gospel if it is to be of any benefit (Rm 10:15). (TLSB)

feet of those who bring good news. A reference to messengers who ran from the scene of a battle to bring news of the outcome to a waiting king and people (see 2Sa 18:26). Here the news refers to the return from exile, a deliverance that prefigures Christ's deliverance from sin. See Ro 10:15; Eph 6:15. (CSB)

Isaiah had just prophesied God's gracious deliverance of his people. In these verses, he describes the deliverance as though it has already occurred. Messengers sped forward with the good news. Their feet were beautiful because their feet carried great good news. Three terms summarize the content of their message: peace, good tidings, and salvation. (PBC)

publishes peace – Hbr *shama*‘, “to hear” or “to cause to hear.” Israel's creed was such an announcement (Dt 6:4–9). (TLSB)

Peace does not refer to the end of hostilities with the warring nations that surround God's people. This peace has a meaning much deeper and more profound. It is the peace that God has established between his people and himself. God no longer burns with anger toward his people. He has removed their sin so that a condition of deep well-being exists between God and his people. This peace rests on the knowledge that the Great Servant would come to achieve it by his work on earth. (PBC)

This is “wholeness” that Yahweh gives to the whole man. God is a God of peace (Lev. 26:6; Judges 6:24). God faithfully keeps His covenant of peace (Is 54:10). The “Prince of Peace... will reign on David's throne” forever (Is 9:6-7). “The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him” (Is 53:5). Jesus brings God's unique peace (John 14:27). Through the cosmic Christ, God was pleased “to reconcile to Himself all things by making peace through His blood” (Col 1:20). Christ “our peace” has broken down the barrier between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-17). The Gospel is the “good news of peace” (Acts 10:36). Faith in Christ produced by the Good News, apprehends peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1). As we commit our anxieties to Him, the “peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

salvation. God alone is Savior (Is. 43:11), and His salvation comes only in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

Your God reigns! † See Ps 96:10. The return of God’s people to Jerusalem emphasizes his sovereign rule over the world, evident to all at the second coming of Christ (see Rev 19:6). (CSB)

The fall of Israel’s enemies brings words of good news. (TLSB)

52:8 *watchmen*. Those in Jerusalem watching for the arrival of the messengers (cf. 62:6–7; 2Sa 18:24–27). (CSB)

Prophets (Ezk 33:1–9; Hab 2:1–4). (TLSB)

When the watchmen on the city wall see the messenger and hear the good news, they shout for joy. God appointed the prophets as watchmen (ez 3:17; 33:7). Today the role is carried out by pastors. Israel (the church) is to “listen” as the messenger “shout for joy.” The pastor’s joyful shouting sets the mood for the whole congregation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

eye to eye. As clearly as when a person looks squarely into the eyes of another (cf Nu 14:14). (TLSB)

The fulfillment includes Judah’s return from captivity in Babylon, the first come of the Great Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, in humility, and the second coming of the glorified Lord in power and majesty. All of these arrivals are blended into one vision, and all of them bring great joy. Even the ruins of Jerusalem are encouraged to “burst into songs of joy together.” (PBC)

52:9 *Break forth together in singing*. This is an admonition to sing praises for that blessing of the Gospel. (Luther)

52:10 *holy arm*. God’s arm is often associated with redemption and salvation (see Ex 6:6). (CSB)

The power of the Lord is terrifying for impenitent sinners but joy for those declared holy in His sight (cf 6:5; 33:17, 22; Ex 24:9–11; 1Co 13:12; 1Jn 3:2; Rv 22:4). (TLSB)

The Lord “rolled up His sleeves” many times and redeemed His people “with an outstretched arm” (Ex 6:6 cf. Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19). His mercy combined with His right hand, won for Israel victory (Ps. 44:3) and rescued them as His inheritance (Deut 9:29). Because He saved His people with His outstretched are, He is worthy of worship (2 Kings 17:36) and praise (Ps 98:1) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

In the incarnation Yahweh hides His strong arm in the gentle hand of a child. He works a mighty deliverance through weakness. That reaches its climax as Christ’s arms are nailed to the cross. But make no mistake, He is God’s powerful “horn of salvation” (Luke 1:69), revealed not just to Israel, but to the Gentiles as well (Is. 9:1-3; 42:1-6; Mt 4:15-16; 12:18-21; Luke 2:32). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 1)

all the ends of the earth. Equivalent to “all mankind” in 40:5. Cf. 45:22. (CSB)

Also called “all flesh” (40:5; 49:26; 66:16, 24). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Hebrews 1:1-6

The Supremacy of God's Son

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. 5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? 6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.”

Hebrews *Chapter 1*

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1:1-4 Listen to the Son – He Reveals God.

The very first sentence of Hebrews (1:1-2) tells us that these days, since Jesus has appeared, are the last days. With Jesus' coming, the writer asserts, God's way of speaking has changed. In former times God spoke through prophets. But now, in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, Jesus. The writer refers to Jesus' person and work with a series of seven concise statements (vv. 2-4). {a number of spiritual completeness} He declares, concerning Jesus (1) He is appointed heir of all things (at the end); (2) He was God's agent of creation (at the beginning); (3) He is the radiance of God's glory and the imprint-copy of God's being; (4) He upholds the universe by His powerful command; (5) He provided purification for our sins; (6) He sat down at the right hand of God in heaven; (7) He has received a name and inheritance better than the angels. (LL)

With these declarations the writer begins a major point: Jesus, and the new covenant He brought into being, is superior. What we have in Christ is better – far better! Even the disgrace and possible persecution we may be called on to bear for the sake of Christ does not diminish the superiority of Christ and of the covenant that came about through Him. The writer will speak of this superiority throughout this letter. (LL)

1:1 *long ago*. Prior to Christ's coming, in contrast to “in these last days” (v. 2), the Messianic era inaugurated by the incarnation. (CSB)

Writing to people half inclined to turn back to Judaism because of difficulty and danger, the author began with a point with which they could hardly disagree. God had indeed spoken in the past to their forefathers. At many times and in various forms of law, history, poetry and prophecy God had spoken to them through His prophets from Moses down to Malachi. But the ministry of the prophets had been partial and their message incomplete. More was to come, not to cancel what had been divinely recorded, but to complete it. (PBC)

in many ways – God’s prophetic Word was delivered to His people through the prophet’s oral proclamation, written words, and prophetic actions. (TLSB)

God spoke. Cf. “he has spoken” (v. 2). God is the ultimate author of both the OT and the NT. (CSB)

God spoke His Word to His people by means of the prophets; the words and deeds of the prophets were full of God’s power and brought about God’s will. (TLSB)

The Bible records many different ways in which God communicated with people. The passages cited refer to three of them: through dreams (Gen. 28:10-13); miraculous signs (Ex. 3:1-4); and prophets (2 Chron. 24:19). God also communicated to people with an audible voice (for example, on Mount Sinai and at Jesus’ Baptism), through visions, and in other ways. (LL)

to our fathers. In contrast to “to us” (v. 2). (CSB)

Those who lived by faith in the Savior God had promised. (TLSB)

by the prophets. All OT writers are here viewed as prophets in that their testimony was preparation for the coming of Christ; cf. “by his Son” (v. 2), a new and unique category of revelation in contrast to that of the prophets. (CSB)

at many times and in various ways. The OT revelation was fragmentary and occasional, lacking fullness and finality. (CSB)

1:2–3 The superiority of the Son’s revelation is demonstrated by seven great descriptive statements about him: (CSB)

1. *appointed the of all things*. The incarnate Son, having performed the work of redemption, was gloriously exalted to the position of the firstborn heir of God, i.e., he received the inheritance of God’s estate (“all things”). See Ro 8:17. (CSB)

2. *through whom he created the world*. See Jn 1:3; Col 1:16. (CSB)

3. *radiance of God’s glory*. As the brilliance of the sun is inseparable from the sun itself, so the Son’s radiance is inseparable from deity, for he himself is God, the second person of the Trinity (Jn 1:14, 18). (CSB)

This meant the whole array of His divine attributes, radiates forth in Jesus. Radiance is an inner brightness which shines out like the sun in the sky with its streaming light. To see that light is to see the sun; to see Jesus is to see the God of glory. (PBC)

Tired under affliction and almost ready to call it quits because of persecution, those Jewish Christians needed such a view of the perfect and victorious Christ. So do we! Struggling to keep the faith in an increasingly hostile world, so often engaged in what seems no more than a holding action, we need eyes

lifted to the Lord Jesus, who is God's perfect revelation. May what the author has shown us of his glory prompt us to say, "My Lord and My God!" (John 20:28). (PBC)

4. *exact imprint of his nature*. Jesus is not merely an image or reflection of God. Because the Son himself is God, he is the absolutely authentic representation of God's being (cf. Jn 14:9; Col 1:15). (CSB)

An exact representation is some exact impression made by a tool, like a coin stamped by a die. So Jesus exactly represents the Father. To know Jesus is to know God's nature or glory. "God in focus" we might call Jesus. He expressed it even better when He said in John 14:9, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (PBC)

5. *sustaining all things*. Christ is not like Atlas, the mythical Greek god who held the world on his shoulders. The Son dynamically holds together all that has been created through him (Col 1:17). (CSB)

Let the scientists theorize and test; we know who holds all things together and leads them toward their final goal. It is He whose powerful word brought all into being in the beginning. "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together," says Colossians 1:17. In the strong hands of such a Christ believers are externally secure. (PBC)

6. *making purification for sins*. Through his redeeming death on the cross. (CSB)

This is the heart of the whole matter. The whole letter was written to show that Christ was superior because he had come to "to provide purification for sin." Sin stains; it defiles and damns. Only one could purify and only once would He need to do it. At Calvary's cross the Creator and Sustainer became the Sin-bearer. Here is His most amazing glory! [John 12:23, "*Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'*"] What a staggering thought – the sovereign Lord became the sacrificial Lamb! (PBC)

7. *sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*. Being seated at God's right hand indicates that the work of redemption is complete and that Christ is actively ruling with God as Lord over all. (CSB)

"Right hand" refers to a position of power and honor; "Majesty in heaven" refers to God and all His awesome greatness. The ascended Lord Jesus holds the scepter in His nail-scarred hands, ruling over all in heaven, earth and hell. What a picture of greatness! [Revelation 1:12-16] (PBC)

1:2 in these last days – The time of the definite revelation of God's will in Christ (cf. Acts 2:14-21). The distinction between the words of the prophets and of Jesus anticipates the establishment of the Bible as OT and NT. (TLSB)

"We know a little bit about a lot of things." But if God had not set out to instruct us, there are some things no amount of thought or study or discovery would have revealed. Three of these referred to in the passages listed are (a) salvation is by grace; (b) Jesus is God; (c) God created the universe through Jesus. (LL)

The writer of the epistle makes the point in 1:1-2 that there was a message from God in the OT. Now there is another. Stage 1 is the message delivered by the prophets. Stage 2 is the message delivered by Christ. (LL)

In this phrase indicates that the last and final revelation has already come in Christ. Thus we have absolutely all we need or shall receive to achieve the gift of life. In the light of that promise we must be wary of the false claims of latter-day prophets and non-Christian religions that claim revelations after the

NT; e.g., the Mormons, Muslim, TV evangelists, and others who claim they've received new and direct revelations. Instead of being caught up in every new wind of doctrine, or purported additional revelation, we need to go ever deeper in our grasp of Holy Scripture. All we need and everything we ought cherish is ours and fully revealed in God's Word. (LL)

So it happened, just as the fathers had been told. Moses had told them in Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him." And it happened! "In these last days," that the NT period of time is which we live and after which comes only eternity, God has spoken in the person of His Son. (PBC)

Note the stress on inspiration. Through the prophets and now through His Son, God was speaking. They spoke His words. The prophets spoke for God; the Son spoke as God. Now having spoken through His Son, God has nothing more to say to man. His Son, the Redeemer, to whom the OT pointed, is the ultimate Word and the perfect Revelation of God. How foolish for anyone to turn his back on such a revelation for any reason. (PBC)

appointed the heir – An heir inherits all that belongs to the parents. Jesus as God's only begotten Son, shares with His brothers and sisters the Father's mercy, forgiveness, and new life. (TLSB)

through whom also he created the world – The Son was not created by the Father, but always existed with Him and the Holy Spirit (John 1:1). God the Father, with the Holy Spirit created all that exists, seen and unseen, by His Son, the Word of the Father. (TLSB)

1:3 radiance of the glory of God – God the Father, invisible and dwelling in "unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16), [Exodus 33:12-23; 34:29-35] has revealed the light of His glory in Christ Jesus. (CSB)

Imprint of his nature – As wax mold reveals every detail of a metal seal, Jesus is the exact expression of the Father's nature, being eternally begotten of the Father. He possesses and reveals all that is divine. To see Jesus is to see the Father (John 19:9). Luther: "These two words [imprint nature] lead us to understand that the Father and the Son are of two kinds and distinct according to the Person, but one and undivided according to the substance. The word 'image' indicates that the Son is not the Father, but the image of the Father and a different Person. The phrase 'of his substance' indicates that he is not separate from the Father according to nature, but is together with him in one Godhead and of equal substance, and is thus an image of the Father's substance, not made or having a beginning at a previous time, but having become and been from eternity, just as the divine substance was neither made nor has a beginning but has been from eternity....For the divine substance is eternal, whereas whatever has a beginning is temporal" (AE 34:222) (TLSB)

word of his power – Jesus, the Word who called creation into being (Gen. 1), continues to uphold all creation. (TLSB)

purification for sins – The blood sacrificed animals cleansed both the OT temple's altar and God's people from the defilement caused by sin (Lev. 16:19, 30). Jesus alone makes the final complete purification of our conscience (Heb. 9:14). Luther: "We should despair of our repentance, of our purification from sins fore before we repent, our sins have already been forgiven. Indeed, first His very purification, on the contrary, also produces penitence in us, just His righteousness produces our righteousness" (AE 29:112). (TLSB)

Meditate on the richness of meaning in the phrase that summarizes Christ's ministry on earth: He provided purification (cleansing) for sin." How do the following texts expand on that meaning? Leviticus 16:30; Ephesians 5:25-26; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 3:21. (LL)

The Son accomplishes in His incarnation, suffering, and death what the high priest pictured and signified in his yearly sacrifice of an animal on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:30). Once for all, on Calvary, the Son atones for the sins of the world. He did this out of love (Eph. 5:25), in order to make the church, His bride, holy and perfect. All this He did, not because of our goodness, but because of His mercy – even working in us through His Spirit and Baptism the faith by which we accept His forgiving love (Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 3:21). (LL)

at the right hand – The right hand of God represents the fullness of God’s authority and glory (cf. Ps. 110:1). (TLSB)

Psalm 110:1 pictures the coming Messiah as a king with defeated enemies at his feet. (As in Joshua 10:24, victorious kings placed their feet on the necks of their prostrate, defeated enemies.) Ephesians 1:20-22 teaches that Christ, as true man, is not only present everywhere, but now fully exercises this divine power over the whole universe for the benefit of His kingdom and the up-building of His church. (Note: This belief, often repeated as we confess our faith in the words of the Apostles’ Creed, should not lead us to picture Christ as far away and inactive but, on the contrary, as our active-for-us Prophet, Priest, and King.) (LL)

1:4 superior to the angels. To most Jews angels were exalted beings, especially revered because they were involved in giving the law at Sinai (see note on 2:2)—to the Jews God’s supreme revelation. The Dead Sea Scrolls reflect the expectation that the archangel Michael would be the supreme figure in the Messianic kingdom. Whether the recipients of Hebrews were tempted to assign angels a place above Christ (Messiah) is not known. (CSB)

In the OT the Law was given through angels. In those days angels frequently appeared to God’s people. So Jewish Christians would know and respect the high position of such heavenly beings. Yet Jesus ranked head and shoulders above them. He is eminently “superior” to the angels, the author tells us, using a word that is to appear again and again in Hebrews, thirteen times in all. In fact, Jesus was superior to anything and everything, and He was their Savior. How could they even think of leaving Him? (PBC)

Those Jewish Christians would also be well versed in the OT Scriptures and would readily accept their authority. So the author lets the OT speak. In every chapter of his letter there is at least one quotation from the OT: in this chapter there are seven! Reading the quotations makes us marvel at the depth of the OT. (PBC)

The Messiah was at the heart and center of the whole OT Scripture. He was in passages where we might not have even imagined Him to be. In John 5:39 the Messiah Himself told the Jews about the OT, “You diligently study the Scriptures.... These are the Scriptures that testify about me.” In Acts 10:43 Peter repeated that tremendous thought to Cornelius, “All the prophets testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sin through His name. (PBC)

Angels, although holy and great, were created by God. Jesus, through His suffering and humility, resurrection and exaltation, showed all creation that He was truly the eternal Son of the Father, and that He was and still is far above any creature (cf. Phil. 2:1-11). Hus: “Christ alone is the head of the universal church” (The Church, p. 27). (TLSB)

name. To Jews a name stood for the full character of a person in all he was and did. The section that follows indicates that this name was “Son”—a name to which no angel could lay claim. (CSB)

The title “Son” expresses the wonder that Jesus, the Son of Mary, is also the Son of God from eternity. (TLSB)

1:5–14 Christ’s superiority to angels is documented by seven OT quotations, showing that he is God’s Son, that he is worshiped by angels and that, though he is God, he is distinguished from the Father. (CSB)

Seven passages from the OT (five from Psalms) are used to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God from eternity. (TLSB)

The seventh assertion – that Christ is superior to angels – leads to the next section, where the writer marshals OT passages to tell of the superiority of this exalted and enthroned Son over the angels. This demonstration is important for two reasons. First, some Jews held that various angels were closer to God and more powerful than the Messiah, whom they held to be only a human king (Son of David). Hebrews proves that Christ, the Son of David, who became a human being and made purification for sins, is also truly the Son of God. While Christ humbled Himself and “was made a little lower than the angels” (2:9) for a time, He has been exalted far above all angels. Second, God made use of angels in connection with His revelation of the Law in the OT. Heb. 2:2; Gal. 3:19; and Acts 7:53 all indicate that angels were involved in the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. Therefore, the Word of God spoken of old was through prophets and associated with angels. But a message brought through angels can never be set above the Gospel revealed in Jesus. Nor is any angel the ruler of the world to come. No angels are ministering spirits, God’s servants appointed for the sake of people who are to be served (1:14). (LL)

The author makes this point that Christ is superior to angels with a string of OT passages, with a concluding summary of his own (1:14). He quotes verses (mostly from the psalms) that speak of the Messiah, the Son of David and the Son of God. These passages show that the Son (1) is begotten by God (v. 5); (2) is worshiped by the angels (v. 6); (3) is eternal and upright king (vv. 7-8); (4) is anointed by God to be above His brothers (v. 9); (5) is eternal and unchanging (vv. 10-12); (6) has been commanded to sit at God’s right hand (v. 13). Two prominent psalm verses, Psalm 2:7 and 110:4, open and close the chain, testifying to the enthronement of the Messiah. Throughout this collection of Bible passages the angels are shown to be subservient to the Son: they worship Him (v. 6) and are winds and spirits, flickering flames of fire (v. 7). Hebrews concludes (v. 14) that God has created angels to be ministering spirits to help people who are to be saved, not dominating powers to be feared and served by humans. (LL)

That angels serve as agents of God’s care of us, His people, is of great comfort and reassurance to us. God’s holy angels watch over and guard us, both in spiritual and in physical matters. These invisible servants of God, who surround us every moment, are another evidence that our God loves us and preserves us in all our ways. How grateful we can be to God for the service of the angels, creatures of our God as we are, who obediently serve God by watching over and caring for us. Though holy and more powerful than we, the angels serve us as they carry out God’s will in regard to us. (LL)

1:5 *You are my Son; today I have become your Father.* This passage (Ps 2:7) is quoted in Ac 13:33 as fulfilled in Christ’s resurrection (cf. Ro 1:4). (CSB)

I will be him a Father, and he shall be my Son. Jews acknowledged 2Sa 7:14 (of which this passage is a quotation) and Ps 2 to be Messianic in their ultimate application (see Lk 1:32–33). This royal personage is neither an angel nor an archangel; he is God’s Son. (CSB)

The name “Son” is His also in a special sense. The angel Gabriel referred to it in Luke 1:32 when he told Mary of that child to be born of her, “he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” In His incarnation Jesus inherited the name “Son” also according to His human nature. The God-man Jesus is

God's Son. At the Jordan where Jesus was baptized and on the Mount of Transfiguration where His glory shone, the Father said it for all to hear, "You are my Son, whom I love" (Luke 3:22, 9:35). (PBC)

With the resurrection the Father placed the exclamation point behind that statement. Read Acts 13:33 to see how Paul used this very verse from Psalm 2 and connected it with Christ's resurrection to show that Jesus was the Son of God. The word "today" refers to the whole matter of the Son becoming man to take away the world's sin, the mission on which the Father had sent Him and which marked Him far superior to the angels. (PBC)

Next follows 2 Samuel 7:14: "I will be his father and he will be my son." Spoken originally about Solomon, these words had deeper meaning. They pointed ahead to David's greater Son, the eternal one whose kingdom would never end. Note how the author doubles the words. It is not enough to call Jesus "Son"; he also calls God "Father." Never was such divine sonship claimed for the angels.

1:6 firstborn. A king's firstborn son would usually succeed to the throne. Because Jesus is the "firstborn" of the Father, the glory, honor, and power of the Father also belong to Jesus. (TLSB)

Let all God's angels worship him. Possibly quoted from Ps 97:7. This statement, which in the OT refers to the Lord God (Yahweh), is here applied to Christ, giving clear indication of his full deity. The very beings with whom Christ is being compared are commanded to proclaim his superiority by worshipping him. (CSB)

Do we need more proof that Jesus is superior to the angels? Then look ahead to that great day of judgment when God will again "bring his first-born into the world." On that day Christ will surely stand out as "first-born," first in rank and position, as all angels – not just some here and some there – but all angels bow down before him in worship. In Revelation 5:11, 12, John gives us a preview of the scene: "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand...In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (PBC)

GOSPEL – John 1:1-14

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 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.

1:1-18 The *Gospel* also recounts John's placing himself unequivocally below Christ on the "honor roll." The prophet claims for himself only the role of a voice "calling in the desert" (1:23), inviting all people to

repent and to turn in faith toward the coming Messiah King. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

John is simply a herald; his mission is to point out the “Word made flesh,” the Son of God, who has appeared on earth to “take away the sins of the world” (1:29). The prologue makes the relationship absolutely clear: Jesus is the light, not John; Jesus ranks far above John, because Jesus is before John (both in time and prominence); Jesus alone brings the fullness of God’s grace—John only testifies to the eternal life revealed in the Son of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

John’s brief but profound “Christmas account” (Jn 1:14, “The Word became flesh”) declares the high and holy mystery of the Christian faith—incarnation—from a cosmic yet immanent perspective. It declares the incarnate Word’s essential connection to his creation as its Creator (vv 1–3), as the source of life and light amidst the darkness of separation from God (vv 4–9), and as One who is ever with the Father, sees him, and makes him known (vv 2–3, 14, 18). Like John the Baptist, we as preachers of this text will “cr[y] out” with a loud voice (v 15) to be heard above the din of the world, which, by this time, considers itself long past these holy days. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

1:1-5 John’s Gospel takes us back to Genesis, to the beginning, prior to the creation when there was only God. Yet he describes God as two distinct persons—God (the Father) and his Word (the Son)—both present from eternity and both active in the creation. The Son’s role in creation is also described by Wisdom’s speech in Prov 8:22–31. Thus, like God, the Word is uncreated, infinite, and eternal (see the Athanasian Creed, 7–12, in *LSB*, p 319). As the agent of creation, he is the source of light and life (eternal life, 1 Jn 1:1–2). But the world as man knows it is now “darkness.” For John, “darkness” sums up the fall into sin, the reality of death, and man’s separation from God. It describes the spiritual ignorance and blindness of the fallen world: living in darkness, the creation does not recognize or know its Creator. The light remains, however, and even from the beginning it shines in and disperses the darkness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:1-2 John’s gospel begins at the beginning, before the creation of which we are apart. We can go no farther back than to Gen 1:1, the very first revelation; anything else is pure speculation. From the start, the OT is the story of the pre-existent Word of the Father. This counters the heresy of Marcion that the God revealed in the OT is a different, vengeful god; John says he is the same gracious, triune God who became flesh. The Word is eternal, uncreated. He “was,” not “was made first,” contrary to the Arian heresy and its modern versions, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The next two phrases are carefully balanced trinitarian theology. The Word was a distinct person of the Godhead, “with God,” not the same person as God the Father, contrary to Sabellianism and modalism. “*pros* with the accusative presents a plane of equality and intimacy, face to face with each other” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT* [Nashville: Broadman] 5:4). While distinct, he is also fully God. The Greek word order emphasizes Christ’s divinity: “God was the Word,” but the definite article in *ho logos*, “the Word,” means that the Word is the grammatical subject, not the object of the sentence, and so the correct translation is “the Word was God.” Like the Spirit, who hovered over the waters (Gen 1:2), the Word was there in the beginning, a distinct person beside the Father, yet every bit as much God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The Word is the full, authentic revelation of the eternal, divine being. As a title for Jesus, *logos* refers to the content of God’s revelation and echoes the divine activity of “speaking” in Genesis 1 and in the prophets (Louw & Nida, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [New York: UBS, 1988] § 33.100). The Word exists eternally as a separate person from the Father; yet he exists with the Father and shares in all the divine attributes and glory of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

Many languages have two quite different types of equational sentences. One type indicates complete identity in such a sentence as “My husband is John Smith” or “John Smith is my husband”—that is, the two parts of the sentence are completely equivalent. In the second type, however, one may say “John Smith is a teacher” but cannot say “A teacher is John Smith.” “A teacher” merely qualifies “John Smith” and indicates the class of persons to which he belongs. The latter is precisely the type of equation sentence which occurs in (Jn 1:1). “God” completely characterizes “the Word,” and all that is true of God is true of the Word. This does not mean, however, that the two elements can be inverted, and that one can translate “God was the Word” any more than one can make “Love is God” an inversion of the biblical statement “God is love.” (Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of John* [New York: UBS, 1980] 9.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

1:1 *In the beginning.* See Ge 1:1. (CSB)

ΔEn ajrch/, “In the beginning”: John purposefully takes our ears back to Moses’ words in Gen 1:1. His account takes us as far back as you can go: to eternity, before creation. The Word that becomes incarnate is there, preexistent. The Word is with God, is God, and in time creates all things with God (vv 1–3). All creation is called into being by him and so bears his stamp. Jesus has a claim on all creation since “the beginning.” Now to a fallen creation he comes to deliver . . . by his flesh. Redemption is intimately tied to creation by the incarnation of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

Word. Greeks used this term “Word” not only of the spoken word but also of the unspoken word, the word still in the mind—the reason. When they applied it to the universe, they meant the rational principle that governs all things. Jews, on the other hand, used it as a way of referring to God. Thus John used a term that was meaningful to both Jews and Gentiles. (CSB)

Gk *logos*; cf Eng “logic” and “-ology,” referring to reason, meaning, and study. Describes not only divine self-expression, but the pre-existent Christ, as the following shows. (TLSB)

with God. The Word was distinct from the Father. (CSB)

was God. Jesus was God in the fullest sense (see note on Ro 9:5). The prologue (vv. 1–18) begins and ends with a ringing affirmation of his deity. (CSB)

Fully God, but distinguished from the Father. John Chrysostom: “The Father was never without the Word, but He was always God with God, yet Each in His proper Person” (*NPNF* 1 14:17). Augustine: “We are speaking of God; what marvel if you do not comprehend? For if you comprehend, He is not God. . . . To reach to God in any measure by the mind, is a great blessedness; but to comprehend Him, is altogether impossible” (*NPNF* 1 6:459). (TLSB)

The Word is God in kind and essence: Jesus Christ is, according to His nature and essence, true God, 1 John 5, 21. A god that would have someone over him as a superior could not be considered God. But the Word is coessential with God, is in full possession of the Godhead with eternity and all the other attributes of the Godhead. (Kretzmann)

1:2 *was with God in the beginning* – This same *Word* was in the beginning with God: an emphatic reassertion of the distinction between the persons of the Godhead, and yet not a mere repetition of the first verse. The first statement had characterized the Word alone; the second had declared the personal distinction of the Word from God the Father; the third had expressed the essential unity and identity of the divine essence. Here John states that the eternal existence of the Word and His distinct personality had their being contemporaneously. It was the same Logos that he had spoken of in the first statements, whose

deity he was here so plainly establishing. Incidentally, there is some emphasis on "in the beginning." "In the beginning He was with God; afterwards, in time, He came to be with man. His pristine condition must first be grasped, if the grace of what succeeds is to be understood." (Kretzmann)

1:3-5 The Word created every bit of universal matter. He is the source and embodiment of life. As the source of all created light, he provided the sphere/context in which life can grow and flourish. Unafraid, the Word of life faced down the darkness of sin—and won! The victory goes to the living Word, who is our Life! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

1:3 through him – This indicates that Jesus is the Father’s agent in creation. (TLSB)

all things were made – Creation is presented as a becoming (*ginomai*), in contrast with the Word’s eternal being (*eimi*). The Word was; all creation came into being through him. He was not a lifeless tool, but the living agent. God spoke, and it was so. Prov 8:22–31 gives a lively picture of the Word’s presence and joy in creation. Cf. also 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Gk *panta*; emphasizes Jesus’ priority and supremacy over creation. (TLSB)

1:4 life. One of the great concepts of this Gospel. The term is found 36 times in John, while no other NT book uses it more than 17 times. Life is Christ’s gift (10:28), and he, in fact, is “the life” (14:6). (CSB)

John uses “life” 36 times. The Word is God’s life (Jn 11:25, 14:6). In him is the life of the “living God” (Jer 10:10), the great “I am,” who alone is immortal and eternal (1 Tim 6:16), upon whom all life and existence depend (Jn 10:10). A few Greek manuscripts have “In him is life” to convey that he is the ever present source of life eternal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

zwhv, “life”: both natural, physical life and spiritual life are from God, created by him. This is life “out of God” that comes to, and so enlivens, the creature and all living things. It is life enacted by God’s creative, eternal Word: “Let there be . . .” and his redemptive “I forgive you all your sins” (now!). Both are sentences from his mouth, his Word creating life. In Christ you possess this life as enlightenment from God that brings “real life” with God in the here and now, even in suffering and physical death. This life from God is victory over physical death and so extends even into the future as eternal worship of God, finally with a resurrected body. All this on account of the incarnate Word’s victory over life’s opposite and enemy: death and Satan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

The OT clearly taught that God gave life to people through His Word.

light of men. This Gospel also links light with Christ, from whom comes all spiritual illumination. He is the “light of the world,” who holds out wonderful hope for man (8:12). For an OT link between life and light see Ps 36:9. (CSB)

The Word’s life is light. “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Ps 27:1). The life that Christ gives enlightens and illuminates the dark heart and mind of man. The full revelation of God’s life and light is precisely in the incarnation (Is 60:1, Epiphany; Jn 8:12; 12:36). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Phōs, “light,” connotes the power and promise of God. The very first of God’s acts in creation was to create light to shine into the darkness (Gen 1:1–2). The idea of light also captures the essence of God’s re-creation, redeeming the world that fell into the darkness of sin. “I am the light of the world,” Jesus

declares to his disciples. “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (8:12). He reveals the same truth to Nicodemus: “Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God” (3:21). Light is the sphere of viability, growth, and joy. Only in Christ does God’s light bring forth salvation and the good fruit of redemption. Otherwise, the light induces fear and hatred: “Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (3:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

Living in the light calls forth a response of praise to God, our lively light source. God’s children bask in and follow the light’s lead, as Christ empowers us to walk without stumbling (8:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

Enlightened by the Word, believers encourage and remind each other of the great value of God’s light: “So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime” (Rom 13:12–13). “You are all sons of the light and sons of the day” (1 Thess 5:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

Jesus the Word was born the true Son of God. Many ancient and modern skeptics believe that Jesus *became* God’s Son as a result of his life or work. In truth, though, Christ’s preexistence and our predestination (election) are inextricably linked. St. Paul’s words are forceful: “[God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world” (Eph 1:4; see also 1:11). God reveals the truth of our election in order to strengthen and confirm our faith. Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promise to return—all these mighty acts disclose the Father’s purpose from all eternity: to save his people in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

fw", “light”: In keeping with the parallel to Genesis and creation (see v 1), John here calls to mind Gen 1:3, where God calls light into being as his first creation. Vv 6–9 take pains to declare that John the Baptist is *not* the light. John is distinguished as a creature sent (Rom 10:15) to bear witness to *the* light, the incarnate Word, Jesus (Jn 3:19; 8:12; 9:5). Light is connected to God (v 4), life (v 4), and truly “knowing” God (v 18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

OT clearly taught that God gave life to people through His Word. Wisdom and the Law (Torah) are light (Ps 119:105, 130; Pr 6:23). Now the incarnate Word—the light of the world—has come to give life eternal. Contrasts between light and darkness are common in the Jewish Dead Sea Scrolls (first century BC) and should not be attributed to ancient Gnosticism, as some interpreters have wrongly concluded. (TLSB)

Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Psalm 119:130, “The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

Proverbs 6:23, “For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.”

1:5 darkness. The stark contrast between light and darkness is a striking theme in this Gospel (see, e.g., 12:35). (CSB)

skotiva, “darkness”: the complete opposite to God as light and all things associated with God as light and salvation revealer. This relationship between light and darkness is perhaps the most important motif of John’s Gospel (see Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995] 123–33). Darkness is the fallen creation; the blind, dead, enemy of God; the realm of this world’s prince,

Satan (Jn 13:27, 30; Lk 22:53). God takes on flesh precisely to “overcome” this darkness of sin, which began so soon after “the beginning” (Genesis 3) with his light and life (Gen 3:15; Jn 12:35, 46). The darkness cannot wrap its feeble mind around this incarnation and universal salvation by the death of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

This is the world estranged from God, spiritually ignorant and blind. (TLSB)

“The Scriptures flatly call natural man in spiritual and divine things... darkness (that is, in the dark, blind world, which does not know or regard God)” (FC SD II 10). (TLSB)

Augustine: “As in the case of a blind man placed in the sun, the sun is present to him, but he is absent from the sun” (NPNF1 7:13). (TLSB)

has not overcome it.† The Greek verb could also mean “has not overcome.” It is possible that both meanings are implied here, as John seems to do at 3:3—“born again” and “born from above.” (CSB)

The light keeps shining (present verb), and will keep on shining to eternity. *katalambanō* (NIV: “understood”) can mean “seize in a hostile sense” or “comprehend, understand” (Vulgate: “*comprehenderunt*”; RSV: “overcome”). St. John often employs double meanings, both of which are true. Here we prefer “overcome,” because of Jn 12:35. The Light will not be blown out. It is as strong and enduring as the eternal Logos, who is life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

katevlaben, either “grasp/comprehend” or “extinguish/overcome”: both meanings fit here—the darkness can neither *understand* nor *put out* the light/incarnate Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

1:6-8, 19-28 The noun "Gospel" or "Good News" does not occur in the Gospel and Epistles of John, the Evangelist. It occurs only once at Revelation 14:6. Many Lutherans believe that Revelation 14:6 is a prophecy about Martin Luther. That is why it was quoted on the cover of *Der Lutheraner* and is still found on the cover of the *Concordia Journal*. But the noun "witness" is a key word in the Johannine corpus. It is found fourteen times in the Gospel and sixteen times in the Epistles and Revelation. It always speaks of absolute Truth, be that of Jesus, the Father, the Baptist, the Evangelist, etc. The verb "to witness" occurs but once in both Matthew and Luke, but forty-three times in John's Gospel and fourteen times in the Epistles and Revelation. Like "witness" the verb has various applications: of Jesus, the Father, the Baptist, the Evangelist, the miracles of Jesus etc. "Witness," in our text, is found at verses 7 and 19. "To witness" is found at verses 7 and 8. The witness of the Baptist still stands in the Scriptures and is still as powerful as it was two thousand years ago. Witness means "to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." The Baptist had received "witness" by direct revelation and from the OT Scriptures. (Buls)

1:6-9 John now turns to the circumstances of the incarnation. A man was sent from God, as were the prophets; from this verb comes the noun “apostle.” He came as a witness so that all might believe. Emphatically and literally, “Not was that one the light” (v 8). He merely points to the light (cf. 1:29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

St. John introduces us to the Baptist’s mission: he is the supporting player, the best man at the wedding. He came to offer a true witness to the Light so that all people could have the opportunity to believe in the Messiah. John prepared people for the arrival of the Light, whose coming had long been proclaimed by the ancient prophets. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

The opening chapter of the Gospel according to St. John is a solemn prologue to the entire book. It introduces Jesus as the eternal, divine, creative Word through whom all things were made, who is the light and the life of all. What the rabbis said of the Torah, John says of the Word made flesh who dwelt among us (see *TDNT* lovgo"). Interleaved with Jesus is John, whose life as a witness (*mavrtu*) is completely bound up in the life of Jesus. Jesus is the light; John is the witness to the light. The structure of the first chapter bears this observation out: the eternal Word who is light and life (1:1–5); John, the witness to the light (1:6–8); the true light enters the world (1:9–13); the Word became flesh (1:14–18); the testimony of John regarding himself (1:19–23); the testimony of John concerning Christ (1:24–28); the “next day”—Behold the Lamb—the witness of Jesus’ baptism (1:29–34); the “next day”—Behold the Lamb—the first disciples (1:35–42); the “next day”—Jesus goes to Galilee, Philip and Nathanael (1:43–51). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

John the Baptist is clearly distinguished from “the light.” Through his ministry, he served as the witness (*marturian*) or forerunner to this light. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:6 *there was a man* – “There appeared.” The Baptist “appeared” in history as do all mere humans. (Buls)

Bengel: God deals with men through agents similar to themselves, namely, men in order that they may the more readily take and accept His office of love. (Buls)

John’s appearing differed from other men. He had a direct, divine commission. (Buls)

sent from God – He had a direct, divine commission.

Gk *apostello*, “to send.” (TLSB)

“sent from God”—no one preaches on his own initiative, see Rom 10:15. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

“A man sent from God.” The divine origin of John’s mission, and ultimately the answer to the question of authority. “Whose name was John.” *John* means “Yahweh is gracious.” How gracious he is will be seen in the One to whom John will witness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

He was entrusted with a mission; he was sent out for a special, distinct purpose, as the forerunner of the Messiah. (Kretzmann)

Greek *apostello*, “to send.” Luther: “He did not come on his own, unauthorized...He was to rap at the doors, arouse the Jews, and testify of the Lord” (AE 22:43). (TLSB)

John. In this Gospel the name John always refers to John the Baptist. (CSB)

Son of the priest Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80). Name means “the Lord has been gracious.” He bore witness to the truth, as John 5:33 indicates. (TLSB)

The name John, *yḥochanan* in Hebrew, means “Yahweh is gracious.” Like the name Jesus (“Yahweh saves”), John’s name was announced beforehand by God through an angel (Gabriel, Lk 1:13). The use of the word name in both Lk 1:13 and our text indicates the importance and the power of the name. Just as the name of Jesus describes what he would do (he is the Lord who saves; “He will save his people from their sins,” Mt 1:21), so John’s name conveys John’s message: God is showing that he is gracious. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

1:7-8 Not John, but Jesus Christ. Through the Light, and only through Him, do we come to saving faith. (TLSB)

1:7 *as a witness to bear witness.* John the Baptist's singular ministry was to testify to Jesus (10:41). "Witness" is another important concept in this Gospel. The noun ("witness" or "testimony") is used 14 times (in Matthew not at all, in Mark three times, in Luke once) and the verb ("testify") 33 times (found once each in Matthew and Luke, not at all in Mark)—in both cases more often than anywhere else in the NT. John (the author) thereby emphasizes that the facts about Jesus are amply attested. (CSB)

"He came" introduces his public ministry. "As a witness" denotes purpose and the clause, "concerning the light" emphasizes the witness and limits it to Jesus. Outside of Jesus Christ there is no spiritual Light. The darkness resists the Light but cannot quench it. (Buls)

Luther: These words hurl another thunderbolt against the sectarians and fanatics of our own day, for these visionaries despise the oral Word. . . . Whoever fails to adhere closely to the Word of God takes offense very easily at this or that or something else. . . . However, the evangelist praises John the Baptist and declares that his office cannot be dispensed with; for he bears witness to Christ and points to Him who is the Life and the Light illumining all men. This implies that the external Word serves the purpose of engendering faith and of imparting the Holy Spirit. For God has decreed that no one can or will believe or receive the Holy Spirit without that Gospel which is preached or taught by word of mouth.(Buls)

Lenski: Faith comes only through the preached Word, and God invariably honors the preachers who truly proclaim that Word. Those who leave the Word and cry 'Spirit, Spirit' or who invent methods that discard the gospel can never hope to have it said of them that men came to faith through them.

Westcott: The coming of the Baptist in the fulfillment of his office is contrasted with his personal coming. (Buls)

IB: The word 'sent' carries the sense of official authority, recalling the OT prophets, through the word is frequently used in this Gospel of Jesus, who is par excellence the emissary of God to earth. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: The name 'John' signifies 'God is gracious' and brings with it the promise it contains. (Buls)

"To bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him." Does that mean that all might believe through John's witness to the light or does it mean that John witnesses to that light through which all men might come to believe? The text is somewhat ambiguous, but the former seems more likely. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The noun "witness" (*marturiva*) and the verb "to witness, testify" (*marturevw*) form the backbone of this reading. Together, these words occur 137 times in 115 verses of the NT; they occur 47 times in 35 verses of the Gospel according to St. John, and 5 times in this reading. *marturevw* is the chief preaching word in John. To preach or proclaim Christ is to bear witness or testify. Because of the importance of this word group in John, a brief word study is in order. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

John is the principal witness to Christ, the Word incarnate and light and life of all (Jn 1:7, 15, 19). John's voice bears witness to Jesus' baptism, in which he is revealed to be the Son of God on whom the Spirit rests (Jn 1:32, 34). As a witness, John did not draw attention to himself, but to the object of his witness, to Jesus (Jn 3:28). The Samaritan woman who met Jesus at Jacob's well testified to the people of her city, and many believed because of her testimony (Jn 4:39). Jesus testifies that he is sent from the Father, and the Father and his works testify that what Jesus says is true (Jn 5:31–33, 36–37; 8:17; 10:25). Jesus says that the Scriptures testify to him (Jn 5:39). The crowd that had seen Lazarus raised from the dead bore witness (Jn 12:17). The Spirit, whom Jesus sends from the Father, testifies to Jesus (Jn 15:26). His

disciples are witnesses, in that they have seen Jesus from the beginning (Jn 15:27). Jesus testified before Pilate (Jn 18:23), saying that he has come into the world to bear witness to the truth (Jn 18:37). The one who saw the issue of blood and water from Jesus' side bore witness to what he saw (Jn 19:35). The evangelist John himself bears witness to what he has seen and heard (Jn 21:24). This last citation is illustrative. To bear witness is not to draw attention to one's self, but to recede into the background and to proclaim another. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30 KJV). The only one in the Gospel according to John who testifies concerning himself is Jesus, the validity of whose testimony is disputed by the religious Pharisees (Jn 8:13). To accept Jesus' self-testimony is to accept his claim to bear witness to the Father. The word group also carries with it the connotation of death (Rev 6:9; 20:4). The martyr's testimony to Christ is his or her martyrdom (*marturiva*) for the sake of Christ. Closely tied to witness is confession (*oJmologiva*), see 1 Jn 4:14 (*TDNT* 4:498–99). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

"Witness," *martureō*, appears three times. While the word in its simple sense means "to bear witness" or "testify," it also came to mean to "witness unto death" or "witness/testify by one's death." (The noun *martus*, originally "witness," came primarily to mean "martyr.") This second meaning cannot be overlooked when we remember that John the Baptizer lost his life because of his witness to Christ (cf. Mk 15:39; Jn 21:19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

that all might believe.† People were not to believe "in" John the Baptist but "through" him. Similarly, the writer's purpose was that the readers believe and continue to believe in Christ; he uses the verb "believe" 98 times. (CSB)

Correct. John preached stark Law, as should every preacher. But he was far more evangelical than we usually think. The word "witness" covers both his baptism and his preaching. That centered in The Light, Jesus Christ. Cf. John 1:29. Underlying the word "all" is the universal atonement. To this day anyone who reads John 1:29 and is converted is included in the word "all." (Buls)

Ylvisaker: When John (the evangelist) declares the purpose in sending the Baptist, that all should believe through his testimony, we learn not only that the grace of God is universal, that it embraces all humanity, but also that the testimony of the Baptist should be more than the testimony of the Law. The Law does not lead to faith in Christ. (Buls)

Bengel: Through him, that is through John, not in John, but in Christ, see verse 12. The power of John's testimony extended itself so as even to come under the knowledge of the Gentiles. Acts 10:37. (Buls)

parvte", all—note the inclusive, universal aspect of John's testimony. He preaches so that all might believe, just as Jesus is the light that gives light to all men (v 9), the light of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

1:8 *to bear witness about the light* – In Greek we have a "but quite to the contrary." The evangelist makes certain that we understand that the Baptist did not use his office for self-aggrandizement. (Buls)

Westcott: From this passage and other similar passages, verse 20 and 3:26ff, it has been plausibly argued that the Evangelist was familiar with some who unduly exalted the Baptist. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: He was, indeed, as the text indicates, a light. The individual who believes is also called a light (Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15); the Church of the Cross, likewise (Matthew 5:14). (Buls)

But John was very careful not to detract from *the* Light, as verses 19-28 will clearly show. (Buls)

Light (*phōs*) is one half of several key word-pairs in St. John's Gospel that express themes of Law and Gospel. Christ himself is the light of the world (8:12; 9:5; 12:46), who gives sight to the blind (John 9). Light's opposite, darkness, represents sin and evil (3:19–21). In Jn 1:4 and 8:12 "light" and "life" (*zōē*) are closely associated. The light of Christ brings life. "With you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (Ps 36:9). "'Life' in John characteristically refers to eternal life (3:15), the gift of God through His Son" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] 82; see the verse citations on p. 83). This prologue of John's gospel (1:1–18) harkens back to Genesis 1, where light and life, and indeed all creation (Jn 1:3) came into being through God's Word. John the Baptizer bore witness to the source of all light and life: Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

"He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light." He, whom our Lord called the greatest born of woman (Mt 11:11), was indeed mistaken in the early days for the Messiah himself. We think of the reluctance of his disciples to see our Lord increase and John decrease (Jn 3:30). John is not the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom; not the Light, but the witness to the Light. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

So great was "the light" so great must it be to be "the light" indeed for all our fallen race, that no man or any sin-born creature like ourselves, not even John, the greatest of prophets, or that other John the foremost of evangelists, could be "the light." All that these at most can do is to testify and "witness concerning the light," and they need a special enabling even for that. Augustine writes that they are like trees and mountains upon which the sun shines, which reflect the light and show their own brightness and beauty that a great and wonderful light, vaster and mightier than they, is shining above them. (Lenski)

Another important word in this text is "light" (*fw*). When John begins his Gospel "in the beginning," he draws our attention to the first of the creative days in which God spoke the Word, "Be light," and there was light (Gen 1:3). As the light of the world, the eternal Son who is the creative Word has been with his creation literally since day one. The rabbis said that the Torah was light and life (see Kittel, *LJewgw*, *ibid.*, 134–6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

Here John identifies the Torah with the Word made flesh who is Jesus. He is the light who shines in the darkness, which the darkness cannot overcome (Jn 1:5). Though he is the true light of the world, the world did not recognize him (Jn 1:9–10). Men prefer to hide in darkness rather than come into the light (Jn 3:19). The light reveals the works wrought in God (Jn 3:21). Jesus called John "a lamp that burned and gave light" (Jn 5:35), yet John was not the light. Jesus identifies himself as the light of the world (Jn 8:12; 9:5). To follow him is not to walk in darkness, but to have the light of life (Jn 8:12). To see the light of the world is to walk in the day (Jn 11:9). To believe in the light is to become sons of light (Jn 12:36) and not remain in darkness (Jn 12:46). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

1:9-12 "God of God, Light of Light" was now coming into the world. The participle "coming," like the present "shines" (v 5), points to the continuing entrance of the light into the world as the Gospel spreads to every dark corner of the globe. Natural man does not know (NIV: "recognize") or receive him; he is blinded by Satan and loves darkness (2 Cor 4:4; Jn 3:19). Even Israel, his own covenant people, slew the heir of the vineyard (Lk 4:28; 20:14). For man to see the light and believe takes no less a miracle than the creation of the world. Lest we think this is our own doing, children of God are not born naturally, but "of God," who makes "his light shine in our hearts" (2 Cor 4:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The rejection of the light of the world described here is an allusion to the suffering and death of Jesus. Although humanity failed to recognize its Creator, through the Gospel of John the Creator is now being revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:9 John is referring to the incarnation of Christ.

world. † Another common word in John's writings, found 78 times in this Gospel and 24 times in his letters (only 47 times in all of Paul's writings). It can mean the universe, the earth, the people on earth, most people, people opposed to God, or the human system opposed to God's purposes. John emphasizes the term by repetition (v. 10), and moves without explanation from one meaning to another. (CSB)

Not that everyone is saved (universalism), but Christ made satisfaction for everyone (universal) justification. Salvation requires the gift of faith that holds to Christ. Although He came for everyone, not everyone trusts in Him. (TLSB)

1:10-13 The Light shone brilliantly in the world, but most of his own people (*ta idia*) did not see him as the light. Those who by faith received him as God's revealed Word, he claimed as his true children (*tekna*). Their status as children of God is not the result of any human decision or choice; they are "born of God." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

1:10 *world made through him* – At the time when John was bearing witness of Jesus, He was already in the world, He had become a part of the physical world as true man, He was subject to the usual laws governing man and his relation to the universe. And all this was true, though He had been the Creator of the world; the whole world, without reservation, with everything it contains, is His work, He made it, Col. 1, 16; Eph. 3, 9; Heb. 1, 2. (Kretzmann)

Christ, as God, is present everywhere. (TLSB)

world did not know him – But in spite of the fact that He was in the world and had created the world, the people of the world did not know Him, did not acknowledge Him. The people did not recognize their own Creator, so thoroughly is the world estranged from God. The entire world consists of people in need of redemption, and yet the majority insists upon being counted with those that are lost. The representative part of the world will not acknowledge and accept Him. Cp. 1 Cor. 1, 18—25. (Kretzmann)

The created order (esp sinful human beings) in rebellion against its Creator. (TLSB)

1:11 *his own* – Literally, "His own things," or property. Here, the Lord's chosen people of the OT, His household. (TLSB)

sarx, "flesh": Not our sinful, wicked longings here, but rather all that is truly and essentially human—what God created. A figure of speech by metonymy that depicts all that God "took on" already in the womb of the Virgin, cell by cell, to save that whole creation. Flesh is the common covering all humanity wears. It covers us entirely. For the creature it is a powerless, superficial, yet natural "clothing." Yet God, in love, by *power*, took on exactly *this*—what you're wearing! John introduces us to a fellow human being: One whom John *saw* and *touched* (cf 1 Jn 1:1), yet One who helped create all things (v 3), is light and life (v 4), and who is with God the Father (v 18). What mystery! What scandal! What salvation! God has become flesh, and John the apostle and John the Baptist bear witness to him so that "all men might believe" (v 7). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

1:12-13 The Gospel of John is read and preached to bring about faith in Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life (Jn 20:31). Those who believe are described as having the authority (*exousia*) "to become children of God." To become children requires a new birth "of God," not of man, which Jesus treats more fully in Jn 3 with rich allusions to Baptism. Thus, the birth of God in the flesh is connected to our birth as God's children in Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:12 *receive* – Synonymous with believing. (TLSB)

he gave the right. † Membership in God’s family is by grace alone—the gift of God (see Eph 2:8–9). It is never a human achievement, as v. 13 emphasizes. (CSB)

The Greek for “right” is *exosia* which means “freedom,” “authority.” Christ authorizes us to become God’s children by grace through faith in Him. (TLSB)

1:13 *not of natural descent* – Luther: “These words are the evangelist’s confutation, as it were, to all those who lay claim to anything within themselves of which they may boast. However good or rich it may be, or however much of it there may be, it contributes nothing to ward becoming a child of God” (AE 22:90). (TLSB)

born...of God – The work, the new birth, is from God. Luther: “Jesus along impart this birth, granting believers in Him the privilege, the right, and the power to become God’s children” (AE 22:101). (TLSB)

1:14 *became*. Indicates transition; the Word existed before he became man. (CSB)

flesh. A strong, almost crude, word that stresses the reality of Christ’s manhood. (CSB)

Here is one of the central passages of John’s gospel, along with 3:16 and 20:31. God the Father incarnated his Son among us; the divine Word takes on the limitations of human flesh. He came filled with glory, glory that consists of God’s grace (merciful love) and truth (complete fidelity to God’s character and promises). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

God’s Word was embodied. John elsewhere refers to Jesus’ humanity (4:6; 11:35; 19:28). “The Word, that is the Son of God (John 1:14), assumed the human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. So there are two natures – the divine and the human – inseparably joined in one person. There is one Christ, true God and true man” (AC III 1-2). “The divine essence is not changed into the human nature. But the two natures, unchanged, are personally united” (FC SD VII 36). (TLSB)

Just how this was brought about, that God could gather children out of the midst of a world that did not accept His Son, is shown in that incomparably beautiful passage of the incarnation of the Word. The Word, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, became flesh, assumed the true human nature according to body and soul. (Kretzmann)

This verse is central to the mystery of the incarnation. Belief in the incarnation is essential to salvation (1 Tim 3:16; 1 Jn 4:2). The word *sarx*, “flesh,” stresses the reality of Christ’s humanity (“a man of flesh and blood,” BAGD p. 743, 3.). While St. Paul often uses the word to denote the sinful nature, St. John emphasizes human weakness, not sinfulness (cf: BAGD pp. 743–44, 4. “mortal nature”; 5. “corporeality, physical limitations”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

A docetic Gnostic says the Word only seemed to take on flesh. John announces that “the Word, God himself (Jn 1:1f) in His divine glory (Jn 1:14f) . . . assumes the full reality of historical objectivity, human transience (6~p), and human death . . . The incarnation of the Word means the presence of God in the person of Jesus, not just the present activity of God in the words of Jesus” (B. Klappert, *Dictionary of NT Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978] 3:1117). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory. The Greek for “made his dwelling” is connected with the word for “tent/tabernacle”; the verse would have reminded John’s Jewish readers of the Tent of Meeting, which was filled by the glory of God (Ex 40:34–35). Christ revealed his glory to his disciples by the miracles he performed (see 2:11) and by his death and resurrection. (CSB)

ejskhvnwsen, literally “to live in a tent”: Missed by English translations, this dramatic reference to how God was truly present to save amidst Moses and the Old Testament people by “tabernacling/tenting” with them parallels (but then is surpassed by) the way he is now “enfleshed” among us as the God-man Jesus (cf Jn 2:19–22). God is not far-off and distant, but with us. Jesus is God’s full, gracious, fleshy location among us. How can it be that eternal God has become the truest man? How can the One born *after* John the Baptist be *before* him (v 15)? Because true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, has been born of Mary. Great is the mystery of our faith: God dwells among us in flesh. It is flesh that is even now concealed from our eyes, but that he nonetheless gives us to eat and so live with him (Jn 6:51–58; cf Gen 2:9, 16, where God offers life by eating . . . from his tree). This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it: God coming in the flesh, dwelling among us? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

God revealed his glory when he tabernacled among his people Ex 29:43–46; 40:34–38). Jesus showed forth his glory in his signs (Jn 2:11; 11:4), ministry (Jn 17:4), transfiguration (Mt 17:19), and death and resurrection (Jn 12:23; 13:31; 17:1). In 1 Jn 1:1–3 the evangelist elaborates on just how visible and even palpable was the eternal glory of the incarnate Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

eskēnōsen means to tabernacle, or dwell, and *doxan* refers to the glory of the Lord that was manifest in the Old Testament through the cloud. The same God who dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34–38) and in Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 8:10–12, 27) to forgive the sins of his people has taken up permanent residence in the flesh of Jesus Christ (see also Ezek 37:27; Rev 21:3). While the phrase “dwelt among us” speaks of the incarnation, it also suggests the continual presence of the enfleshed Word with the Church in Holy Communion. The absence of an infancy narrative, as Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels have, allows John to emphasize the incarnation not simply as a past event but as a present reality. We are to recognize our Creator, the eternal Word of God, in the flesh that was laid in a manger, nailed to a cross, and now given from the altar in bread and wine as light and life for us. *Sarx* refers to the human nature, thus indicating that the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, became true man like us. He who created heaven and earth enters into his creation so that man might again know and worship him. The glory of God was literally, physically present in the flesh of Jesus Christ such that it could be “looked upon” and “touched” with human hands (1 Jn 1:1–2). This teaches the communication of attributes—the divine nature present with and working through the human nature of Christ. The Gospel claims to be an eyewitness account of the person and events that it relates. “Grace” (*charitos*) and “truth” (*alētheias*) describe the purpose of the incarnation: an undeserved act of kindness for sinful humanity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

In the OT, God revealed His glory in the tabernacle. When Christ took on flesh, He dwelt or “tabernacle,” among His people. God’s glory was manifest in Christ throughout His entire ministry, but especially in His submission to the cross. John Chrysostom: “We admire Him not only on account of the miracles, but also by reason of the sufferings; as that He was nailed upon the Cross” (NPNF1 14:42). (TLSB)

Many people love to go camping, tenting, or traveling from place to place in their recreational vehicles. As they are tourists, their experiences are temporary. When the Israelites left Egypt, they lived as nomads, tenting from place to place for years. Meanwhile, the presence of God went with

them in the tabernacle, a tent that was a portable temple. The tabernacle pointed to Jesus. When Jesus became a man, He made His dwelling among us; that is, He tented—or “tabernacled”—among us.

The Gospel of John is an excellent sacred writing that highlights, through many miraculous signs, the presence of God dwelling in the human person of Jesus. St. John says of these signs, “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

Jesus didn’t become human to live with us as a tourist. He tented among us in our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior in order to secure eternal life for all. He dwelled with us in human flesh so that He might be our eternal dwelling place.

Only son – St. John uses *monogenēs*, “only-begotten” (NEV: “One and Only”) exclusively of Christ (1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9). (Luke uses it for “only child,” “only son,” Lk 7:12; 8:42; 9:38.) The Christ is unique; only he is begotten of the Father from eternity, being of the same essence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

grace and truth. The corresponding Hebrew terms are often translated “(unfailing) love and faithfulness.” (CSB)

Cf Ex 34:6. In Christ, the Lord is faithful to His promise to be gracious. (TLSB)

“Grace and truth” reflect the Hebrew word-pair *chesed va’emet* translated “love and faithfulness” or “mercy and truth” (Pss 26:3; 85:10; 86:15; 92:2). “Grace” is not used by John after the prologue (1:14, 16, 17), although the concept is prominent. Christ is the personification of “grace” as he is of “life” and “light” “Truth” occurs 25 times in John’s gospel and 20 times in his epistles. Jesus is the truth (14:6). God’s truth is related to his faithfulness in keeping the promise given to Abraham (Lk 1:73) by the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

cavrito" and ajlhqeiva", “grace and truth”: Remarkably, the word *grace* appears in John only in the prologue. Raymond Brown (*The Gospel According to John: I–XII*, Anchor Bible [New York: Doubleday, 1966] 14, 16) and Koester (129) suggest that these two words are used together to bring to the hearer’s mind yet another reference to Moses. In Exodus 34 Moses receives the tablets a second time on Sinai. God is present (in the cloud) and passes before Moses, proclaiming himself “merciful and *gracious* . . . abounding in goodness and *truth*” (NKJV, Ex 34:6) as he gives his covenant. God is not merely giving Law in the narrow sense, as the opposite of Gospel (as we usually translate *novmo*”, as in v 17), but rather his full instruction, *hr:/T*, which are his words of Law *and* his Gospel promise in Christ. Thus, when John says, “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” it is not meant to pit old Moses-Law (bad!) against new Christ-Gospel (good!). The faithful Old Testament ear would hear that the enduring love of God revealed in part through “Moses and Law” (wide sense) has everything to do with the love he would show by the One coming into the world. Jesus is grace and truth personified and enfleshed. To truly respect the Law of Moses is to believe in Jesus, the One greater than great Moses, wherein God’s grace and truth has happened for us, in the flesh. Note John is always approving references to Moses as a faithful proclaimer of the Christ (Jn 1:45, 3:14, 5:46). This helps us to understand the previous verse (v 16) when it says that “from the fullness of his grace we have all received *cavrin ajnti; cavrito*”, “grace upon grace, “one blessing after another.” Namely, the grace of the New Testament given in the flesh-and-blood-Jesus has been “stacked upon” the grace given through the old covenant that Moses delivered. God does not deny his old covenant. He continues to be gracious. He fills us by giving even more now “through Jesus Christ”—God in flesh. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 14, Part 1)

grace. A significant Christian concept (see notes on Jnh 4:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2), though John never uses the word after the prologue (vv. 1–18). (CSB)

truth. A word John uses 25 times and links closely with Jesus, who is the truth (14:6). (CSB)