

2A. PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

- 1B. From Matthew: Joseph's genealogy, Matthew 1.1-17.

Examining this genealogy in a verse-by-verse fashion, we will draw conclusions along the way.

- 1C. Verse 1: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

- 1D. It is immediately seen that Matthew aggressively sought the attention of the Jewish reader. Who else would be stimulated by the words we have just read? The typical Gentile reader would ask, "Who were David and Abraham?"

- 1E. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ" provokes the Jewish mind, schooled in Old Testament Scripture, to think of Genesis 5.1, "This *is* the book of the generations of Adam." As Adam was the head of the human race of sinful men, Jesus Christ is the Head of a new race of redeemed sinners.

- 2E. "Jesus Christ" would certainly open the eyes of any Jewish reader. In English, this name might seem unimpressive, but in Greek, Matthew was saying, "Jesus the Messiah" or "Jesus the Anointed One." He was calling Jesus the Messiah of God. This, then, was the One the Jewish people had been waiting for for so many centuries... the Son of God!

- 3E. Next, there is the phrase "son of David." David was Israel's glorious and godly king of the previous millennium, the king to whom God had promised a perpetual throne upon which his descendant would forever sit and reign. To refer to someone as the "son of David," then, was to ascribe to him the right to reign and rule over Israel as the sovereign king. What a revelation to the Jewish people who had suffered the indignities of foreign domination for all those centuries.

- 4E. Finally, Matthew wrote, "the son of Abraham." Jewish people felt Abraham was the most important man ever to live. He was the man to whom God made the promises and with whom God had established covenants. He was the friend of God. He was the father of the faithful. He began the nation of Israel. He was the foremost patriarch. A man could be nothing in Israel, for Israel, or to Israel, unless he was a son of Abraham.

- 2D. Having captured the attention of all Jewish readers whose eyes fell on the opening words, Matthew then proceeded with the genealogy of Joseph, the stepfather of

the Lord Jesus Christ. Or more properly, this is the legal genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, this is the genealogy that will forever establish the Lord Jesus Christ's legal right to sit upon the throne of His father David.

2C. Verse 2: "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren"

- 1D. I find it quite interesting to note who Matthew left out of this genealogy. There is no mention of Ishmael, the first-born of Abraham. There is no mention of Esau, Isaac's son who was Jacob's twin.
- 2D. The reason for this is quite simple. Those men were not participants in the covenants and promises. So far as a relationship with God is concerned and any contractual obligations that God freely entered into with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Ishmael and Esau were outsiders. Ishmael and Esau were not ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3D. The Judas mentioned here is, of course, the son of Jacob, translating his name from the Greek word. In the Old Testament, his name appears as Judah, translating his name from the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament. His descendants became the tribe of Judah, the largest and most prominent of Israel's twelve tribes. It was from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Judah mentioned here, that Jacob predicted the Messiah would come. This prediction is found in Genesis 49.9-10:
 - ⁹ Judah *is* a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?
 - ¹⁰ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

3C. Verse 3: "And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;"

- 1D. It is in this verse that we are struck with the fact that our Lord's ancestry was not spotless. Phares and Zara were the bastard twins Judah begat by his stepdaughter, the widow, Tamar, when she posed as a prostitute, and he took her not knowing her identity.
- 2D. Mistake #1 was being joined with an harlot, which is a sin, according to First Corinthians 6.15-20. Mistake #2 was the incest this harlotry made possible.

3D. Despite all of this sin, Phares, whose conception is recorded in Genesis chapter 38, was an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4C. Verses 4 and 5:

- ⁴ And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;
- ⁵ And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

Verse 5 mentions some very important people. It also mentions someone not thought of as important, but who is.

1D. Look first at Rachab, whose name in the Old Testament is Rahab. Mentioned in Joshua chapter 2 as the Jericho prostitute who aided the spies sent in by Joshua, Rahab was very helpful in the defeat of Jericho, from a human perspective.

1E. In Hebrews 11.31 we see her behavior remembered as an act of faith. To do what she did, she must have placed her faith, trust, and personal safety in the hands of the God of Israel.

2E. Thus, we see a beautiful example illustrating that even the sins of a Gentile harlot are dealt with by God's provision for sins.

2D. The second important person mentioned is Booz, seen as Boaz in the book of Ruth. The son of Rahab, the harlot, he was the great-grandfather of Israel's great King David.

1E. It is really quite interesting to note that the book of Ruth strongly suggests that Boaz was considerably older than the Moabite widow named Ruth, yet he was unmarried.

2E. Even though men did tend to marry at an older age, generally, during that era and in that culture, I wonder if that was the only reason why Boaz was unmarried at the time Ruth entered his life.

3E. Do you suppose Boaz was unmarried because the fathers of the Bethlehem girls thought their little girls too good to marry the son of a prostitute? I think it is quite possible. Or, he could have married, sired children, and became a widower.

- 4E. At any rate, I rather like to think that the God I serve, Who is rich in mercy, brought together the son of a prostitute and a woman who descended from the incestuous Lot and his daughter, addressed their sin problem and dealt with it, and gave them a pure, and holy, and altogether lovely marriage.
- 5E. It was this man and his wife who became links in the chain of the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3D. The third important person is Ruth. As already mentioned, she became the wife of Boaz. But there are other important facts that would especially appeal to the Jewish reader of Matthew's Gospel.
 - 1E. We read in Ruth 1.1 that Ruth had married a Jewish man who died in the land of Moab. We read that Ruth herself was from Moab. This might not seem significant at first glance, until you realize the history of Moab.
 - 2E. From Genesis chapter 19, we know that Abraham had a nephew named Lot, who in turn had two surviving daughters. Remember, Lot and his two daughters were rescued by two angels from the city of Sodom just prior to its destruction by God. After that rescue, the Bible informs us, Lot became drunk on two successive nights and engaged in incestuous sexual intercourse with his two daughters.
 - 3E. The product of this abominable act with one daughter was the man who founded the nation of Moab. Eventually, for this and other reasons involving extremely serious sin, God decreed that Moabites never enter the congregation of Israel.
 - 4E. When Ruth's first husband violated the Mosaic Law and illegally and sinfully married her, he brought her into the congregation of Israel. What a wonderful irony that this sin on his part eventually worked out to God's purpose and glory.
 - 5E. When her first husband died, widow Ruth (and the Jewish inheritance left to her by her first husband) married Boaz, and they, joined together and producing offspring, became ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 6E. Do not think God was at all fooled in this, because He was not. No matter what kind of sins foolish humans involve themselves in, God invariably works things out to His personal glory. So, woe unto Ruth's first husband for disobeying God's command, regardless of how God eventually worked things out.

5D. Though we have dealt with the three obviously important persons in this verse, there is a fourth worth noting. And his behavior is, or seems to have been, the very essence of godliness.

1E. Notice Salmon. What did he do? He married a Canaanite prostitute from Jericho. We can look at Salmon's behavior in two ways: You can imagine him to be a lusty individual who thought that marrying a prostitute would be a wonderful way of satisfying his lustful desires. Or you can imagine him as a tender and forgiving man who left a legacy of forgiveness and godly forgetfulness.

2E. Take note of Titus 1.15:

"Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Using this verse as justification, I choose to see Salmon in a good light.

3E. Consider, also, First Corinthians 13.4-7:

4 Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Using this passage to structure my personal attitude, I again choose to see Salmon in a good light.

4E. I choose to think that God gave Rahab a wonderful husband, a man who personified Ephesians 4.32:

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

5E. God granted to Rahab forgiveness and so, I choose to believe, did Salmon. How many husbands and wives are unwilling to forgive in like manner? Such forgiveness is the secret of a great marriage. Perhaps husbands and wives who are unwilling to forgive have never experienced God's forgive-

ness. Remember Ephesians 4.32? Forgive, even as God has forgiven you, spouse.

6C. Verse 6: “And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias;”

- 1D. Do you remember the great sin of David in taking Bathsheba, the wife of another man, in adultery? Do you remember, also, that to cover up his sin of adultery when he found her carrying his child, David committed murder by arranging the death of Bathsheba’s husband in battle?
- 2D. If you read Second Samuel 23.39, you will see that Uriah the Hittite, the first husband of Bathsheba, the one David arranged to be slain to cover his sin of adultery, was one of David’s mighty men. That is, he was one of thirty-three men who demonstrated time and time again his loyalty to David by risking his life, by saving David’s life on countless occasions, and by obeying his slightest wish as their own command.
- 3D. The mighty men were men of such caliber that when David was fighting the Philistines in a battle, they broke through the enemy lines and went into David’s hometown of Bethlehem to fetch water for him, simply because he had reminisced about the wonderful taste of the water at Bethlehem. They risked their lives to get him a drink of water!
- 4D. Can you imagine, then, the kind of treachery it was to repay such devotion as Uriah had by taking his wife in adultery while Uriah was fighting and risking his life for his king? And then having him killed to cover things up? Is it any wonder David received no loyalty from his children and numerous subordinates, after he had demonstrated no loyalty to Uriah?
- 5D. What a wonderful bloodline the Lord of glory had prepared for Himself. So far, there has been Ruth, the Moabite descendant of incest; Perez, another descendant of incest; prostitution by Tamar and Rahab; and now adultery and murder. Not to mention the non-Jewish blood in the family tree.
- 6D. Could any Jewish reader object to the bloodline so far? No! So far, we are only to David and Solomon, but we have included Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jewish people were extremely proud of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. How could any Jewish reader possibly complain about the ancestry of the Lord Jesus Christ so far? He could not. But neither could he brag about it.

7D. So far, this genealogy reveals to the Jewish reader not only a great deal about the Lord Jesus Christ, so far as His legal right to reign is concerned, but it also reflects to the reader a great deal about himself and his nation, so far as their history of moral and spiritual purity and piety is concerned.

7C. Verses 7-11:

7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;
8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;
9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;
10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;
11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

1D. The Ezekias of verse 10 is the good king Hezekiah of the Old Testament, one of the most godly kings Judah ever had.

2D. The Manasses of verse 10 is the infamous butcher son of Hezekiah, whose name appears as Manasseh in the Old Testament. He was known for slaughtering his own children by passing them through the fire in worship of the heathen god, Molech. That is not much different than slaughtering your own children by passing them through the abortion suction tube in worship of the heathen god of materialism and selfishness, is it?

3D. Manasses was also infamous in Jewish tradition as the man who ordered the prophet Isaiah stuffed into a hollow log and then had the log cut in half, while Isaiah was still alive, thus ending the life of one of God's choicest servants in a most brutal way.

4D. By the way, there is some evidence Manasses did repent of his sin, and maybe God forgave him, though a consequence of his life of rampaging sin eventually led his nation to Babylonian captivity. Perhaps his soul was saved and heaven-bound when he died.

8C. Verse 12: "And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;"

1D. The Jechonias of this verse gets us into very interesting territory as we draw closer to Joseph, the stepfather of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament refers to Jechonias by three different names. He is known as Jehoiachin, and in the book of Jeremiah is called Jeconiah and Coniah.

2D. Because of his extreme brutality and wickedness, God pronounced a judgment on him, recorded in Jeremiah 22.24-30:

- 24 As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;
25 And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand *of them* whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.
26 And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.
27 But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.
28 *Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure?* wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?
29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.
30 Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man *that* shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

3D. Thus far in Joseph's genealogy, we have followed a blood line that was both legally and by blood-right entitled to the throne of David. All of this changed with the pronouncement upon Jeconiah. Although he did sire children, God denied his descendants the right to sit upon the throne of Israel. This seems to place God in an apparent bind.

4D. How do you reconcile the fact that a man has a legal right, but is denied the blood-right to the throne? From this point on in Joseph's genealogy the men listed had the legal right to sit upon Israel's throne, but were denied God's divine permission to sit upon the throne because they descended from Jeconiah.

9C. Verses 13-16:

- 13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;
14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;
15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;
16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

1D. Notice what verse 16 does not say that would be expected. It does not say that Joseph was the father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2D. It only says that he was “the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”

10C. Verse 17: “So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.”

1D. Matthew divides Christ’s stepfather’s genealogy into thirds; Abraham to David, David to the Babylonian captivity, then the Babylonian captivity to Christ.

2D. Some comments about this genealogy by way of conclusion are appropriate:

- #1 This genealogy is not complete. Matthew did not list the names of every person in the family tree of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was neither desirable nor necessary as a means of establishing Christ’s credibility as the legal ruler over Israel.
- #2 It is indisputable. The Temple kept genealogical records. Matthew might even have obtained his information from the Temple records. At any rate, no Jewish person could or did dispute the right to the throne that the Lord Jesus Christ held. Through His stepfather, Joseph, He had the legal right to the throne of His father David. Thus, Matthew’s purpose in giving the genealogy was fulfilled.
- #3 The genealogy was humble, and our Lord took it for Himself. Proud in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to be sure. But in taking Ruth, Rahab, Bathsheba, Tamar and others to be His ancestors, the Lord Jesus Christ was doing what Paul described in Philippians 2.7: “But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” Thank God He did that.
- #4 Carson & Beale write,

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“More interesting than the men are the women in Jesus’ genealogy. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba (“Uriah’s wife” [1: 6]) were Gentiles but also women who were under suspicion, rightly or wrongly, of illicit sexual relations (see, respectively, Gen. 38; Josh. 2; Ruth 3; 2 Sam. 11).”¹

¹ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (p. 3). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

2B. From Mark: Silence

- 1C. Why was Mark silent concerning preliminary information about the Lord Jesus Christ, His past, His genealogy, etc.?
- 2C. Possibly because, being written to a slave-owning Roman world, the genealogy of God's Perfect Servant was inappropriate for reaching them with the Gospel. After all, what would a Roman want to know about the genealogy of a servant, which is how Christ is portrayed in this Gospel?
- 3C. Or, possibly, there is no genealogy in this Gospel because, being written to a Gentile world, Christ's ancestry would be meaningless to anyone who had little or no knowledge of the Old Testament revelation.
- 4C. Finally, it is possible that, since Mark's Gospel is an action book, facts without action would be somewhat out of place in this action-packed history of Christ's earthly ministry.

3B. From Luke, Luke 1.1-25.

Prologue and annunciation of John the Baptist.

1C. Prologue, Luke 1.1-4:

- ¹ Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,
- ² Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;
- ³ It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,
- ⁴ That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

There are four things that Luke told readers in his prologue:

- He named his subject,
- He gave his sources of information,
- He described the method of his work,
- And he revealed the purpose of his writing.

1D. In verse 2, Luke announced his subject with this phrase:

“Which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the Word.”

1E. Here, at the beginning of the account, we see Luke’s ultimate comment on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2E. It is obvious from reading Luke’s account that his is a history of Christ’s earthly life and ministry.

3E. Yet, when writing an advance summation of what his Gospel message is about, he used the phrase “the word.”

4E. We will learn more about that phrase in John’s Gospel, but suffice it to say this: To Luke, the Lord Jesus Christ is quite simply God.

2D. Next, Luke gave us the sources of his information. Those who, from the beginning, were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word.

1E. Notice that he did not, here, seem to imply that he was himself an eyewitness, or even a minister of the Word, from the beginning.

2E. For sources of information, Luke must have relied on others who were on the scene as the events unfolded.

3D. Third, Luke described the method of his work:

“Even as they delivered them unto us.”

1E. What seems plausible is that Luke gathered much of the information from his Gospel account during the time the Apostle Paul was in custody in Jerusalem and in Caesarea.

2E. He would have had time and opportunity to do this since Paul spent about two years imprisoned in Caesarea Philippi.²

3E. Examine a Bible map to see how centrally located Caesarea Maritima is to the region where the Lord Jesus Christ spent His growing-up years and the years of His earthly ministry.

² Acts 21.27-24.27

- 4E. It is not difficult to imagine how Luke would have traveled back and forth, visiting all the people who were still alive who had witnessed the Lord's ministry and had seen His great works.
- 5E. How excited he must have been as he sat in John's house, visiting with Mary, the mother of our Lord, listening to her talk about her sinless Son and Savior.

4D. Finally, Luke revealed the purpose of his writing, 1.3-4:

- ³ It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,
 - ⁴ That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.
- 1E. He wanted to reaffirm, in the mind and heart of Theophilus, the things this man had already been taught.
- 2E. He wanted to strengthen the man's faith and conviction.
- 3E. He wanted to give this man reliable facts about his Lord and Savior's earthly ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection.
- 4E. He understood, and we should also understand, that faith is properly rooted in fact. For that reason, our study of the "Life and Lessons Of The Lord Jesus Christ" will strongly emphasize application, but will major on the facts presented in God's Word.

2C. Annunciation of John the Baptist, Luke 1.5-25.

- 1D. Verse 5: "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth."
- 1E. "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea"
 - 1F. The Herod mentioned in this verse is also known as Herod the Great, the son of Antipater. He was born in 62 B. C. and began to rule portions of Palestine when appointed to governorship over Galilee in 47 B. C. Then, later on, he was promoted.

- 2F. Herod was not of Jewish descent, but was Idumean, which is to say that he was an Edomite, or a descendant of Esau. The Jews are descendants of Jacob, Esau's brother. Genesis 25.21-23 records the beginning of the animosity these two lineages had for each other.
 - 3F. Herod was a vicious and brutal psychopath who slaughtered anyone who he imagined to be plotting to overthrow him.
 - 4F. His rule over the Jews was merciless, and they hated him for it.
 - 5F. This period of time Luke brings us to was not a pleasant time in Jewish history.
- 2E. However, it was in this bleak period that there was "a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth."
- 1F. What was the course of Abia? In Israel there were priests. These descendants of Moses' brother, the first high priest Aaron, had very special duties and responsibilities. But after the Temple was built by Solomon, and there was no further need to carry the Tabernacle furniture around, as in the days of old, the other descendants of Levi who were not direct descendants of Aaron had very little to do, because there were so many of them. To solve this problem, and allow each Levite to have a part in the Temple worship, King David devised a solution in First Chronicles 24. Basically, he divided all of the Levites into 24 groups, called courses. These courses took turns, one every twenty-four months, ministering at the Temple and doing service for and to the Aaronic priests. Zacharias served in the course of Abia, or Abijah, as it is found in the Old Testament, the eighth course.
 - 2F. What about Zacharias and Elizabeth? Zacharias means "Jehovah remembers," and comes from the shortened word "JAH" and a Hebrew word for "remembers." Elizabeth means "oath of God." She was a descendant of Aaron, which made Zacharias a double-blessed husband in Jewish minds. So, think of the kind of parents these two might have had to give their children such names as these. As well, remember that names given to children were significant. I rather suspect that the fathers of these two members of the priestly tribe were Godly people, who knew that "Jehovah remembers" and that the "oath of God" was important.

2D. Verses 6-7:

- 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.
- 7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

1E. Verse 6 shows that both of them were godly people, who strived not only to obey the Law of Moses, but also to maintain a good testimony before the people. This was unusual during this period, when the priesthood was largely corrupt.

2E. “The phrase “commandments and regulations” (*entolais kai dikaiomasin*) reflects biblical expressions (Gen. 26: 5; Num. 36: 13; Deut. 4: 40; cf. 1 Kings 8: 61).”³

3E. Yet, in spite of their holiness of life, they were childless. The Bible says that they “both were now well stricken in years.” This suggests, according to some historians, that they were around 60 years old, which, for a woman, is usually well past childbearing age.

3D. Verses 8-10

- 8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest’s office before God in the order of his course,
- 9 According to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.
- 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

1E. Here, Luke sets the stage for what is about to happen to Zacharias.

2E. Verses 8 and 9 are very informative.

1F. From what we have already learned, we know that Zacharias and the rest of his course are taking their turn at serving around the Temple.

2F. Because there were so many priests in each course, the privilege of burning incense was determined by drawing lots. And the honor was allowed only once during each priest’s lifetime.

³ Beale and Carson, page 257.

- 3F. Therefore, this records Zacharias offering incense in the holy place of the Temple for the first and only time of his life. Temple translates ναον, “The word *naos* refers to the place outside the holy of holies.”⁴
- 4F. While he was within the place outside the holy of holies ministering and praying (for that is what incense is a picture of, prayer), the rest of the people (priests and Levites), according to verse 10, were offering their prayers outside the place outside the holy of holies.
- 5F. Their attitude of posture during prayer was probably on their knees, bent over with their arms outstretched and having their faces all the way down to the ground.
- 6F. Thus, we picture the entire scene as being filled with reverence and an attitude of worship as Zacharias burned incense and offered prayers as a mediator for his nation.

4D. Verses 11-12:

- ¹¹ And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.
 - ¹² And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.
 - 1E. What Zacharias was supposed to do was offer or burn the incense on the altar of incense and then pray for the nation in a posture of worship.
 - 2E. But, before he could bow himself, he saw an angel standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Knowing the arrangement of the furniture in the holy place, he was facing west, looking directly toward the altar of incense; the angel was a little to his right, in the northwest corner of the holy place.
 - 3E. Seeing the angel, “he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.” In a small and dark room where no one else was supposed to be, and illuminated only by a small seven-flamed menorah, his reaction was reasonable.
- 5D. Verse 13: “But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”

⁴ Ibid.

- 1E. Before the priest could do anything other than fear, before he could run, before he could even speak, the angel said, “Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”
 - 2E. Now we see, in this one instance, why Zacharias was fearful and why human priests descended from Aaron must be inferior to our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 3E. Zacharias was in the holy place, not to pray for himself, but to pray for his nation. But being human, he apparently offered up prayers to God for the desires of his own heart: “thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son.”
 - 4E. However, when the Lord Jesus intercedes for us, He needs not pray for Himself, but only for us.
 - 5E. Was God displeased with Zacharias praying as he prayed? I think not. After all, the angel was dispatched to inform him that his prayer was going to be answered, and his son’s name was to be “John.” John means “the grace of God.”
 - 6E. Imagine the message God gave in these three people’s names. Jehovah remembers. The oath of God. The grace of God. During a time of spiritual darkness when it seemed that He had forgotten, Jehovah remembered. When it seemed as though there was nothing else to cling to, there was the oath of God, who cannot lie. And what was required was supplied by the grace of God.
- 6D. Verses 14 and 15:
- ¹⁴ And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.
 - ¹⁵ For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.
- 1E. Their son John was quite unusual in that he was one of the very few human beings ever born whose name was chosen by God.
 - 2E. His unusual life and ministry would result in not only his mother and father having joy and gladness, but in many rejoicing at his birth. The angel gave several reasons for his statement.

- 3E. “For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.” We know that no man is great in God’s sight until and unless God makes him great. This means God had already marked out John and his life as something special in God’s purpose and plan.
- 4E. “and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.” Though this phrase does not dogmatically state it, it strongly implies that John would be one of only three men in history ordained by God to be Nazarites from birth to death.
- 1F. Let me explain the concept of a Nazarite. Notice the difference in words. Our Lord was a Nazarene, not a Nazarite. The two words have very different meanings.
- 2F. A Nazarite, according to Numbers chapter 6, was to be a man under a special vow of separation unto the LORD. During the days of his vow, three things were to be true in his life: He was, #1, forbidden to cut his hair, #2, forbidden to eat or drink anything of the grape, whether it be raisins, grape juice, or wine, and #3, he was forbidden to touch anything dead.
- 3F. Normally, one would take a Nazaritic vow for a period of time, but three men were ordained of God to be Nazarites for life: Samson, Samuel, and apparently John.
- 4F. That the Lord Jesus Christ was not a Nazarite proves that He had short hair, not the kind of long hair seen in most pictures of Him. Except for a Nazarite, it was a reproach and shame for a man to have long hair.
- 5E. “and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”
- 1F. This passage gives many people problems. They ask, “Was he really Spirit-filled from his birth?” Yes.
- 2F. Don’t you have to be regenerated to have the Spirit and then to be Spirit-filled? Yes.
- 3F. We know that all men and women are sinners by nature. Further, we know that the offspring of the human race are also sinners in need of salvation.

- 4F. For John to be Spirit-filled and also conceived as a sinful person suggests that sometime whilst in his mother's womb he was regenerated.
- 5F. You say, "How could that happen?" I do not know. You will have to take it up with God.
- 7D. Verse 16: "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God."
- 1E. This verse is a sad commentary. It shows the sad spiritual state of the children of Israel. But it also shows what God planned to do through this one life.
- 2E. "The language of 'turning' or 'returning' to God is used in the OT for the repentance of God's people (Deut. 30: 2; 1 Sam. 7: 3; Hos. 3: 5; 7: 10; cf. Acts 15: 19)."⁵
- 8D. Verse 17:
- "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
- 1E. This verse is the key to our understanding of the ministry of John the Baptist.
- 2E. "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias."

What does this phrase mean?

- 1F. Who is the "him" referred to in this verse? It is "the Lord their God" in verse 16. But who does John go before? Christ. Yet another of the many, many indications of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2F. To understand the rest of the phrase, let's connect it to the phrase which follows it.
- 3E. Turn to Malachi 4.5-6:

⁵ Ibid., page 258.

- 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:
- 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

These are the last two verses of the last Old Testament book. Notice how similar Malachi 4.5-6 and Luke 1.17 are.

- 1F. “‘To turn the hearts of parents to their children’ (epistrepsai kardias pateron epi tekna) clearly alludes to Mal. 4: 6 (3: 24 MT; 3: 23 LXX), although the wording is not exact.”⁶
- 2F. In considering these two passages, why do you think the verses are not exactly the same? Did the angel misquote Scripture? Not likely.
- 3F. Malachi 4.5-6 is a prophecy predicting the ministry of Elijah the prophet during the Tribulation period, just before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. My persuasion is that one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 will be Elijah coming down from Heaven.
- 4F. In Luke 1.17, God’s angel, duly authorized, slightly alters that prophecy to make another prediction concerning the First Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5F. As Elijah will have the honor of preparing the way for the Lord’s Second Coming and preparing the people for His glorious return, so John the Baptist, in the spirit and power of Elijah, will perform a similar office and function for the First Coming of Christ to earth from Heaven.

9D. Verses 18-20:

- 18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.
- 19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.
- 20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

⁶ Ibid.

We will look at each of these three verses separately.

- 1E. First verse 18. What do you think God would think of you if you had just prayed for a miracle and then an angel from God said you were going to get the miracle, and you say, “How do I know I’m going to get it?”
- 1F. Would you not think that the presence of this angel in the holy place of the Temple would be proof enough that God was going to provide a miracle? That in itself is a miracle.
- 2F. But the miracle confirming a miracle is not enough for Zacharias. He wanted further proof. He was like so many of us who ask God for something. Then, through the miracle of the Word of God, He tells us our prayers will be answered, and still we do not believe Him.
- 3F. “Zechariah’s response, “How do I know that this is so?” (*kata ti gnosomai touto*), is almost identical to Abraham’s reaction to the promise of God (Gen. 15: 8), while the second half of the verse parallels Gen. 18: 11 (cf. 17: 17).”⁷
- 2E. In verse 19, the angel identified himself as Gabriel.
- 1F. Gabriel means strength of God or power of God. Imagine asking a being whose name is “power of God” if God is powerful enough to give a child to an aged couple? Should not a Jewish priest have remembered that God gave a child to an aged couple whose names were Abraham and Sarah, two people every Jew would be familiar with?
- 2F. Gabriel is a very special angel. He stands in the very presence of God, an awesome privilege for this great messenger of God. Remember him from Daniel chapters 8 and 9 as the special envoy from God to Daniel, the man greatly beloved of God.
- 3F. Because Zacharias did not believe the words of Gabriel that God would answer his prayers, because his speech was not the speech of faith and his hearing was not the hearing of belief, he was struck dumb. He remained dumb until the birth of the Baptist. This was for not believing the words of God’s messenger.

⁷ Ibid., pages 258-259.

- 3E. Keep in mind that everything that transpired in verses 11 through 21 happened inside the Temple in the holy place, where no one else could possibly have witnessed anything that happened.

10D. Verses 21-23:

- ²¹ And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.
²² And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.
²³ And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

- 1E. Imagine the worry those outside must have felt. After all, when the priest approached holy ground he did so at the risk of his life. And when the high priest went into the most holy place he went in with a rope tied around his leg, lest he sin before God and die and have to be dragged out with the rope, since no man would dare unauthorized entry.

- 2E. So, when Zacharias did emerge from the holy place and could not speak they knew, by his gestures and motions, that he had seen a vision.

- 3E. After all the commotion died down and the course of Abia had finished their month's duties, Zacharias returned to his home and to his wife Elizabeth.

11D. Verses 24-25:

- ²⁴ And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,
²⁵ Thus hath the Lord dealt with *me* in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

- 1E. "The mentioning of the deliverance from disgrace recalls the words of Rachel ("God has taken away my reproach" [Gen. 30: 23; cf. 21: 6]), although Rachel's reaction came after the birth of her son and not immediately after conception."⁸

- 2E. By "hid herself," Luke seems to be indicating that Elizabeth did not inform anyone that she was pregnant. With the kind of flowing robes and garments

⁸ Ibid., page 259.

women wore in those days, it might very well have been possible to be a considerable time pregnant, especially since she was postmenopausal, with no one except a personal maid to notice that she was with child until she told them.

- 3E. Also, notice the effect. This woman, as old as she was, apparently presented herself at just the right time to achieve the maximum effect and bring the greatest glory to God.
- 4E. Through her pregnancy God took her reproach away among men. How different society is today. How greatly distorted has mankind's thinking become to consider a barren woman better off than the fruitful womb. How very alien to God's thinking that kind of notion is. Amen?
- 5E. This brings to a close Luke's introductory remarks to his history of Christ's life and lessons, which included his opening remarks to Theophilus and the annunciation of John the Baptist.

4B. From John

John's introduction is the most theological of the introductions found in the Gospels, and can easily be broken down into Christ's relationship to all things, John's record about the Word, the response of men to the Word, and the revelation of the Word to men.

"From the very beginning and throughout the prologue of his book, the Fourth Evangelist operates within a scriptural, salvation-historical framework... In his references to the OT John spans the entire range from explicit quotations to verifiable allusions and thematic connections. In keeping with John's purpose statement, Jesus is identified as the Christ and Son of God and is set in relation to the major figures in Israel's history, whether Abraham, Jacob, or Moses, as well as the Prophet, by citations of or allusions to Scripture."⁹

Explicit Old Testament Quotations in John's Gospel

"There are fourteen explicit OT quotations in John's Gospel, nine in the first part (chaps. 1–12), five in the second part (chaps. 13–21)... Structurally, the most significant OT quotations are found at the end of the first part in 12:38, 40. Many of the numerous allusions and a considerable amount of the OT symbolism relate in one way or another to various Jewish reli-

⁹ Ibid., pages 415-416.

gious festivals. In terms of distribution, seven quotations (or 50 percent) are from Psalms; four from Isaiah; two from Zechariah; one from the Pentateuch.”¹⁰

Four observations from John’s introduction:

1C. First, in John 1.1-5 we are told His *relationship* to all things.

1D. First, relationships related to His person, 1.1-2:

- ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- ² The same was in the beginning with God.

1E. Statements of Christ’s eternity.

1F. In verse 1, “In the beginning was the Word....”

“The term ‘the Word’ conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (cf. Ps. 19: 1–4). The Genesis creation account provides ample testimony to the effectiveness of God’s word: he speaks, and things come into being (Gen. 1: 3, 9; cf. 1: 11, 15, 24, 29–30). Both psalmists and prophets portray God’s word in close-to-personified terms (Ps. 33: 6; 107: 20; 147: 15, 18; Isa. 55: 10–11), but only John claims that this word has appeared in space-time history as an actual person, Jesus Christ (1: 14, 17).”¹¹

There is no definite article in front of the word “beginning” in the Greek New Testament. The reason for the lack of the Greek definite article in front of the word “beginning” is because John is not admitting that there ever has been a beginning. “The beginning” is that point in time before which nothing existed previously. But since there has never been such a point in time, John refers not to “the beginning” but to the concept of beginning. John wanted his readers to understand that no matter what their mind conceived of as “a beginning,” not for one minute acknowledging that there has ever been such a thing as “the beginning,” the Word was already there. “Go as far back in time as is possible,” John means, “and you will always find that the Word

¹⁰ Ibid., pages 414-415.

¹¹ Ibid., pages 420-421.

exists.” Thus, we see in this first phrase of John’s Gospel the absolute and undeniable assertion of the eternity of the Word.

2F. In verse 2, “The same was in the beginning with God.”

How long do you suppose God has existed? Would you assert that God is about as eternal a being as is possible? I rather think so. Verse 2 indicates that as long as God has been in existence, the Word has also existed “with” God. Note the term “with” because we will soon look at it more carefully. However, to conclude the thought, verse 1 and verse 2 both contain statements showing the eternity of the Word.

2E. Next, statements of the equality of the Word.

1F. In verse 1, “... and the Word was with God....”

That word “with” is the Greek preposition *προς* which carries the meaning of being toward something or facing something. The implications of this preposition are not lost on either John or the Holy Spirit. The message conveyed is that whatever rank the Word has, the Word approaches and stands, as it were, face to face with the Monarch of the Universe. This cannot be true unless there is a direct equality of both rank and power between the Word and God.

2F. Also, in verse 1, “... and the Word was God.”

The Jehovah’s Witnesses vainly attempt to convince themselves and others that since the Greek language has no indefinite article, such as our words “a” and “an,” they are justified in adding the word “a” to their perverse imitation of Scripture that they call “The New World Translation.” They do this because they maintain that this phrase is not trying to teach that the Word is God, but that the Word is a god. Their false logic fails in the following way: In the previous phrase, “and the Word was with God,” there is a definite article before the word translated “God,” *τον θεον*. Why is this fact interesting? Because it establishes that John was not asserting anything about the relationship between the “Word” and a god, but the relationship between the “Word” and God! Therefore, when these two phrases are read together, in the order in which the words are written in the Greek New Testament, they read like this: “and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.” You cannot say it any plainer than that. “The Word was with God and the Word was God.”

3F. Verse 2: “The same was in the beginning with God.”

The word “with,” being the preposition *προς*, means being toward or to when in the accusative case. It must be asked: How can this be unless the Word is of equal rank with God? To show you that I am not teaching heresy, note that in John 10.30, the Lord Jesus Christ declares, “I and my father are one.”

3E. Finally, the statement about the Lord Jesus Christ’s essence.

“... and the Word was God.”

As I mentioned previously, the word order in Greek is, “and God was the Word.” This statement, along with passages such as Isaiah 9.6 and Hebrews 1.8, convinces the truly honest inquirer that whatever else the Bible says about this “Word” John refers to, the Bible asserts that the Word is God. Not a god... God!

2D. In verses 1 and 2, John dealt with relationships related to His person. In verse 3, John dealt with relationships related to His power.

1E. The phrase, “All things were made by him,” points to the nature of His power.

1F. Notice the *scope* of the power: “All things”

This, of course, excludes from the possibility of thought that He Himself could possibly have been created, for if He Himself was created at any time, then all things were not really made by Him.

2F. Notice the *strength* of His power: “made by Him”

Does this remind you of some familiar verses in the Bible?

Genesis 1.1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Colossians 1.16: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or

principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”

Hebrews 1.2: “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

Hebrews 11.3: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

3F. Now notice the *source* of His power: “by Him”

To be grammatically correct, a pronoun must agree, in both case and number, with its antecedent. That is, a pronoun must be of the same case and match whether the noun it has replaced is either singular or plural. Thus, grammar shows us that the pronoun “Him” can only properly refer to the “Word.” This means that the Word of God has no other source of creative power than Himself.

2E. Next, we see the necessity of His power:

“and without Him was not anything made that was made”

1F. This negative statement asserts that no creative act of God was possible apart from the Word, Who is God.

2F. Again, the Greek text is most emphatic. Berry’s *Interlinear New Testament*, which shows the Greek words alongside the English words, with the King James Version words in the margin, reads this way:

“and without Him came into being not even one [thing] which has come into being.”¹²

3F. Consider this: The Word spoken of by John is it not Jesus Christ? Yes. How, then, can Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that Jesus Christ is a created being if nothing, not even one thing, can be created except by Him?

¹² George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear KJV: Parallel New Testament In Greek And English*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House), page 240.

4F. Truly, we must bow down before our Lord Jesus to worship and praise Him as the true God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

3E. One final note related to this verse.

1F. Notice, again, the pronouns used in this verse. The word “him” appears twice. This reveals, contrary to some people’s beliefs, that the Word of God, that God, if you will, has personality. God is not a gigantic *IT* in the sky. He is personal. That is why, to be saved, men must have personal knowledge of the personal Savior.

2F. This interpersonal relationship is completely absent from Dianetics by L. Ron Hubbard, Religious Science, Science of the Mind, Christian Science, Buddhism, Hinduism, and a number of other false practices and belief systems.

3F. Most false religions do not envision God as personal, with intellect, sensibility, and will. Thus, the notion of a personal relationship with God is foreign to them.

4F. I have never known of a religious Jew speak of a personal relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Neither have I ever known of a religiously active Muslim who thought it possible to experience anything like a relationship with Allah.

3D. Verses 4 and 5 deal with the relationships related to His purpose:

⁴ In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

⁵ And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

1E. The “life” referred to here is of two kinds. Not only is the Word the source of existence, which we normally think of as life, but He is also the source of real and genuine spiritual life.

“‘Life’ is the Greek word *zôê* usually in John means spiritual life, but here the term is unlimited and includes all life, not ‘manner of life,’ but the very principle or essence of life.”¹³

1F. We know from the Bible that spiritual death is separation from God. This is stated in such verses as Ephesians 2.1 and Romans 6.23.

¹³ Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures in the New Testament: Concise Edition (p. 202). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

- 2F. However, to be “in Him,” or to know Him as your personal Lord and Savior, is spiritual life... eternal life... salvation.
- 2E. This spiritual life in Christ is “the light of men.” That is, Jesus Christ, the Word, is the only real and genuine source of guidance and direction for mankind. There is no other. He is the guidepost of our ethics, our morality, and our mores. He is the pole toward which a spiritual magnet is properly aligned.
- 3E. Once more, as the Holy Spirit chose to identify the Son of God as “the Word” in verse 1, so He is described as “the light of men” in verse 4. This calls to mind Psalm 119.105, “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” As “the Word,” which is to say Christ, is “the light of men,” so is God’s Word, Scripture, the source of illumination. Thus, the Second Person of the Trinity is the living Word, while the Scriptures are the written Word.
- 4E. Verse five reads, “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”
- 1F. Shineth is the present active indicative of φαίνω, meaning the shining of the light is ongoing in the darkness. This reveals the problem not to be the life that is in Him, but a matter of receptivity to the light.
- 2F. When Adam sinned and fell, he plunged the entire human race, which was to later spring from him, into darkness. The resulting darkness makes it impossible for human beings, left to our own devices, to rightly perceive spiritual truth. This is true for at least two reasons:
- #1 Because, being sinners, our sinful souls are warped and twisted beyond imagination, making our spiritual vision severely distorted and rendering us effectively blind to spiritual reality.
- #2 Also, because when Adam sinned against God, he took the entire human race over to the enemy camp of Satan, who then became our spiritual ruler. We see this in RoRomans 5.10, where Paul declares unsaved people are enemies of God. We see it again in Ephesians 2.2, where Paul states that unsaved people are the children of Satan, who blinds the mind of the unbeliever (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

3F. The darkness is a reference to the darkened understanding of the human race. We can also see why “the darkness comprehended it not.”

2C. Next, in verses 6-8, we are given the *record* of John the Baptist about the Word.

1D. In verse 6, John’s authority.

“There was a man sent from God whose name was John.”

This, of course, is not the Gospel writer, but John the Baptist, a different person entirely.

“We are here told concerning him, in general, that he was a *man sent of God*. The evangelist had said concerning Jesus Christ that he was *with* God and that he *was God*; but here concerning John that he was a *man*, a mere man. God is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves. John was a *great man*, but he was a man, a son of man; he *was sent from God*, he was God’s *messenger*, so he is called, Mal 3:1. God gave him both his mission and his message, both his credentials and his instructions. John wrought no miracle, nor do we find that he had visions and revelations; but the strictness and purity of his life and doctrine, and the direct tendency of both to reform the world, and to revive the interests of God’s kingdom among men, were plain indications that he was *sent of God*.”¹⁴

1E. Notice how that which is so common is blended in this verse with that which is so uncommon. What is common? “There was a man.” Nothing unusual about that. Nothing uncommon.

2E. But note that the man “was sent from God.” “Sent,” the Greek ἀπεστέλμενος, is a word that comes from the same root word as “apostle” and means to send, to commission, to send as an authoritative personal representative.¹⁵ The man had a message from the throne room of heaven he was dispatched to deliver. It would be good to listen to the message that he brought. Amen?

¹⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary On The Whole Bible*, (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com.

¹⁵ Rogers, Jr., Cleon L. and Rogers III, Cleon L., *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), page 176.

- 2D. In verse 7, his ambition. “The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.”

You might wonder at my selection of the word “ambition” to describe the ministry of John the Baptist, but wait until I show you what his ambition was before you question it.

- 1E. First, notice that John’s ambition was the direct result of a *commission*. It was a commission from God for him to be a divinely ordained and appointed witness. What do witnesses say on the witness stand except those things which they know to be true. Never mind those things which they think, hope, or speculate to be true. John testified only of what he knew to be true.
- 2E. Second, know that John’s ambition had *character*. What kind of character? Selfless character. He was not ambitious to promote himself, but rather to promote the Word, to point men to the Word, to show forth the Word.
- 3E. Finally, the *concern* of John’s ambition: “that all men through him might believe.” His concern was for mankind’s lost souls. Also notice that, even though he was a purely Jewish prophet, the scope of his concern was worldwide.
- 4E. Was John the Baptist ambitious? Very definitely yes, he was. He had that ambition to be mightily used of God. He had the kind of ambition the Holy Spirit seeks to implant into every man’s heart.

- 3D. In verse 8 we see John’s attitude:

“He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.”

Again and again and again he told men what he was not.

- 1E. In John 3.23-36 we see John’s attitude perfectly represented:

- 2E. This is the record of John the Baptist about the Word.

- 3C. Third, in verse 9-13, returning our attention to the Word, we see the *response* of men to the Word.

- 1D. Verse 9 records the *affect* upon all men of the Word:

“*That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

- 1E. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, and this verse declares that His light lights every man that cometh into the world. Notice that the true Light is external to every man, not internal.
- 2E. You may ask, “If He lights every man, why do so few men receive Him as Savior? Why do so few men claim Him as their Lord?”
- 3E. I respond with a question. When the lights are on in a room can the physically blind man see the light? No. His inability to see is not because of any fault in the light, but in his incapacity to see.
- 4E. Notice Second Corinthians 4.3-4:
- 3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
- 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
- 5E. Spiritual blindness is the reason why so few respond to the light of the truth.
- 2D. Verses 10 and 11 record the *attitudes* of men to the Word:
- 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- 1E. Imagine the Creator of the world actually coming to His Own creation, and His Own creatures not even being aware of His presence here!
- “Grammatically different than the second, the first is lit. ‘his own things,’ (cf. John 19:27 ‘his own home’). The second has a narrower sense, ‘his intimates,’ ‘his own family,’ ‘his own friends’ (cf. John 13:1), likely meaning the Jewish people, the chosen people to whom Christ was sent first (Matt. 15:24), but in a wider sense the whole world is ‘his own.’”¹⁶
- 2E. If that is not spiritual blindness, then I do not have any conception of what spiritual blindness is. But that is exactly what happened with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

¹⁶ Robertson, p. 203.

- 3E. God came, and no one knew it! That is what verse 10 tells us. Verse 11 is more specific. It refers specifically to the Jewish people, the physical descendants of Abraham.
- 4E. When He presented Himself to them (and He did present Himself to them as their Messiah, the King of the Jews), they rejected Him.
- 5E. They received Him not. That one attitude of the heart necessarily required for a soul to pass from death unto life, an attitude of receptivity to God's offer of His Son, was missing.

3D. Verses 12 and 13 record the *acceptance* of the Word by men:

- ¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:
- ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Here John throws light on three facets of men's acceptance of the Word:

- 1E. *First*, there is the relationship that is experienced. "Sons of God." It is interesting to note how the four Gospel writers have stressed different aspects of such subjects as the Church and the family of God.
- 1F. Matthew, who shows the fulfillment of the Law and the things necessary for the setting aside of the nation of Israel, also wrote about those things pertaining to the Church; the Church, of course, being that institution replacing Israel as God's instrument during the age of grace in which we now live.
- 2F. John, however, focuses much more on the vital relationship that must exist between the sinner and the Savior for eternal life to be shared and says nothing about the Church in his Gospel. Instead, he recorded those things pertaining to the family relationship that Christians must have to look forward to a heavenly home.
- 3F. In other words, I do not have to be a member of Christ's Church to be destined for heaven. I must, however, be a member of God's family. The two are not the same.

- 2E. Getting back to our text... God gives the power (or the right) to become sons of God. Adam Clarke writes, “ἐξουσιαν, *Privilege, honour, dignity, or right.*”¹⁷ Imagine that! Though the idea is mind boggling, it is, nevertheless, true.
- 3E. How does this come about in someone’s life? You must meet the requirement. What is the requirement? You must receive Him, passive tense. You must receive Him for Who and what the Word of God says He is. He is God Who became a man. He is Savior to lost sinners. He is the sacrifice for sins. He is whatever you and I need. Receive Him as the All-Sufficient Savior! That is how one becomes a son of God.
- 4E. Verse 13 gives the actual reasons behind this spiritual birth which must take place before anyone can become a son of God.
- 1F. “Not of blood” That is, this event is not related to genealogy, or family religion, or history.
- 2F. “Nor of the will of the flesh” Meaning that it is impossible for your will or mine to be the initiating reason for anyone’s spiritual birth, including your own spiritual birth.
- 3F. “Nor of the will of man.” This eliminates any religion or belief system that teaches a human being’s will must be involved in your salvation.
- 1G. Any religion which requires a priest for salvation is covered here.
- 2G. Any religion which requires baptism for salvation is covered here, because you cannot baptize yourself. Right?
- 3G. Any religion which requires Church membership for salvation is also wrong.
- 4G. Nothing that requires the agency of man, any man, can possibly be Biblical according to this phrase.
- 5G. There is a vital reason the new birth is so named, as analogous to natural birth. Though every infant’s birth is experienced by that infant born, it is never caused by that infant, initiated by that infant, or aided in any way by that infant.

¹⁷ Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com.

4F. “But of God” The new birth must be of divine origin to be genuine. Your individual birth into God’s family must ultimately have been at God’s instigation for it to be real.

5E. Thus, we see that any real and genuine response, on the part of man, to the Word is the direct result of God working in that man’s heart and life. The salvation which is real is of heavenly origin, not earthly.

4C. Finally, in verses 14-18 we see the *revelation* of the Word to humanity.

There are four facets to this revelation to examine:

1D. Facet 1: In verse 14 there is the facet of the incarnation of God:

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

I address the five phrases in the verse individually.

1E. First phrase: “And the Word was made flesh”

1F. Read verse 1 of John chapter one again; notice that John has really dropped a bombshell on us. *First*, in verse 1, he proclaims that the Word has always been... in the beginning, with God, face to face, and has always been God!

2F. The way in which John constructed his sentence shows the Word simply did not begin. The Word has always been.

3F. That said, verse 14 adds something new regarding the Word. Though the Word has always existed, though the Word has always been with God, and though the Word has always been God, something new and heretofore unimagined occurred in human history. The Word became something that He was not before. He became flesh.

4F. The phrase “was made” does not mean “was created,” for that did not happen. It means that the Word, which already existed, became something He had not before been. He became a man. Think of it! One day in human history God became a man.

“‘Became.’ The Greek verb was chosen to show the historic event of the Incarnation rather than a continuous state of being. The Logos did

not enter, fill, or dwell in(to) a man; he ‘became’ flesh (cf. also 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 1:3; 8:3; Phil. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14.”¹⁸

2E. Second phrase: “and dwelt among us”

- 1F. The word “dwelt” means “to live in a tent.”¹⁹ Literally, the way in which the Word became flesh was to pitch a tent in a human body among us.

“This is the Greek verb *skênoô*, to pitch one’s tent or tabernacle (*skênos* or *skênê*). In Revelation it is used of God tabernacling with men and here of the Logos tabernacling, God’s Shekinah glory here among us in the person of his Son (cf. Rev. 7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3).”²⁰

- 2F. It rather reminds me of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Though somewhat plain and ordinary as a tent on the outside, this thing fashioned of skins, fabric, wood and precious metals was a tent in which was housed the glory of Almighty God.
- 3F. In like manner, this plain and ordinary looking body in which Jesus Christ lived for something over thirty years was the tent in which the glory of God dwelt.

3E. Third phrase: “and we beheld His glory”

- 1F. Consider that the first eighteen verses of John’s Gospel are his summary and conclusion. Basically, he informs his readers 1-18 what he is going to develop throughout the body of his account.
- 2F. With this phrase he highlights one of the most significant occurrences in all of human history... that occasion when the Son of God’s glory could no longer be cloaked by His humanity and did dramatically burst forth.
- 3F. What do we call this event John referred to? It is termed the transfiguration of Christ. We will study it at length in due course, though it is

¹⁸ Robertson, pages 203-204.

¹⁹ Fritz Reinecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), page 218.

²⁰ Ibid., page 204.

referred to frequently in the New Testament (Matthew 17.1-9; Mark 9.2-13; Luke 9.28-36; Second Corinthians 3.18; Second Peter 1.16-18).

4E. Fourth phrase: “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father”

1F. This phrase is another one of the theological battlegrounds where those who do not believe in the Trinity choose to try and defend their false beliefs.

2F. It is held by those espousing non-Christian beliefs that the phrase “only begotten” proves that Jesus Christ was “begotten” of His Father in the sense that He was created by God the Father.

3F. Poppycock. Two reasons why this fallacious assertion must be false:

#1 A. T. Robertson’s comment on this phrase: “Strictly, ‘as of an only born from a father,’ since there is no article with *monogenous* or with *patros*. In Joh 3:16; 1Jo 4:9 we have *ton monogenê* referring to Christ. This is the first use in the Gospel of *patêr* of God in relation to the Logos. *Monogenês* (only born rather than only begotten) here refers to the eternal relationship of the Logos (as in Joh 1:18) rather than to the Incarnation. It distinguishes thus between the Logos and the believers as children (*tekna*) of God.”²¹

#2 Now for the second reason, which relates to “glory.” Isaiah 42.8 and 48.11-12:

42:8 I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

48:11 For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it*: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

¹² Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

²¹ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol V*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), pages 13-14.

Reflect on this consideration: How can Christ's glory be seen as the glory of the Father if the Father will not share His glory with another? Simple. God will not share His glory and essence with any created being. For James and Peter and John to have seen Christ's glory as of the only begotten of the Father must mean, therefore, that Jesus Christ is God. When they saw Christ's glory, they saw God's glory, because Jesus Christ is God!

4F. Conclusion? Jesus Christ is God, and to deny the fact of that reality is to deny the clear and irrefutable declaration of Scripture.

5E. Fifth phrase: "full of grace and truth."

1F. What is "grace"? Some describe it as God's unmerited favor. The word also refers to a gift. So, we ought to realize that everything Jesus Christ did was gracious. I point this out because He did not have to leave heaven and come here. He did not have to die for sins. Thank God, He did. Amen?

2F. "Truth" It was this same John who recorded Christ's words to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

3F. It is truth that informs us of our deadness, our sinfulness, our helplessness, and our hopelessness, as those who needed a Savior to die for our sins and shed His blood for the remission of our sins. And it is the truth that tells us that without Him we are hopelessly lost and undone, without God and without hope.

4F. It is by grace sinners are saved despite weakness and defilement. It is by grace sinners are saved despite rebelliousness. It is by grace sinners are saved in spite of everything.

5F. And Jesus Christ, the Word, the Light, and the Life, was full and is full of both grace and truth.

2D. Facet #2: As verse 14 has to do with the facet of the incarnation of God, verse 15 has to do with the facet of the instruction of John:

"John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me."

- 1E. Let us review some facts that we know to be true. Whose existence began first, John's or the Word's? The Word's existence, being without beginning, outstrips John's.
- 2E. But who was born first into the human race? Right. It was John the Baptist. Remember, from Luke 1.26, that in Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy with John, Mary, having just been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit of God and carrying the newly conceived Christ child, came to visit Elizabeth.
- 3E. So, John's statement about "He that cometh after me" refers to their respective chronological birth ages. John was, physically, six months older than his cousin, Jesus of Nazareth.
- 4E. That said, the Word is preferred before John. How can that be, since John is older and age meant so much in Jewish society? Simple. John is not preferred because the Word, being eternal, is before him and by right is preferred.
- 3D. Facet #3: We saw that facet called the incarnation, verse 14. We saw that facet which is instruction, verse 15. Now, in verses 16 and 17, we see the facet of the involvement of every believer:
 - ¹⁶ And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.
 - ¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
- 1E. "Fullness" is a very interesting word in the Bible. In Colossians 1.9 and 2.9, the word indicates that in Jesus Christ our Lord, everything that makes God God is present. Further, nothing about God is not in Him. Powerful word: "fulness."²²
- 2E. That same word, here in John 1.16, is used to show that what is received from the Lord Jesus Christ when one receives Christ and is born again is from His infinitely abundant supply. That shows that one who is born again has everything from God He wants you to have, because He is not lacking in supply when it comes to the grace needed for daily living.
- 3E. Since it is grace for grace, which either refers to New Covenant grace replacing Old Covenant grace or grace stacked on top of grace, it is clear that

²² See footnote for Colossians 1.19 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 1833.

we are dealing with a grace proposition here. Thus, it is God's gift the Evangelist is referring to, not something the individual earns or deserves.

4E. Now also, notice verse 17:

“For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

For a relationship with Jesus Christ to exist, what involvement with the Law of Moses would you say is necessary? If you said, “None,” you would be correct. John contrasts Law with grace and truth.

- 5E. There is no assertion that God was not truthful or gracious during His dispensation or administration of the Law of Moses, but certain things regarding the Law cannot be dismissed by the Bible student. While God used the Law for a specific purpose in the lives of a specific people, the Law never appropriated or maintained any kind of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom to know is life eternal. Such things as that must be on the basis of grace working through the medium of faith.
- 6E. As an aside, though the Law of Moses was given to the nation of Israel, and the Law of Moses was not given to establish a relationship with Jesus Christ, it would be a mistake to conclude from these observations that the Law of Moses has no use while being without present authority, Romans 3.19.
- 7E. Not only does the Law of Moses provide insight for us in moral matters (without imparting righteousness in any way), but it is also asserted by many to be a most useful tool in preparing the lost for Jesus Christ. This is why, it is suggested, Paul wrote, in Galatians 3.24, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring *us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”
- 8E. Regarding the Greek term translated “schoolmaster,” παιδαγωγος, Robertson wrote,

“This was a common word for the slave employed in Greek and Roman families of the better class in charge of the boy from about six to sixteen. The *paedagogue* watched his behavior at home and attended him when he went away from home as to school. Christ is our Schoolmaster and the law as *paedagogue* kept watch over us till we came to Christ.”²³

²³ Robertson, A. T. Word Pictures in the New Testament: Concise Edition (p. 493). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

In response to the question “How does BDAG define the Greek term *paedagogue*?” GROK responded,

“BDAG (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich, 3rd edition, p. 748) defines *παιδαγωγος* (*paidagogos* / *paidagogue*) as: “one who has responsibility for someone who needs guidance, guardian, leader, guide.” [Jesuswalk.com](https://jesuswalk.com)
This reflects the ancient Greco-Roman context: a *paidagogos* was typically a trusted slave or servant (often not the formal teacher) responsible for escorting boys to school, supervising their behavior, ensuring their safety, and providing moral guidance/discipline. The role emphasized custodial oversight and moral formation more than classroom instruction (distinguished from a *didaskalos* or teacher). [Digitalcommons.liberty.edu](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu)

Key New Testament usages (the word appears 3 times):

1 Corinthians 4:15: Paul contrasts himself as a father with others as “guardians” (or pedagogues/instructors) in Christ — a supervisory, inferior role.

Galatians 3:24–25: The law is likened to a *paidagogos* — temporary guardian/custodian for Israel during its “childhood” phase, until Christ came (after which the guardian role ends).

BDAG’s entry aligns with other lexicons (e.g., Mounce, Thayer) but is the standard scholarly reference for NT Greek, drawing on extensive extra-biblical evidence. billmounce.com”²⁴

- 4D. Facet #4: The incarnation of God, the instruction of John the Baptist, and the involvement of every believer. In verse 18, we see the identity of God:

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.”

Four phrases to examine individually:

- 1E. “No man hath seen God at any time.”

At first glance, this seems to contradict several Old Testament passages indicating men have seen God. This apparent conflict disappears, however, when you realize that John is not speaking of a visual manifestation of God, but of God’s real essence and nature. That has no man seen. Why had no man seen God in this way before? Because it is not possible. This is why Moses could only look upon the “back parts” of God, according to Exodus

²⁴ <https://x.com/i/grok?conversation=2061852284028412194>

33.23. This is also why the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, was filled with smoke during Day of Atonement worship, so the priest would not die upon beholding God. “No man hath seen God at any time.”

2E. “the only begotten Son”

This phrase, often used by cultists to twist Biblical truth, is actually very straightforward. “Only begotten” refers to Christ’s uniqueness as the eternal Son of the living God, God’s “one-of-a-kind” Son.²⁵ Despite notable opinion to the contrary, He did not *become* God’s Son by any event which has ever happened. He has always been God’s Son.

3E. “Which is in the bosom of the Father”

The bosom speaks of communion and intimacy and fellowship. Jesus Christ, being in the bosom of the Father, refers to the fact that the unity, the love, and the intimacy between the Father and the Son is absolutely unparalleled.

4E. “He hath declared Him”

1F. The word “declared” translates the Greek term from which our transliterated word “exegesis” is derived. “He hath exegeted Him.” Exegesis is a word Bible teachers use frequently. It means to bring out into visibility, to bring forth authoritatively. It is the bringing forth of something which has always been there, but which was not before seen until it was declared.²⁶

2F. Bible scholars and commentators use this word to describe the process of studying God’s Word so that you can bring forth truths which have always been contained in the Bible, but which you did not know or appreciate until your studies revealed them to you.

3F. What the phrase we are examining means is this: Not only could God not really be seen physically, but He could never before really be seen spiritually, either... until Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world.

²⁵ Beale and Carson, page 422.

²⁶ See footnote for John 1.18 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 1575.

- 4F. The Jewish people knew of God, but they never saw God. And they could not have, for the One Who brings God into visibility and focus had not yet arrived.
- 5F. The Lord Jesus Christ, this One about Whom we study, is the indispensable go-between between man and God. If a man would see his God, he must first come to Christ.