



# Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN  
LESSON 2

## Prologue: The Supremacy of Jesus Christ John 1:1-18

### Introduction

In this magnificent passage called the Prologue, John introduces us to the preeminence and totality of Jesus Christ. We see our Lord from every angle and in all of His divine dimensions. In the first 2 verses He is the *Eternal Christ*, the *Word* and *Son of God*. In verse 3 He is the *Creator Christ*, supernatural agent of all creation. In verses 4-5 He is the *Incarnate Christ*, the life and light of the world. In verses 6-8 He is the *Heralded Christ*, announced by John the Baptist. In verses 9-11 He is the *Rejected Christ*, unrecognized by the world and unreceived by the Jews. In verses 12-13 He is the *Omnipotent Christ*, received by those who believe in His name. And in verses 14-18 He is the *Glorious Christ* bringing grace, truth and redemption to mankind.

The Prologue thus sets forth the basic theme of the entire Gospel of John. That theme clearly points to the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who 1) uniquely and conclusively declared and demonstrated that He is the Son of God and 2) confirmed irrefutably that He came to earth to fulfill the redemptive purposes and plans of God. The rest of the book then spells out that theme in detail, utilizing words of these first 18 verses, such as “*life*”, “*light*”, “*darkness*”, “*witness*”, “*believe*”, “*enlightens*”, “*power*”, “*born of God*”, “*grace*”, “*truth*”, and “*glory*”. These words are spiritually rich in significance and contextual relationships and provide full meaning to the passage, “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:11-13).

### Outline of John 1:1-18

- I. The Eternal Christ
- II. The Creator Christ
- III. The Incarnate Christ
- IV. The Heralded Christ
- V. The Rejected Christ
- VI. The Omnipotent Christ
- VII. The Glorious Christ

### I. The Eternal Christ (1:1-2)

#### A. The Word “Word”

“*In the beginning was the Word.*” The word “Word” (logos) had a specific connotation in the New Testament Greek language. To the Greek, it expressed the ideas of reason, thought and creative control, implying a rational mind that rules the universe. To the Hebrew, the Word of God denoted God in action, especially in creation, revelation and deliverance. Thus, “Word” was uniquely applicable here because in Jesus Christ was embodied all the treasures of the divine wisdom, that is, the supreme mind, collective thought and universal power of God. “*In the beginning*” means that before time and the world began, Christ the Word was already in existence. Jesus didn’t begin, He always was. When the heavens and earth were created (Genesis 1:1), He was there. He existed from all eternity as explained in Proverbs 8:22-30. The terms “pre-existent” and “self-existent” can reliably be applied to the Eternal Word. Revelation 19:13 verifies that “*His name is called the Word of God.*”

#### B. John Calvin’s Explanation of “Word”

John Calvin writes, “The evangelist (John) calls the Son of God the Word simply because, first, He is the eternal wisdom and will of God; and secondly because He is the exact image of God’s purpose. Just as men’s speech is called the expression of their thoughts, so it is not inappropriate to say that God expresses Himself to us by His speech or Word” ([John: Crossway Classic Commentaries](#)).

#### C. Great Trinitarian Truth

“*And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” Jesus Christ is identified as co-existent with God before creation. In fact, John writes that He was God, the eternal Word. He was in communion with God and yet distinct from God. This verse is one of the great Trinitarian truths in the Bible (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19). Our Almighty God is an infinitely intelligent Spirit, perfect in all His attributes, one in essence but existing eternally in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Word, Jesus Christ, is the second Person of the Trinity, the Son

of God, coequal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in essence, but distinct from Them in subsistence. C.K. Barrett writes, "John intends that the whole of his gospel shall be read in light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the words and deeds of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous" (The Gospel According to St. John). We will learn much more about the Holy Spirit in later chapters of the Gospel.

#### D. With God Before Creation

"*He was in the beginning with God.*" This statement affirms that Jesus, the eternal Christ, was with God before creation. William Hendriksen describes it well, "The prologue begins by portraying the life of Christ in eternity, before the world was. That life was rich and glorious, filled with infinite delight and serene blessedness in the presence of the Father. Once this truth is grasped, the condescending love of Christ in becoming flesh will be appreciated more fully" (Exposition of the Gospel According to John).

### II. The Creator Christ (1:3)

#### A. The Universe and All It Contains

"*All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing has come into being that has come into being.*" God's creative Word was a Person, an eternal, divine, all-glorious Person. He was active in the work of creation. Everything that exists was made by the Word. He was God's agent in creating all things that have come into existence. As the second Person of the Trinity, He created the universe and all it contains. The Apostle Paul confirms this in Colossians 1:15-17, "*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible . . . All things were created through Him and for Him.*"

#### B. Not Independent of God

It is important to note that the Word did not act independently from the Father. John presents Jesus as under God's authority having authority over every created thing. As God's creative agent, Jesus' work of revealing God began with creation because all creation reveals God (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20). Two vital facts are emphasized in this passage: (1) Christ Himself was not created. He was eternal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit even before Genesis 1:1; (2) all things, as they came into existence one by one, were created by Him. He was the Agent of creation.

### III. The Incarnate Christ (1:4-5)

#### A. Life: Creation's Most Significant Element

"*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*" John moves from creation in general to the creation of life, the most significant element in creation. "Life is one of John's characteristic concepts: he uses the word 36 times, whereas no other New Testament writing has it more than 17 times. Thus more than a quarter of all New Testament references to life occur in this one writing" (Leon Morris - The Gospel According to St. John).

#### B. The Source of Life

Jesus is the source of life. In these verses we see the life and light of God come to mankind in a body. Jesus, by the Father's good pleasure, is God in the flesh and He shares that self-existent life which belongs to the Creator as distinct from the creature. Because the Son shares this self-existent life with the Father, He is able to impart life to others. This life, Christ's life, is the light of men, the spiritual illumination that dispels the darkness of sin and unbelief.

#### C. The Divine Light of Life

Apart from this divine light, the world of mankind is shrouded in darkness. This light, the goodness and truth of the incarnate Christ, shines in the evil and falsehood of the world, and the darkness does not overcome it.

Light and darkness are opposites but they are not of equal power. Light is stronger than darkness, and darkness cannot prevail against it. Similarly, the Life and Light of the world, the incarnate Christ, can not be overcome by the power of darkness.

### IV. The Heralded Christ (1:6-8)

#### A. An Authentic Prophet

"*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.*" John the Apostle now abruptly inserted this passage saying that God heralded the coming of Christ with a forerunner - John the Baptist. God previewed the advent of Christ by announcing His arrival and John the baptizer was the announcer.

The reason for the Apostle's sudden interjection is that there had been no prophet in Israel for 400 years. The Jews were anticipating word from God, and after this long dry spell, here was an authentic prophet. The multitudes were attracted to him. All of Jerusalem and Judea went out to see and hear him. As John proclaimed and baptized, people started idolizing him instead of the One he was talking about. It seemed to be developing into a little John-the-Baptist cult. People were getting hung up on him rather than the message he was proclaiming.

#### B. John the Baptist Not the Light

So, John the Apostle makes sure in these verses, as he does throughout the Gospel, that everyone understands that the Baptist was not the Light, but God's chosen man to herald the reality of the Son of God. He was the witness of the Light. The One to get your eyes and heart on is the incarnate Christ, the living Son of God.

### V. The Rejected Christ (1:9-11)

#### A. The World Did Not Know Him

Jesus was the true Light who gives light to every man who comes into the world. *"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."*

Jesus brought light to His world - the world He had created. And the world did not know Him. Why didn't the world know Him? Romans 1:20 tells us that God made His invisible attributes, His eternal power and His divine nature, evident to mankind through His creation. If these can be clearly seen, why didn't the world know Christ?

John 3:19 provides the answer. Man loves to live in darkness. He loves the pleasure of a self-centered, self-serving life. He loves his autonomy, his self-identity apart from God and His rules and regulations. Man lives in darkness so long he becomes blind. He can't recognize the Light.

#### B. The Jews Did Not Receive Him

The words of this verse strike at the very roots of the pride, the prejudices and the self-satisfaction of mankind. John writes again about the true Light, the real genuine Light, that came to dispel the darkness of doubt; to dispel the darkness of despair; and to dispel the darkness of death. This Light came to enlighten every man and to bring spiritual life that had not been known before. The Jewish leaders and most of the people did not re-

ceive Him because of their ego-centered self-righteousness.

#### C. One of the Gospel's Recurring Themes

And so, He came to the world of mankind in general, and He came as special revelation to His own people, Israel, and they would have none of Him. What a grim paradox! God's chosen people starkly and absolutely refused their Messiah. He was unrecognized by the great majority in spite of His sign miracles, supernatural events and divine attestations as to who He was. We shall see that this is one of the two constant recurring themes in the Gospel - the first being the nature of unbelief which led the Jews to refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah. The second recurring theme covers the prerequisites and the constituent factors of the faith which led His disciples to acknowledge Him as the One of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets did write.

### VI. The Omnipotent Christ (1:12-13)

#### A. The Children of God

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* The shocking reality of the unrecognized Christ is relieved by the fact that there were some who did receive Him gladly. They showed themselves to be truly His people. By placing their faith in Him, yielding their allegiance to Him and acknowledging His claims, they were given the right by the Omnipotent Christ, the all-powerful Son of God, to become children of God.

#### B. Spiritual Birth

Spiritual birth is the gateway to the new life in Christ. We will see a fuller explanation of this in Chapter 3. But here where John uses three negatives (not from blood, the will of the flesh, nor the will of man), he is emphasizing that birth into the family of God is quite different than physical birth. This divine birthright has nothing to do with racial, national or family ties. Many of the Jews believed that because of their blood as Abraham's descendants, they were spiritual children of God. Even today some people think that the faith or works of their ancestors somehow guarantees their salvation. New spiritual life, however, comes from God Himself. Ultimately it is the result of God's choice, not man's (Ephesians 1:4). Therefore the object of our faith must be God rather than our heritage or race, our works, or our own initiative.

### C. The Mediator

Jesus is the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). He is the Head of His Body, the Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). He is the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6). He is the final Judge of all who fail to put their trust in Him as the Lord of life and the only Savior (Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 7:25).

## VII. The Glorious Christ (1:14-18)

### A. A Real Historical Human Person

*“And the Word became 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. John bore witness of Him and cried out saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me’. And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”*

The first words of this passage describe the event to which the previous statements in the Prologue have been leading. John drives a dagger into the heart of the teaching which denied that Jesus had come as God in a human body. When the Word became flesh, God became a man. The divine Word took on a human body in the flesh that was like unto ours except for sin. God made Himself known in a real, historical human person. He took up residence on earth in the Word made flesh.

### B. Grace and Truth

John MacArthur points out in his sermon on John, “The magnitude of Jesus’ glory and goodness is an ocean from which all of His people may draw without ever diminishing its content. The ocean of divine fullness is one wave of grace after another. There is no limit to the supply of grace which God has placed at His people’s disposal in Christ. This new order of grace and truth through Jesus fulfills, surpasses and replaces the old order of Moses.”

### C. The Exact Representation of God’s Nature

God, being pure Spirit, is invisible to human eyesight. Only the begotten, unique, one and only Son can make God fully known. The mutual love and understanding between the Father and the Son, and the Son’s dependence on the Father, are woven like tapestry throughout the Gospel. The Son as the Word who became flesh is the only one who can satisfactorily

explain the invisible, incomprehensible God (Hebrew 1:1-3).

### D. The Radiance of God’s Glory

In his book God’s Passion for His Glory, John Piper writes that Jonathan Edwards, one of the great fathers of evangelical Christianity, saw and savored the supremacy of God in all things. Edwards proclaimed, “The invincible end for which God created the world is that first, the glory of God might be magnified in the universe, and second, that Christ’s ransomed people from all times and all nations would rejoice in God above all things.” God manifested His own glory on earth by sending His Son to carry out His great plan of revelation, redemption and reconciliation. This unspeakable grace and truth through Jesus Christ further manifested His magnificent glory in the highest happiness of His elect people. As believers in Jesus Christ may our souls rejoice in God above all things that the glory of God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit might be magnified in the universe.

### Application

1. As the one and only God-man, Jesus Christ represents the fusion of humanity and deity into an indivisible oneness. Can you comprehend the doctrine of two natures (divine and human) residing in one person simultaneously? Does one’s inability to understand such a doctrine nullify its truth?

2. As the second Person of the Trinity, the Word, Jesus Christ possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal with God, the Father, and is of the same essence and coeternal with Him. The purpose of the incarnation was for Him to reveal God the Father, to redeem men and women, and to rule over God’s kingdom. In view of John’s statements in the Prologue, why do you believe in Christ?

### Summary

The Prologue is the introduction to this remarkable Gospel. The Apostle John has given us these staggering, incredible truths about the Eternal Christ, the Creator Christ, the Incarnate Christ, the Heralded Christ, the Rejected Christ, the Omnipotent Christ and the Glorious Christ that we might reflect on them and bury them deep in our hearts and souls. Keep in mind that John’s definitive, two-fold purpose in writing this Gospel is: (1) to lead us to a deep personal belief in the historical Jesus as “the Christ” and as the Son of God; and (2) to lead us to the possession of life in His name by believing and trusting totally in Him.



# Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN  
LESSON 2

## THE UNVEILING OF THE SON OF GOD John 1:19-51

### Introduction

In the Prologue, the Apostle John has given us a concise overview of the entire Gospel by describing the divine totality of Jesus Christ, including His redemptive mission on earth and His resultant grace and truth to all who receive Him as the Incarnate Word of God. In this remarkable introduction, John also has introduced us to John the Baptist, one of the greatest men in the Bible, the forerunner and premiere witness for the Lord.

In this week's lesson, the Apostle describes the unveiling of the Son of God, that period of five eventful days which preceded the start of Christ's public ministry in Galilee. During this time, John the Baptist announced and identified the Son of God to the multitudes. Then Christ started enlisting His group of disciples who eventually became the advance team for spreading the Gospel to the known world (Acts 1:8).

The unveiling of Christ begins the first day with John the Baptist confessing to the Pharisaical deputation from Jerusalem that he is not the Messiah, or Elijah, or a Prophet, but only *"the voice of one crying in the wilderness."* The second day the Baptist pointed the public to Jesus saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"*, and then later, *"This is the Son of God."*

The third day the Baptist pointed out Jesus to two of his disciples who then decided to follow and stay with Jesus. The fourth day, Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus who said, *"You shall be called Cephas"* (which is translated, a Rock). The fifth day Jesus found Philip and said to him *"Follow Me."* Then Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus who made some supernatural observations and caused Nathaniel to say, *"Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"*

It was a glorious, five-day period of preparation for beginning Christ's public ministry.

Following is a discussion of John's background, the nature of his witness to Jesus, and the circumstances under which some of the earliest disciples of Jesus first came into contact with Him.

### Outline of John 1:19-51

- I. The Witness of John the Baptist
- II. The Witness of the First Disciples
- III. The Witness of the Son of God

#### I. The Witness of John the Baptist (1:19- 34)

##### A. Background of John

1. None Greater Than John the Baptist:  
Matthew 11:11

John the Baptist, the forerunner or precursor of the Lord, was a remarkable man. Aside from his grisly appearance and eccentric lifestyle, he was a model witness for all Christians. Jesus said in Matthew 11:11, *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist."* What an incredible statement from the Lord Himself!

2. Preparation for Ministry

The Synoptic Gospels give us the full story of John's ministry. Luke 1:5-17 tells us that the Baptist was born by a supernatural act of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and destined to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord, their God. He began final preparations for his mission by withdrawing to the rocky desert beyond the Jordan to fast and pray. He kept himself alive by eating locusts and wild honey and wearing a rough garment of camel's hair, tied with a leather girdle.

In his early thirties, during the summer of the year 26 A.D., John started preaching in the towns of Judea. William Hendriksen ([New Testament Commentary](#)) writes, *"His austere mode of life, stern preaching, and emphasis on the fact that even the sons of Abraham are in need of thorough repentance and spiritual cleansing (symbolized by baptism) caused a mighty stir among the people, so that 'all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins'"* (Mark 1:5).

### 3. His Incorruptible Humanity

The Baptist's appearance was haggard and uncouth, but his eyes burned with zeal and his voice carried deep conviction. The Jews were accustomed to preachers and prophets who gave no thought to outward appearances and many accepted John at once. Because of the power and conviction of his message, "*Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*," some believed that he was the long-awaited Messiah. However, John's humanity made it plain that he was merely the forerunner who came to prepare the way and that he was not worthy to untie the Master's sandals.

In 1:6-8 and 15, the Apostle John has indicated the purpose of John the Baptist's ministry: namely, to focus the attention of everyone upon the true Light, Jesus Christ, as the object of faith. In this next section, the Apostle elucidates further the nature of John's witness to Jesus.

#### B. The Negative Witness of John About Himself (1:19-28)

##### 1. The Deputation of Priests and Levites (1:28)

These nine verses describe the visit and interrogation that John the Baptist conducted with the deputation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem. It was not uncommon for the Pharisees, who made up the Sanhedrin (Great Council) and the Sadducees (priestly tribe) to send spies and secret informers around to check on John the Baptist, and later on, Jesus. The high priests probably did not come themselves because they did not like to have John and Jesus call them "*brood of vipers*" and "*hypocrites*" (Matthew 3:7; 12:34; 23:13.)

The priests and Levites confronting John had traveled some 25 miles to Bethabara and wanted to know who this strange preacher and baptizer was. He seemed to have the authentic signs of a prophet of old. He had made deep impressions on his fellow-Israelites who were captivated by his incisive message and unique appearance (Matthew 3:1-6.)

##### 2. The Voice From the Wilderness

When the Pharisees ask, "*Who are you?*," the Baptist asserts without any reservation and with deep humility that he is not the Christ (Isaiah 9:6; 11:1-2), nor Elijah (Malachi 4:5), nor the prophet of whom God had spoken when He said He would raise up a prophet who would be a second Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). He tells them I am, "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the*

*way of the Lord*," thereby identifying himself with Scripture (Isaiah 40:3.)

In his commentary on John, R.V.G. Tasker writes, "John's lowly estimate of himself was that he was a voice. It was a voice both stern and comforting. It cried out in the wilderness of the world's need and pointed men to Him who alone can satisfy it; but it also called upon them to prepare the way for His coming by removing all that was crooked in their conduct and narrow in their outlook; like men turning a winding, narrow track in the desert into a royal highway, broad and straight."

##### 3. His Own Relative Unimportance

The Pharisees asked John why he was baptizing if he was not the Christ, Elijah or the prophet. John told them that he baptized with water, but that his baptism was just a precursor to the real thing, that is, his baptism cleansed but bestowed no gift by which the cleansed would remain clean. There was, however, One standing among them whom they did not know, who would baptize in a different medium. John soon revealed that that One would baptize with the Holy Spirit and supply the gift of permanent cleansing and allegiance to God.

Next, we see John, as the forerunner, underlining his own relative unimportance in comparison with the coming One. Even though Jesus appeared in human history later than John, He took preference over John, for He was already in existence when John was born. So exalted was Christ's status that John felt himself unworthy to render Him even such menial service as unfastening the strap of His sandals. John was pointing the *way* to his Christ - setting the stage and preparing those who would listen. He was a true follower of Christ, exalting only his Master, not himself.

#### Application:

When John says in vs. 26, "*There stands One among you whom you do not know*," there is an obvious parallel with today. Jesus Christ, as the only reconciling agent between God and man, is spiritually present among us now. Yet there are relatively few people who really know Him. Is He real in your life? Do you honor, glorify and exalt Him above all else through all of the events and circumstances of day-to-day living?

### C. The Positive Witness of John About Jesus (1:29-34)

#### 1. His Encouraging Preaching (1:29-34)

In these verses we see the startling identification of the Lord to the public, probably some weeks after John had baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). He announced very precisely, "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" Can you imagine the feeling of being in that crowd? The Jews knew the meaning of Lamb. In Exodus 12:23 the blood of the lamb was put around the door so that the Angel of Death would pass over. The Old Testament Passover lamb did not take away sins - it just averted God's wrath for sins. In a sense it covered sin, but John's Lamb of God here does not cover sins - He takes away sin. He removes sin. God's justice is answered in Christ.

John Tenney describes the title of "Lamb" well, "It (Lamb of God) combines in one descriptive term the concepts of innocence, voluntary sacrifice, substitutionary atonement, effective obedience, and redemptive power like that of a Passover Lamb."

#### 2. The Son of God (1:35-36)

Interestingly, John the Baptist says twice in the next few verses that he did not know Jesus. Luke 1:36 tells us that he and Jesus were cousins, so he must have known about Christ's unusual birth and work as a carpenter. What he probably meant was that he did not realize that his cousin was the Messiah until the Holy Spirit showed him. John had no way of recognizing the Lord as Messiah until the symbolic descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove landed on and identified Jesus as the One who was to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10). The Spirit of God gave John this sign: the One "*upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit*"(1:33). Then comes the bold climax of John the Baptist's testimony concerning Jesus, "*And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God*" (1:34.)

## II. The Witness of the First Disciples

### A. Andrew and Another Disciple (1:35-38)

In the next verses, we see Christ's preliminary contacts with the men who are to become part of His team of twelve disciples. These men will eventually be charged with spreading Christianity in the known world. He did not call these first three men to follow Him as disciples just yet. That will come

later as described in Mark 1:16-20, 2:13-14; and Luke 5:1-11,27-28.

On the third day of the Baptist's eventful preaching, two of his disciples heard him again point out the Lamb of God in their midst. John had taught them well concerning the coming Messiah, Son of God, and they wanted to see and hear Him personally. Their interest centered primarily on the fact that John had said this is "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" Most of Israel was expecting the Messiah to be the One who would deliver Israel from the Romans.

### B. Staying With Jesus (1:39)

After He was pointed out, the two men followed Jesus and in a short time they concluded that indeed He was the Messiah. At first, it seemed like the two men were reticent about speaking to Jesus, so they just followed Him respectfully, hoping He would say something. He did. He turned and said, "*What do you seek?*" Jesus knew why they were walking behind Him, but He wanted them to express their hearts and minds, even as He wants us to specify honestly and clearly what we are thinking in our prayers and meditation.

His question gave them the opportunity to state their desire to be His disciples. However, they were not ready to make that commitment. They answered Him with, "*Rabbi, where are You staying?*" This polite response indicated that they wanted to talk with Him further.

Jesus responded with, "*Come and see.*" He wanted them to accompany Him and visit with Him. Only in this way would they begin to understand the spiritual hunger in their hearts and comprehend the startling words from John the Baptist, "*Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*" We can only speculate how the three spent the day together and exactly how Jesus led the conversation. But it must have been a life-transforming time period for both of these men who were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

The two men were Andrew and an unnamed man who most commentators believe was the Apostle John, the author of the Gospel. Their reasoning is the intimate knowledge that John displayed in writing about the Baptist's witness of Christ, and his not bringing attention to himself by name throughout the Gospel, even after spending the rest of this day with Jesus.

## C Peter, the Rock (1:40-42)

After this intimate time with the Lord, Andrew went and found his brother, Simon Peter, and said, “*We have found the Messiah.*” Peter obviously was familiar with the prophecies concerning the expected Messiah in the Jewish manuscripts (Old Testament) and he picked up on Andrew’s intense excitement immediately.

Andrew is an excellent example of introducing people to Jesus Christ. On three different occasions in the Gospel of John he brought someone to Jesus: first, his brother, Peter; then the boy with the loaves (John 6:8-9); and lastly the Greek worshipers (John 12:20-22).

Like Andrew, Peter had the same honest desire to have an eyeball-to-eyeball encounter with Jesus Christ as a person. So, Andrew brought him to Jesus. Dr. T. Constable describes the meeting, “Jesus knew what Peter would become in the history of the church by God’s grace. Simon was a common Jewish name, probably derived from Simeon. Jesus gave him a nickname that expressed the opposite of his personal traits. It is interesting that Simon Peter originally had the same rash and impulsive character as his ancestor Simeon, the second son of Jacob. Cephas is Aramaic, the common language of Palestine, and means ‘Rock’. Peter is the Greek translation of Cephas. As the record of Peter unfolds in the Gospels, he appears as anything but a rock. He was impulsive, volatile and unreliable. Yet Jesus named Peter in view of what he would become by the power of God.”

The radical change in Simon Peter’s personal characteristics and life were brought about both by his 3-year exposure to Christ and the divine energy born into him by the indwelling Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

## D. Philip and Nathaniel (1:43-49)

## 1. Follow Me

The next day Jesus wanted to go north to Galilee. He found Philip, who also may have been a disciple of John the Baptist. Philip probably knew Peter and Andrew since they were from the same hometown. The two brothers even may have told Jesus about Philip, because there was no need of conversation when they met and Jesus simply said to him, “*Follow Me.*” This was an invitation to become His disciple and follow Him in His day-to-day ministry. At this moment, Phillip saw the divine difference in this man, Jesus, and decided to drop everything

and go with Him. And the very next thing he did was go and find his friend, Nathaniel.

## 2. Plans for Their Future

Little did Philip realize, (nor for that matter, Andrew, John, Peter or Nathaniel,) the spiritual transformation in store for them over the next three years. They were to become an integral part and personal witness of the Lord’s teaching, healing, casting out demons, confronting the Pharisees, forgiving sinners, receiving the repentant, raising the dead, suffering the Passion, dying on the cross, conquering death, defeating Satan and sin, appearing to 500-plus people and ascending to the Father’s right hand. None of them had any idea of God’s purposes and plans for them to institute a world-wide spiritual enterprise of historic proportions.

## 3. Nathaniel’s Calling and Response

Nathaniel, like Philip, was a godly Jew. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the Messiah. Philip 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.*” Nathaniel’s response implied that this was not possible because nothing good could come out of Nazareth. However, he was curious enough to go see for himself whether Philip’s words were true.

Jesus had a divine perception about this man, Nathaniel. He knew that Nathaniel had serious doubts and questions, but He also knew that he was honest, unpretentious, sincere and undisguised. Jesus said, “*Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.*” Jesus had supernaturally known him before Philip contacted him. He had seen into Nathaniel’s heart and saw the type of man described in Psalm 32:2, a man without guile who had a sincere desire for God.

When Nathaniel asked Jesus how He knew about him, the Lord replied, “*Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.*” This response, along with Christ’s compassionate, loving attitude, struck home dramatically with Nathaniel. The kindly omniscience of this Man from Nazareth stabbed his soul. Only God could have such an intimate knowledge of his life and heart. His dramatic reaction showed his depth of understanding about Jesus, “*Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*”

## Application

Jesus’ divine sensitivity towards Nathaniel was remarkable. Before they met, the Lord had divinely

perceived this Galilean Jew just as he was - candid, no deceit, unsophisticated, rational. This shows us clearly that the Lord's knowledge is without limits and His unconditional love comes to us just as we are. He knows our good characteristics, our shortcomings, our desires, our idiosyncrasies and our hang-ups. We can come to Him just as we are. But just as Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, Nathaniel and the rest will find out, we can be sure that knowing Him will bring about change - change born out of love that wants the very best for each one of us.

### III. The Witness of the Son of God (1:50-51)

#### A. Just the Beginning

Nathaniel's bold, accurate identification of Jesus as the Son of God brought the reply from Christ that this was just the beginning for him. The Lord's supernatural knowledge of Nathaniel before He met him was small compared to what he would see as he followed Jesus as his Rabbi and King. The specific promise is, "Nathaniel, you have had a taste of My omniscience (knowing all), but greater revelation is yet to come."

#### B. Confirmation

Jesus appears to be giving a confirmation - perhaps a special revelation to Nathaniel. His words are carefully chosen and relate to the Old Testament story about Jacob and his dream of angels ascending and descending between earth and heaven (Gen. 28:10-15). Jesus told Nathaniel, "*You will see greater things than these. Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*" The meaning of the "greater things" in store for him probably refers to Jacob's experience in Genesis. In Jacob's dream, the ascending and descending angels on the ladder (Gen.28:12) are God's agents assisting human beings by taking communications to God in heaven and by bringing information of divine things down to them. In Christ's words to Nathaniel, He is pointing out that He, Jesus, is the real ladder by which the gulf between earth and heaven is bridged. He is the key to access to God and communications with God. Calling Himself the Son of Man, Jesus is emphasizing that He is the true and only way to God (John 14:6).

#### C. The Son of Man

The term, Son of Man, is Christ's favorite title for Himself. Biblically, the term has two uses:

(1) In the Old Testament, Ezekiel 2:1,3,6,8; 3:1,3 uses it with small letters (son of man) to refer to a human person. On the other hand, Daniel 7:13 uses it with capital letters (Son of Man) to refer to a divine figure in visions of a coming kingdom.

(2) In the New Testament Gospels, Christ uses the title Son of Man to identify Himself frequently. It has the notion of suffering as related to glory, that is, suffering is the way to glory.

### Application

This lesson teaches us that we really need to open the eyes of our hearts to know the hope and significance of Christ's calling. Do you have a spiritual hunger in your heart to know Jesus more and more? To know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe? What are you doing to maintain a vibrant interactive relationship with Him? Do you express your grateful thanksgiving and love to Him for reconciling you to God, unloading your burdens, carrying you through the "fires" of life and instilling in you the peace and joy of His salvation?