

**A PERSONAL
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

JOHN

(a complete update as of June 2013)

BY SHARON CRAVENS

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

“In the beginning,” I would assume, means from human perspective, i.e., the creation of the world, since God is eternal and had no beginning and has no end. That, by the way, is probably the hardest concept of God to understand for a “logical brain like mine.” It’s one of those questions that I don’t dwell on and rely on the truth that I can’t reason or understand like God. His way of thinking and reasoning is so far above mine.

Isaiah 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

I think the rest of verse one is a reference to the Trinity, the three persons of God.

“the Word” = Jesus, the son

“with God” = the Father

“was God” = the Spirit.

This is another huge concept. Three persons--all one God; and John is supposed to be the most simply written of the gospels!

Verse two emphasizes the oneness of the Son and the Father. What was true about the Son in the beginning was true about the Father. In other words---In the beginning was God, and God was with the Word, and God was the Word.

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

John 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

“All things were made by him” still refers to the Word, a being, the physical expression of the Father. This being is the Creator—of everything. I’ve never really tried to break down what these verses mean before. My thoughts are spinning as I try to make the phrases build on each other.

“Life” = breath and consciousness; the essence of our being.

“light of men” = origin of our breath and consciousness or what is good and righteous.

“light shines in darkness” = what is good vs. what is evil. This light or being is an illumination to all that surrounds it. I think the darkness represents the fallen creation.

“the darkness has not understood it” – Man has never understood his Creator. Had we never sinned.....but we did, and are cursed with a sin nature that

can never really understand a being with all the attributes of God—total goodness, unselfishness, righteousness, etc.

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.

John 1:7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe.

John 1:8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

John 1:9 *That* was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John the apostle, the man who penned this book, now introduces John the Baptist as a messenger from God.

I was listening to Jon Courson recently, and he mentioned that not only was John the Baptist Jesus' cousin, so was the Apostle John. I had never heard that before and decided to do some research as to scripture that would back up that statement. I found that a pretty convincing case could be made to support that conclusion. John seems to identify four women at the cross:

1. Mary the mother of Jesus
2. Mary's sister
3. Mary wife of Cleopas
4. Mary Magdalene

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

Mark 15:40 identifies three women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and Joses, and Salome. *"There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome...."*

Matthew 4:21 Identifies Zebedee as the father of James and John. *"And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them."*

Matthews 27:56 identifies the women at the cross as Mary Magdalene, Mary wife of Cleopas, and the mother of Zebedee's children. *"Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children."* This would seem to be referencing Salome as Mary's sister when compared to John 19:25.

Though not conclusive, the evidence is pretty strong. This actually makes a lot of sense to me in understanding some other things in scripture. I would assume that there would be a close relationship between Mary and her sister's family. It might explain why John and his brother James and their friend Peter would naturally form the inner circle of disciples. Maybe John was the beloved disciple because of a special connection they formed as cousins. It especially would explain why "the mother of Zebedee's children" would think she could approach Jesus with the request that her sons be given places at His side in His kingdom (Matthew 10:21) since she was His aunt and might assume family should be

given preference as to those positions. Finally, it also makes sense in light of Jesus' dying request for John to take care of His mother—John's aunt.

We know from scripture that John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins since their mothers were cousins. *Luke 1:35–36* “*And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.*”

John the Baptist's sole purpose in life was to tell the world about the Light so that through Him (the Light) all men might believe. (We have a choice to believe or not.) John was not this Light, only a witness concerning it. As a witness, he gave personal testimony to the fact that Jesus was the true Messiah, God in flesh. “The true Light” is a reference to the Source or Creator.

It was interesting to note that the Greek root for the word “light” states “to show or make known one's thoughts.” I believe this makes direct reference to verse one in which Jesus is called the Word, God in flesh declaring Himself and His message to His people.

“which lighteth every man” – I think is a reference to our conscience, an innate knowledge of right and wrong and an innate knowledge of a Creator God.

This also brings to mind Romans 1:19-20, “*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*”

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

John 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe on his name:*

John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The Creator came into His creation and was not recognized as the Creator.

“He came unto his own” – I believe this is a reference to the nation of Israel as a whole. They were looking for a Messiah, but did not accept Jesus as that Messiah. Everyone who did accept him as the Messiah, Savior, was recognized as God's Son, His child.

The Greek for the word *power* indicates a privilege; it is a privilege to become a child of God. We are his children—not because of a bloodline or a choice of a father and mother to have a baby or because of anything we can do to earn it, but solely because of belief in the Messiah, a loving, sacrificial gift from God. We

have this privilege not because we deserve it, but because it is His will—a sovereign choice to bestow unconditional love to those who will accept it.

“which were born” – This is obviously speaking of spiritual birth—a miraculous new life wrought by God from inception to completion.

John 1:14 **And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.**

Now he tells us that the Word, the Creator, the Light, the Messiah became flesh, took on human form and came to live on this earth. The Greek for *dwelt* means “to tent or encamp.” This speaks to me of the truth that His sojourn here was temporary. Jesus embraced the outlook of the great patriarchs of faith as described in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

The Word, Jesus, is the “only Son” of God the Father, the only begotten Son, not of adoption. To see Him was to see the glory of the Father. He was full of “grace and truth.” Grace enables one to give others what they do not deserve, and truth is all that is real and honest and factual.

GRACE = God's Riches At Christ's Expense

Already John is drawing a line in the sand. To be full of grace and truth means that Jesus is who He claims to be, God the Son in flesh, the Messiah—either we believe this or we don't. We have to look at all the evidence presented to us in the Word of God and decide.

Psalm 33:4 *“For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.”*

John 14:6 *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

“Grace” is the divine influence on the heart, and Jesus possessed the Holy Spirit in His fullness.

John 1:15 **John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.**
John 1:16 **And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.**

Evidently John was telling people of Jesus' coming before Jesus revealed Himself. John was careful to tell the people that he was just a messenger—the Messiah was far greater. Even though John was older by birth, he knew that Jesus had existed before him. We are never told how John learned of his purpose in life or how he knew so much about Jesus being God's son. I think it had to be

divine revelation. If the angels visited the parents, they could have visited John as well for him to be so “sold out” and passionate about his calling. He recognized that every blessing we enjoy in life is a direct result of God’s grace.

Luke 1:15-17 “For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Zacharias knew, so maybe it was he who trained John for his ministry.

Luke 1:67 “And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying....”

Luke 1:76-79 “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

“grace for grace” – I decided to do a phrase search on the internet and found an interesting thought by Mark Horne regarding this phrase: “What John is teaching is that God was fundamentally gracious and loving in giving the Law through Moses but that Jesus manifests more grace and truth than what was in the Law. We have received *greater* grace through Jesus. Moses was good, but Jesus was better!”

He made this connection with Moses from verse 14 regarding beholding the glory of God. It makes good sense to me when I continue on to verse 17.

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

The law, the standard of right and wrong for centuries, was delivered to us through Moses. Then along comes Jesus, who embodied grace and truth, to fulfill that law. No longer will man have to depend on keeping the law for right standing with God; he can now experience the gift of grace and truth presented by Jesus Christ. That grace allows for my / our sin to be completely forgiven through the obedience of Christ to lay down His life on the cross. His sacrifice was once for all for all sinners.

No one has ever seen God the Father except God the Son—no one of this creation. Jesus has come to make Him known to us.

I was reading through J. Vernon McGee's thoughts on John recently and incorporated some of his thoughts in my journal. One was in reference to the word "bosom" used in verse 18. "He (Jesus) came to reveal the *heart* of God."

John 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

John 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

John 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

John 1:22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

John 1:23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

Evidently John was making quite a name for himself because some of the priests and some of the other Levites were sent to ask him to declare himself. He quickly told them that he was not the Christ, the Messiah. So they wanted to know if he was Elijah or "that" prophet. I didn't realize it before, but they were also looking for a special prophet that was foretold in Deuteronomy 18. They insisted that he identify himself. So he quoted Isaiah in saying basically that he was another messenger preceding the Messiah. (*See study called "Who is John?"*)

Isaiah 40:3 "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Thought from McGee in my words:

Jesus = The Word

John = A voice

The message is much greater than the voice that shares it.

My thought - Our culture today seems to exalt the messenger far above the message.

John 1:24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

John 1:25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

John 1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

John 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Then some of the Pharisees wanted to know why he was baptizing people. As I read through this time, I wondered with what the Pharisees associated baptism. Eerdman's states: "Prior to the New Testament period, a ritual cleansing was instituted for the purification of gentile converts to Judaism."

Strong's defined the word as "ceremonial ablution" which would seem to relate to the different priestly ceremonial cleansings that were part of the sacrificial system.

John didn't really answer why; he just emphasized that all he used was water—but one was coming who was greater. This implies to me that he will have a greater baptism as well. Verse 33 below specifies this to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"whom ye know not" = the Messiah, Jesus

"coming after...preferred before" = John was declaring his position. He was giving glory to the Savior before He had even been revealed. John was making sure that his followers knew that the person they should follow was yet to come. John positioned himself as one unworthy to even loosen the strap of the Savior's sandals.

Then we are told that this happened at Bethabara, across the Jordan River.

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 1:30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

John 1:32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

John 1:34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

"taketh away" = "...to expiate sin...remove...."

"expiate" = "...to make complete satisfaction for; to atone for.... the extinguishing of guilt by suffering...."

The next day John sees Jesus coming toward him and immediately tells the people around him that this is the man he has been telling them about.

John emphasizes that Jesus has come to remove sin by satisfying God's righteous judgment and atoning for our sin through His willingness to suffer as our sacrifice. He was the perfect Lamb of God, the Lamb without blemish that satisfied God's judgment for sin once for all for all who believe. This was very significant wording that would immediately make connection to the sacrifices offered at the temple.

It's also significant to note that John was clear to declare that he was preparing the way for one who not only existed before him, but also possessed more authority than he.

In verse 31 we find out that John didn't know who Jesus was at the first; he just knew that he was to baptize with water in preparation of the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. He was to baptize those who recognized their sinful condition and were repentant.

As Jesus' cousin, it would be assumed that John knew Jesus, but he evidently did not know that He was the Messiah until it was revealed to him.

Then John explains that he had seen the Spirit come down from heaven like a dove and remain on him. This happened when Jesus came to John to be baptized. (see Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, and Luke 3:21-22) It turns out that the one who sent him to baptize with water had told him that this would be the sign of the One who would come to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Then he declares that this is the Son of God. Now we have an explanation for John's passion. We don't know who the one who sent John was, but it was obvious he believed that messenger to represent God.

John 1:35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;
John 1:36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

The next day John was out with two of his followers; he saw Jesus passing by and he told them, "Look, the Lamb of God!" I guess this was term the Jews used in reference to the Messiah. Why else would he call him the Lamb of God? Could he already have been told of what would happen (that Jesus was to be the sacrifice for our sins) by the same messenger who informed him of his purpose in life? Was it a reference to the words of Isaiah?

Isaiah 53:7 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

It certainly had to bring to mind the innocent, unblemished sacrificial lambs offered at the temple in obedience to the law to atone for sin in context with verse 29.

John 1:37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.
John 1:38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?
John 1:39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.
John 1:40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

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

John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

When John's followers heard him say that, they followed Jesus. When Jesus saw them following, He asked them what they wanted. They addressed him as Teacher and asked where he was staying. Jesus basically said, "Come home with me." They went with Him and saw where he was staying and spent the day with him. I guess this means it must have been in the morning when they first saw him. They must have stayed with Him until about the tenth hour (probably between 4 and 6 pm). Finally, one of the followers is identified as Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Note: John wrote his gospel many years after Jesus' resurrection. Peter had been the disciple of dominant character and part of the inner circle, so it was natural for John to identify Andrew as Simon Peter's brother in this account.

Andrew couldn't wait to find his brother Simon and tell him that he had found the Messiah! Naturally, he took him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and immediately changed his name to Cephas, Peter in Greek, which means stone. John just expects you to realize that once they met Jesus, they became his followers/disciples.

Andrew was one of the two that first followed Jesus (v40). Who was the other? Probably John, who was very careful not to identify himself by name in this gospel.

John 1:43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

John 1:44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

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

John 1:46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Jesus decides to go to Galilee. On the way he found Philip and told him to follow him too. Philip didn't hesitate. So far, all the disciples are from the town of Bethsaida. Philip went to find Nathanael (aka Bartholomew) and tell him about the one Moses wrote about in the law and whom the prophets wrote about. Then he told him that it was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nathanael was shocked! Nazareth was a bad place. He couldn't believe anything good could come from Nazareth. Philip just said, "Come and see."

John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

John 1:48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

John 1:49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

John 1:50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

John 1:51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, He said, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!” Nathanael seemed to take it as a compliment; he just wondered how Jesus knew him. So Jesus gives him a “bone”--He lets him know that He saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him. He was amazed at Jesus’ knowledge! That was enough to convince him that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, the King of Israel. Jesus basically said, “If you think that’s something, you ain’t seen nothin yet!”

Then he said, “Verily, verily (truly, truly—this is a fact you can count on), you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” I’m not sure what Jesus was referring to here—maybe when he ascended into heaven after his death? Michael Card suggests the following: “Maybe he was referring to Jacob’s dream and the ladder to heaven. What Jacob could only dream about, a way to heaven, has become a reality. Jesus is Jacob’s dream come true.” I have heard it suggested that Nathanael might have been reading in Genesis 28 where Jacob’s dream is recorded.

I found some interesting thoughts at www.Yashanet.com on this passage concerning the revelation given to Nathanael.

1. Jesus gave a prophetic revelation to Nathanael.
2. Nathanael declared his faith as a result of that revelation.
3. Jesus declares that his faith will result in further revelation.

I believe that is a natural process for gaining further understanding as a student of God’s word. If we will but read the Word with a heart of faith believing the truth that we do understand, we can expect to be given further understanding as we continue to study the scripture. That has certainly proven true in my life to this point.