

# JOHN

## Chapter 1

### *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. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

**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, *yāhochanan* 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; In 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)

pavnte", 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, *IJevgw*, *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)

*savrx*, “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 *exousia* 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 alone 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)

**1:15-18** John explains that Christ's preexistence establishes his preeminence over John himself. The Word arrived here abounding with God's gracious blessings, one piled on top of another. These gifts are above and beyond the law of Moses. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 1)

**1:15** *cries out*. The present tense indicates that John the Baptist's preaching still sounded in people's ears, though he was killed long before this Gospel was written. (CSB)

*he was before me*. In ancient times the older person was given respect and regarded as greater than the younger. People would normally have ranked Jesus lower in respect than John, who was older. John the Baptist explains that this is only apparent, since Jesus, as the Word, existed before he was born on earth. (CSB)

Luther: "Christ the Lord existed before His incarnation and, therefore, prior to [John] ... with respect to [Christ's] divinity" (AE 22:129). (TLSB)

In these things the Master had at once gained the ascendancy, leaving John far behind. He was prior to John, as the eternal Son of God, and His priority was evident in every respect. This testimony of John the Baptist agreed in substance exactly with that of the evangelist. (Kretzmann)

**1:16** Luther: “Christ... is an interminable well, the chief source of all grace, truth, righteousness, wisdom, and life, without limit, measure or end” (AE 22:134). (TLSB)

**1:17** *law was given through Moses* – Under the Old Covenant, indeed, the opposite of grace, merit and works, was prominent. The Law as given by Moses demanded full obedience and threatened the transgressor with temporal and eternal punishment. But Moses, though the keeper and preacher of the Law by God’s command, was a mere man, and therefore the Law itself could not have lasting value in the way in which it had been in use among the Jews. (Kretzmann)

*grace and truth* – A contrast of intensity rather than quality. God gave the Law (Torah) through Moses in preparation for the full revelation of His grace and truth (i.e. Christ). The instruction of the Law prepares the way for the Gospel. (TLSB)

**1:18** *God the One and Only*. An explicit declaration of Christ’s deity. (CSB)

John Chrysostom: “[The prophets saw] instances of (His) condescension, not the vision of the Essence itself unveiled” (NPNF 1 14:51). (TLSB)

*only*. Gk *monogenes*, “only-begotten”; expresses Christ’s divinity and origin from the Father, and thus His complete uniqueness from all other beings. (TLSB)

*has made him known*. Sometimes in the OT people are said to have seen God (e.g., Ex 24:9–11). But we are also told that no one can see God and live (Ex 33:20). Therefore, since no human being can see God as he really is, those who saw God saw him in a form he took on himself temporarily for the occasion. Now, however, Christ has made him known. (CSB)

Whoever saw Christ, therefore, saw the Father (cf 14:9), in whom Christ was always abiding. (TLSB)

eixhghvsato, “explain, reveal, make known” (for the pastor, “exegete”): No one but the Son has ever seen God, not even great Moses, who only gets to see the “back” of God (Ex 33:18–23). Only the Son, “in the Father’s bosom” (located with, but distinguished from the Father), has seen him and has made him known. Ultimately, only God can reveal, make known, or “exegete” God! He does so by his Word become flesh. We can only know the Father by the giving of his only-begotten Son. This is literally divine exegesis from the Source so that now we not only see God, but also touch and taste him.

**1:1–18** By taking on human flesh, God the Son comes into the world He created. He graciously brings deliverance from spiritual darkness and authorizes believers to become God’s children. Those who do not receive Christ by faith remain in darkness. Christ, the true light, has overcome the darkness, and He promises His forgiving grace to you and all people. • O Word made flesh, be present with me this day, and fill me with Your limitless grace. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Testimony of John the Baptist*

**19** And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” **20** He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” **21** And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” **22** So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” **23** He said, “I am the voice of one

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

**1:19-23** “priests and Levites”—the first line of questioning comes from the temple, controlled by the Sadducees. There are three questions: Are you the Christ (Messiah)? Are you Elijah? Based on Mal 4:5, Elijah was expected to appear before the coming of Messiah. Jesus testified that John indeed was Elijah (Mt 11:14), but this required faith that Jesus was the Messiah. John would not make this claim of himself. Are you the Prophet? Some expected a great prophet in the way of Moses to arise before the Messiah, based on Deut 18:15, 18. John deflects all questions away from himself and identifies only with the “voice of one calling [in the wilderness]” (Is 40:3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

**1:19** *testimony – hē marturia tou Iōannou*, “The testimony of John.” Occasionally one hears about how foreign forensic talk is to the fourth evangelist. Today’s text is replete with it. John solemnly testifies, as in a court of law. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Verses 1-18 are called the prologue. Except for verses 6-8 and 15, the witness of the Baptist, the prologue speaks of the person of Christ, both preincarnate and incarnate, and that God, a gracious God, is known only in Christ, the Life and Light of the world. Now comes verse 19. (Buls)

*the Jews*. The phrase occurs about 70 times in this Gospel. It is used in a favorable sense (e.g., 4:22) and in a neutral sense (e.g., 2:6). But generally John used it of the Jewish leaders who were hostile to Jesus (e.g., 8:48). Here it refers to the delegation sent by the Sanhedrin to look into the activities of an unauthorized teacher. (CSB)

In verses 6-8 the witness centered in Christ and the Gospel. In verses 19-28 it centers in the Baptist himself, his person and work, but leads to Christ again. In the Synoptics the word "Jews" is rarely used of the Jewish authorities, Jesus' enemies, but is very frequent in John. (Buls)

*from Jerusalem* – Jerusalem was the home of the Sanhedrin. They had the right and responsibility (Deuteronomy 18:20) to stand as sentinel over the religious affairs in Israel. But, in this instance, their motive was pernicious. The priest and Levites were delegated for this formal inquiry. Josephus tells us that the Baptist's activity caused a great stir. The fact that this delegation came from Jerusalem to Bethany, verse 28, quite a distance, bears that out. "You, who are you?" They don't ask about Christ or John's activity. Look at Luke 3:15. The whole populace was asking the same question. (Buls)

*Levites*. Descendants of the tribe of Levi, who were assigned to specific duties in connection with the tabernacle and temple (Nu 3:17–37). They also had teaching responsibilities (2Ch 35:3; Ne 8:7–9), and it was probably in this role that they were sent with the priests to John the Baptist. (CSB)

Probably members of the Sanhedrin Council. They would have understood issues surrounding ritual purification (i.e, baptism) raised by John’s ministry. (TLSB)

Josephus tells us that the Baptist's activity caused a great stir. The fact that this delegation came from Jerusalem to Bethany, quite a distance, bear that out. Jerusalem was the home of the Sanhedrin. They had the right and the responsibility to stand as sentinel over the religious affairs of Israel. But, in this instance, their motive was pernicious.

**1:20** *did not deny* – The poetic repetition “He confessed . . . did not deny . . . confessed” (NIV leaves out the first “confessed”) indicates how emphatic was John's answer, and how clear was his witness to Christ. This verse uses the definite article with the word “Christ.” Usually “Christ” is without the article as a name, and not as it originally meant, a title for the Messiah—the Anointed One. Here John intends it as a title, emphasizing that Christ is the Anointed One who would bring the messianic age to fulfillment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The piling up of verbs shows how emphatic and sincere the Baptist was. (Buls)

Lenski: The Baptist's reply was more than a reply, it was a full, complete, clear-cut confession. (Buls)

Westcott: It may be regarded as being, in some sense, a temptation of John corresponding to the temptation of Christ. (Buls)

By the way, verses 19-28 happened the day before Jesus came to the Baptist, verse 29. John's Gospel does not record Jesus' baptism or temptation. Very likely verse 29 indicates a day shortly after Jesus' temptation. Note the emphatic "I am not the Christ." He said this without their asking about Christ or whether he was the Christ. (Buls)

*hōmologēsen kai ouk ērnēsato, kai hōmologēsen*, “He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed.” It can't get more emphatic than that. John said it and said it and said it again: “I'm not the Messiah!” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

I. Emphatic, contrasting John the Baptist (or Baptizer) with someone else. Throughout the following verses this emphatic “I” occurs frequently, and almost invariably there is an implied contrast with Jesus, who is always given the higher place. (CSB)

**1:21** *Are you Elijah?... I am not.* The Jews remembered that Elijah had not died (2Ki 2:11) and believed that the same prophet would come back to earth to announce the end time. In this sense, John properly denied that he was Elijah. When Jesus later said the Baptist was Elijah (Mt 11:14; 17:10–13), he meant it in the sense that John was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Mal 4:5 (cf. Lk 1:17). (CSB)

CSB Notes on Malachi 4:5... *Elijah*. As Elijah came before Elisha (whose ministry was one of judgment and redemption), so “Elijah” will be sent to prepare God's people for the Lord's coming. John the Baptist ministered “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk 1:17; see Mt 11:13–14; 17:12–13; Mk 9:11–13). - Moses/Joshua - Elijah/Elisha - John/Jesus.

Elijah, who never died (2 Kings 2:11), was expected to come again (Mal. 4:5) as the forerunner of the Messiah. The prophecy concerning Elijah was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Mt. 17:12; Mk. 9:13), though John was not Elijah returned from heaven. (TLSB)

And so, a second question: "Well, what then?" In a spiritual sense John was Elijah, Luke 1:17; Matthew 11:14, but not as the Jews literally understood the promise. (Buls)

Westcott: The denial of the Baptist is directed to the Jewish expectation of the bodily return of Elijah. (Buls)

Bengel: He was a second Elijah; he was not the Tishbite himself, about whom they made inquiry. He rejects from himself all thing in order that he may confess Christ, and bring the inquirers to Christ. (Buls)

We may puzzle at John's denial that he was Elijah, since Mal 4:5 and Mt 11:14 identify him as such. However, since Elijah was taken up to heaven alive (from the same region across the Jordan in which John was baptizing, v 29), the Jewish expectation seems to have been for Elijah himself to come back down from heaven, and in this sense John was not Elijah. The Jews may also have considered Elijah to be another name for the Christ, or a figure on par with the Christ and the Prophet (cf. Mt 27:47). John most emphatically denies this and states that he is an inferior and a minister to the Coming One. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

“Elijah.” See Mal 4:5. Some are troubled that Jesus identifies John with Elijah (Mt 11:14), while John denies it. St. Gregory the Great observed: “John therefore in spirit was Elijah, he was not Elijah in person. So what the Lord declares as to the spirit, John denies of the person” (MPL 74:1099; author's translation). “Are you the Prophet?” See Deut 18:15–18. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Matthew 17:10-13, <sup>10</sup> “The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” <sup>11</sup> Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. <sup>12</sup> But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” <sup>13</sup> Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.”

*the Prophet.* The prophet of Dt 18:15, 18. The Jewish people expected a variety of persons to be associated with the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist emphatically denies being the Prophet. He had come to testify about Jesus, yet they kept asking him about himself. His answers became progressively more terse. (CSB)

The third question: "Are you *the* Prophet?" The Jews knew the promise of Deuteronomy 18:15-18. (Buls)

Bengel: They supposed the Prophet not only to be distinct from Christ, but even inferior to Elijah, as is evident from the gradually descending climax here in verse 25. (Buls)

Westcott: The reference is probably to Deuteronomy 18:15, interpreted not of the Christ, Acts 3:22; 7:37, but in some lower sense. Look at John 7:40-41. (Buls)

Luther understood “the Prophet” to be a reference to Deut 18:15–19. That this identification is correct is seen in Acts 3:22 and 7:37 where the apostles understand Deut 18:15–19 to mean the Christ himself. John the Baptizer can answer that he is not “the Prophet” since he is not “the Christ.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

*no* – Notice that John's answers grow shorter. “The increasing curtness of John's successive utterances should not be missed. It appears to stem from a dislike for answering questions about

himself. He had come to bear witness to Another” (Morris, p. 136). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Lenski: The Baptist's denial does not clash with what was promised regarding him in Luke 1:17, and with what Jesus afterward said of him in Matthew 11:14; 17:11, three statements which correctly interpret Malachi. (Buls)

All commentators note that the answers of the Baptist in verses 20-21 become shorter and shorter, denoting his sincerity and humility. Arrogant and vain people become wordier as they go along. It is clear from this entire account that John the Evangelist, a disciple of the Baptist, was a witness to what happened in verses 19-28. (Buls)

**1:22** *are you* – The question reveals no personal mission. These men think only of the answer they are expected to bring to the Sanhedrin. It may, indeed, be quite true that their personal thoughts and desires went no further, that personally they were left quite cold by what they saw and heard out here. (Lenski)

The Baptist had forestalled their asking him whether or not he was the Christ. Then they had asked whether he was Elijah or the prophet (which implies that they did not consider Deuteronomy 18:15 as Messianic). Verse 22 likely denotes desperation, for as Bengel says: "They had already enumerated all those of whose coming prophecy had foretold." They could think of no other specific person. "Well, then, who are you?" We have something like "Tell us." The purpose clause practically says: "It's not we who want to know. We're supposed to report to the authorities." They were not interested personally, nor, for that matter were the Jews. If they had returned to be baptized, confessing their sins, the Evangelist would surely have recorded it. They ask one final question: "What do you say about yourself?" (Buls)

*who sent us* – “Those who sent us.” That is, the Pharisees (see v 24). “What do you say about yourself?” That is the crucial question, and the shocker is that John really doesn't want to talk about himself, but about the one who is the light himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**1:23** *I am the voice* – “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’ ” The LXX certainly allows for the New Testament read of this passage from Isaiah, locating the calling out in the wilderness as opposed to the location of the “making straight” being the wilderness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

The Baptist prefixes an emphatic *I* to the prophecy from Isaiah 40:3, found in all four Gospels with reference to the Baptist. Only John tells us that the Baptist consciously applied the prophecy to himself. He is only God's voice, crying in the wilderness. What does the voice cry? "Make straight the way of the Lord.." Here "Lord" is Christ. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: He disowns at once, both pride and a false sense of humility. He acknowledges that he has an office, and this office is of God. In His testimony there is the knowledge of self and the knowledge of Christ. (Buls)

Lenski: Whereas the prophet has two poetic lines in a synonymous parallelism, the Baptist uses only one. Such condensation and abbreviation are constantly employed when quoting. (Buls)

In the Baptist's reply the entire stress is on his work and office, none on his person. He is merely a voice with a message. (Lenski)

John announces a new exodus. God will soon deliver His people from sin's captivity through His Son. (TLSB)

*Make straight* – Through John's preaching of repentance and Baptism, God prepared people spiritually. (TLSB)

The coming of the Baptist, his mission, his use of God's Word, were in precise fulfillment of prophecy. Repentant sinners wanted to know what these words from Isaiah meant. They confessed their sins and were baptized. But in this case the delegation made no such inquiry, did not confess their sins, were not baptized. Evidently the Baptist's testimony left them cold. That still happens today and we should not let it dampen our enthusiasm. (Buls)

Isaiah 40:3-4, “<sup>3</sup>A voice of one calling: “In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.”

CSB Notes on Isaiah 40:3-4... *prepare the way*. Clear obstacles out of the road (cf. 57:14; 62:10). The language of vv. 3-4 has in view the ancient Near Eastern custom of sending representatives ahead to prepare the way for the visit of a monarch. The picture is that of preparing a processional highway for the Lord's coming to his people. In Mt 3:1-8 John declares that repentance is necessary to prepare the way for Christ.

TLSB Notes on Isaiah 40:3-4... The double comfort of vv 1-2 will come about when the Lord breaks into history and comes to the aid of His people. The Lord has done before (cf. Dt 33:2; jgs 5:4-5; Ps 68:7-8) and will do so again (Is 52:7-10). The prophet may also be playing on a Babylonian hymn that speaks of making straight paths for Nabu, Babylonian god of writing and wisdom. Roads were often constructed for visiting dignitaries, triumphant kings, or for idols as they were carried in procession.

According to His eternal plan, “the way of the Lord” has as its predestined goal the redemption of all humankind through His Son, Jesus Christ. All obstacles will be cleared from His highway of salvation. His chosen people will come forth from the grave of the exile and survive the rise and fall of empires in order that the Savior might be born “of the house and lineage of David” (Lk 2:4) as foretold.

Luther on Isaiah 40:4... This is the way it must be. If I level hills and valleys, then they are all alike. So the Gospel makes us all equal. “We have borne the burden of the whole day. Then the Gospel comes and upsets everything. *Valleys* are sinners, fools, lowly. *Mountains* are presumptuous saints. Here before God all things must be leveled.

**1:24-25** “Pharisees”—the second line of questioning comes from the synagogue, controlled by the Pharisees. Why then do you baptize? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

**1:24** *Pharisees*. The conservative religious party, who probed deeper than the rest of the delegation (v. 19). (CSB)

This verse has caused difficulties in translation: (Buls)

- a. AV and NKJV take it to mean that the delegation was made up entirely of Pharisees;
- b. LB RSV TEV JB and NASB take it to mean that the Pharisees had sent them;
- c. NEB and AAT take it to mean that some of them were Pharisees;
- d. NIV evidently takes it to mean that the first delegation (verses 19-23) returned and that a second delegation, made up of Pharisees, came back for further questioning.

These Notes consider the translation of NIV the correct one. We have a second delegation. The Pharisees are not mentioned in verse 19. Furthermore, the Pharisees had an interest in baptism. Verse 25-26 dwell on baptism, not the person of the Baptist. But, we can't prove that verse 24 denotes a second delegation, nor does it affect the *sensus literalis*. (Buls)

The real situation, then is that the committee of the Sanhedrin had ended its inquiry and stepped aside. In addition, to this committee the Pharisaic party in Jerusalem had sent a representation of its own. These men had stood by while the committee from the Sanhedrin had made its inquiry. When these were through, the Pharisaic representatives speak. The explanation that the men who now speak are Pharisees is necessary for the understanding of the question which they put to the Baptist. They were of the party which laid utmost stress on the strictest outward observance of the law, around which they had also built up a forbidding hedge of traditions and human commandments. They were utterly self-righteous and cultivated a formalism that was ostentatious to a degree, especially in observing ceremonies, fastings, almsgiving, long prayers, tithes, etc. The Sadducees were freethinkers, skeptics, usually men of wealth and prominence, and given to loose and luxurious living. The people revered the Pharisees for their supposed holiness and for their zeal regarding the law; and even the Sadducees had to accommodate themselves to their demands in many ways. (Lenski)

**1:25** *why are baptizing* – “Then why are you baptizing?” The authority question is here put. Later, our Lord would put the same question to his detractors and not get an answer: “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?” (Mk 11:30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Ylvisaker: If he were not among the personalities they had enumerated, he had, in their view, no right to baptize. In the following reply, John again diverts their attention from his person to his office. . . . The evangelist in no way indicates that the delegates from the Sanhedrin were affected in their attitude by John's answer. There is, however, a solemn indictment in the words of the Baptist 'Ye know not.' Now the conflict opens which reaches its climax in Jesus' death. The fourth evangelist pictures this struggle, and therefore this incident is placed in the beginning of the Gospel. (Buls)

What they say in verse 25 amounts to a fact or particular condition "if, as you say, you are not etc." Note "We are totally unacquainted with any Biblical person, not already mentioned, who has the authority to baptize." They were very dubious of John's right to baptize. They were clearly still dead in their trespasses and sin. (Buls)

Lenski: Passages like Ezekiel 36:35; 37:23 led the Jews to expect a lustration and cleansing of the people. (Buls)

If that is so, they were expecting baptism. But, they reasoned, it had to be by a truly commissioned person. (Buls)

*the Christ.* Means “the Anointed One.” In OT times anointing signified being set apart for service, particularly as king (cf. 1Sa 16:1, 13; 26:11) or priest (Ex 40:13–15; Lev 4:3). But people were looking for not just *an* anointed one but *the* Anointed One, the Messiah. (CSB)

Passages like Ezek 36:25; 37:23 led the Jews to expect a purification and cleansing of the people. That this should be accomplished by way of a baptism would seem quite in order. But they expected that it would be the Messiah Himself who would thus cleanse the people, and if not He, then at least His forerunners as they imagined them. When John denied that he was one these, they naturally asked how, then he came to be baptizing. Their wrong preconceptions concerning the Messiah’s forerunner blinded them to such an extent that, when they had their real forerunner before their very eyes, they failed to recognize him. (Lenski) They did the same with Jesus.

**1:26-27** “I baptize with water”—John doesn’t answer the question posed to him. Even his baptism points beyond, to a Greater One so great that John is not worthy to untie his sandal straps, the work reserved for the lowest rank of slave. It was forbidden for a disciple to loosen the sandal ties of his teacher. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

**1:26** *I baptize* – To baptize, meaning to apply water in a ritual washing, was not a totally new idea. Rabbis of that time regularly applied water to symbolize purification. Pupils of a particular rabbi could identify themselves with him and his teaching through the act of washing. However, John’s baptism was unprecedented in that it was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4). The question of the delegation indicated their belief that the Messiah would baptize. They wondered, therefore, why John was doing this if he were not the Messiah. Apparently the Jews thought that only the Messiah himself should perform such a baptism that forgave sins (cf. Mt 9:26). John replied simply that a greater One stood among them whose baptism superseded both John’s baptism and that of contemporary rabbis. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

In all the cases of questions (verses 19-23) "replied" was used only once for an emphatic: "NO." In verse 26 we have "replied" again for an emphatic statement. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: This was a severe rebuke for the Jews, especially for their spiritual leaders that they did not know the Christ who was to come, the Christ of prophecy, because they did not know and understand the Scriptures, which testified of Christ, nor had they any longing for the Savior of Israel. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: The evangelist in no way indicates that the delegates from the Sanhedrin were affected in their attitude by John's answer. There is, however, a solemn indictment in the words of the Baptist 'Ye know not'. (Buls)

Bengel says: 'In the midst of you' especially at the time of His baptism. 'Ye know Him not', he addressed the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had not been present at the baptism of Jesus. And he whets their desire that they may be anxious to become acquainted with Him. (Buls)

Lenski: John answers the Pharisees as readily and as succinctly as he had answered the Sadducees. To baptize with water simply says that John is using a means of grace. Christ's redemption is the basis of the means of grace. (Buls)

After clearing up the matter regarding his baptizing John clears up the matter regarding the Messiah and shows how he is connected with this Messiah. His reply may be divided into three statements: 1) Unknown, the Messiah is already in your midst; 2) He I already in the act of coming after me; 3) And He is infinitely great. Thus John more than answers the question put to him. His work is not only legal in the narrow Pharisaic sense, it is legal in a far higher sense and has the stamp of approval from the present Messiah Himself. (Lenski)

“Among you stands one you do not know.” That is John’s answer to the authority question. The authority he had to dump water on people’s heads and promise them forgiveness, making them a people prepared, derived from the One among them whom they did not yet know, but whom John has the job of pointing out. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Knowledge of Jesus comes by revelation, not by reason or strength. This was a severe rebuke for the Jews, especially for their spiritual leaders that they did not know the Christ who was to come, the Christ of prophecy, because they did not know and understand the Scriptures, which testified of Christ, nor had they any longing for the Savior of Israel.

**1:27** *who comes after me* – “Who comes after me.” That is because John is to “go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins” (Lk 1:76–77). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

*whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.* A menial task, fit for a slave. Disciples would perform all sorts of service for their rabbis (teachers), but loosening sandal thongs was expressly excluded. (CSB)

Compared to the Son of God, John was unworthy of even a slave’s task. (TLSB)

This tells us in what respect John is not worthy. The remainder of this verse clearly shows the utter humility of the Baptist. There is very likely something to the idea that the delegation(s) from Jerusalem was (were) a severe temptation to John to make more of himself than he really was, though we cannot prove it. Likewise, perhaps, at John 3:25-30 when the disciples of John complained that people were following Christ rather than John. But John answered: "He must increase but I must decrease." The point we are making is that when a Christian is tempted to pride he must resist by stating the true facts of his own condition. (Buls)

**1:28** *Bethany.* The Bethany mentioned elsewhere in the Gospels was only about two miles from Jerusalem. The site of this other Bethany is not known, except that it was located on the east side of the Jordan. (CSB)

pevran tou' jIordavnou, trans: Jordan Bethany. The precise location is not known, though John always notes the time and place of key events in the Gospel (see, for example, Jn 2:1; 4:5–6; etc). That this happened “across the Jordan” in the wilderness is more important than the precise location. John is calling Israel out of Israel, back into the wilderness in a reverse exodus of repentance, to meet her Messiah who will be revealed in John’s baptism as the Son of God (Jn 1:29–34). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 1)

Not the Bethany near Jerusalem, but the town east of the Jordan River, closer to Galilee and north of Jericho. (TLSB)

Much has been written about the locale of this Bethany and its variant, Bethabara. In any case, it was on the east side of the Jordan. Hendriksen discusses this matter at length. We quote in part: (Buls)

We are distinctly told that this Bethany was beyond the Jordan, not to be confused with the place of identical name where Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus lived. The latter was near Jerusalem. Although the exact location of the Bethany mentioned in our paragraph is not known, it would seem that those are not far wrong who look for it just east of the Jordan, about thirteen miles below the Sea of Galilee and about twenty miles south-east of Nazareth. (Buls)

“Where John was baptizing.” Again the focus on Baptism, which has raised the whole authority question. How can John baptize? His answer: by the power of the One who comes after me, whose way I prepare, and to whom I shall point in the next verse as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**1:19–28** John testifies to Jewish leaders asking, “Who are you?” that he is not the Christ but was sent to prepare the way for Him. As a faithful servant, John sets an example of humility and reverence for us. Ironically, the One whose sandal John was unworthy to untie became the Suffering Servant, who bore all our sins. • O Christ, prepare a royal highway in my heart, that I may receive You in steadfast humility and joy. Amen. (TLSB)

*Behold the Lamb of God*

**29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ 31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” 32 And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”**

**1:29-41** An epiphany—a manifestation of the divine or a sudden perception of a thing’s essential meaning or nature—calls for response, reaction. When the Magi learned of the newborn King, they sought and worshiped him. So do we. At his Baptism, Jesus was declared the Son of God and empowered by the Spirit for ministry. In our Baptism, we were made children of God and filled with the Spirit for our role in the church. The proclamation of Jesus as Son of God and the world’s Savior moved those who heard to share the good news. God intends us to do the same so that Epiphany may be a constantly occurring event. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

Last week, in the baptism of our Lord, we encountered the very first words Jesus speaks in Matthew’s Gospel. In this week’s text, we have the first words Jesus speaks in John’s Gospel. Consider the import of these words, which the Holy Spirit led these writers to use as the first words of Christ in their Gospel accounts. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 1)

In connection with John referring to Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” many commentaries will direct you to Passover imagery. I prefer the imagery of the Day of Atonement. In Leviticus 16 we learn that the high priest casts lots for the two goats used on the day, “one lot for the Lord, the other for the scapegoat” (Lev 16:8). The goat whose lot fell for the

Lord was sacrificed as a sin offering. Over time this goat became known as “the Lamb of God.” This imagery is a significant background to John’s use of the term “Lamb of God” with respect to Jesus, especially with the specific addition “who takes away the sin of the world.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 1)

An understanding of what John made Jesus out to be, “the Lamb of God,” would come from a familiarity with the Seder meal narrative (Haggadah) for Passover. For the Passover festival, God commanded Israel to retell his rescue of them (Ex 13:8) every year. The retelling would serve as a constant reminder of his grace and mercy and also as a prophetic preparation for the Messiah to come for complete and final rescue. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

Jesus is this final Paschal Lamb whose blood we need placed on (that is, in) our bodies so that death will pass over us. And we do eat and drink this greater paschal meal in the Lord’s Supper, the New Testament Seder: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:29-31** John the Baptist’s purpose (like John the evangelist’s) was to bear witness to who the Messiah would be and then to point him out. This he did in word but, interestingly, through the waters of Baptism as well (v 31). His Baptism was one of repentance, making ready for the Gospel and Spirit that came in Jesus. That is, his Baptism was to lead everyone to the Christ as Savior. Now having the Word himself in the water, John saw Jesus revealed as the Savior, by the Spirit in visible form. Jesus reveals himself to us through Word and water by the same Spirit today. This should not be surprising, as Luke points out in the Emmaus story that those two disciples only recognized Jesus at the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:13–32). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:29** *next day* – This is the day following events/day of vv. 19-28. John may not be using precise reckoning of time but may be creating a comparison with the six-day creation. He began his account with creation themes from Genesis, including reference to “light” (which forms days vv. 1-4) and water (an important element of creation; vv. 26-34). Vv. 19-51 suggest a passages of four days (day 1, vv. 19-28; day 2, vv. 29-34; day 3, vv. 35-42; day vv. 43-51). At 2:1 John begins to count again, starting on day 4. So “on the third day” (2:1) would make a total of six days – a week that ends with yet another Genesis theme: the blessing of marriage (cf. Gn. 1:28; 2:18-25). On expressions for time and reckoning, see p. 1567. John ends his account with another six-day period: Holy Week (12:1). (TLSB)

*look* – “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (v 29) is the first and most complete one. This proclaims law and gospel as succinctly as it can be stated. John the Baptist wants Jesus and his identity to grab and hold the attention of his hearers. There is a sense of excitement in John’s imperative “Look!” excitement generated by the identity of the One approaching, “the Lamb of God.” The expression “Lamb of God” has a rich Old Testament background that would have been more familiar to the original hearers. There was the Passover lamb, whose shed blood averted the destroyer of the firstborn, and who was eaten in an annual sacred meal commemorating God’s deliverance (Ex 12:11–13; see Paul’s application of it to Christ in 1 Cor 5:7). There also was the lamb of daily sacrifice (Ex 29:38–42), and the lamb led to slaughter in Isaiah 53:7—Yahweh’s Suffering Servant. All these sacrificial lambs foreshadowed this Lamb of sacrifice “who takes away the sin of the world.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

*Lamb of God.*† An expression found in the Bible only here and in v. 36. Many suggestions have been made as to its precise meaning (e.g., the lamb offered at Passover, or the lamb of Isa 53:7, of Jer 11:19 or of Ge 22:8). But the expression seems to be a general reference to sacrifice, not the name for a particular offering. John was saying that Jesus would be the sacrifice that would atone for the sin of the world. In Jn 1:29, 36 the Greek is *amnos* for Lamb. In only one other book in the NT is Jesus called Lamb—about 30 occurrences in Revelation, also written by John. There in each case the Greek is *arnion*. (CSB)

This has rich OT background and would have been familiar to the original hearers. There was the Passover lamb, whose blood averted the destroyer of the firstborn and who was eaten in an annual sacred meal commemorating God’ deliverance (Ex 12:11-13). There also was the lamb of daily sacrifice (Ex 29:38-42), and the lamb led to the slaughter in Isaiah 53:7 – The Suffering Servant. All these sacrificial lambs foreshadowed this Lamb of sacrifice who would take away the sin of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

“The Lamb of God” (*ho amnos tou theou*) is a title for Jesus. From the Baptizer’s statement the Church receives the Agnus Dei canticle, sung during the Divine Service. The same title will be given to Jesus in Revelation, especially in the words of another Divine Service canticle, Dignus est Agnus (“Worthy Is the Lamb”). From the earliest times in the Old Testament economy, *lamb* specifically referred to sacrifice (Gen 4:4; 22:7; Ex 29:38–42), so this symbolism would have been unmistakable to John’s hearers. “Who takes away the sin of the world” indicates that Christ’s mission will be for more than the descendants of Israel. It will be for all nations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

*Lamb of God. amnos tou theou* is used to refer to a lamb that was sacrificed in the Old Testament. The Septuagint uses *amnos* when it refers to the Paschal Lamb. In light of the Psalm for this Sunday, we should consider that ram caught in the bushes after God stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac (Gen 22:8, 13). God must provide, since our offerings, no matter the cost, remain inadequate. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

Exodus 29:38-42, <sup>38</sup> “This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. <sup>39</sup> Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight. <sup>40</sup> With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. <sup>41</sup> Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. <sup>42</sup> “For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you.

John the Baptist is a beautiful example of how all of us can and should introduce others to Jesus. By what we say and do we want to call the attention of others to this great messenger of God. We want them to realize who He is, and what He has done, and then accept Him by faith. Sometimes witnesses attract so much attention to themselves that others never notice Jesus. The faithful witness will say as John did, “I’ am not the one you need. Jesus is. Follow Him.” (LL)

This lamb was provided by God and sent out by God. The Lamb of God first took the load of sin off the world onto Himself, then rolled it off from Himself. Luther says, “It is extremely important that we know where our sins have been disposed of. The Law deposits them on our conscience and shoves them into our bosom. But God takes them from us and places them on the shoulders of the Lamb. If sin rested on me and on the world, we would be lost; for it is too strong and burdensome. God says: “I know that your sin is unbearable for you; therefore behold, I will lay it upon My Lamb and relieve you of it. Believe this! If you do, you are delivered of sin.”

There are only two abodes for sin: it either resides with you, weighing you down; or it lies on Christ, the Lamb of God. If it is loaded on your back, you are lost; but if it rests on Christ, you are free and saved.” (LW Vol. 22 – pp 169-170)

*takes away* – The Greek *airo* is “bearing off,” “getting rid of,” or “carrying away.” John the Baptist alluded to the scapegoat carrying the people’s sins away (Lv. 16:21-22). Luther: “(The Son of God) says to me: ‘You are no longer a sinner, but I am. I am your substitute... All your sins are to rest on Me and not on you’” (AE 22:167). (TLSB)

*Takes away*. The meaning of *airō* is “to take up” and “carry.” Jesus uses it to call to us: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and *take up* his cross” (Mt 16:24). It can also refer to that which we take “*along for the journey*” (William Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaption of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer’s Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der Übrigen Urchristlichen Literatur* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], 24). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

*sin of the world* – The singular “sin” shows the abominable condition of the entire race in its state of rebellion, separation from God and spiritual death. – The use of the word *kosmos*, “world” may be John’s way of emphasizing the cosmic significance of Christ’s atoning work. All of sin, its guilt and shame, as well as its rippling results in throwing the whole created order out of right relationship with God, is removed in Christ Jesus. Not just the sin of humankind, but that sin’s effect in the world is the target of Christ’s atoning work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 1)

The singular “sin” raises attention above individual sins (which people attempt to play down and excuse) to the abominable condition of the entire human race in its state of rebellion, separation from God, and spiritual death. It is this whole deadly mess which the Lamb of God removes, lifting it off us by his sacrifice (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Jn 1:7). John is very deliberate in identifying Jesus as the one greater than he, the Messiah for whom Israel was waiting (vv 30–31; note the interplay of the carefully chosen Greek prepositions: “after me . . . surpassed me . . . before me”). When Jesus was baptized, John recognized him as the very Son of God (vv 32–34), and he testified to that effect; the revelation led to action. Seeing the Spirit “remain” on Christ is significant in that it marks Jesus as the one to whom “God gives the Spirit without limit” (Jn 3:34), unlike many of the leaders in the Old Testament, such as Samson, upon whom the Spirit would rush only at certain times (Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 16:17). It also marks Christ as the co-sender of the Spirit (Jn 16:1–16; cf. the *Filioque* in the Nicene Creed). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

*World, kosmou*, has for its first meaning in most lexicons the entire universe. Anyone would be hard-pressed to limit this scope to only a few, or only those whom Christ intended to save, that is, the elect. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:30** *a man* – *avar* – A true man. But He was before John because He is the eternal God. John knew Jesus was the God-man.

“A man who ranks before me” (*anēr hos emprosthen mou gegonen*, literally “a man who has become before me”). The Baptizer’s words are his recognition of his place relative to Jesus: Jesus is greater than he. As he testifies to the Pharisees earlier in the chapter, John knows that he is not

the Christ, but simply his forerunner (Jn 1:23), and that he is of lesser rank (Jn 1:27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

**1:31** *I ... did not know him.* John the Baptist, who “lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel” (Lk 1:80), may not have known Jesus at all. But the words probably mean only that he did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the sign mentioned in vv. 32–33. (CSB)

John knew Jesus (they were cousins; cf. Luke 1:36), but until Jesus was baptized, John did not know that He was the Messiah (cf. V. 33). (TLSB)

*I came baptizing* – “For this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed [*phanerōthēi*] to Israel.” John speaks of his purpose—to reveal the Christ to Israel. This is the theme of the Epiphany season, the manifestation or revelation of the Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

*revealed to Israel* – As the forerunner of Christ, John’s mission was to make Jesus manifest as Messiah to His own nation. (TLSB)

*So that he might be revealed, phanerōthēi*, “intentional” subjunctive passive. It was John’s job to baptize and proclaim (“for this purpose I came,” Jn 1:31), and through this Word and water was the Messiah to be revealed. It was no mere wish, but God’s intended outcome. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:32-34** Here John describes Jesus’ Baptism. “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (v 33). John indicates that he did not know that Jesus was the Christ until seeing the Holy Spirit’s descent upon him. This shows the importance of Jesus’ Baptism for knowing that he is the Christ. Having seen it, John bears witness about the divine identity of Jesus, only known by the Father’s revelation to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

**1:32** This is testimony of what happened at the Baptism of Jesus. (CSB)

John saw the Spirit remain on Christ (v 33), thus anointing Him as the Messiah. (TLSB)

*dove.* Cf Gn 8:8–12. An animal associated with the services of the temple. Cf Lv 1:14; Lk 2:24. (TLSB)

We are reminded here of how the Spirit hovered over the depths at creation, together with the Word. Just as in the beginning, the Father spoke, and that which was not was. Here we have the new creation taking place, again through the Word sent by the Father, together with the Holy Spirit and water. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

It was significant that the Spirit remained on Jesus because God the Father had told John to watch for this sign to identify Him. (PBC)

**1:33** John the Baptist, like the OT prophets, received direct revelation from God. (TLSB)

*he ... will baptize with the Holy Spirit.* John baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize with the Spirit. If a specific event is intended by these words, the fulfillment was the sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2). – John’s baptism was Christian. It differed from

that of Mt. 28:19 in only two respects: a) It was for Israel only; b) It was under the Old Covenant whereas that of Mt. 28:19 took place after all had been fulfilled. Some commentators call it “preparatory” but that does not mean that it was not a true means of grace. John does not say that there are two baptisms or that his baptism is inferior. He is stressing the fact that he is not Christ, but is His forerunner. Since Pentecost, all who receive Christian baptism receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

The One upon whom the Spirit came at His Baptism now gives the Spirit through Holy Baptism (Ti 3:5). Luther: “Thus our Baptism in Christ, in which He gives us remission of sin, baptizing us with the Holy Spirit and with forgiveness, remains and continues to be effective” (AE 22:179). (TLSB)

In v 33, the NIV translates, “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who *will* baptize with the Holy Spirit” (emphasis added). Though translated as future, the tense is actually present. Hence, “is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” This present tense helps to dispel any attempt to construe that Christ was without the Holy Spirit prior to its descent upon him at his baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 1)

Some may make too large a distinction between John’s Baptism and future Baptisms after Pentecost. It is not that John’s work was devoid of the Holy Spirit, but rather it was not all that this gift was to be—not until after everything was complete and fulfilled. The full gift had not yet been sent. The Spirit did not remain on anyone else but Jesus until after he had been sent to all, on the Day of Pentecost. Now he remains on all who are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:38–39; Rom 6:3–10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:34-39** Here is where we see John “decreasing” as Jesus must “increase.” That was why John was sent—to bear witness and send people on the “straightened path” to their Savior. John was the best man, leading the Bride to the Bridegroom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:34** *I have born witness* – God Himself gave the Baptist the unmistakable proof which led to the unshakable testimony that Jesus is, in very truth, the eternal Son of God. John’s testimony lives to this day.

The apostle John does not record the baptism of Jesus in his Gospel. Instead, he has John the Baptizer relate parts of what took place in connection with Christ’s baptism, as John now points his disciples to following Jesus. John is lesser; Jesus is greater. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 12, Part 1)

*Son of God.* See vv. 14, 18; 3:16; 20:31. (CSB)

This title bears witness to God the Father’s words from heaven (Mt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22) declaring Christ’s unique relationship to His Father (cf. Ps 2). Jesus is “very God of very God, begotten not made” (Nicene Creed). (TLSB)

**1:29–34** John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world—the very Son of God, on whom the Holy Spirit rested at His Baptism. Today, the Lord gives His Spirit in Holy Baptism. To regard Christian Baptism as a symbolic act is to despise a precious treasure. In Baptism, Jesus Christ has taken away our sin, and the Spirit daily assures us

of His merciful goodness toward us. • O Lamb of God, send Your Spirit with Your gracious pardon, and silence my accusing conscience. Amen. (TLSB)

*Jesus Calls the First Disciples*

**35** The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, **36** and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” **37** The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. **38** Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “**What are you seeking?**” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” **39** He said to them, “**Come and you will see.**” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. **40** One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. **41** He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). **42** He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter.

**1:35-37** “The next day” shows us the consecutive nature of events. “With two of his disciples.” John had his own followers who believed his prophecy. Now two of them believe John’s testimony about Jesus, “and they followed Jesus.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

**1:35** *two*. One was Andrew (v. 40). The other is not named, but from early times it has been thought that he was the author of this Gospel. (CSB)

Andrew was one (V. 40). Commentators agree that the other must have been John, the Evangelist.

*his disciples*. In the sense that they had been baptized by John and looked to him as their religious teacher. (CSB)

**1:36** *Lamb of God*. It was if he had said, “Look, there is the man you need to follow.

There is the long-awaited Savior. Why are you standing here with me? Go to Him – now!” (PBC)

**1:37** *they followed Jesus* – God worked through Word of the Baptist to cause his own disciples to follow Jesus. God still uses His Word to make disciples. (TLSB)

**1:38** *Rabbi* – This literally means “my great one” and which John translates as “teacher” for his gentile readers. (PBC)

“Rabbi.” The Hebrew title used by John’s disciples shows their recognition of Jesus as one to follow. They place themselves underneath Jesus as students, just as John placed himself underneath Jesus as the one who ranked before him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

*saw them following* – theasamenos – This root from which the word “theater” is derived, denotes more than mere seeing or looking. He was interested in them.

*What are you seeking* – Jesus question implies that they want to see Him. – It was a penetrating question, meant to get those who follow Jesus to think about what they expect to get from Him. We will learn soon enough about some who were wanting things from Jesus that He didn't come to give, such as earthly prosperity, political power, and deliverance from the Roman oppressors. (PBC)

*where are you staying* – Their answer turned the focus properly back on Jesus. They wanted to stay with Jesus, learn from Him and get from Him what He had to offer them. Should any disciple want anything more? (PBC)

Not an unreasonable question; they want to find out where to receive this new rabbi's teaching. (TLSB)

*Remain. menō* means “to stay, dwell, or abide.” This is third person singular, but its subject is the “dove,” which is masculine. The ESV has “it remained” (v 32), but we could as easily say “he remained,” as God is always “he” and the Spirit is never feminine. In v 33, this verb is present active, so can we conclude that John still sees the Spirit remaining on Jesus, approximately forty days later? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:39** *come* – He opens the door to them that very instant as if He had been expecting them. Nothing is easier than to get an audience with Jesus.

The respectful title “Rabbi” indicates that like Nicodemus, who used the same title later (Jn 3:2), the men were sincerely expecting to learn truths of God from Jesus. When Jesus invited them to his home, he surely had much more in mind for the two seekers than a social visit. As he did so often in the years following, he taught them about himself and the coming of the kingdom of heaven. It was the beginning of their experience of living with the Word made flesh (see Lenski on Jn 14:8). What a blessed time as they “spent that day with him”! (The tenth hour after sunrise would be about 4 p.m.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

*they stayed the day with him* – “And they stayed with him that day.” John's two disciples are now Christ's disciples. They stay with Jesus and begin learning from him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

*tenth hour.* 4:00 P.M. JEWISH TIME. IF JOHN WERE USING ROMAN TIME, 10:00 A.M. (CSB)

10 a.m. according to Roman time, which John seems to use. He reckons time differently from the other Gospels. (TLSB)

The exact time here may be less important than John's mention of the time. This detail suggests that he was there, that he was one of the two disciples. The idea is strengthened when, in turn, he names only one of the two, a strange decision unless he was merely consistent in not naming himself in his Gospel. (PBC)

**1:40-41** Hearing John's testimony, the very words of God, caused Andrew to believe that Jesus was the one for whom Israel was waiting: “We have found the Messiah.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

**1:40 Andrew** – Assumes readers’ knowledge of previous Gospels or Christian teaching as Peter is not previously introduced in John. Andrew came to Christ first and led his well-known brother to the Lord. (TLSB)

“One of the two . . . was Andrew.” The evangelist gives us the identity of one of John’s disciples. Though not a member of the innermost circle of Peter, James, and John, Andrew can claim the status of the first of the Twelve to follow Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

**1:41 find his brother** - While there are textual variants, the reading *prōton* is best understood as an adverb. The following morning, “the first thing” Andrew did was locate his brother, indicating both his eagerness to share his amazing discovery and his love for his relative. How very simply the great ministry of the apostle Peter was launched! “Found the Messiah” may say what Andrew thought had happened, but who found whom? Nevertheless, there is a bold, though embryonic, confession of Jesus as the long-awaited Christ. “In Jewish lips ‘We have found the Messiah’ was the most comprehensive of all Eureka’s” (Dods, quoted in Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971] p. 159 note 93). This technical term, “Messiah,” occurs only here and in 4:25 in the New Testament, though “Christ” is of course the Greek equivalent. Many hearts longed for the promised One to come. The full significance of “Messiah” and terms like “Light of the world,” “Word made flesh,” and “Son of God” would come much later. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

*the Messiah* – Out of the OT he gathers the truth that if Jesus is the Lamb of God and God’s Son, then He must be the Messiah. He wants to share this great news with someone close to him like his brother. (CSB)

Messiah (Christ). *Messias* is transliterated from the Hebrew. It means “a consecrated or anointed person. . . . In ancient times not only the king, but also the priest and the prophet were consecrated to their calling by being anointed” (2. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, electronic ed. [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers], 1993). It is curious that at first (v 38), Andrew referred to Jesus as “Rabbi,” but then, perhaps from further reflection on John’s words, he calls him the Messiah. Even though there were many ideas as to who this Messiah would be, Andrew at least here is connecting Jesus with the removal of sin—this rather than the more popular idea of the Messiah returning Israel to its former earthly glory under David and Solomon. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

Once again John remembered to translate the Aramaic term for his Greek readers. Andrew had found the “Messiah,” which is the “Christ.” (PBC)

“We have found the Messiah” (v 41) is the third Epiphany declaration about Jesus. Like “the Lamb of God,” the key theological term *Messiah* has a rich Scriptural background, including 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2. One of the former disciples of John the Baptist is identified as Andrew. Most commentators agree that John, the future apostle and gospel writer, was the other. With characteristic humility, he fails to identify himself, just as elsewhere in his gospel he omits his name and designates himself with the periphrastic description “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” That self-effacing humility is a model for how the person of the preacher should not obstruct the congregation’s view of Christ; we should minister so that they see him, not us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

“‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ).” Andrew fully believes his former teacher’s confession about Jesus’ identity. In his exuberance, he is the first to spread that testimony to

another who had not heard the Baptizer's own words. Here Simon, Andrew's brother, is brought to Jesus, where he will be rechristened as Cephas (v 42b). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 1)

**1:42 Peter.** † In the Gospels, Peter was anything but a rock; he was impulsive and unstable. In Acts, he was a pillar of the early church. Jesus named him not for what he was but for what, by God's grace, he would become. (CSB)

*John?* Peter's father, Jonah of Bethsaida (cf Mt 16:17). (TLSB)

Jesus looks at Peter and says, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (v 42). The naming or the renaming of an individual is rooted to the original creation when God asks man (Adam) to name the animals (Gen 2:19). By naming animals, man shows power and authority over, the animals. "You made him ruler over the works, of your hands; you put everything under his feet." (Ps 8:6) Now Jesus, by renaming Simon, makes a claim on him. Peter means "rock" or "rocklike." Jesus' claim on Peter's discipleship and the shape of that discipleship are seen in his renaming of Simon. From Peter's bold confession to his preaching, from his courage under fire to his legendary martyrdom, Peter's name described his life as a disciple. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

At every Baptism we call out the name of the baptized in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Lord then has authority over the baptized, for the baptized is called forth from the world to a new identity with Christ (Is 43:1). Baptism is God redesigning his people for discipleship. Daily baptismal renewal is a reidentification with Christ and a rejection of the world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

When Jesus renames Simon, he is pointing out what he will be, not what he is now. Peter will go from one who tends to bend in the wind to a pillar of the Church, as Paul calls him (Gal 2:9). Peter will become steadfast and stalwart, a "rock," even to the point of being led off to die for his Lord. This was not always the case, as his triple denial at Jesus' trial shows. Paul also reminds us of his failure when facing the Judaizers (Gal 2:11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 1)

*Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael*

**43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."**

**1:43-51** Important for anyone preaching on this text is the use of days in the first chapter of John's Gospel. The connection with the creation theology of the prologue is clear. An astute Jewish person would pick up on what is going on here. The phrase "the next day" assumes an understanding of what went before and what went after the events of this pericope. By counting the number of times this phrase appears in the first chapter, "the next day" of our pericope would be the fourth day of the Jewish week. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

One interpretation sees the first day as the day John the Baptizer denies being the Christ (Jn 1:19–28). The second day, then, is the day Jesus comes down to the Jordan River and is called by John the Baptizer "the Lamb of God" (a title carrying obvious Jewish overtones). The third day is the day Jesus calls Andrew to be his disciple. The fourth day is the day Nathanael is called to be Christ's disciple, and three days later (or the seventh day) is the day on which Jesus turns water into wine, completing the seven-day week of the new creation. If we move the whole week back one day by counting the creation of the cosmos and the fall into darkness (sin) as the first day, then the changing of the water into wine at Cana becomes the eighth day. The message is still the same. God is beginning a new creation. The number eight in Jewish circles connoted a new creation. For the same reason many baptismal fonts today are made with eight sides. The Jewish person would know that with the coming of the Word in flesh, God is beginning something new. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

The preacher of this pericope needs to sense that God is here beginning a new creation. God is revealing his design to save all mankind by discipling these men from Galilee. This is similar to God establishing the 12 sons of Jacob (Israel) as the heads of his people. This pericope is either the fourth or fifth day of God's new creation, a new design. This design is rooted and founded on his gracious and recreating Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Following the beautiful prologue to his Gospel (1:1–18), John describes the beginnings of Jesus' public ministry and gathering of disciples. John the Baptist is confronted by priests and Levites from the temple in Jerusalem. They've been sent to inquire whether John claims to be the promised Messiah. Just as John insists that he is not the Messiah, Jesus appears. Note that there is no "messianic secret" in John's Gospel. The very next day, Jesus comes to John the Baptist, who immediately confirms both Jesus' identity and his mission. "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29). Although the evangelist does not report the event directly, the implication is that this was the day of Jesus' baptism and the beginning of his public ministry. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

Jesus immediately turns to the task of making disciples. The first disciples are two former disciples of John the Baptist who leave him to follow Jesus. One of them is Andrew. He begins a pattern of going and telling others to come and see Jesus, which concludes in today's reading. Immediately after becoming a follower of Jesus, Andrew went and told someone else about him. He brought his brother Simon and introduced him to Jesus. Here is the first example of one who comes to see Jesus and then goes to tell someone else about him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

These verses immediately follow the pericope (Jn 1:29–42) in which the Baptist identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29) and the one upon whom the Spirit of God descended and remained in his Baptism (Jn 1:33) and the Son of God (Jn 1:34). This preceding pericope also mentions Andrew and Peter as the first two "followers" of Jesus. They recognize that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ. This then leads into the Gospel for this day, wherein Philip "follows" Jesus, and then speaks of this one to Nathanael, who will also become a follower of the Son of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

These verses are immediately followed by three pericopes: the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1–11), the cleansing of the temple (Jn 2:12–25), and the dialogue with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1–21). In all three, Jesus’ promise to Nathanael in today’s Gospel—“You will see greater things than these” (Jn 1:50 ESV)—is beginning to be fulfilled. In these three, Jesus performs a miracle, turns over the tables of the cashiers, and speaks of a ritual. They, however, all refer to much greater things: the Lord’s Supper, Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, and Holy Baptism, respectively. It must be noted how the Sacraments surround the single event of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The Sacraments point to the atonement, and the gifts of the atonement are given through the Sacraments. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

**1:43** *next day* – The next day Jesus goes up from the Jordan to Galilee, where he will choose his disciples. The region of Galilee had many fishermen, who were not noted for keeping up on the latest world events. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

*tē hepaursion* This Greek word translated “tomorrow” is common in the New Testament (Mt 27:62; Mk 11:12; Jn 6:22; 12:12; Acts 10:9, 23). The biblical writers give us a tightly sequential narrative. On the preceding day, Andrew was called by Jesus. Andrew’s first act as a disciple was to find Simon and announce, “We have found the [Messiah]” (v 45). The word has kingly connotations, referring to the anointed Judean kings (Psalm 2), who were thought to be God’s sons, his representatives on earth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

*follow me* – Philip is the first one, so far as we know, to whom Jesus said “Be following me.” Very likely all five of these were disciples of the Baptist.

*Philip*. Like Andrew and Peter, he had a Gk name. *Follow Me*. Christ’s powerful call makes Philip His follower and an apostle. (TLSB)

Christ’s powerful call makes Philip His follower and an apostle. (TLSB)

Jesus decides to go to Galilee. He specifically asks Philip to follow him. The imperative *ajkolouvqe moi*, “follow me,” is more than a suggestion, it is a direct command. God doesn’t simply say “come if you want”; he commands us to follow him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

*Akolouthei moi*, “Follow me”: One can only imagine what these words sounded like from the lips of Jesus. I imagine them being filled with compassion, irresistible compassion. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Please note that Jesus found Philip and not the reverse. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

Jesus took the initiative and found Philip, as the Lord takes the initiative with all of us and invites us by His Word to follow Him. (PBC)

**1:44** *Bethsaida*. All five were from Bethsaida which was known as the “house of fish.”

Bethsaida provides a geographical background for the pericope. Moreover, it connects Andrew and Peter of the previous pericope with Philip and Nathanael in this pericope, all from the same location. Furthermore, this tiny geographical location of the first apostles stands in sharp contrast

to their later travels throughout the Mediterranean world. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

**1:45 Philip found** – Philip, in turn, driven by the joy of his new discovery, of the faith of his heart, feels urged to tell his friend Nathanael (or Bartholomew) of his happiness. His words gush forth in a joyful stream: Of whom Moses wrote in the Law and the prophets, Him have we found. He had the right understanding, His faith was firmly based upon Jesus, known as the son of Joseph, of Nazareth, as the promised Messiah. Philip was well versed in the Old Testament prophecies. He referred to Moses and the prophets as having given a clear picture, in unmistakable prophecies, of Christ. And the antitype, the fulfillment of the prophecies, Philip found in Jesus of Nazareth. His knowledge was not yet perfect, but was fully sufficient for his purpose, that of bringing another man to his Master. (Kretzmann)

*Nathanael* – In Hebrew this name means “gift of God.” Nathanael’s guilelessness is a gift of God, so is his confession later. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

Probably Bartholomew, paired with Phillip in the other Gospels (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:14; cf. Acts 1:13). (TLSB)

*in the Law about whom the prophets wrote* – cf Lk 24:44); another way of referring to the OT. *Nazareth*. Jesus’ hometown (Mt 4:13; Mk 1:9; Lk 1:26; 2:4, 51; 4:16–44). (TLSB)

That the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament prophesied of Jesus is a common theme throughout the New Testament, e.g., Lk 16:31; 24:27. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

Philip based his faith on the sure words of Scripture. (PBC)

*hon egrapsen* (whom . . . wrote about). Philip and Nathanael are Jewish. They know Moses and the prophets. God’s design had already been planted in their hearts. The name Nathanael in Hebrew means “gift of God.” Nathanael’s guilelessness is a gift of God, so is his confession later. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

*son of Joseph*. Not a denial of the virgin birth of Christ (Mt 1:18, 20, 23, 25; Lk 1:35). Joseph was Jesus’ legal, though not his natural, father. (CSB)

*Huion tou Hiōsēph*. Here Jesus is identified with his stepfather, Joseph, not Mary. Does this mean that Joseph is still living? Joseph does not follow Jesus to the cross, but Mary does. Does this mean that Joseph died between this scene and Jesus’ crucifixion? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

**1:46 Nazareth**. A rather obscure town, nowhere mentioned in the OT. It was Jesus’ hometown (13:54–57; see Lk 2:39; 4:16–24; Jn 1:45–46). *He will be called a Nazarene*. These exact words are not found in the OT and probably refer to several OT prefigurations and/or predictions (note the plural, “prophets”) that the Messiah would be despised (e.g., Ps 22:6; Isa 53:3), for in Jesus’ day “Nazarene” was virtually a synonym for “despised” (see Jn 1:45–46). Some hold that in speaking of Jesus as a “Nazarene,” Matthew is referring primarily to the word “Branch” (Hebrew *nešer*) in Isa 11:1. (CSB)

*can anything good come from out of Nazareth* – Five of these disciples were from Bethsaida. Nathanael was from Cana. Nazareth, Bethsaida and Cana were close to each other geographically. But though these six disciples grew up close to Jesus they did not “find” him until the Baptist testified of him or they compared the OT prophecies with what he was until he called them directly. The Word led them to Jesus.

Despite Nathanael’s roots, he is skeptical. He has in his mind what many had thought of Nazareth. Nazareth is a new town and has no reputation of note, unlike Bethlehem, the town from which King David had come. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

John Chrysostom: “His mode of living was ordinary, and His garments not better than those of the many. For He was not girt with a leathern girdle, nor was His raiment of hair, nor did He eat honey and locusts. But He fared like all others, and was present at the feasts of wicked men and publicans, that He might draw them to Him” (NPNF1 14:55). (TLSB)

He scoffs at the possibility that anything good, let alone the Messiah, could come out of Nazareth. This is one more reminder that God calls his children in spite of their weaknesses, not because of their strengths. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

Luther: “Christ chooses as His apostles the poorest and lowliest He can find” (AE 22:192). (TLSB)

*come and see* – Philip did not argue with Nathanael. He merely invited the skeptical Nathanael, as Jesus had invited Andrew and John, to come and see. There is no other way. We can’t argue or force someone into faith in Jesus. We can only show Jesus as He has revealed Himself in His Word and the leave the rest to the Holy Spirit. We today can do no more and must do no less than Philip. We can invite all who will listen: “Come and see.” (PBC)

This is an invitation to discard preconceived notions and to believe in the fulfillment of the OT. (TLSB)

The Jews in general, could not and still cannot do that. The disciples struggled with this until after the resurrection.

The Word of Christ overcomes the weakness and objections of man. "He who candidly examines the evidences of the religion of Christ will infallibly become a believer. No history ever published among men has so many external and internal proofs of authenticity as this has. A man should judge of nothing by first appearances or human prejudices. Who are they who cry out, The Bible is a fable? Those who have never read it, or read it only with the fixed purpose to gainsay it. ...God has mercy on those whose ignorance leads them to form prejudices against the truth; but He confounds those who take them up through envy and malice, and endeavor to communicate them to others. (Kretzmann)

Isaiah 42:1-4, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup> **He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.** <sup>3</sup>A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; <sup>4</sup> he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.”

**1:47, 51** These two verses point back to Jacob in the Old Testament. Jacob deceived his father (Genesis 27) and later had a dream of angels ascending to and descending from heaven (Gen

28:10–17). In contrast, Nathanael is the anti-Jacob in that he is without guile. In addition, Nathanael is promised that he will see the angels ascending from and descending upon Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

**1:47** *an Israelite indeed*. See 2:24–25. (CSB)

Here we find the first demonstration of Jesus’ divine knowledge, giving credence to Philip’s words (vv. 45-46) and verifying the OTs teaching that true Israelites will come to Christ. (TLSB)

*in whom there is no deceit* – *dolos* means “bait” with which to catch fish. The fisher man, by using bait, deceives the fish. Deceit was the characteristic fault of the Jew. Nathanael is not deceitful. Jesus wished to give Nathanael a practical demonstration of the truth of Philip’s words. This man belonged to the small number of those in Israel that were members of God’s people in truth, not merely by carnal descent, but by spiritual knowledge and faith. His hope was in the Messiah and his spiritual kingdom.

Jesus’ response reveals so much of what is in the heart of our Lord. Just as when he graciously demonstrates an awareness of the private life of the woman at the well in John 4, Jesus here reveals a loving knowledge of Nathanael’s heart. Yet he declares that he is *alēthōs Israēlitē en hōi dolos ouk estin*. Grace marks God’s new creation, just as the Gospel writer has already said in v 14. Grace empowers and enables, making men and women new. Eph. 2:8–9 ends with v 10, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” In and through Christ’s grace-filled words, Nathanael is recreated, redesigned for discipleship. There is no water here, but this pericope has baptismal implications. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Jesus says of Nathanael that he is “a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” *dovlo* means simply “deceit” or “guile.” This should not be interpreted to mean that Nathanael was in some way “better” than others. Note that *dovlo* is the same word used in Ps 32:2 in the Septuagint: “Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.” But it is clear that Nathanael doesn’t play games—he doubted that anyone good could come out of Nazareth, and he didn’t try to hide his feelings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

Nathanael will speak the truth about Jesus (v. 49). (TLSB)

**1:48** *fig tree*. Its shade was a favorite place for study and prayer in hot weather. (CSB)

Fig trees are cited both literally and metaphorically throughout the Bible. Sticking to Johannine literature, the apostle saw “the stars of heaven [fall] to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind” (Rev 6:13 NKJV) when the sixth seal was opened. If Nathanael is one of those metaphorical figs, then “the great day of His wrath has come” (Rev 6:17 NKJV) that is, the Day of the Lord is at hand in the incarnate Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 1)

God’s knowledge of us is personal and intimate as seen in Psalm 139. We cannot escape God’s knowledge of us. Sitting under a fig tree meditating, as Nathanael may have been—intensely involved in our job or traveling to foreign countries or staying at home—wherever we are God knows our whereabouts (Ps 139:8). A major theme in St. Augustine’s *Confessions* is God leading him all the way up until the present moment of faith. Ten years after his conversion he writes, “O

God, you have created us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Jesus says, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Fig trees, with their broad leaves, provided shade in the parched areas of Palestine, and sitting under a fig tree was considered to be a prime location for an Israelite to meditate on the Word of God. For example, 1 Ki 4:25 suggests that the greatest peace and prosperity of the Kingdom of Israel was known under kings David and Solomon, when “Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree.” The prophet Micah indicated that in the messianic age “every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid” (Micah 4:4). Thus Nathanael may have understood Jesus’ comments as a claim to his messianic identity. Even so, Martin Luther suggests that Nathanael and the others probably hoped Jesus would be the kind of political Messiah for which many Israelites longed: (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

No, they thought that the son of Joseph would one day sally forth spectacularly, as David and Solomon had done, and place himself over kings and Roman emperors. They placed the Messiah on as high a pedestal as we do an emperor today. Messiah means “the anointed one.” The kings’ heads were anointed with balsam and precious perfumes, as the three ecclesiastical electors today anoint and bedaub the emperor’s back. And now these good fellows wished Christ, the Anointed, to be the foremost king in heaven and on earth and to liberate them from Roman bondage. With such thoughts in mind they exclaimed: “We have found the Messiah!” They meant to say: “Until now we have lived under the yoke of the Romans. But God be praised! Now our Horn of salvation has come, who will manifest himself as a true Judge” (Lk 1:69). But Nathanael proves himself a silly old sheep when he says: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” He wished to imply that if it came from Jerusalem or some other large city of Judea, all this might be credible. (LW 22:188–89) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

Under the hot Mediterranean sun, people commonly sought the refreshing shade of a fig tree, where they meditated and prayed (see 1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4). It was not necessarily a momentous revelation for Jesus to have placed Nathanael under a fig tree. Given Nathanael’s reaction, however, clearly Jesus, by identifying the place and time, also knew the subject of Nathanael’s meditation and prayer. Had he been praying for the Chosen One of Israel to come? Was he meditating on his soul’s eternal well-being? Had he asked to see the fulfillment of God’s prophecies? Whatever it was, Jesus knew. (PBC)

**1:49** *Son of God*. See vv. 14,18,34; 3:16; 20:31. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry Nathanael acknowledged Jesus with this meaningful title; later it was used in mockery (Mt 27:40; cf. Jn 19:7). (CSB)

Nathanael is not only confessing what Jesus is but also what Jesus means for him personally.

The Messiah has a special relationship not only to God but also to God’s holy nation. (TLSB)

*King of Israel*. See 12:13. In Mk 15:32 “Christ” and “King of Israel” are equated. (CSB)

The Son of God is Israel’s royal Messiah. (TLSB)

**1:50** *you will see greater things* – Even though a believer is without deceit, acknowledges the God-man as the Son of God and King of Israel, Jesus is always promising him that he will see greater things. Just think of our many sins, doubts and weaknesses! Even the most brilliant

theologian must listen to this promise from Jesus. The longer he lives the more he must realize his own selfishness and unworthiness but also the wonders of the person, Word and work of Jesus.

**1:51** *truly, truly I say to you* – *aman* always denotes divine, irrevocable Truth.

From Hbr *'aman*; verb meaning “to confirm” (source of Eng “Amen”). Stresses importance of something said. In the Gospels, it is used only by Jesus; in John’s Gospel, it is usually doubled. (TLSB)

*heaven open*. In Jesus’ ministry the disciples will see heaven’s (God’s) testimony to Jesus as plainly as if they heard an announcement from heaven concerning him. (CSB)

Heaven opened in Jacob’s dream at Bethel and also at Jesus’ Baptism. God has revealed and continues to reveal the way to Himself through Jesus, the Word made flesh (1:14; 14:6). (TLSB)

*the angels of God ascending and descending*. As in Jacob’s dream, thus marking Jesus as God’s elect one through whom redemption comes to the world—perhaps identifying Jesus as *the true Israelite* (see v. 47). (CSB)

The meaning is, henceforth you shall see a constant communication established between heaven and the Son of man: The reference is not so much to particular appearances of angels, as to the full and constant communication which the Son of man has with God, and which he gives to each of his disciples in his measure. (CB)

There is now direct communication between God and man, Jesus himself being the Mediator. Something much more beautiful than the ladder of Jacob, Gen. 28, has now unified earth and heaven – the full atonement through the blood of the Savior.

Alluding unmistakably to Jacob’s dream at Bethel when he fled from the anger of Esau (Gen. 28:12), Jesus offered an open heaven as the greater thing He had to give Nathanael and the others. Yes, He was “the Son of God.” Yes, He was “the King of Israel.” And as such He was the only way to get to heaven. In his dream Jacob had seen the angels of God ascending and descending on a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. “I” Jesus was saying, “am the stairway that links heaven and earth.” (PBC)

Jesus describes and then applies to himself what Jacob saw at Bethel (“a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it,” Gen 28:12). The Jews believed that the stone pillow that Jacob had used at Bethel was the “touchstone” on the floor of the Holy of Holies in Herod’s temple. In this statement Jesus claims to be the replacement for the touchstone and all it represented for the Jews. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 3)

*Son of Man*. Jesus’ favorite self-designation. (CSB)

This is a term He used 8 more times in John’s gospel and a total of 55 times in all the gospels. As the Son of Man, Jesus was in essence a human being like us. He had the same emotional makeup, the same facilities, the same physical needs. However, He was also as human being were meant to be from creation, namely, without sin. As the Son of Man He could live the perfect life the rest

of us fail to live and die the death we deserve to die. As the Son of Man He came to win the forgiveness of sins for all people, not just for Israel. (PBC)

**1:35–51** When Jesus calls the first disciples, He reveals Himself to be the Messiah—the Son of God and Son of Man—the way to heaven. Today, people may still question Jesus’ invitation to follow Him. Yet, Jesus overcomes unbelief through the Gospel testimony and graciously opens the way to heaven through His Word. • Son of God, give me the strength I need to follow You daily and to testify that You are the only Savior. Amen. (TLSB)