

D. Jesus the Word Made Flesh: The Third Witness of John the Apostle, 1:14–18

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| <p>1. Christ became flesh¹</p> | <p>14 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.</p> |
| <p>2. Proof 1: Christ dwelt visibly among us</p> <p>a. He & His glory were seen</p> <p>b. He was full of grace² & truth</p> | <p>14 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.</p> |
| <p>3. Proof 2: John the Baptist bore witness of the superiority of Christ</p> | <p>15 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.</p> |
| <p>4. Proof 3: Men have received the fullness & grace of Christ</p> <p>a. Not by law</p> <p>b. By Jesus Christ</p> | <p>16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.</p> <p>17 For the law was given by Moses, <i>but</i> grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.</p> |
| <p>5. Proof 4: God has revealed Himself through Christ</p> | <p>18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared <i>him</i>.</p> |

D. Jesus the Word Made Flesh: The Third Witness of John the Apostle, 1:14–18

(1:14–18) **Introduction:** “The Word was made flesh”—God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was made flesh and blood; He became a man. No greater message could ever be proclaimed to man.

1. Christ became flesh (v.14).
2. Proof 1: Christ dwelt visibly among us (v.14).
3. Proof 2: John the Baptist bore witness of the superiority of Christ (v.15).
4. Proof 3: men have received the fullness and grace of Christ (vv.16–17).
5. Proof 4: God has revealed Himself through Christ (v.18).

1 (1:14) Jesus Christ, Incarnation: Christ became flesh. The Incarnation did take place. The Son of God was actually made flesh. He came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. There is no doubt about John's meaning here.

The word *flesh* (*sarx*) is the same word that Paul used to describe man's nature with all of its weakness and tendency to sin. This is a staggering thought. Jesus Christ is God—fully God, yet Jesus Christ is man—fully man. (See 1 Jn. 4:2–3.) The word *beheld* (*theasthai*) means actually seeing with the human eye. It is used about twenty times in the New Testament. There is no room whatever for saying that God's becoming a man was merely a vision of some man's mind or imagination. John was saying that he and others actually saw the Word made flesh. Jesus Christ was beyond question God Himself who became man, who partook of the very same flesh as all other men. (See 1 Jn. 1:1–4.) (See Deeper Study # 1, *Flesh*—Jn. 1:14 for the meaning of "flesh" and why Jesus Christ had to become flesh. Also see Deeper Study # 1, *Flesh*—1 Co. 3:1–4 for more discussion.)

Deeper Study # 1

(1:14) **Flesh:** What does the Bible mean by "flesh"? And why did Jesus Christ have to become flesh? The best description of the flesh is probably found in 1 Co. 15:42–44. (See outline and notes—Ro. 5:12–21; 8:1f; Deeper Study # 1—1 Co. 3:1–4.)

1. The flesh is corruptible.

a. The flesh is tainted, debased, ruined and depraved by sin (lust, 2 Pe. 1:4). There is a seed of corruption within human flesh; therefore, the flesh sins (lusts) and thereby ages, dies, deteriorates and decays. It does not live beyond a few years on this earth.

"The corruption which is in the world through lust" (2 Pe. 1:4).

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Ga. 6:8).

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Co. 15:50).

b. Christ (the Word) became flesh to correct and to counteract the corruption of flesh.

"[By Christ] are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pe. 1:4).

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.... Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pe. 1:18–19, 23–25).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).

2. The flesh is dishonorable.

a. The flesh is not what God created it to be. It does not exist in the image of God that God intended. It does not hold the glory, the honor, nor the prestige it once did when God created it. It is disgraced and shamed, and it is reproached by sin and lust. It is held in the grip of sin and fear and subject to being held in bondage—even the bondage of death.

“In me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Ro. 7:18).

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Ro. 1:28–32; see Ga. 5:19–21).

“They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.... For to be carnally [fleshy] minded is death” (Ro. 8:5–6).

b. Jesus Christ became flesh to correct and counteract the dishonor of the flesh.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (He. 2:14–15; see 2:14–18).

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Ro. 5:8–10).

3. The flesh is weak.

a. The flesh is impotent. It is feeble, frail, fragile, infirmed, and decrepit because of sin (lust). It has no strength to please God nor to save itself.

“They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Ro. 8:8).

“There shall no flesh be justified in His sight” (Ro. 3:20; Ga. 2:16).

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (Jn. 6:63).

b. Jesus Christ became flesh to correct and counteract the weakness of the flesh.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Ro. 5:6).

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Ro. 8:3).

4. The flesh is a natural body.

a. The flesh is of the earth and is part of the earth; it is made up of the chemicals and substances of the earth. It is physical, material, animal. It is “the earthly house,” the “tabernacle,” the “tent,” which houses the human soul and spirit (2 Co. 5:1). It is neither spirit nor spiritual; therefore, it cannot live beyond the strength of the chemicals and substances that form its flesh. It cannot live beyond its *natural life*.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Co. 15:50).

“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Lu. 24:39).

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body... As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Co. 15:44, 49).

b. Jesus Christ became flesh to counteract the natural body of the flesh. He became flesh in order to become “a quickening spirit,” the Savior who could quicken and make alive all those who would trust Him (1 Co. 15:45).

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pe. 3:18).

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Ro. 8:11).

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Ep. 2:4–5).

2 (1:14) Jesus Christ, Incarnation: the first proof of the Incarnation is that Jesus Christ dwelt visibly among us.

a. God’s glory was seen (see previous note, *Incarnation*—Jn. 1:14 for meaning of word “beheld”). Two things are meant by the word “glory.”

1) Christ was the *Shekinah glory* of God. The word Shekinah means that which dwells or dwelling. It refers to the *bright cloud* that God used to guide Israel out of Egypt and that rested upon the tabernacle and above the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place (Ex. 40:34–38). The cloud symbolized God’s presence, and that is just what John was saying. “We beheld,” actually saw the Shekinah glory, God’s very presence “dwelling among us.”

2) Christ was the very embodiment of God, all that God is and does. John said “we beheld,” looked at Him, and could tell He was God. All that Jesus was in His person and being, character and behavior, was so enormously different. In person and behavior, work and ministry He was ...

- the very embodiment of “*grace and truth*”

- the perfect embodiment of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control
- the absolute embodiment of all that God could be

The glory of all that God was stood right before them, right in their very presence. They beheld Him with their very own eyes. Jesus Christ, the Man who dwelt among them, could be no other than the glory of God among men. It was clearly seen that “in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). The glory of His being ...

- was the very glory God Himself would possess
- was the very glory God would give to His only begotten Son (just as any father would give the best of his glory and all he is to a son)

A striking fact is that James, who was the Lord’s brother, even called Jesus “the Lord of glory.” Just think: James was reared with Jesus beginning from the earliest years of childhood stretching right on through the years of adulthood. If anyone ever had an opportunity to see and observe Jesus, it was James. He had every chance to see some act of disobedience, some sin, something contrary to the nature of God. However, James’ testimony is: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of Glory*,” the One in whom the very presence of God dwelt among us (Js. 2:1).

The references in John dealing with glory are as follows: Jn. 2:11; 5:41; 7:18; 8:50, 54; 11:4; 12:41; 17:5, 22, 24.

b. Jesus Christ was full of grace and truth.

- 1) He was the very embodiment of grace (see Deeper Study # 2, *Grace*—Jn. 1:14).
- 2) He was the very embodiment of truth (see Deeper Study # 2, *Truth*—Jn. 14:6; Deeper Study # 1—8:32).

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14).

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.... Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Lu. 1:31, 34–35).

“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” (Jn. 1:14).

“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Ro. 1:3).

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Ro. 8:3).

“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Ph. 2:7).

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Ti. 3:16).

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil” (He. 2:14).

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God” (1 Jn. 4:2).

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 Jn. 7).

Deeper Study # 2

(1:14) **Grace:** grace is probably the most meaningful word in the language of men. In the Bible the word *grace* means far more than it does when men use it. To men the word *grace* means three things.

1. Grace is that quality within a thing that is beautiful or joyful. It may be the fragrance of a flower, the rich green of the grass, the beauty of a lovely person.
2. Grace is anything that has loveliness. It may be a thought, an act, a word, a person.
3. Grace is a gift, a favor that someone might extend to a friend. The favor is always freely done, expecting nothing in return. The favor is always done for a friend.

However, when the early Christians looked at what God had done for men, they had to add a deeper, much richer meaning to the word *grace*. God had saved sinners, those who had acted against Him. Therefore, *grace* became the favor of God showered upon men—men who did not deserve His favor. *Grace* became the kindness and love that dwells within the very nature of God, the kindness and love that God freely gives to His *enemies*.

No other word so expresses the depth and richness of the heart and mind of God. This is the distinctive difference between God’s *grace* and man’s *grace*. Whereas man sometimes does favors for his friends and thereby can be said to be *gracious*, God has done a thing unheard of among men: He has given His very own Son to die for His *enemies* (Ro. 5:8–10). In this act He has done something that shows He is the perfect embodiment of *grace*, full ...

- of beauty and joy
- of loveliness and goodness

- of favors freely given
- of kindness and love freely demonstrated

3 (1:15) Jesus Christ, Incarnation: the second proof of the Incarnation is John the Baptist. He, too, bore witness of the Incarnation. John said very simply ...

- Jesus was born “after me” (6 months after).
- But He is “preferred before me” (mightier; more important in being, rank, and dignity).
- Why? Because “He was before me.”

The words “for He was before me” (*hoti protos mou en*) literally mean *first to me* or *first of me*. It refers both to time and importance. Jesus Christ was first in time, existing before John. He existed “in the beginning”—throughout all eternity. John proclaimed, “He was before me”: He always existed; He was the First; He was the very cause for John’s existence. John also declared that Jesus was first in importance. He was first in superiority, Being, Person. His very name is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

“Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (Is. 44:6).

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Re. 22:13; see Re. 1:8; 21:6; Is. 44:6).

4 (1:16–17) Jesus Christ, Incarnation—Jesus Christ, Deity: the third proof of the Incarnation is the fullness and grace of Christ which was given to us. Genuine believers can testify to this.

The word *fullness* (*pleroma*) means that which fills, the sum total, the totality. It is the sum total of all that is in God (Col. 1:19). In Jesus dwelt all the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—all the abundance of God (1 Co. 1:30). All that Christ is, the very fullness of His being, is given to us who believe—all His “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Ga. 5:22–23). We are complete in Him.

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:9–10).

The term “grace for grace” means that He gives grace upon grace, grace enough to meet all our needs, no matter the circumstances. It is one blessing leading to another blessing; new wonders dawning upon one’s consciousness every day; fresh experiences constantly springing into one’s life.

Note that the fullness of God, His grace and truth, does not come by the law, but by Jesus Christ. It does not come ...

- by being as good as we can
- by working to please God as much as we can
- by keeping the rules and commandments of the law

It does not come by law, for no man can keep the law to any degree of perfection. The law only points out a man's failure and condemns him for breaking the law. If a man is to be acceptable to God, it is because he comes and keeps on coming to God, begging God to forgive him, and because God loves him so much that he forgives the man.

Such is the grace, the undeserved favor, of God. God's grace comes by Jesus Christ, and we would not know the grace of God unless Jesus Christ had come to reveal it to us. The glorious fact that we do experience the fullness of God and His grace is proof of the Incarnation (that God did become flesh in the person of Jesus Christ).

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Tit. 2:11).

“But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Tit. 3:4–7).

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Ac. 15:11).

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Ro. 3:23–24).

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ep. 2:8–9).

5 (1:18) Incarnation—Jesus Christ, Deity: the fourth proof of the Incarnation is Christ—God's Son. He alone has seen God. No man has seen God at any time; however, Jesus Christ claimed ...

- that He was “the only begotten Son of God” (Jn. 3:16)
- that He had come from the very “bosom of the Father” (from the deepest part, the most intimate place, the most honorable fellowship) (Jn. 1:18)
- that He had come to reveal and to proclaim the Father (see Deeper Study # 1, 2, 3—Jn. 14:6; see note, *Revelation* 14:7)

The fact that Jesus Christ is “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father” is proof of the Incarnation (that God became flesh). Jesus Christ declared unequivocally that He had come from God. A man either believes or does not believe the grace and truth of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. (See note—Jn. 3:31 for discussion and verses.)

E. Jesus the Messiah, the Lord: The Second Witness of John the Baptist, 1:19–28

1. **John was questioned by religionists who were suspicious of him: They asked, “Who are you?”¹** 19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?
2. **He was a man who knew who he was** 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.
- a. He was not the Christ²
- b. He was not Elijah 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.
- c. He was not “the prophet” 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?
3. **He was only a voice—only a forerunner for the Lord** 23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.
- a. His clear declaration: He was merely a man proclaiming the coming of the Lord
- b. His questioners: The Pharisees³ 24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.
4. **He was a baptizer** 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?
- a. He baptized with water 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;
- b. He pointed to One whom they did not know: The Messiah
5. **He was an unworthy servant of this One, the Messiah** 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

- 6. He was a man who brought honor to a place** 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

E. Jesus the Messiah, the Lord: The Second Witness of John the Baptist, 1:19–28

(1:19–28) **Introduction:** the witness of John the Baptist is a dynamic example for every servant of God.

1. John was questioned by religionists who were suspicious of Him: they asked, “Who are you?” (v.19).
2. He was a man who knew who he was (vv.20–22).
3. He was only a voice—only a forerunner for the Lord (v.23–24).
4. He was a baptizer (vv.25–26).
5. He was an unworthy servant of this One, the Messiah (v.27).
6. He was a man who brought honor to a place (v.28).

1 (1:19) John the Baptist: John was questioned by the religionists who were very suspicious of him. These particular religionists were a fact-finding commission sent from Jerusalem, the headquarters of Jewish religion. The questioning of John by the religionists was to be expected, for John’s father, Zechariah, was a priest (Lu. 1:5); and in the eyes of the authorities, all the sons of priests were automatically priests by descent. However, John was not a priest like other priests. He was most unusual, for the way he lived and preached was radically different (see Mt. 3:1–12). He was a nonconformist, and the authorities had to find out why.

Thought 1. Too often institutional religion is suspicious and opposed to the unusual.

⇒ If a person is different or does things differently, he is questioned.

⇒ If a person is unusually blessed or if miraculous things are happening in his life and ministry, he is questioned.

Deeper Study # 1

(1:19) **Levites:** these men were servants of the priests. They were descendants of Levi just as the descendants of Aaron were. However, only Aaron’s descendants could serve as priests; all other Levites served under them.

2 (1:20–22) Minister—Humility: the messenger was a man who knew who he was. Others had questions about John, but not John. He knew exactly who he was. He knew God personally; therefore, he knew God had sent him into the world for a specific ministry. He was from God, called and commissioned by God; therefore, He knew exactly who he was and what he was doing (see Deeper Study # 1—Jn. 1:6. Also see outline and notes—Jn. 1:6–8 for more discussion.)

a. John was not the Messiah (see Deeper Study # 2, *Christ*—Jn. 1:20).

b. John was not Elijah. Elijah was expected to return from the dead to proclaim the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 4:5). He was expected to do several significant things: to warn the people, to anoint the Messiah to His kingly office, to raise the dead, and to help select those who were to have a part in the Messiah's kingdom. John denied that he was Elijah in person. It should be noted that Jesus did later identify John with Elijah (Mk. 9:11f); however, what Jesus meant was that John was Elijah in spirit, not in person.

c. John was not "that prophet." This prophet was thought to be another forerunner of the Messiah (Jn. 7:40). Some persons thought he would be either Jeremiah or Isaiah. This belief was based on Moses' prediction that there would be a prophet like unto himself (De. 18:15). However, today most Christians interpret the prophet predicted by Moses to be Christ Himself (Ac. 3:22; 7:37).

Thought 1. The lessons are clear. The servant (minister or layman) of God must not ...

- claim to be the Christ nor any other great prophet
- pretend to be some great man of God
- seek recognition
- assume some honor that does not belong to him
- allow God's power upon his life and ministry to turn his head toward pride, thinking more highly of himself than he should

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Ge. 18:27).

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands" (Ge. 32:10).

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11).

"And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10).

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2 S. 7:18).

"And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in" (1 K. 3:7).

"The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Mt. 8:8).

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Co. 15:9).

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Ti. 1:15).

Deeper Study # 2

(1:20) **Christ—Messiah:** the words *Christ* (Christos) and *Messiah* are the same word. Messiah is the Hebrew word and Christ is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same person and mean the same thing: *the anointed one*. The Messiah is the anointed one of God. Matthew said Jesus “is called Christ” (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as *the anointed one of God*, the Messiah Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised Messiah. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverished. Under the Romans, people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfill His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people gullible. Many arose who claimed to be the Messiah and led the gullible followers into rebellion against the Roman state. The insurrectionist Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus’ trial, is an example (Mk. 15:6f). (See note—Mt. 1:1; Deeper Study #2—3:11; notes 11:1–6; 11:2–3; Deeper Study #1—11:5; Deeper Study #2—11:6; Deeper Study #1—12:16; notes 22:42; Lu. 7:21–23.)

The Messiah was thought to be several things.

1. Nationally, He was to be the leader from David’s line who would free the Jewish state and establish it as an independent nation, leading it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.
2. Militarily, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. Religiously, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. Personally, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of Messiah on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name *Jesus* shows Him to be man. The name *Christ* shows Him to be God’s anointed, God’s very own Son. *Christ* is Jesus’ official title. It identifies Him officially as Prophet (De. 18:15–19), Priest (Ps. 110:4), and King (2 S. 7:12–13). These officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the Christ, the Messiah (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10–11; Lu. 3:21–22; Jn. 1:32–33).

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (Jn. 1:41).

“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (Jn. 1:45).

“Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (Jn. 1:49).

“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he” (Jn. 4:25–26).

“And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (Jn. 6:69).

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (Jn. 11:25–27).

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Ac. 8:36–37).

3 (1:23–24) Jesus Christ, Messiah—John the Baptist, Forerunner: the messenger was only a voice, only a forerunner for the Lord. Why was it necessary for the Messiah to have a forerunner? Why did John have to run ahead of Christ crying, “Prepare. Make straight the way of the Lord”? What kind of preparation needed to be done?

a. The people needed their concept of the Messiah straightened out. Their concept had deteriorated through the years.

1) First, few had ever seen “the seed” promised to Adam and Abraham as referring to the Messiah (see Deeper Study # 1—Ga. 3:8, 16; Deeper Study # 1—Ro. 4:1–25). They interpreted “the seed” as the nation Israel, as all circumcised Jews. “We be Abraham’s seed” they were later to tell Christ (Jn. 8:33). They saw Christ as being “the seed of Abraham” only in the sense that an ordinary Jew was. He was just an ordinary man born through Abraham’s line. Few ever saw the Messiah as “the Seed” in whom all the promises made to Abraham were to be fulfilled.

2) Second, the Jews saw the Messiah primarily as the Son of David. David had liberated and led their nation to its highest peak, so they saw the Messiah as following in David’s footsteps. (See notes—Jn. 1:45; Lu. 3:24–31; Mt. 1:1; Deeper Study # 1—1:18; Deeper Study # 2—3:11; notes—11:1–6; 11:2–3; Deeper Study # 1—12:16; notes—22:42; Lu. 7:21–23). At first, the Jews saw the Messiah as a liberator, One who was going to deliver them from all their enemies and restore their nation to its greatest glory. (Keep in mind how awful the Jews had been treated and persecuted throughout history.) However, as centuries rolled on and they suffered brutal violence after violence, their concept of the Messiah deteriorated into *anger*.

The Jews saw themselves as the subjects of the Messiah’s salvation (deliverance) and saw all other people (Gentiles) as the subjects of the Messiah’s judgment. The Jews were the ones acceptable to God; all others were unacceptable. Therefore, the Messiah was to come and free Israel, elevating the nation to rule over all the nations of the earth. This, of course, led to two tragic faults. First, the Jews became blind to their own sinful condition and personal need for salvation. Second, the Jews saw salvation as a matter of national heritage and personal rites (being circumcised) and ritual (religious observances).

They believed that they were safe because they had been circumcised and their forefathers were godly people.

The forerunner, John the Baptist, had to begin cracking through the crust of these errors. Salvation was not a national thing, not an institutional thing, not even a religious thing. It was not a matter of heritage and rites. It was a personal matter, a spiritual matter of the heart and life. A man had to personally want forgiveness of sins and then repent and be baptized if he wished to be saved. This was to be the message of the Messiah. Therefore, because of the hardness of the people in understanding the personal need for salvation, God had to send a forerunner to begin breaking through the crust of self-righteousness which had become so cemented in the mind of man. (Just how deeply rooted the false concept of the Messiah was can be seen in the enormous struggle the disciples had with it. See note—Mt. 18:1–2.)

b. The people needed their religion straightened out. They had allowed their religion to become formal and institutionalized, that is, just a *form* of godliness which denied the power thereof (2 Ti. 3:5). So many were going through the motions of religion, its services and rites, yet living as they wished. God and personal righteousness were of little concern. The Messiah was to bring a new message, a message of God's love—a love so strong that it would proclaim the truth:

- ⇒ that man is sinful and perishing (Jn. 3:16)
- ⇒ that man must repent (Mk. 2:17)
- ⇒ that man must prepare, for the Kingdom of God is at hand (Mt. 4:17)

The message was to be so radical that some preparation of the people was needed before the Messiah appeared on the scene. Therefore, God sent the forerunner, John the Baptist.

c. The world needed to know about the Messiah. As the Son of God, the Messiah would be so different—so pure, so holy, so truthful—that men would not tolerate His presence too long. His proclamation of the truth and salvation would be very, very short. Men would destroy Him. Therefore, men needed to be stirred to a high pitch of excitement when the Messiah arrived. Men needed to be buzzing about with great anticipation and with the glorious news that the Messiah had finally come. People would need to sit up and take notice. They may not respond; they might even react violently, but they needed to be aware of the Messiah's *historical coming* and *claims* to be the Son of God. The forerunner was to arouse and stir the people to expect the Messiah immediately.

Thought 1. The same can be said of men today.

- (1) Many need their concept of the Messiah straightened out.
 - (a) Some have never seen that the *promised seed* is Christ.
 - (b) Some still think of themselves as being *special* to God. They are blind to their sin and need for personal salvation.
- (2) Many need their religion straightened out.
- (3) Many simply need to hear about the Messiah: they have never heard that He has come.

Thought 2. The messenger of God is only a voice, only a forerunner for the Lord. But he *is* a voice and a forerunner; therefore, He *must* speak up for the Lord.

(1) He must be a *clear voice* proclaiming a *clear message*.

“For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Mt. 10:20).

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15).

“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Co. 2:13).

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever” (1 Pe. 4:11).

(2) He must be an *earnest voice* proclaiming the desperate need to prepare and repent.

“And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 3:2).

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Ac. 3:19).

Deeper Study # 3

(1:24) **Pharisees:** see Deeper Study #3—Ac. 23:8.

4 (1:25–26) Baptism—John the Baptist, Baptism of: the messenger was a baptizer. John was asked why he baptized.

a. His baptism shocked the Jewish nation, for Jews were never baptized. Baptism was only for non-Jewish persons who were converts to the Jewish faith. The Jews considered all Gentiles unclean, so they had to be baptized when they became converts (all males were also circumcised). However, Jews were thought to be clean and acceptable to God no matter how they lived. Why? Because Jews were “of the seed of Abraham,” of his heritage. They were his seed, the people promised to Abraham.

b. The religionists wanted to know if John were the Christ. They believed that when the Christ came He might institute the practice of baptism.

c. The religionists wanted to know if John were a prophet. In theory a true prophet was said to have the right to institute new practices and to change some laws.

John’s baptism was radical, most unusual, a shocking practice. It was a “baptism of repentance *for* the remission of sins” (Lu. 3:3). What does this mean? Simply this: when a person wanted God to forgive his sins, the person made the decision to repent, to turn from his sins, and to change his life. Then he was immediately baptized, thereby proclaiming that he was becoming a follower of the Messiah whom John preached (see note—Lu. 3:3 for detailed discussion).

The Old Testament prophets had cried for Israel to wash themselves and to be cleansed of their filthiness. John used water baptism to show that a man was turning from his sins and turning to God, seeking forgiveness of sins.

“Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil” (Is. 1:16).

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec. 13:1).

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh” (Eze. 36:25–26).

Thought 1. Baptism is critical. The believer is to be baptized, but he is to be baptized because he is truly repenting and sincerely turning to God.

Thought 2. The servant of God is to be a baptizer, a man who proclaims and practices the baptism of repentance in its full meaning.

5 (1:27) Servant—Humility: the messenger of God was an unworthy servant. Two things demonstrated this.

a. John proclaimed and confessed that Jesus was preferred before him (see note—Jn. 1:15).

b. John proclaimed that he was not worthy even to unloose the shoe latchet of Jesus’ sandals. He confessed the *nothingness of self*. Slaves were the ones who loosed the sandals of guests and washed their feet. John said that he was *less* than a slave, unworthy to do even what a slave did.

Thought 1. The same confession of unworthiness must be made by every servant of God.

“But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Lu. 22:26).

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Ro. 12:3).

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Ph. 2:3–4).

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mi. 6:8).

6 (1:28) John the Baptist—Minister: the messenger was a man who brought honor to a place. John was ministering in Bethabara beyond Jordan, which means it was a great distance from Jerusalem. John brought honor to the place. It would not be known apart from John, for nothing else is known about the city.

Thought 1. A servant of God who is faithful in his witness and ministry (like John) will bring honor to a place. In God's eyes a place is honored because believers are there (see Ge. 18:16f).¹

DEEPER STUDY # 3

(23:8) **Pharisees:** the word means *the separated ones*. The Pharisees were strict religionists. Their religious sect arose about B.C. 175. A Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, tried to stamp out the Jewish religion and replace it with Greek customs and practices. A number of Jewish men opposed this threat and determined among themselves to save the Jewish religion. They refused to practice Greek customs and dedicated themselves to practicing the Jewish law in the strictest sense. They felt that by carrying out every little detail of the Jewish law and by teaching others to do the same, they could save the Jewish religion and nation and keep it from dying out. (See note and Deeper Study # 1—Mt. 12:10.)

Several things should be noted.

1. They were the orthodox of their day—a sect or school of religious thought. They were organized solely for preserving the law and the Jewish religion. Thereby, they were to save the Jewish nation.
2. They were strict literalists. The Jewish law was expanded into thousands and thousands of little rules and regulations by the Scribes. These rules and regulations were known as the Scribal or Oral Law. More than fifty volumes or books were eventually needed to hold the regulations. (See Deeper Study # 1—Lk. 6:2).
3. The Pharisees were a body of the most zealous religionists.
4. There were never many Pharisees—never more than 6,000. The strictness and demands of the sect were too hard for the common people.
5. They were in dead earnest—dedicated and zealous, self-denying, and moral. No man could give his life to so desperate and restrictive a task unless he was totally genuine.
6. They were self-righteous, heartless, and hypocritical (Lk. 18:9). They lacked any sense of need or sin (Lk. 7:39).
7. They were bitterly opposed to the Sadducees, hating and despising them, feeling that the Sadducees were traitors to the nation. However, the Pharisees were forced to quietly cooperate with the Sadducees because the Sadducees were the primary ruling party of the nation.
8. They were the main opponents of Jesus Christ and were unsparing in their denunciation of Him. Their savage attacks were primarily for two reasons. First, He was not a graduate of any of their rabbinical schools, nor a member of any of their religious sects. Second, He attacked their

¹ Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2004). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (pp. 18–27). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.

rules and regulations which had been added to God's law (see outline and notes—Mt. 23:1–36; Lk. 11:37–54).

5 (23:11) Paul—God's Care & Presence: for two days Paul had been under a frightening, terrible strain. His mental and physical capabilities had been taxed to the limit. Twice he had to be snatched from the clutch of a frenzied mob by a Roman patrol. And the warning he had received not to venture into Jerusalem was bound to be preying upon his mind. How much more could he take? What was his breaking point? God knew, just as He always does. The scene was this: it was the night following and Paul was deeply discouraged and questioning, sensing failure and feeling hopeless and helpless. And he had been in such a state for over twenty-four hours. Note a significant fact: no mention is made of any support from James or the other apostles or elders of the church (cp. Acts 12:5). Paul apparently stood alone. But note: the Lord stood by him.

- ⇒ The Lord gave some appearance to him.
- ⇒ The Lord said, "Be of good cheer" (tharsei), of good courage.
- ⇒ The Lord assured him that his witness in Jerusalem was of God.
- ⇒ The Lord assured him that he would bear witness in Rome.

Thought 1. The Lord will stand by our side, encouraging and seeing us through all—if we are bearing true witness for Him.

Thought 2. The Lord wishes His servants to always be cheerful and courageous, no matter the trial. The life of His servant is under the care and leadership of the Lord.

"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. 23:4).

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1).

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him" (Ps. 28:7).

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God" (Ps. 40:17).

"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Ex. 33:14).

"Fear thou not; For I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Is. 41:10).

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Is. 43:2).

"Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he, that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Is. 50:9).

“Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Mt. 28:20).

“At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever” (2 Tim. 4:16–18).

“He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer ... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).²

² Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2003). [*The Acts of the Apostles*](#) (pp. 324–325). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.