

# HEAVEN'S ANSWER

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*By the Book™* A Chapter by  
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## Let's Begin

*One of the most memorable definitions of a "parable" that Jesus used to teach about the Kingdom of Heaven, children learn in Bible school: "parables are earthly stories with heavenly meanings." Similarly, the first three gospel records in the New Testament view the coming of Jesus into the world from an earthly standpoint. Matthew and Luke begin with Bethlehem and record the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus. On the other hand, though Mark does not record Jesus' birth, he begins with His baptism and the circumstances surrounding it.*

*John's gospel is entirely different. John begins not with the "earthly story" of Jesus' birth and moving to its "heavenly meaning." Instead, John begins his gospel in Heaven—in fact, in eternity past—and proceeds to unfold Heaven's intent in the coming of Jesus. As we consider John 1, observe the following outline:*

- I. Heaven's Eternal Person (vv. 1-5; 10-14; 18)**
- II. Heaven's Extraordinary Prophet (vv. 6-9; 15-17; 19-34)**
- III. Heaven's Exciting Purpose (vv. 35-51)**

## I. Heaven's Eternal Person (vv. 1-5; 10-14; 18)

John's opening remains beyond the grasp of a human mind to fathom. As we noted earlier, unlike the other gospels, John begins in heaven not on earth. He peers into the ages of eternity past. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (v. 1). There are three mind-boggling truths to embrace as we explore the verses under consideration.

First, let's notice that Jesus Christ is heaven's language (vv. 1-3). He is the Person John identifies as the Word (v. 1). We know this, for example, when we consider what John says about this word later: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." (v.14). A few years later when John penned his first letter, he revealed Jesus as the Word (1 John 1:1). Additionally, in John's final book, The Revelation, he revealed the King of Glory coming a second time wearing a robe dripped in blood whose name was called the Word of God (Revelation 19:13).

If God had an alphabet, Jesus is it. Once again, in Revelation, John says Jesus is the "Alpha and Omega" (1:8). He spells out all that God is, uttering all that God says. Jesus makes the incomprehensible God intelligible.

Not only is Jesus the Person of the Word, He is also the pre-existence of the Word. "In the beginning" John lifts right from the Old Testament (Compare John 1:1 with Genesis 1:1). In Genesis, the beginning is directly linked to God the Creator. And in John's linking the beginning with the eternal Word, he established the pre-existence of Jesus. Christ was co-eternal with God because the Word was in the beginning. He was also co-existent with God: "the Word was with God" (v. 1). But that's not all. Even more incredibly the "Word was God." That is, He was co-equal with God.

When you worship Jesus, you are worshipping God. When you call on Jesus, you are calling on God. When you trust Jesus, you are trusting God. So, the Person of the Word is pre-existent: And, the external Person has an eternal purpose. Words are vehicles of thought, which reveal the mind and heart of one person to another. This includes communication, explanation, and revelation.

### Reflection Connection

*The Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ is eternal. Does that mean that there are two Gods? Ask your pastor to assist you in dealing with this question.*



Secondly, Jesus is not only Heaven's language; He is also Heaven's life (v. 4). As such, He is the source of our physical life. It's clear from the creation narrative that God intended that man should have eternal life (Gen. 2:9; 17; 3:22). Yet, when man disobeyed, death followed on sin's heels (Genesis 2:17; 3:19; cp. Romans 5:12).

Now, we live in a world of death. All around us, we feel its kiss. Flowers-- once so beautiful and fresh-- only shortly become wilted and lifeless. A puppy jumping excitedly, running and chewing balls, becomes a terrible corpse lying on a cruel highway. No one of us is exempt from the kiss of death. But while that is only physical death about which we speak, there is also a spiritual death for every man (Rom. 6:23). Men, apart from Christ, are dead in their sin. Jesus came to restore spiritual life now (1:2; 10:10; 11:25).

*Wherever  
Jesus goes,  
darkness fades.*

### Reflection Connection

*How often do you think of death? Do not be afraid to ponder such. If you do fear thinking of death, why do you think that is?*

Thirdly, Jesus is Heaven's Light (v. 5). As the Light of Heaven, He spoke physical light into existence (cp. Gen. 1:2-4). It was as if He pulled a giant switch and the whole universe lit up! And, it is He who keeps light in continuous existence (cp. Hebrews 1:1).

In addition, He is the Light of conscience, placing a measure of light in every man (v. 9). Yet, men rejected the light because they loved darkness (3:19, 20). Consequently, the result is darkness (cp. Ephesians 4:18; 5:8). He is also the Light of conversion. Jesus brought light into the world. "I am the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5). Wherever Jesus goes, darkness fades.

Fourthly, Jesus is Heaven's likeness (vv. 10-14). John makes clear to us that when He spoke of the Word, he was speaking of the revelation of Christ (v. 14). He writes, "the Word was made flesh." The birth of Jesus was no ordinary birth. Rather it's what scholars call "incarnation." This means when Jesus was born, it was God being born. As someone said, "the birth of Jesus was God, only with skin on." Admittedly this is beyond our ability to understand (cp. 1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:5-8). However, John is clear: "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." (v.14).

Also, note that this verse not only reveals the Word's incarnation but also His identification. That's what John means when he says the Word "dwelt among us." The word translated "dwelt among us" literally means "tabernacle." In the Old Testament, the tabernacle symbolized God's presence among His people. No less it is that in John's view. In Jesus Christ, God pitched His tent among His people. He identified with us.

Yet, ever how clear God's revelation of Christ was in Jesus, the rejection of Christ followed (vv. 10-11). He came to live among His own but His own rejected Him. How true concerning Jesus the prophet Isaiah was when he wrote, "He was despised and rejected of men" (53:3). Thank God all did not reject Him! Many experienced receiving Christ (vv. 12-13). The potential of the new birth for everyone is so clear in this passage that it is difficult to understand why anyone would deny such. God wants all to be His children. And "to as many as received Him" actually become children of God, not because of anything they do, but because they are "born of God."



## II. Heaven's Extraordinary Prophet (vv. 6-9; 15-17; 19-34)

The biography of any great person is interesting and instructive. As one reads their life story the roots of greatness often appear. This is certainly true of John the Baptist.

Let's begin by observing the making of this extraordinary prophet. From Luke's gospel we learn about John's birth (Luke 1:5). His father was a priest and his mother the daughter of a priest. Their spiritual biography is summed up in Luke 1:6. Thus, John's home life stands as one secret to his greatness.

Every evidence available points out that solid home life contributes immeasurable to the success of our future. Unfortunately, if John had had a home like the average home today, he would probably have become a dope addict instead of a man of God. His self-discipline, individuality, and later even his isolation, living alone in the desert, allowed him time to mature and to listen to God.

Also, we find Luke informing us of John's call to the prophetic office (3:2-3). It is no surprise that God by-passed a list of men and chose John instead. John's courage made him a cut-above his peers. He had fear for no man, but had the fear of many. He called religious leaders snakes (Luke 3:7). Nor would he spare Eve-kinds the cut from his blade (Mark 6:18-20).

John's message was plain and precise, sincere but disturbing. He broke the mold of any one who claimed the voice of God. When he spoke, something profound was the norm not the exception. How our own time needs prophets like John. He preached repentance with passion and righteousness with power. His messages never lacked reality but they always demanded retribution. For John, if one truly repented of stealing, then it only made sense to give the stolen goods back with full restitution.

It is not difficult to see to whom John bowed—Jesus Christ was John's Master. He knew his calling was rooted in God and God alone: "There was a man, sent from God whose name was John" (v. 6). And since God sent him, he knew he was only a servant. In fact, his self-confessed unworthiness was a sign of his greatness (v. 27).

To the query of the Priests and Levites, he would not surrender his agreement (vv. 19-23). They wanted to trap him as later they would attempt to trap Jesus. John was but a wilderness voice. When the time came, however, John reveals to the world who is really great: "Behold the Lamb of God" he quickly proclaimed; the one which, "taketh away the sin of the world" (v. 29). No statement in the New Testament is more profound or plainer about the identity of Jesus—God's Lamb sacrificed for human sin. We need to consider whether we are as quick to identify who Jesus is to our culture. Are we ready to proclaim at any cost the gospel of Jesus Christ?

### Reflection Connection

*John was a very unusual preacher. Do you think his unusual gifts would be acceptable in today's society? Why or why not? Are there any preachers about which you are aware that "fit" John's description of "unusual"?*

*Jesus Christ was John's Master. He knew his calling was rooted in God and God alone.*



### III. Heaven's Exciting Purpose (vv. 35-51)

Considering the cost we incur in proclaiming the Gospel, this brings us to our final section. Heaven's exciting purpose for us is to carry on the mission John, the man of God, began.

First, let's consider the *majesty of Jesus* (vv. 29, 36). That's where purpose begins. Jesus' majesty is all important. In fact, it's precisely why John immediately pointed out to the crowds "Behold the Lamb" (v. 29). Heaven's mission is all about Jesus. Later, John would make it clear to his discouraged disciples "He must increase but I must decrease" (3:30).

When John spoke of Jesus being "the Lamb," he was specifically employing Old Testament imagery. In fact, the Old Testament anticipated Jesus as the Lamb of God. We may observe this, for example, in Abraham's story concerning the sacrifice of his son, Isaac (Gen. 22:7-8). Abraham cleverly revealed God's promise to "provide Himself a lamb." Thus, when John proclaimed Jesus as the Lamb he was merely announcing what the Old Testament anticipated (cp. also Heb. 10:4; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:24). The purpose of Heaven's message concerns the majesty of Jesus.

Secondly, Heaven's exciting purpose acknowledges the *magnetism of Jesus*. John's preaching at the Jordan River pointed men to Jesus (vv. 35-36). The first two disciples to follow Jesus were Andrew and Philip. Once they heard Jesus speak, they immediately followed Him (v. 37). This implies the magnetism Jesus possessed. Preaching is the means God so often uses to bring people to Jesus. When the gospel is preached in power under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, inevitably men are saved. Note that Andrew and John "followed Jesus." This is the object of all-genuine preaching—getting people traveling on the road after the Lord.

Andrew's first act after coming to Christ was to go and witness to his brother, Simon Peter: "We have found the Messiah" (v. 41). This validates Heaven's method in pursuing its purpose. Not only is it public preaching that God uses to bring people to Jesus, but it is also personal witness as well.

*Jesus masters our desires.*

In addition, this stands as a reminder of the natural response toward others of those who are truly born again—a desire to tell of their personal faith in Christ. You don't need a college degree to tell someone about Jesus. In fact, telling someone about Christ has nothing to do with being smart. The only qualification to possess is to know Jesus personally. That's all the equipment you'll ever need.

Thirdly, Heaven's exciting purpose reveals the *mastery of Jesus*. All of those who followed Jesus were each different. Yet each found in Christ that which met his need and satisfied his heart.

Jesus masters our desires. He certainly mastered Andrew and John's when they were following after Jesus. He suddenly turned and asked "What seek ye?" (v. 38). That is, what is it you want? Jesus will meet our every need if we will but allow Him. If one answers the question about what it is one is seeking, their spiritual state will be revealed each and every time.

#### Reflection Connection

*The image of a lamb slain is used of Jesus often. Explain the significance of such. Are there any other images you can think of that could communicate the same message? Explain.*



### Reflection Connection

*Are there some ways in which you identify with Peter? Explain them and be prepared to share with the group.*

Jesus also masters our deficiencies. Peter was a weak individual vacillating and very unstable. To Peter, Jesus gave an anchor of hope and made him a rock of faith (v. 42). No matter how shaky we may seem, Jesus offers us stability and strength (cp. 1 Pet. 2:4-5). Jesus also masters our doubts. Nathaniel was a natural born skeptic, filled with every doubt imaginable (vv. 46-49). While there are some sincere doubters and skeptics about things spiritual, so many times people are attempting to cover sin rather than confess doubt. It's a lifestyle issue—a Lordship problem—not a legitimate intellectual problem.

### Golden Greek Nugget

The term translated “Word” is “logos.” This term has a rich history going back almost six hundred years before John wrote. It was used by Greek philosophers as well as Jewish mystics. John is the only New Testament writer to use “logos” in a formal way, which is expressed in the English version in a capitalized eternal “language” or “speech” of God. But not in the sense we normally think. For John, “Logos” was fully personified and that Person was born in human flesh and “dwelt among us” (1:9-14).

### Wrap Up

*Heaven's Person may have been born in time but Christ has always existed. Taking the form of men, He dwelt on earth. His identity was not hidden. John the Baptist made Him known and the rest is history. Still today the church carries on the exciting mission of teaching the gospel to the ends of the earth.*

