

# Jesus: The Celestial Man

## The Gospel of John Volume 1 – Chapters 1-6



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Jesus: The Celestial Man -- Volume 1  
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the gentleman who always made it easy for me to believe in a loving Heavenly Father, my Dad, The Reverend Clarence H. Barnett, Jr.

## Introduction

How was Jesus both human and God? This was and continues to be the central tenet of Christianity; that the immortal God became a man to save us when we could not save ourselves. The theologians of the early church gave it the name “incarnation,” God putting on flesh, bone, and blood.

The Apostle Paul in his missionary journeys around the Mediterranean world noted that the Christian idea of God dying on a cross was a “scandal” to the Jews and nonsense to the Greeks (1 Cor. 1:23). The Jews were seriously agitated by such ideas. Yahweh was so holy humans could not say his name out loud. People, on the other hand, were sinful and mortal. These categories were mutually exclusive. God becoming human was blasphemy. The Law of Moses said that anyone who died on a “tree” (a criminal’s execution) was cursed. It was inconceivable to the Jews that God could become a human, let alone a criminal.

The Greeks laughed at the idea that God became human. Greek gods were contemptuous of humans. The gods of the Gentiles had to be appeased, or they could unleash chaos upon the earth. Greeks admired philosophers who taught that the elevation of humanity came from education. They perceived the problem of human existence to be one of ignorance, not sin. So, to the Europeans, the story of Jesus was the fable of a backward culture.

In this book, I try to explain how the infinite God became the person called Jesus. Christians down through the millennia have supplied answers to this question. Here are summaries for a few of the alternatives.

Twin Natures – This position is still considered the orthodox answer. Adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD, it teaches that Jesus had two separate natures – one human and one divine. Each nature had its own unique properties. They remained distinct yet inseparably united in the person of Jesus. He was perfect God and perfect human. The human nature needed to eat, sleep and do all the things people must do to survive. The divine nature was his omnipotence, omniscience, and righteousness. I think the “twin natures” theory is a description, not an explanation of how Jesus could be both God and human. The believer had to accept by faith the twin natures of Jesus as a miracle.

Monophysite (Mono – one; *physis* – nature). These Christians explained that Jesus was a man only to the degree that he was born, survived, and died. His only nature was divine. His body was just a vessel and a means of transportation. His human nature motivated nothing Jesus did. People today don’t understand the word “nature” as the early churches used it to describe Jesus. Nature was a person’s character, the motivator of behavior.

Gnostic – Surprisingly, Gnosticism is one of the earliest concepts for explaining how Jesus was God. But there was no talk about natures. Gnostics said Jesus was not a man. They taught that an evil God called the demiurge created the material world. Consequently, all matter was evil. Jesus was a spirit who came to release the divine spark implanted by the God of Light into human beings. The release of the God within you needed a special knowledge (the Greek word was *gnosis*) that Jesus taught to his disciples and which they later passed on to believers. One of the old Geek mantras of the Gnostics was

“*soma-sema*,” meaning the body is a prison. These ideas were prevalent in the late first and early second centuries, concurrent to the time the Gospels were being written. Some scholars (R. Bultmann, E. Kasemann, et al.) think that the Gnostics profoundly influenced the Gospel of John. I will attempt to show that while John does use similar vocabulary to the Gnostics, his ideas were completely different. For example, Gnostics would never sanction the I AM statements, the Logos as co-eternal with the creator God, or his suffering on the cross. With the archeological discovery of many ancient texts like the Nag Hammadi Scriptures, gnostic ideas continue today. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Carl Jung developed a psychological movement rooted in ancient Gnosticism. Gnostic assumptions about people and God form the basis for many so-called New Age organizations.

Secular Christianity – The solution is easy for many Christians in modern materialistic cultures. The Christ (they don’t like to use the name Jesus) was a good man but not divine. He was called the Son of God because he was true to his human spirit and always did what was morally right. His death on the cross revealed his absolute dedication to the principles of his life: love, service to the poor, and inclusiveness (Gentiles, women, outcasts, etc.). People are saved as they make Christ their example in life. John is little read in the secular church because his Gospel has been labeled anti-Semitic by some based on his vitriolic treatment of “the Jews.”

What would you say if I told you that I think Jesus was not born *Homo sapiens*? Would you think I’ve entirely lost my grasp of Christian orthodoxy and reverted to Gnosticism? Well, you must admit; Jesus was nothing like us or any other human who has

ever lived. Jesus was what is called in science a singularity. He was born by parthenogenesis (without the need of a father). How exactly was he a man like other *Homo sapiens* and yet could walk on water or emit thousands of lumens of light from his body atop the Mount of Transfiguration?

Do you know any people like you who raise dead people back to life? He told Jewish authorities he had seen Abraham who lived more than twelve centuries before Jesus's birth. The signs he performed alerted people to his unique existence. For hundreds of years, the ancient church got hung up on the word "nature:" human nature vs. divine nature. But they all thought Jesus was human.

Christians affirm Jesus lived like a man. He was tempted like a man, but he didn't sin (Heb. 4:15). To understand what kind of being I think Jesus was, we need to take a close look at the first man, Adam. Adam has not created *Homo sapiens* either. Adam wasn't physical or spiritual. Adam was celestial.

**I will be using the word *celestial* throughout this book without reference to any doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or any other group or individual.**

I use the word celestial to describe a universe made up of higher dimensions of reality that are not perceptible to us. They are celestial because these super dimensions extend far beyond earth into space-time. Celestial also refers to their physical existence and not to subjective or metaphysical ideas. In saying this, celestial is the opposite of spiritual. Spirituality is ephemeral and religious.

Multidimensions are measurable and objective. The world we experience is three-dimensional. But

some theoretical physicists say there may be as many as ten dimensions above our own. Others postulate 26 or even 44 dimensions to our cosmos. This idea is not Gnostic mythology. These higher orders of creation are a scientific probability.

To prove the existence of these higher planes of existence, scientists have built various types of nuclear particle colliders. The most famous is CERN in Switzerland, an underground racetrack about 17 miles in diameter. Simply put, a single atomic particle speeds around the track, going faster and faster until at a precise moment it collides with another atom. The impact releases tremendous energy. Particles appear for a Nano-second from somewhere other than our three-dimensional space. I am no expert on the so-called God Particle (Higgs-Boson) or fermions, but there's far more to our universe than the three dimensions we can experience.

Scriptures say God made Adam in God's image. Theologians have struggled for centuries to explain what that could mean. But it's only hard if you assume God created Adam *Homo sapiens*. The image of God can suggest only one thing: Adam looked like God. Adam looked like God, and he walked and talked with God. That being so, the Garden of Eden was not anywhere on the three-dimensional earth at all. The Garden of Eden had to exist where God was – further into Earth's celestial space. But how could God the Father walk? The Father never took on a human form. Since the Father doesn't have legs, Adam's Holy Companion in Eden was the one John called Word, the second person of the Trinity.

Adam was the first celestial man, but he did not obey God. God created Adam as a High Human. But Adam rebelled against the Creator. (Later in the

book, you'll learn what the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was and how it was incompatible with the Celestial Spirit-sphere.) As punishment for their disobedience, God ejected Adam and Eve from the Celestial Garden. Where did they go? There's that verse about Cain taking a wife. Haven't you always wanted to know where she came from? Was she Cain's sister? Are we all products of incest?

If you read Genesis 3 carefully, after God cursed Adam and his wife, they became Low Human (*Homo sapiens*) in mortal bodies like our own. They would sweat and decompose to dust after death. The woman would bear children in great pain, live mammalian birth. Adam and Eve were not the first *Homo sapiens*. The previously High Humans received new bodies and new instincts like many other hominin species on the earth in those days. When scientists trace the origins of *Homo sapiens* back millions of years, Bible believers need not be defensive. They are looking at the species God graciously gave Adam to inhabit. Unlike the Gnostics who perceived the body as a prison, Adam's physical body meant life rather than destruction and posterity instead of loneliness.

As *Homo sapiens* ourselves, we receive Adam's curse in our genesis as mud-bodies. Mud, a little moisture from the breath of God mixed with dust. Everyone ever born is a sinner, not because of bad moral choices themselves, but because they carry the body of flesh so prone to sin and eventually death. God never intended humans to be the way we are. When God looks at us, he is sickened by the sight of our potential encased in a dying mortal body when He made the original Adam immortal to be with Him forever. The original sin is how we *are*, not something we *did* or failed to do.

The first Celestial man was a failure. And that is why Jesus said he came. Look at it this way. Jesus now is what Adam was made to be, but squandered. Jesus is the Celestial Man, the first successful High Human who will never die again. Jesus obeyed God. Jesus is called “the second Adam” because he came into this three-dimensional world to undo the curse of mortality on *Homo sapiens* and restore them to the multidimensional existence for which God created them.

What if Heaven is not way out there somewhere on another planet, but close by, right on top of us? What if “spiritual” doesn’t mean subjective and metaphysical? Heaven is physical, more substantial, not less, than earth.

Jesus was not half God half man. He was all man—all God. Jesus’s singularity in human history was that he was the one celestial life that was made to suffer and die. He was always a Sixth Dimension Time Lord. The eternal plan was that he would be the sacrifice for the sin of the first Adam. But he limited himself, or, as the Scriptures put it, he humbled himself and took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7-8). He was not a servant of humanity, but a servant of his Father. Jesus allowed the Father to control his celestial power. Jesus listened to the Father constantly to know when and how he could release Celestial energy into the needy situations of people.

Jesus body not a prison for his divinity. Jesus’s body could, therefore, be both physical as we understand the three-dimensional universe, but at the same time multidimensional. He had access to parts of creation inaccessible to us. When Jesus heard the Father speak, his ears were tuned to higher spheres. His hands reached into a boy’s food

bag to feed thousands of people because the Father made that picnic basket an open portal into dimensions of unseen and unsuspected plenty. His legs could walk in the Sixth Dimension, looking to ordinary folks like a ghost walking on water. There was nothing different about his existence until “the hour” would come when for the first time Jesus would experience anxiety, pressure, and would ultimately be asked to do the unthinkable – die.

How was Jesus God and human? That was the question John wanted to answer in his Gospel. I will take you verse by verse through John’s inspired story and show you his testimony of why he called Jesus the Son of God, but which we might better understand as meaning the Man-God, Jesus.

### A Word About Bible Translations

Bible sales account for more than \$400 million annually in the United States. It’s a big business. There are hundreds of versions, each version is a translation, and every translation is an interpretation. The original Bible was not written in English. That should seem obvious to most readers, but as one defender of the King James Version once said, “If it was good enough for the Apostle Paul, it’s good enough for me.”

The original language of the Old Testament was Hebrew. The New Testament first appeared in a Greek dialect called Koine, or common Greek. Koine Greek was the language of the Mediterranean world from the time of Alexander the Great (320 BC) into the 6th century AD. The Koine New Testament was read and spoken throughout the civilized world. But both Biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek were “dead

languages” by the first millennium AD. Only scholars used the languages to read historical documents.

Since this study focuses on the Gospel of John, I think it will be helpful if we review how the New Testament came into our English mother tongue. The original parchment on which John first wrote has long since deteriorated and disappeared into the sands of time. All the original books of the New Testament have disappeared. We have only copies of copies. But thankfully, God not only inspired the writing of the Bible, but he also preserved it through the ages. People made hand-written copies of these holy documents. The earliest surviving copy is a fragment of the Gospel of John about the size of a business card dating to 125 AD.

More remnants of the New Testament have been discovered than any other ancient text. We have 5,800 Greek fragments and complete manuscripts, 10,000 Latin copies, and 9,300 duplicates in various other languages. By cross-referencing these documents, Bible linguists have verified and reconstructed more than 99.5% of the original text.

But even though Greek manuscripts mostly agree, Bible translations can vary widely. In 1604 James the First authorized a new version which would be the official translation used by the Church of England. William Tyndale had produced the first English Bible in 1525. But Tyndale’s Bible appealed more to Protestants and King James was a Roman Catholic. The Roman Catholic Church released their authorized English version in 1610, just a year before the King James or Authorized Version appeared. Each Bible gave texts in a light favorable to its publisher. And it’s the same today.

The King James Version annually outsells the Bible in second place (currently The New

International Version) by three to one. Please don't misunderstand. By 17th century standards, both the KJV and the Roman Catholic Douay Version were pretty good. It helped that everyone could be on the same page, so to speak. However, you might be surprised to learn that today these translations are some of the most unreliable. Their weakness isn't because readers don't understand the archaic Elizabethan English. They are less reliable than most newer Bible translations because they do not include the oldest and best-attested manuscripts. The King James Version (both the original and the latest version), the Revised Standard Version of 1952, and the New American Standard Version of 1971 are all based on a translation made around 400 AD. It was called the Vulgate Bible. It was the work of a monk named Jerome who translated the 4th-century collection of scripture called Codex Vaticanus from Greek into Latin. King James scholars relied almost exclusively on Jerome's Latin Bible because they did not have Greek copies.

In this book, I come down hard on Jerome. Why is Jerome's Latin translation inferior?

Because it predated the science of archeology. The Vulgate New Testament relied entirely on ancient texts from around 340 AD. But archeologists have turned up thousands of Scripture fragments and manuscripts dating to the first century. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, date from that period. They give us copies of Scripture much closer to the time of the original manuscripts. These texts help clarify the meaning of words in their original context.

Because there are many words in the original Greek that Jerome could only guess at as to their meaning. In my opinion, the most egregious error of Jerome's translation is that of Jesus speaking from

the cross in Matthew 27:46. Jerome got the first part right: “My God, my God.” But after that, Jerome was lost. Matthew reproduced Aramaic words in his manuscript. Aramaic is the language Jesus spoke. But Jerome didn’t know Aramaic. Jerome had no idea what the words meant, but since the first part of the verse looked like the beginning of Psalm 22, the Roman monk just decided to translate the text after the Psalm: “Why have you forsaken me.” But that’s not what the words meant. Jerome’s erroneous substitution influenced a new way of thinking about the crucifixion; that God had abandoned the Son while on the cross. Today songs and sermons still proclaim God turned his back on Jesus. Would it surprise you to learn that what the Aramaic says, “For this cause I have come?” In other words, Jesus affirmed the Father’s plan. But here’s the strange thing: Bible translators who know better continue to print the mistake for fear of backlash and lost sales.

Beginning with the New International Version (Zondervan, 1977), Bible translations began to use the oldest Greek manuscripts available as their primary sources. If a question arose about a text, the NIV and many of the new versions will include the disputed passage in a footnote and give the reason the text is being changed or excluded from the translation. Usually, it will be like the note on John 5:4: that “the oldest and best manuscripts do not include the text.”

What would you think if I told you even our Savior’s name was mangled horribly in Jerome’s translation? His given name in Hebrew was *Yeshua* — or Joshua in English. His name meant Savior. His countrymen called him *Yeshua Nazariti* (Joshua of Nazareth). The Greek version of Joshua was “Iēsous.” Think of it like the Celtic name Daffyd that comes

into English as David, for example. But Jerome didn't translate the name. He simply transliterated it; that is, he substituted Latin letters for the Greek. The Greek "I" came out "J" and the "ou" was dropped for just the "u" sound. So, the Messiah has become known to us by the non-name, Jesus. No one was ever named Jesus. It's an error based on shoddy scholarship. But to avoid confusion, I will refer to our Savior as Jesus throughout this volume.

Yes, the King James Version is indeed beautiful. It's hard to imagine the 23rd Psalm in any other cadence. I am merely suggesting that students of Scripture should consider using as their study Bible one of the newer versions based on ancient Greek texts.

In this book, I will translate verses into conversational English, and where the publisher has compromised the original Greek, I will show how John's text should read. I will also supply historical context so that you can decide for yourself about its meaning. My goal is to create a more precise Gospel of John; that is, Scripture that takes the words of the Gospel for what they meant in their original context wherever possible. I understand -- Bible publishers must sell their books. But it's unlikely they would change Jesus's name or His word on the cross, for example, for fear it would ignite protest and undermine sales.

The view I take in these studies is that Scripture is the word of God expressed through the words of men inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible was not written to us, but it was written for us. We live two thousand years later in a completely different culture. These facts require us to make some interpretation of the ancient texts. The Holy Spirit applies the written word to us, so it becomes the

personal Word of God. We are not like Muslims who claim a perfect Holy Book. We are Christ's people who claim only God is perfect and our Bible is the tool used by the Spirit to lead us without error to Jesus.

### Introduction to the Fourth Gospel

John's Gospel is very different than the other three. Each offers a different perspective on Jesus' life and ministry based on the audiences to whom each Apostle wrote. The first three Gospels share some literary relationship. Whole sections of text are identical indicating one copied from the other. Which one of the three was primary; that is, written first from which the others borrowed?

Matthew wrote to Jews and Jewish believers. His purpose was to show that Jesus was the long-predicted Messiah. Matthew's genealogy begins with Abraham and puts Kind David in Jesus' list of ancestors. Matthew embeds many Old Testament Scriptures in his story. Matthew may have been Matthew Levi, the tax collector Jesus called to follow Him. If so, this would make Matthew an eyewitness to the events about which he writes and the logical choice as the source from which Mark and Luke copied.

Mark's Gospel is based on the oral history of the Apostle Peter. Liberal scholarship today teaches that Mark was the source Gospel for Matthew and Luke. Mark wrote for Jews and Gentiles in Rome. Mark has teachings, stories, miracles, and Messianic prophecies. But half of Mark's narrative focuses on the last week of Jesus' life. Mark's original ending has disappeared. The Gospel abruptly stops mid-sentence at Mark 16:8. Most new Bibles put Mark

16:9-19 in a footnote since it was a forgery added perhaps 500 years later.

Luke was Paul's travel companion. Luke writes the longest Gospel. Along with Acts, which he also wrote, Luke penned more of the New Testament than anyone else, including Paul. Luke's writes in excellent Greek. He wrote to someone named Theophilus which can mean "anyone who loves of God" but who I think was more likely a real person, perhaps a high court official at the trial of the Apostle Paul. Luke has many memorable stories that appear nowhere else (for example, chapter 15).

When we come to John, we get a very different picture of Jesus. I am convinced that the author of the fourth Gospel is John the son of Zebedee, one of the disciples who made up Jesus' inner circle. As such, he gives us eyewitness insights into Jesus' character and intent not revealed in the other Gospels.

John wrote his Gospel from the cosmopolitan city of Ephesus. His audience included Greeks and Jews who lived in the Gentile world. But the Fourth Gospel takes a great interest in the Samaritans. More and more scholars are beginning to think John was writing to the Samaritans as his primary audience. I think this is a definite possibility. But whether Samaritan or Gentile, John said his purpose was to convince readers to believe that Jesus was the Son of God (John 20:16).

What does the term Son of God mean? Adam was called the Son of God. Many kings and rulers took the title as their own, such as Alexander the Great, the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaton, the Roman Emperor Augustus, and many oriental potentates. The Jews used the title to refer to the Messiah, God's Anointed King who would rule the world.

But the term “Son of God” has been confusing, even misleading for many outside Semitic patriarchy. It did NOT mean the Father pre-dated or created the Son. It did NOT suggest as I’m afraid so many children in Sunday School today think, that there are two Gods: God and Jesus. In the ancient Middle East, the Son was often sent as an emissary of the father to conclude far-away business. Jesus used this setting in his parables (see Matthew 21:37-39). As the Son of God, he was the messenger of God and bore the mark of God.

I think John uses the terminology “Son of God” to refer to the same realities I am describing with the term celestial man. Jesus had a body of flesh, but his abilities were unlike any human being that ever lived. John’s cosmology could only perceive the relationship of Jesus to God in terms of patriarchy. Today we are developing a new cosmology that allows us to explain more broadly how Jesus was able to perform his mighty deeds. They were not supernatural. Miracles revealed a world beyond our own, part of the way God made the multi-dimensional world. The relation of Jesus to the Father was unique.

Unlike the other three Gospels, John tells us no parables and no morality stories about helping the poor. John used a lot of ink on Jesus’ conflict with the “Jews.”. Secular Christian scholars say John’s Gospel is anti-Semitic. But Jesus wasn’t arguing with Jewish men and women in the street. Jesus was a Jew. It would be hard for him to be anti-Semitic. The context shows that Jesus was quarreling with the Jewish elite, the Pharisee Bible scholars and the Sadducee attorneys who ran a corrupt Temple along with the Idumean King Herod and all his gross calumny. I shall refer to these

authorities with the literal Greek word John uses, *Ioudaioi*. They were the federal heads of state. Jesus sought to persuade them as the first step in Israel's salvation.

One more distinctive of John's Gospel. No other New Testament writer preserved as much of Jesus' teaching about the trinitarian nature of God as John. It would take the Church 300 years to figure out what Jesus taught about the central relationship of the Godhead, made relevant to patriarchal Semitic culture with terms: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

## A View of Six Dimensions

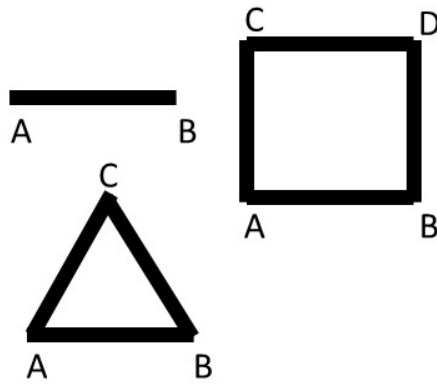
First, a disclaimer. Although the concept of higher dimensions is central to this book, I am not an expert in theoretical physics, and you probably aren't either. I have greatly simplified a very complex subject to help an average person understand the person and work of Jesus from a more scientific perspective.

Typically, when I start to teach about the higher dimensions of creation, people shake their heads. "Fifth Dimension? Wasn't that a singing group?" Just saying that Jesus was a Sixth Dimension Time Lord sounds like something from Dr. Who or some other science fiction.

There are many articles on the Internet along with videos that help visualize the cosmos above our basic three-dimensional existence. You might also read *Flatlanders: A Romance of Many Dimensions* by Edwin Abbott Abbott. These resources have helped me develop a view of the celestial cosmology.

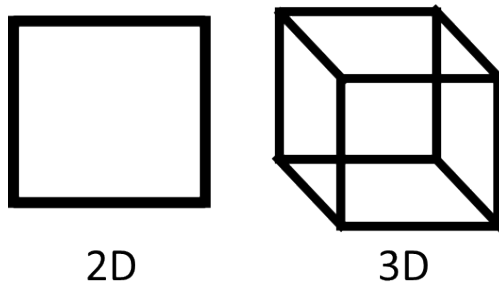
Here's a basic concept that has helped me visualize what is entirely invisible to us. To go up one dimension, imagine a perspective that is 90 degrees (or any number of degrees) from the last dimension.

For example, in Figure 1 the First Dimension is a line that passes between any two points. Add a third point, and you have a triangle with two dimensions – length and height. Add four points, and you have a two-dimensional square.



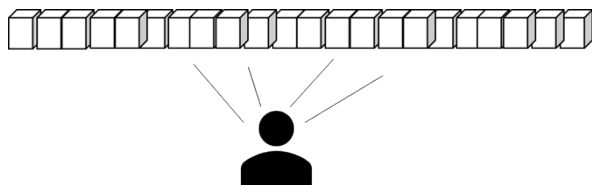
*Figure 1 – First and Second Dimensions*

If we move 90 degrees perpendicular to the square, we add a new dimension. Now in Figure 2, we see the shape has not only length and height but width as well. This is the three-dimensional word with which we are familiar.



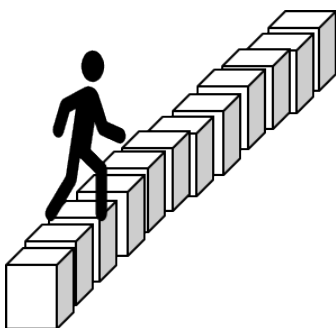
*Figure 2 – Add Third Dimension*

Imagining the Fourth Dimensions requires some imagination as we move 90 degrees perpendicular to the third dimension. As shown in Figure 3, our position would be as an observer looking at an infinitely long timeline. Each of the “blocks” represents a three-dimensional point in time. Each of those moments is static like a frame of film. What accounts for motion is time, like the frames of a film going one by one through the projector to make it a motion picture.



*Figure 3 – The Fourth Dimension*

Most people think they live in the three dimensions of space. But we are also creatures moving through time. So, the universe we inhabit is called space-time.



*Figure 4 - \_ The Fifth Dimension*

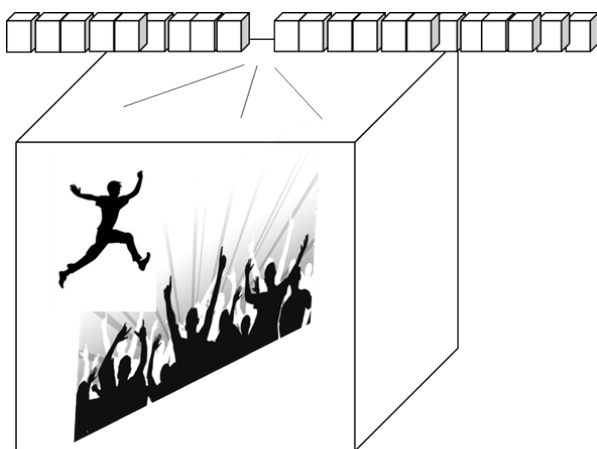
To understand the Fifth Dimension, position yourself 90 degrees perpendicular to the 4D picture.

In this case, we have the same space-time as in the previous figure, but we are no longer outside the universe (if that were possible), but we can move through any of these point-by-point scenarios. We can jump ahead or go backward to any point in space-time. Most theorists say the Fifth Dimension is only a theoretical hypothesis and is bound up with the Sixth.

The Sixth Dimension is the first “inhabitable” dimension since the third. By that I mean there are beings there. We are familiar with the Third Dimension but cannot comprehend the First or Second dimension because they have no width. We can’t conceive of anything that has no width. Even a 2D picture has the width of the ink with which it was printed. Dimensions lower than ours make up our world, but they can’t be inhabited.

It’s the same with the Fourth and Fifth Dimensions. The Fourth is an abstract point in

space. The Fifth is a line of moments, also uninhabitable. But in the Sixth Dimension, one can drop into any of those 3D worlds and “inhabit” that space-time.



*Figure 5 – The Sixth Dimension*

All these dimensions build on one another. One doesn't exist in the third OR the sixth dimension. We all live within the six dimensions. We do not have senses to experience the next inhabitable world that is right on top of us. But as the Celestial Man, Jesus had access to the Sixth-Dimension. From there he received the power to give *zoé* life to those the Father has called in this world. Heaven exists in the Sixth Dimension. Angels and redeemed believers live there now. I do not believe redeemed humans can interact with our world or even see it. Our fallen creation is as invisible to them as they are to us. In his parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus said there is a

vast chasm between the world of the living and the dead that keeps either from crossing over (Luke 16:19-31).

I hope this has simplified summary of theoretical physics has not confused you further. But I am convinced that John is not mystical as some commentators suggest. He is describing a cosmology that today we are only beginning to understand.

John Chapter 1

John 1:1-18 -- The Prologue of John

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- 1 In the beginning was Word. Word was with God, and Word was God.*
- 2 With God, he has always existed.*
- 3 Through him everything was made; absolutely everything.*
- 4 In him was celestial life that was the light of humanity.*
- 5 The light has continued to shine in the darkness, and the darkness has not put it out.*
- 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*
- 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the light, that all might believe through him.*
- 8 John was not the light but came to bear witness about the light.*
- 9 The True Light enlightens every individual coming into the world.*
- 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.*
- 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*
- 12 But to all who did receive him, he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believed in his name,*
- 13 who were born, not of a particular tribe, nor by their own decision, nor by any ceremonial rite, but were born again of God.*
- 14 Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us, (and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father,) full of grace and truth.*
- 15 (John bore witness about Word made flesh, and*

*cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me.'")*

*16 And from his overflow, we have all received, grace upon grace.*

*17 The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Messiah.*

*18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

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John 1:1-18 is the Prologue to John's Gospel. The prologue is the backstory, the prequel that introduces the reader to the main characters and fills in events from the past that are important to the narrative about to be told.

The Prologue also identifies the intended audience for the story. Each of the four Gospels has a prologue. Mark's Gospel has the shortest prologue. He gets right down to the action, just like the Romans for whom he wrote. Matthew's prologue is a long genealogy that traces Jesus's lineage all the way back to King David and Abraham. An impressive family pedigree was critical for the Jews if they were going to accept Jesus as Messiah. Luke's gospel was a brief prepared for Paul's attorney at his trial in Rome. Roman law allowed the Jews to practice their faith. Paul's defense was that Christianity deserved the same protection as it was an offshoot of Judaism. So, Luke's prologue begins with miracles in Herod's Temple. What could be more Jewish than that?

When he wrote his Gospel, John lived in cosmopolitan Ephesus. Unlike theocratic Israel that did not tolerate dissent, Ephesus was always humming with active debates and openness to new ideas. John's neighbors were up on the latest

philosophical ideas. In the opening of his gospel, John talks their language. John's Prologue takes us back to the beginning of time and introduces us to the Divine Logos/Word through whom God spoke into existence the universe. The philosophers surely laughed when John wrote that the Logos put skin on and came in person to an outback outpost of the Empire. But this is John's story. His Prologue is a brief synopsis of the historical drama that will unfold: how most of his people rejected the Revealer of God; however, a few believed and became like Him, children of God.

*In the beginning was Word.*

John was not a philosopher. I don't think he was a student of Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish scholar who developed the Logos Philosophy. After the Prologue, John doesn't bring up the concept again in his Gospel. I think the old fisherman heard enough about Philo's main idea and realized that it solved a problem for him. And that was: how to talk about the pre-incarnate Jesus? John sat through Jesus's lectures on how he left the glory of Heaven and became a man. But how could he talk about Jesus before he was born? John called him Logos -- Word.

Notice how John 1 starts like Genesis 1. "In the beginning ..." In Genesis, God spoke while the Spirit hovered over the primordial soup. But John adds a third force is present and at work. This is Word. The Greek language forced John to put the article in front of Word. But "the Word" comes into English as a thing, not a person. Word is a being.

*Word was with God, and Word was God.*

Wait. How could that be? How could a being exist alongside God and at the same time be God? Such an idea was unlike anything ever conceived about Deity in any religion then or since. From the very

first verses, John introduces the reader to a whole new cosmology based upon a radical new understanding of who God is. The Church will take hundreds of years to work out the identity of Word as the Second Person of the Triune God. This person is not Jesus, not yet. Jesus was flesh and blood. Word is not human. Word is celestial.

Word is the action-agent of the Father. The Father said, "Let light exist!" Word obeyed, and there was light. It went on like that through all the ages of creation. The Father willed, and Word spoke it into being. The pattern for all eternity looked like this:

The Father desires. Word fulfills the desire. Father glorifies Word. Word glorifies Father. Father gives more to Word.

And around and around went the dance of creative love, and from this cycle, our universe appeared and a plan to one day fill it with beings "just a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:5).

*With God, he has always existed.*

Word moves between celestial and terrestrial worlds. The Father intends; Word extends the Father's will into space-time. Word appeared throughout the Old Testament speaking and acting on behalf of The Father. Abraham met him at the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15. Word put Abraham to sleep and strolled between the carcasses, Word taking upon himself the responsibility for the covenant failure of Abraham's descendants. Moses met Word atop Mt. Sinai. Word gave his protective presence to the three Hebrew children inside the fiery furnace. When the Jews couldn't imagine the imminence (closeness) of God, they preferred to tell stories of angels interacting with the world of men. Many angel sightings in the Old Testament were also the appearance of Word

who was commander of the angelic army (heavenly host) (Joshua 5:13-15). Word was active in the life of his people before becoming the man, Jesus.

*In Word, was Celestial life that was the light of humanity.*

In verses 1-3, John wrote about Word's relation to the universe and its Creator. In verse 4, the subject is Word's relation to humankind. Word had a life that was outside evolution, devoid of a breathing body, transcending anything biological in all creation.

Hominin may be an unfamiliar word to you. Hominin were all the species of early humans that were evolutionarily more advanced than chimpanzees. Hominin comprised proto-human species such as Australopithecus, *Homo ergaster*, and Neanderthal. Anthropologists believe hominin reach back 4½ to 7 million years ago.

The Greek word I've translated celestial life is *zoé*. This is John's first mention of it. John uses this word thirty-four times in his Gospel, more than twice the number of appearances in the other three Gospels combined.

*Zoé* is just one of the Greek words for life. *Zoé* refers to immortal life as contrasted with *bios* (the life of the body) and *psûche* (the life of the mind). *Zoé* was the enlightenment of early hominin. Far back in time, Word shared with our earliest physical ancestors a sensitivity to the divine. Anthropologists now believe that cave art, painted by primitive people, was rooted in their inherently religious nature? These beings acquired the capability to contemplate upon and share the great mysteries, meanings, and truths of existence.

But sadly, one species used *zoé* to worship false gods. What had been the implanted seed of faith

which, if nurtured, would grow into full-blown Celestial life became futility and foolishness (see Romans 1:19-23). That species was our own – *Homo sapiens*.

Our species appeared about 200,000 years ago. *Sapiens* meant “wise.” *Homo* meant man. So, humans were “wise guys.” Adam was not the first *Homo sapiens*. Biblical genealogies, though difficult to calculate, put Adam at 7,000 - 8,000 years ago. It was the species in which God willed Adam to live out his penance. Who’s to say that the mysterious verse about “the sons of God marrying the daughters of men” (Genesis 6:3) doesn’t refer to Cain finding a wife and other descendants of Adam assimilating into the *Homo sapiens* species?

One final observation about pre-historic hominin implanted with Celestial life. In Genesis, the first couple is named Adam and Eve. These names were highly symbolic. Adam meant “taken from the ground.” In other words, Adam was an earth-ling. Adam represented all the beings made of dust and moisture from the breath of Word. I refer to those living under the curse of Adam as mud-bodies. After Adam’s fall, every mud-body inherited *zoé* life. You and I received it through DNA from mitochondrial Eve. But it is dead within *Homo sapiens* due to our rebellion against God, the propensity to be wise guys in our own eyes.

*The light has continued to shine in the darkness, and the darkness has not put it out.*

So far John has told us about the role of Word in the creation and his relationship with the earliest people. Next, we learn about The Celestial Man’s involvement with the human rebellion that preferred darkness to *zoé* enlightenment.

Scriptures don't explain how a good God could tolerate evil in His creation. It's the question deniers of God love to ask ill-prepared believers. The presence of evil means one of two things to the rebels: either God is not good, or He is not all-powerful. If God is powerful enough to rid the world of evil and doesn't, then he is not good. If he wants to destroy evil, but can't, then he's not all-powerful. Rebels consider this logic irrefutable.

But rebel logic is based on some unexamined assumptions. It is true that God loved the world, but He does not love those who disobey His sovereign rule. Does a good King permit rebels to overrun his Kingdom? God could have destroyed every rebel who presumed to join the devil's insurgency. In doing so, He would have proved both his goodness and power. Was God powerless in the days of Noah when He flooded human civilization and destroyed the rebellion?

God calls darkness the rebellious mind that exists in people, even within morally upright people. Fresh out of the ark, one of Noah's sons inadvertently sinned against his father and, from one unintended act, the darkness began to grow again.

What does this verse tell us about the light of Celestial life and the darkness of the rebel world?

First, the light will never be put out by the darkness of the rebellion. Throughout history, God has preserved a remnant of His people. He has restored the Celestial soul. God will never be without a witness to the saving light of Jesus (Acts 14:17).

Second, the Celestial kingdom is on the offensive. Darkness cannot overwhelm it or put out the light. Light pushes back the rebellion. Evil cannot even fight a holding action. God's brilliance in Christ is

the eventual winner-take-all in the battle for Celestial life.

Third, the advance of *zoé* in the world comes from the witness of people filled with God's Celestial life. It is not a battle that angels fight. Prayer warriors and saints protected with the full armor of God take the fight to rebel strongholds. But only the Celestial man could destroy the rebellion.

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

This was John Baptizer. He was the forerunner of the Celestial Man. He was Israel's first God-sent messenger in four hundred years. The Baptizer came to warn the chosen people of the coming conflagration with Rome and to encourage them with news of the coming Savior, Messiah, and Lamb of God; the final scapegoat to bear away the shenanigans of double-dealers. Sent from God, but not the Light, John knows his place: in the baptismal pool welcoming repentant rebels, proclaiming Heaven's amnesty, opening the floodgates of grace to prepare a few for such a Light-fall as had not been seen since the dinosaur extinction.

*He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.*

Suddenly the Jordan Valley echoed with the shouts of a wild man, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" From a distance, he looked like a deformed dromedary, dressed as he was all in camel's hair. He was a creature of the desert. Up close he was more hominin than human. His hair and beard were mangled and unkept. John was thin and gaunt, covered in bee stings, surviving on honey and the occasional locust. But he began attracting huge crowds. Disneyland-type lines stretched far

downstream; people were lining up to meet John and be immersed in the waters of forgiveness.

Like most prophets, John made enemies. His social skills could have used some improvement; such as the time he greeted emissaries from the Temple by calling them “a brood of vipers” (Luke 3:7). Even Roman soldiers got the John treatment. “Don’t extort. Be content with your wages.” But it was John’s repeated message from Isaiah to which the people responded.

“Prepare the way of the Lord. Get ready. All flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6).

The Hebrew name Jesus (*Ye-Shua*) meant just that — the salvation of Yahweh.

*He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light.*

It’s not surprising that many ordinary people thought John was the Messiah. Our Gospel writer, John, started his studies as a disciple of the Baptizer, as did Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. From our Gospels, we only get that part of the Baptizer’s ministry relevant to Jesus. But John must have done some fantastic things for Jesus to have said he was the greatest man who had ever lived (Matthew 11:11). The Logos Prologue clarified the relationship between John and Jesus. Jesus was God. John was a man sent from God.

We will return to the Baptizer’s ministry at the conclusion of chapter 1. But for now, remember that John is a witness to the light-bringing God. When all Israel’s religious leaders thought they could pervert justice and truth, God sent a wild man shouting, “Prepare for coming fire or prepare for the coming Savior.” When we are alone in suffering, or when pride would convince us we have everything we need, God will always have a witness nearby. Look for Him

in the valley of shadows and listen for a voice shouting, "Get ready. Get ready."

*The true light gives light to every individual coming into the world.*

Sometimes Bible translators publish a verse the way they think readers expect it to read rather than according to what the text says. John 1:9 contains such a switcheroo. Without going into detail, let me say that the problem is with the phrase, "coming into the world." The phrase seems unnecessary. The sentence makes perfect sense without it.

But the problem is that the phrase could modify either "light" or "individual." Most modern Bibles connect the phrase to light, so it reads: "the true light was coming into the world." Publishers do this to avoid the Gnostic idea that people were born with a divine spark. But connecting the phrase to "light" makes it appear that Word was continually coming into the world rather than appearing in a historical moment. But the phrase describes "individual" because that is the way the literal Greek word order appears: "the true light enlightens every individual coming into the world."

*The world did not know him -- his own people did not receive him.*

Some use verse nine to teach that all people carry a divine spark within them. But look at the context. John is not writing about the universal goodness of people. The next sentence speaks of the inability of the world to see the celestial light of Christ. The religious people who should have perceived the light of God rejected their own Messiah. So, the light has little to do with the innate decency of people.

Let me suggest that the light which enlightens every individual is a hold-over from the time when the Celestial light was the life of early people (verse

4). Not totally blotted out of *Homo sapiens*, it continues to function in us as moral receptivity. The capacity to know right from wrong is part of God's providential grace. God shares it with every human. Early on, people develop a conscience. We learned the ethics of our family and community. But some of our do's and don'ts are "God's law written on our hearts" (Romans 2:15). The conscience is our moral compass. But like a compass can be demagnetized, our moral compass can be easily damaged by people and institutions that pursue a life in darkness and rebellion against God. The Messiah's people did not recognize him because religious leaders denied True-North Truth to protect their power and position. As Paul would later write to Timothy:

"By rejecting their good conscience, some have made shipwreck of their faith." (1 Timothy 1:9).

"Every individual coming into the world" included more than only Jews. Samaritans and even Gentiles were also possessors of innate moral standards. The Jews rejected this idea outright, of course, even though philosophers such as Philo proposed that the Logos was universal.

One's true light is the person God intended. Light is our unsullied identity, purpose, and destiny, things that can only be discovered fully in the Celestial kingdom of God. But humans did not glorify or thank God but took their lives into their hands and did what was wise in our own eyes (Proverbs 3:7).

*But to all who did receive him ... who believed in his name.*

Not everyone in Israel rejected the Celestial Man. Some did receive him. They welcomed him into their homes and began to believe that he was who he said he was – Israel's Messiah.

When Jesus talked about receiving him, he was referring to an act of hospitality. The Greek word *agape*, usually translated love in today's Bibles, came from a root word that meant "welcoming" or "openness." We receive Christ by opening our consciousness (hearts) to the divine presence that surrounds us. We expect to obtain from the Celestial realm insights about our relationship to God and others. The basis for receiving Word isn't philosophical understanding or Gnostic secrets, but a new birth by which we no longer hide from God in darkness but welcome him.

Judaism was a group religion. People were put right with God because they were born into a privileged group. First century Judaism divided the world into Jew and Gentile, chosen people and cursed people. But there is no group salvation in Christianity. Joining the church does not put an individual right with God. People are indwelt by the Holy Spirit one at a time. Baptism doesn't erase the sin problem in a person. Baptism is the symbolic act of being forgiven. By it, those who have received and believed Christ are given the watermark of faith. Like the watermark on a piece of paper, baptism tells us who made us and the quality of our content.

Believing in the "name" of Jesus means we have the rights conferred upon us by Christ. We operate under his authority because we know he is the source of our celestial life.

*He gave the right to become children of God.*

Believing and receiving confers upon believers certain rights of the Celestial kingdom. What are these rights that belong to born-again children of God?

First and foremost, we receive the rights of adopted children. We have the right to be included in

Jesus's family and bear his name. We inherit God's kingdom—his rule and peace in our lives, beginning now and carrying over into eternity.

The Bible mentions other Celestial liberties. We have the right to come boldly before God in worship and prayer (Eph. 3:12). It is our right to approach every trial with confidence knowing that even if we suffer for our stupidity or sinfulness, we may find mercy and help in every time of need (Heb. 4:16). It is our right to handle holy things (Heb 10:19-22), to stand up to tyrants without fear whether they are religious (Acts 5:28-29) or political (Eph 6:12). And at the last, Celestial life shall be our right, not by anything we have done, but only because the righteousness of Jesus has been imputed to us as a gift by God (Romans 8).

*Who were born, not of a particular tribe, nor by their own desire, nor by any ceremonial rite, but were born again of God.*

In verse 13 John lists three ways people mistakenly believe Christ received them.

First, people are not God's children based on their genealogy. Being descended from Abraham didn't count. Jesus said God could make stones the children of Abraham (Luke 3:8). You don't become God's children by bloodlines. Just because your parents were Christians doesn't make you a bona fide believer.

Second, Christ doesn't receive us because we decided to follow him. John uses the Greek word for "flesh." Flesh here refers to the appetites and desires of the body. The desires of the mud-body do not trigger the new birth. People don't become children of God as an act of self-will. Initiative and determination play no part in my adoption. Does a baby decide how much and what color hair she will

have? Did you determine who your parents would be? Of course not. God decides.

Finally, John uses a similar phrase to the second one to say we are not made God's children and heirs "by the will of man." If the will of the flesh is the internal force of mind, the will of man is the external rituals and institutions upon which the will decides. Rites of baptism or circumcision do not force God to act on our behalf. People do not become God's children by performances of human religion.

We are made heirs with Christ by God's action alone. He justifies whom He will and gives them the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:16-17).

*Word became flesh.*

Philo, the Logos philosopher, might have agreed with the Apostle John up to this point. But they would have gone separate ways at verse 14. How could the eternal and universal principle of Logos become flesh and blood? The ancients had lots of stories about gods coming down to earth, but none endured such debasement as Word; born in a hovel to peasants on the backside of nowhere.

I think it is interesting to note that John does not say Word became a man. He knows Jesus is unlike anyone else. He has a body that needs fed and washed and clothed, but John knows this body does things that ordinary people just cannot do. Paul describes Christ as being human only in appearance (Phil. 2:7).

*He pitched his tent among us.*

John highlights the humility of Jesus's origins by using a word scarcely seen in the New Testament. The term is sometimes boringly translated as "made his home." But there is a more profound meaning in the word. The Greek word means literally "lived in a

tent.” Calling to mind the first Temple that was carried on the Exodus, John says Word tabernacled among us. The Bedouins who roamed the Judean desert used this expression for a neighbor or family member. There’s proximity in the meaning. Yahweh lived in a tent during the Exodus. So, in one phrase, John captured the nearness of a neighbor and the holiness of God.

Notice, too, that Word does not live in a temple or palace. He doesn’t even dwell in a house, or as many people in Israel lived, including our Lord’s family in Nazareth, in the shelter of a cave. Word lived in a tent, ready to pack up and move with his people as needed.

*We have seen his glory.*

As he wrote, John was so overcome with awe and joy, remembering the Lord, he inserted a parenthetical word of personal witness and praise. Remember, the Exodus tabernacle held the ark of the covenant behind the veil in the Holy of Holies. Two angels, or Seraphim, were carved on the ark’s lid. Between the Seraphim glowed a mysterious energy or light, called the Shekinah glory of God. John saw this same holy radiance emanating from Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. “We saw the glory,” John writes, “God’s Shekinah glory beaming from this flesh and blood man who called God Father.”

*Glory as of the only Son from the Father.*

John’s purpose in writing his Gospel is that readers will come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Celestial Man. There were many so-called sons of God in the ancient world. But God reveals to John Word is the only son of God.

*...full of grace and truth.*

This Bright, Shining One brought what people needed most: grace and truth. Grace because humanity could not help ourselves out of the sin dilemma. Truth because we had so wholly deceived ourselves. Word was not aloof but gifted believers freely with forgiveness and love. Jesus was a gracious man, accepting of others and humble despite awesome power. He revealed the truth about God. He recovered the meaning of God's written Word from the distortions of the religionists. Jesus told us the truth about ourselves, not to condemn our species, but to adopt children and heirs of Heaven.

*John bore witness about Word made flesh.*

Verse 15 is another parenthetical statement inserted by John. Not only did John the disciple see the glory of Jesus, but John the Baptizer also testified about Jesus. The Baptizer was a first-century rock star, a long-haired, uncouth iconoclast. Many believed he was the Messiah. But the Baptizer's testimony was that he was secondary to One who would come after him.

*He who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me.*

John 1:15 helps clarify a cultural problem. It's no big deal to us, but rules of Semitic hospitality demanded that since John Baptizer had come first and was older than his distant cousin, Jesus, he deserved more respect. So, the Baptizer explained his deference to what appeared to be the younger teacher. John understood Messiah's debasement, saw Word wearing a loincloth into the water, witnessed the glory of humility.

The Baptizer acted out grace and truth; he held people underwater in ritual death, then lifted them from the water gasping for fresh inspiration. Whoever

thought you could drown in the desert? Whoever believed Word would begin to transcend the mud-body? Truth is often what you least expect; grace is what you least deserve. But John Baptizer gets it. He pointed to Jesus and cried, "Forget ranks and titles! Forget what you think you know of precedent! Grace and Truth overflow. Be immersed in forgiveness and break the surface rejoicing!"

*And from his fullness, we have all received, grace upon grace.*

Jesus ministered out of his fullness, not his need. Jesus doesn't need any of us. But we are all needy. Without Christ, we despair of the most basic meaning and purpose. But Christ has more than enough grace, mercy, and truth to overflow our needs. Like fountains of water, we minister to others from the overflow of Jesus's sufficiency rather than from the depths of our need. Trying to love others from the aching void of our need only leads to frustration. Jesus's fullness in our life spills over to others, helping us fulfill our Lord's commandment to "love one another as I have loved you."

The phrase "grace for grace" is interesting. I have always interpreted it as meaning an abundance of grace; that God keeps giving and giving. While that is true, I think this expression yields another idea.

The phrase is literally "grace after grace." There is a first grace that saves us. Another type of grace comes along afterward that helps us live in the power of the Holy Spirit. I do not mean a "second work of grace" as taught in holiness churches. It is part of the original saving grace that grows and matures in obedience to Jesus. It is not something humans can try to acquire in a separate salvific transaction. It is always God's gift to bestow. The first is the grace of justification – being declared not

guilty in the courtroom of God. The second grace is living grace, what the Bible calls sanctification, the life-long process by which gifts are given to disciples to aid in their ministry to God and others. As celestial life permeates our spirit, we want more of God's word. We discover the great adventure of prayer. Grace inspires faithfulness. Grace empowers love. Grace after grace.

*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Messiah.*

The purpose of the Law was to teach believers how they could live to please God. But the Law only awakened the individual to what displeased God (Romans 7:1-12). The Law revealed that we couldn't please God on our will-power. The Law throws us back on the grace of Christ. The Law did not forgive sin. The Law of God was given to show us our need for a Savior. Jesus graces us to keep the Law and drives us to a more profound dependence on Him. It's not that the Law isn't relevant but saving grace in a moment of time makes it possible for living grace to please God in our daily walk.

*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

This verse concludes the Prologue and summarizes the pre-history of Word. The Father cannot be seen by humans. The only way we know anything about him is if he sends someone who has seen him who could reveal his character to us. Word made God known to us.

No one has ever seen God the Father. Not Adam, not Moses, no human being, ever. The One who walked with Adam in the Garden and showed Moses his backside on the mountaintop was Word. The Father will forever be invisible to us. He cannot fit inside this universe or any other for He is the

Creator of it all. Can authors step into the pages of their novels?

Word, however, could and did enter our space-time. The Old Testament is all about how Yahweh (the “Lord”) intervened in Israel’s history. He could assume many forms. Word was the pillar of cloud and fire that led the Israelites on the Exodus. He also assumed human form. His finger wrote the commandments on the clay tablets. He met Abraham as a traveling stranger at the Oaks of Mamre. So, what was different about his incarnation as Jesus? In his earthly body, he accepted not only a human form but human limitations. Jesus was born defenseless. He needed to eat and sleep and later resist temptation. His life was hard. Jesus could not merely take on a form for an hour or a day. He had to endure the flesh.

Jesus knew his unique identity. He spoke grace and truth: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,” he said and, “I am the Way, Truth, and Light. No one comes to the Father except by me” (John 14:6,9). This verse makes it clear that Jesus was God alongside God. Forget what you think you know of God if you do not believe Christ. Without Word, what you call “god” is a figment of the twisted mind posing as a ferryman exacting some ungracious toll to cross your private Styx.

## John 1:19 -11:46 Overview – The Book of Signs

At the end of his Gospel, John tells he writes so “that we may believe that Jesus is the Son of God and believing have *Zoé* in the power of his name” (John 20:31). The first half of John’s Gospel (chapters 2-11) is devoted to seven miracles that Jesus performed. Each points us to the conclusion that Jesus is the Celestial Man. Of course, there were many other miracles Jesus performed. John said if he tried to write down everything Jesus did, the world could not contain all the books that would be written (John 21:25). But these seven signs reveal Jesus is more than an ordinary faith healer or wonder-worker. They employ a power beyond anything humans can achieve.

Some scholars believe that John used various sources for his Gospel. They theorize that there may have been separate documents for the seven signs, the upper room discourse, and the Passion narrative which John wove together. If there were once different authors of John’s gospel, they’ve disappeared from the text. John edited each following his style and theology. John was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. He was in the upper room. He saw the miracles. He took part in the passion story. John remained in the background of his Gospel. Although many think he refers to himself by the enigmatic term “the disciple Jesus loved,” there’s evidence that this title points to another individual. We will look at that in a later chapter.

Like driving through unfamiliar territory, let’s follow the signs to arrive at John’s destination, convinced of the divine power of Jesus to bring us to his Celestial Kingdom.

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John 1:19-28 -- The Testimony of John Baptizer

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19 *And this is the testimony of John when the Ioudaioi sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"*

20 *He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."*

21 *So, they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

22 *So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"*

23 *He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."*

24 *Then the Pharisees who had been sent asked him,*

25 *"If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"*

26 *John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize.*

27 *Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."*

28 *This encounter took place in Bethabara, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing."*

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*This is the testimony of John when the Ioudaioi sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"*

The authorities in Jerusalem heard about the crowds streaming into the wilderness and lining up along the banks of the Jordan waiting to be immersed. Caiaphas and his cronies felt they must certify this wild man's powerful preaching and life-changing baptisms. The Ioudaioi sent priests and

Levites as emissaries to investigate John and then report back what they found.

*He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."*

Their knowledge of Scripture suggested three options for the Ioudaioi to understand who John was supposed to be. John knew what the Jerusalem priests were after. He didn't wait for them to ask him the most obvious question. He volunteered his answer to the politically charged question. "I am not the Messiah," John said. Many militant nationalists who would later be known as Zealots, had been tortured and crucified by the Romans. But John answered without equivocation, "I am not the Messiah. No, not me."

*So, they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."*

The second choice the authorities put to him was "Are you Elijah?" This question might appear strange, to ask a man if he is the reincarnation of an 8th century BC prophet. But this was the teaching of Rabbinic Judaism. Before the Messiah appeared, the Ioudaioi believed Elijah the prophet would be resurrected to announce the coming of the Messiah. Jesus later said this had been the role of the Baptizer (Matthew 18:12-13). But when asked by the delegation from Jerusalem, John can truthfully say, "I'm not Elijah. No, not me."

*"Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

The final possibility was the Sadducee option. Could the Baptizer be "The Prophet?" Everyone knew who this was. Moses had predicted that a prophet like himself would arise in Israel (Deuteronomy 18). Israel was to listen to The Prophet who would speak the words of God. But for the third time, John answered, "No, not me."

*He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.*

Who was this guy? Despite his enormous celebrity, John remained humble. He claimed no special privileges, even though God sent him. John said he was a witness, not even a man, but a voice shouting in the wilderness. When the voice grew silent, nothing of importance remained.

*Then the Pharisees who had been sent asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"*

The authorities agreed that baptizing Jews could only be carried out by Messiah, Elijah, or The Deuteronomy Prophet. When John Baptizer claimed that he was none of these, the priests and Levites wanted to know who authorized his water ministry. Baptism was not a new thing. Traditionally, baptism was for Gentiles who converted to Judaism. The Jewish leaders claimed John's baptism violated Scripture and tradition. The Ioudaioi should have known the prophecy of Zechariah who said:

*"On that day (the day of the Lord) a fountain will be opened for the dynasty of David and for the people of Jerusalem, a fountain to cleanse them from all their sins and impurity" (Zechariah 13).*

*John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize."*

The investigators must have arrived shortly after Jesus because John told them his authority was at that very moment standing in the Bethabara crowd. "You just missed the One whose ministry follows mine," John told them, "but whose sandals I am not worthy of removing. If you can't figure me out, what will you do when he's revealed? You think these

crowds of hundreds are significant, what will you do with thousands who will follow him?

John truthfully answered the questions put to him by the delegation from Jerusalem. He was not a prophet to foretell Messiah's coming, but a herald to proclaim that He had come. Imagine those Ioudaioi suddenly turning around, looking intently at the crowd for any sign that one of them in the riverside crowd was Messiah. They not only missed him that day but every other day as well.

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John 1:29-34 – The Baptism of Jesus

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29 *The next day John Baptizer saw Jesus coming toward him. He exclaimed, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*

30 *(John Baptizer said,) “He is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.’*

31 *I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.”*

32 *Then John testified, “I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him.*

33 *I didn’t know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’*

34 *(And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.)*

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*The next day John Baptizer saw Jesus coming toward him.*

Jesus returned to the riverbank the following day. What had happened the previous day is unclear. John told the emissaries from the Temple that they had just missed Jesus who was standing in the crowd. Was Jesus uncertain about being baptized? Was he in such awe of the Baptizer that he did not want to violate the cultural standards of who should be the greater of the two? Some scholars suggest that Jesus came to John to confirm his identity and mission. Did Jesus wonder if he was the Messiah?

The other question is how did John Baptizer know Jesus was the Lamb of God before receiving the sign of the Spirit during Jesus’s baptism? I think back to

that scene when John's mother Elizabeth met Jesus's mother when both women were pregnant. Elizabeth said John jumped in the womb when Mary came close. I get that same sense of surprise in John 1:29. Jesus is still a way off when John jumps and shouts, "Look – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*

The Lamb of God had three distinct meanings to the Jewish people. First, it was the Passover lamb. During the last plague upon the Egyptians, each Hebrew family was instructed to sacrifice a lamb and daub its blood on each Hebrew house, first the lintel and then the two doorposts, plainly making the sign of the cross. The blood of the Lamb marked the houses the wrath of God "passed over."

Secondly, the Lamb of God was flawless. It was a blue ribbon winner having not a single blemish. Jesus was morally blameless. He was sinless in a body carrying the curse of sin.

Thirdly, as the Lamb of God, he was marked out as the sacrifice God would make for the sin of the world. Notice that sin is singular and not plural – sins. All sins were rooted in one sin: disobedience to God. God's Lamb would obediently suffer death to free humankind from the curse of Adam for those who would believe.

*He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'*

John tells the people standing around him that this humble looking man coming down the dusty trail is the one who is greater than him because he existed before John. Baptizer told this riddle to show how closed the Jewish world would be to their

Messiah. The Ioudaioi were boxed-in thinkers. Rabbis obsessively footnoted every statement with teaching from another rabbi. John Baptizer tried to help the rabbis think out-of-the-box. First, it was inconceivable to people that anyone greater than John the Baptizer could come along. John's preaching attracted large crowds from all around the country. Even Roman soldiers came to him. The second part of John's riddle gave the reason for the mystery man's primacy: he existed before The Baptizer. But how could someone coming after John pre-exist him?

*I did not recognize him as the Messiah ... I didn't know he was the one.*

Some critics might have accused the cousins twice removed of collusion. Did John and Jesus get together and work out a Messiah hoax? Even though they were distantly related, John affirmed twice in this section that he never knew Jesus until his baptism.

*I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.*

John said his mission was to reveal the Messiah to Israel. John would know the Messiah when he saw the Spirit descend upon him.

Can't you imagine John sometimes wondered, "What am I doing out here in the wilderness, dunking people in river water, ranting away day after day, telling people to change their ways, when I know there's nothing in this water or in me to overcome the grip of sin? Why am I doing this?" Then one day Jesus arrived, and John knew why what he did mattered. His life's mission regained its focus and purpose. "I'm here to reveal the Messiah (v.31); I'm here to let people know Jesus can do what religion and water could never accomplish—change us and

keep us changed. Before I knew him, I was doing religious things, but now that I've met him, I understand why my life has unfolded this way, why I am here, and what I must do henceforward: testify that Jesus is God in the world (v.34).

*I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove.*

It's almost impossible to picture the baptism of Jesus without a bird somewhere nearby. But was there a fluttering dove on the banks of the Jordan that day? I don't think so. John clearly said it was *like* a dove, not that it was a dove. What did he see?

If we had been there with a TV camera that day, I'm reasonably sure we would not have seen the dove-like Spirit. We might have seen John looking at something transfixed. He was not hallucinating or playing the part of a seer. John was part of an audience of two as he and Jesus witnessed the final Spirit-fall of the Old Testament era. But unlike judges and kings of old, the Spirit would not be taken away from Jesus. This display of the Spirit resting upon our Lord was that which made Jesus God's Anointed, in Hebrew, "Messiah," and in Greek, "Christ."

*God told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'*

Let's assume the universe was the same then as it is now. Higher dimensions of reality existed that were not only unseen but completely unimaginable. This scene revealed the Celestial Spirit-sphere that sits right on top of us.

John lifted Jesus from the water and suddenly the three-dimensional world in front and slightly above them became opaque. Slowly, the cloudy image began to clear, and John saw another world, not at all like the dusty desert around Bethabara. What

appeared like a tapestry hanging in mid-air wasn't a picture, but a window onto another world. John saw gigantic trees, green expanses, and sparkling waterfalls.

Suddenly from this idyllic setting, a radiant being of light flew through the living window. "Like a dove" it may have appeared pure white. It moved through the air in quick bursts, first going one way then zig-zagging another. Like a dove, it may have emitted a sound as it flew. But unlike a dove, it had no specific shape. It alighted on Jesus's head. The other world vanished, but the pure, pulsating energy rested upon the water-soaked Savior.

Before the baptism, John thought Jesus was just another guy waiting in line. But seeing this, John knew God had fulfilled his destiny. Years previously, God told John to start the baptism ministry as a search to find the One on whom God's Spirit would descend and rest. Baptizer was expecting a bird. What else darts through the air and lands on a man?

*(And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.)*

John, the Gospel writer, was then a disciple of the Baptizer. He adds his testimony that he did not doubt after seeing this curious event. It wasn't a bird. It was a Presence, a living being that sat upon the Galilean like a crown. John realized this crowded river bank was the site of Jesus's coronation as King, the Man-God, the Ruler of this world and the other world that lay just behind the window in the air.

John 1:35-41 – Jesus’s First Disciples:  
Andrew and John

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35 *(Again) the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;*

36 *And looking upon Jesus as he walked, The Baptizer said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”*

37 *Two of John’s disciples heard him say this, and they pursued Jesus.*

38 *Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?”*

39 *He said to them, “Come and see for yourself.” So, they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the four in the afternoon.*

40 *One of the two who heard John Baptizer speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.*

41 *He first found his brother Simon (Peter) and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). Andrew brought Peter to Jesus.*

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*The next day after John stood, and two of his disciples...*

John 1:35 presents a historical problem. John’s Gospel doesn’t appear to sync with Matthew, Mark, or Luke. The other three Gospels agree that after his baptism, the Holy Spirit immediately led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. But John omits anything about the temptation. It’s a glaring omission from the Jesus narrative.

I understand that the Temptation doesn’t fit the purpose John gives for writing his Gospel. He wanted

the reader to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, the Celestial Man. But since God cannot be tempted (James 1:3), John avoided the confusion by cutting the showdown with Satan. Instead, John created a three-day scenario. On Day 1 Jesus was baptized. On Day 2 Jesus talked with the first disciples. On Day 3 Jesus and his followers go to Galilee. Is it possible to find in this framework the 40 days the Devil tempted Jesus?

Most translations of verse 35 simplify the original Greek to read “the next day.” But it may not be correct to imply that precisely 24 hours after Jesus’s baptism, some of John’s disciples join Jesus. I’ve supplied a literal translation of the Greek text above. The word “again” does not appear in some of the early manuscripts of this verse, so I’ve placed that in parenthesis. Notice that John’s Day 2 is the day after John stood (or was standing). What could this mean? Why did John write this curious phrase?

The verb used here for “stand.” doesn’t only mean the opposite of sitting down. The word described the way Jewish men stood for prayer. “Stand” can imply waiting, stillness, even expectancy. Let me propose that the word may point to a time of inactivity for John Baptizer.

John has waded waist deep in the River Jordan for months, possibly years. He has had one purpose in all that time: reveal the Messiah. God showed him that when Israel’s Messiah came up out of the water, the Spirit would descend. So, day after day, he waded in and beckoned the first man in line to join him. John lowered each man into the river and then lifted him out, looking intently for the sign. Nothing. John said, “Next,” and repeated this process hundreds if not thousands of times before Jesus finally arrived. But before he has time to talk, the

energy that crowned Jesus led him out of Bethabara toward the Judean wilderness. John wondered as he watched Jesus go: what do I do now? Should he continue baptizing? The Kingdom had arrived. His mission was complete. John wasn't sure what to do next. So, instead of baptizing, he and his disciples wait – they “stand,” they pray. I think it's possible this time of John's inactivity could represent the 40 days Jesus was in the wilderness.

*John looked intently at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”*

Jesus returned to Bethabara victorious in his battle with the Devil. As he watched Jesus approach, joy overcame the Baptizer. In all the Scriptures, only John Baptizer refers to Jesus as “the Lamb of God.” No one except Peter in his letter many years later ever referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God. The title appears uniquely here in John's Gospel and The Book of Revelation. John bar (son of) Zebedee remained nameless in his Gospel. But we are told that as Jesus reached the village, Andrew and “another disciple” followed Jesus. This unnamed disciple was most likely John.

*Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?”*

Jesus hears their feet crunching in the desert sand behind him. He turns and asks an intriguing question. “What are you looking for?” These are the first words Jesus speaks in John's Gospel. The two men aren't exactly sure how to answer. The question caught them unprepared. Rather than waste the time of this esteemed Rabbi by stumbling for words, the two men ask Jesus where he is staying. They hope for a private time of discussion. Very few teachers at that time deserved the honorific title of Rabbi. It had the same impact as calling Jesus

“esteemed doctor.” Jesus rejected all such titles of position or status. But Jesus did not correct them. He said politely, “Come and see for yourself.”

Jesus shows hospitality to these two enquirers. He proves the *agape* of God by his openness to meeting and sharing with Andrew and John. He isn’t always looking at his sundial to get the interview over quickly. He spends all day with the men John Baptizer released to become the Lord’s first disciples.

*They stayed with him that day, for it was about the four in the afternoon.*

John was so impressed with Jesus and what they talked about was so life-changing that the Gospel writer remembered the exact time the conversation started. They met with Jesus from 4 o’clock in the afternoon to the end of the day, sundown by the Jewish way of telling time.

Jesus’s first words are significant. “What are you looking for?” Jesus will meet us on our terms. Christ only asks that we consider the need behind our superficial needs. Find out where Jesus is staying and dwell there for a season of reflection upon his care and love for us.

Second Temple Judaism had grown tired of waiting for the Messiah and transformed Biblical faith into a system of rituals and legal obligations. Blood, altars, and holy buildings that God had given to prepare people for Messiah became the objects of worship themselves and blinded priests and rabbis to the most significant event in human history – the Celestial Man visiting his people.

*Andrew first found his brother Simon (Peter) and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). Andrew brought Peter to Jesus.*

Andrew was a disciple of the Baptizer. He heard John’s declaration of Jesus as the Lamb of God,

Israel's Messiah. He hunted down his older brother, Peter, and told him the Messiah was on the scene. Peter was also a disciple of John Baptizer. All the Baptizer's disciples we have met thus far had left their regular jobs as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee to await the revealing of Israel's Savior.

John 1:42-46 -- Jesus's First Disciples:  
Peter, Philip, and Nathanael

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*42 Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called "Cephas" (which means Peter).*

*43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."*

*44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*

*45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

*46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

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*So, you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called "Cephas" (which means Peter).*

Why did Jesus give Simon the nickname Cephas, "rock" (in Greek, *Petros* from which we derive Peter)? Would it surprise you to learn Jesus never called him anything but Simon (Mark 14:37; Matthew 17:25; Luke 22:31; John 21:15-17)? It's a completely different story by the time we get to the Book of Acts, but at this point in the story, as my father used to say,

"The only thing rock-like about Simon Peter were the rocks in his head."

Consider this. We are only introduced to Peter's brother by his Greek name, Andrew. Jewish children seldom received Gentile names. Any parents who would name their first-born son after one of the tribes of Israel (Simeon) was likely a traditional family. So, it seems reasonable to me that Andrew may have also been a nickname. In Greek, Andrew

means “manly.” We will never know for sure what Andrew’s Hebrew name might have been, but I like the odds that his Jewish name was “Gabri.” Andrew is the Greek translation of “Gabri.” I think when Peter met Jesus, they struck up a great rapport. I imagine Simon laughingly telling Jesus he wanted a nickname, too, like his brother. Jesus gazed at him intently, looked him up and down, and said “Rocky!” What a laugh they must have had.

In the Hebrew understanding, a name captured a person’s character and destiny. No wonder when God changed an individual, the person sometimes changed their name; Abram and Sarai became Abraham and Sarah. Saul of Tarsus used his Roman nickname, Shorty, or Paul. These are just a few examples. The bestowing of a Christian name at baptism preserves this tradition. Also, Greek nicknames would serve the Apostles well when they left Israel and traveled as missionaries throughout the world.

*The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”*

You can see why Nathaniel asked Philip: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip was another disciple of John Baptizer hanging around Bethabara with his homies from Bethsaida, Peter and Andrew. Jesus decided to go back to Galilee. It was time for the men who left behind their old lives to return home. Before leaving the desert, Jesus went looking for Philip. Later, Philip searched for Nathaniel who was close. Philip told him he had found the Promised One, according to Moses and the Prophets.

*Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the*

*prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”*

Philip was correct about everything except for one detail. They didn't find Jesus; Jesus found him. Believers are Christ's foundlings who tell others from their sphere of influence about a life-changing encounter with the living Messiah. We don't find Jesus. We wandered away and couldn't find a way home. But Jesus rescued us or sent someone else he had recovered to share with us the electing grace of the Savior.

*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*

Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, he grew up in the village of Nazareth in the northern province of Galilee. Nazareth was near the vast inland Sea of Galilee. Inhabitants of Jerusalem and the southern region of Judea thought Galilee was a rough and unsophisticated place. There were no great cities there. It was a place of fish-haulers, carpenters, and small-time farmers scratching out a living from the stony soil. Worst of all, many Gentiles lived in the Roman city of Tiberius on the western shore of the lake.

Galilee Province was a hotbed of radical Jewish Messianism. Zealots were not yet on the scene but would appear as an organized group in the 40's. But Galilee was intensely patriotic and spawned many nationalists who led terror raids on the Romans. It was a hard scrapple place where most people lived in the caverns of caves on the hillsides. After Jesus preached his first sermon in the Nazareth synagogue, his neighbors didn't sit down and discuss his ideas; they tried to kill Jesus by throwing him off a cliff (Luke 4). Tough audience.

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John 1:47-50 -- Nathanael Under the Fig Tree

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47 *"As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."*

48 *"How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."*

49 *Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!"*

50 *Jesus asked him, "Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this."*

*As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."*

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Philip found Nathaniel under a fig tree. He took Nathaniel to meet Jesus. When Jesus met Nathaniel, the Lord shouted out in good humor and admiration, "A true son of Israel, a man of complete integrity." Nathaniel asked Jesus how the Lord knew about him to lavish such a compliment. Jesus said, "I saw you under the fig tree." Hearing this, Nathaniel fell to his knees and shouted, "Teacher, you are the Son of God, the King of Israel." Whoa – that's quite a reaction. Let's back that up and see what's going on here.

Nathaniel's response to Jesus's greeting tells us two things: first that this is more than a casual sighting from afar; and, second, there was more going on under the fig tree than merely getting out of the sun.

*Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."*

What was Nathanael doing under the fig tree? Are there any clues to help us make sense of this event? First, remember we are still in the desert. Except

along the riverbank, there were few trees. The fig tree may have been one of the few places to escape the blazing sun. It was perfect for resting or for thinking. Another clue: Nathanael was a student of Scripture. When Philip told him about Jesus, Philip made sure to reference Moses and the prophets. Nathanael may have been a rabbi himself and Philip one of his students.

Nathanael was from Cana in Galilee. His remark about nothing good coming from Nazareth doesn't necessarily reveal prejudice as much as an intimate knowledge of the neighboring town. Nazareth was entirely unknown to history before Jesus. Nothing ever happened there. Nazareth was a humble peasant village up in the hills, the next town west from Cana. As a student of Scripture, Nathanael knew the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, not the honky-tonk hovel of Nazareth.

I think that the fig tree was Nathanael's place of private devotion. Nathanael went there to escape the crowds that flocked to John Baptizer. The fig tree was far off the beaten track, in all likelihood hidden in a ravine where Nathanael could disappear for a while. That a total stranger had seen him in a place known only to him was evidence that Jesus had sources of knowledge beyond mere human senses. But Jesus let Nathanael know that he not only noticed his secret place, but he also discerned the secrets of his heart.

*I tell you the truth; you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth."*

To appreciate Jesus's incredible first encounter with Nathanael, we must understand his comment about "angels ascending and descending upon the

Son of Man.” This phrase comes from Genesis 28:12, Jacob’s dream at Beth-el. The name Jacob in Hebrew means “heel-grabber,” a euphemism for a cheater. In Genesis 28 Jacob was on the road to find a wife. At nightfall, he bedded down and dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. Beside him in the dream was Word who extended the covenant made with Abraham to Jacob. I think it very possible that Nathanael was reading and reflecting on Genesis 28 under that fig tree.

Nathanael’s situation may have been like Jacob’s - on his way to get married but postponing the nuptials so he might come south with Philip and study with the Baptizer. Had he been unsure about his readiness to tie himself down or did he have misgivings about his new bride-to-be or both? Everybody in Cana accepted it as usual that the local Bible teacher wanted to go south and check out John Baptizer. But in his heart, Nathaniel knew how much he had disappointed the bride, her family, and his own family as well who had arranged the marriage years ago.

What clues lead me to such conclusions? First, the chapter divisions in our Bibles are not in the original texts. Steven Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, added them in 1227. In the early manuscripts, there is no break between the end of John chapter one and the beginning of chapter two. Since Nathanael was from Cana, I think Jesus turning water into wine may very likely have occurred at Nathanael’s wedding. Second, remember when Jesus met Nathanael, he called him a “true man of Israel.” Israel is the name God gave to Jacob after he had wrestled all night with Word (Gen. 32:22-24). Jesus assured Nathanael that he was the

Israelite in whom there is no deceit, no heel grabbing, not a Jacob.

No wonder Nathaniel was overcome with awe when Jesus first met him and why the Lord's greeting seems odd to us but made Nathanael fall in worship. Jesus was giving clues that he knew Nathaniel's situation; he even knew the Bible passage on which the runaway bridegroom had been meditating under the fig tree. John 2:25 says Jesus knew what people were thinking. Jesus was encouraging Nathanael, "You're not a disappointment. You are a man who has seen God. Let me take you home. Let me bless your family and, like Jacob, show you that the place where you live can be holy ground."

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John 1:51 -- Jesus: Son of Man and Son of God

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*51 Then Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth."*

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What did Jesus mean by calling himself the "Son of Man"? John records Jesus using the title thirteen times. Scholars have been divided about the connotation of the phrase for 150 years. Some argue that Jesus is merely referring to himself as a human being to be in solidarity with all other people. But Jesus wasn't *Homo sapiens*. He was not like any other person on the planet. Perhaps it was a title that kept him out of trouble with the authorities. Unlike the saying Son of God which would have been considered blasphemous by the Ioudaioi, he referred to himself as someone interested in helping humanity. But Jesus doesn't hold back from identifying his claim to divinity in the face of the Ioudaioi. In chapter 5, the Sanhedrin want to kill him for telling them God was his Father.

Both ideas are totally wrong. Jesus isn't referring to himself as a human being at all, and he's certainly not hiding his identity. Jesus uses the term as it appears in Daniel 7.

"I saw One like a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. And He was given dominion, glory, and kingship, so that every people, nation, and language should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

The Son of Man is a cloud rider. In the ancient world, the only beings who rode on clouds were gods. The Ancient of Days, the One True God, gives him dominion, glory, and kingship that will never be destroyed.

The term of Son of God did not necessarily imply divinity in the ancient world. There were lots of sons of God in the Old Testament. Adam, all the kings of Judah, the fallen angels -- all were referred to as sons of God. But there was only one Son of Man said to be coming and that was the king of Daniel 7. So, we've got it turned around. The Son of God title was not a recognition of divinity, but Son of Man was.

In John 1:51 Jesus first uses the term as indicating a singularly divine individual who connects heaven and earth. This quote from Genesis 28:21 cannot be referencing any human being. The ladder is let down from heaven. Jesus promised Nathanael he will see the Son of Man as the linking of higher dimensions of heaven to the lower realms of Earth.

End of Sample



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**Jesus: The Celestial Man** re-tells the story of Jesus' life and ministry from the eyewitness account of the Gospel of John. Using original Greek texts and detailed information about 1st century Palestine along with discoveries of theoretical physicists, the author exposes intentional erroneous Bible translations. In Volume 1 learn about Bible translations today and explore the universe as God made it with higher dimensions of reality than we can perceive. How was Jesus both God and person? Discover that Jesus was not *Homo sapiens* at all, but the Celestial Man.

Volume 1 covers chapters 1-6 of the Gospel of John.

Note: The word "celestial" has no reference to the doctrine of any church or religious group.