

## **HE'S THE ONE I SAID WAS COMING**

John 1: 15-18 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

John's Prologue – Part IV

John's introductory remarks, his Prologue, these remarks are as deep as the ocean and as high as the heavens. I told us in our first of these four prologue messages that John uses the word believe 98 times. Two of these times the word "believe" is used, are found in John 1:7, where John the disciple, is speaking of John the Baptist saying of him. "He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe. The second time in the Prologue, in our message # 2, believe is found in verse 12. "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." The Greek word believe is **pisteuo**, and it means to have faith in, to put trust in, to have confidence in, or to be persuaded. We know from Ephesians that faith is far more than buying a product after a sales pitch. We read in Ephesians 2: 8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this/this faith/believing is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." We know that Jesus, the eternal Word, the Logos, the redemptive life—the Zoe, the light in our dark world, came that we might believe, but our believing is not something we muster up, something we earn, or something we learn, but rather it is a free gift that we receive. Martin Luther once said, "The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man is the idea that somehow we can make ourselves good enough to deserve to live with an all-holy God." Every one of us, are born in sin with incurable addictions to trying to do something to earn for our own salvation."

John also introduced in John 1:12 another related word to believe, which is receive. The Greek word for receive is **lambano** and it means to accept something or someone which or who is a free gift. What does this mean? Years ago, a young man out West shot and killed a man while gambling. In those days, murderers were hanged. The townspeople were concerned for the young man they knew. They gathered a signed petition from the town citizens, asking the judge to pardon the young man. The judge agreed, but only on one condition. He said he would hand deliver the pardon to the man in prison wearing a clergyman's robe and collar and he would carry the pardon between the pages of his Bible. As the judge approached the young man's cell, he could hear the young man cursing and swearing at him. "Get out of here, preacher, I don't want what you have to offer." "But, son," the judge replied, "You don't understand." "I understand fine," said the young man. "I don't want what you have to offer." The dejected judge left the jail. Later the guard told the young man that the judge, dressed as a minister, had been carrying between the pages of his Bible an authorized, sealed pardon for his release. When the day of execution arrived, just before they put a black sack over the young man's head, they asked him if he had anything to say. He replied, "I am not dying because I killed a man. I am dying because I rejected my own free pardon." John wrote, in John 1:12, "But to all who did receive Him, (accept His offer of His free gift) who believe in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God."

Today, as we embark on the closing four verses of this mighty Prologue, let's go back today that John, the beloved disciple referred back to, saying in v. 15, "John bore witness about Jesus, and cried out, "This is He of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me." Let's go back to that day when Jesus inaugurated His public office as Messiah, the day of His baptism by John the Baptist. Matthew records that when Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan River, he came to John the Baptist to be baptized. Let's read it from Matthew 3: 13-4:1. If we could go back to the Jordan River that day, the eyes of everyone at the river were fixed on Jesus as He came up wet out of the water, and He headed straight for the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Go with me to the scene. I believe the crowd watched Jesus begin to fade from sight, and then they turned to John, and John could see the question in their eyes. Did we just see Jesus, is this truly Messiah?" Now John the disciple who may well have been at the river that day, reports in our Prologue that John looked at the crowd and cried out loudly, "This is the One I said was coming. This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me." This quote sounds like John's eye-witness report as he heard the cry of John the Baptist that day. In God's providential choosing, this John would be called of God to become Jesus' beloved disciple, John the evangelist, the Gospel writer, and the disciple who leaned often on Jesus' bosom. John the Gospel writer, may well have witnessed the last of the prophet witnesses, wrapping up the Old Testament, and proclaiming and evidencing the reality and truth of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In these last four verses of the Prologue, in John 1: 15-18, are found three separate, yet corresponding evidences of the reality, of the incarnate Word, becoming flesh, to dwell among us. Let's study how the testimonies here in our text line up and give us overwhelming positive evidence concerning who Jesus is, the Word made flesh, the Son of God.

### **A STRIKING COMPARISON: THE FORERUNNER TO JESUS CHRIST.**

(I.) Notice the 3 clauses used by John the Baptist, as he cried to the crowd at the Jordan River (1) He who comes after me (2) ranks before me, (3) because He was before me. Notice the strong paradox, riddle, and enigma of clause 1 and clause 3. He who came later than John the Baptist, born six months after his forerunner, was before John the Baptist. The middle clause offers the solution and develops the striking comparison. Jesus ranks above John the Baptist. It can literally mean, Jesus, coming after John the Baptist, got ahead of him. Jesus, behind John the Baptist in birth, assumed His public ministry after John the Baptist. How could He get ahead of John the Baptist taking precedence in dignity and priority? Clause 3 answers the enigma. Jesus was before John all along—His pre-existence means He surged ahead of His forerunner. John the Baptist said in John 3:27-30, "John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease." Secondly,

## **A THREE-FOLD MANIFESTION: THE FULNESS IN JESUS CHRIST.** (II.)

Now we go from the bank of the Jordan River and the testimony of John the Baptist to Gospel writer, John who wants us now to see Jesus through his apostolic witness. John the Gospel writer wanted to say more to us about Jesus manifesting His grace and truth. (16-17) We read, “And from His fulness we have all received, grace upon grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Notice 3 total fullnesses.

**Fullness (1) from which we have all received.** v. 16a. We all referred immediately to all the apostles of which John was one of them, but it also refers today to every believer, for everyone who has repented of sin, believed, and received Jesus, has received from Jesus’ fullness. The Greek word for fullness, **pleroma** means the full measure—and here it means the full measure of the Divine grace, graces, and powers which were concentrated fully, and absolutely in the incarnate Word of God, Jesus. In Colossians 1: 19, Paul wrote about Jesus’ fullness, saying, “For in Him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in Him who is the head of all rule and authority. Just as the sun is not darkened by the whole world enjoying its light, and sunlight could light up many more worlds, so our Lord Jesus Christ, the infinite source of all divine grace, gives to each of us who know Him personally, His fullness. If the whole world would surrender to Jesus, though billions refuse today, yet if all 7.4 billion people on our planet would surrender to Jesus and know Him personally, Jesus would not lose a drop of His fullness. The Word made flesh, is the Fountain that never runs dry, that always runs over. John 1:14 tells us He is full of grace and truth.

**Fullness (2) which is grace upon grace.** v. 16b. Christ is and has the inexhaustible abundance of grace. He is the Giver, and we are ever the recipients, the receivers. That is all we ever or can be. As a helpless patient, dying in ICU, Jesus, the great Physician brings His medicine to our trembling lips. In this relationship of being receivers, we receive grace upon or on top of grace. What does that mean? It is like the waves on the shore of the ocean; one comes in on the heels of another to take its place of cleansing the seashore. Beautiful shells are often left behind each surging wave, to remind us as a shell or beautiful rock is removed and left on shore, that same wave will never come again, but another unique wave will follow, again and again, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, century after century, millennium after millennium, but the sea remains full. One grace is given us for prosperity, but another grace is given us to withstand and overcome this present adversity. As needs invade our lives one by one, another special grace comes along and replaces the former grace, for the grace of God is triumphantly adequate for whatever comes our way. As Annie Johnson Flint wrote, in 1941, “He Giveth More Grace, when the burden grows greater...”

**Fullness (3) by Jesus through whom we realize grace and truth.** v. 17 tells us, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” There was nothing wrong with the law in itself, be it the moral or the ceremonial law. It was truly a gift to man given by God through Moses. It was preparatory in its character. It revealed each of our lost condition in sin, and it foreshadowed God’s coming deliverance in Messiah, Jesus. Yet, there were two

particulars that the law did not supply. **The law did not supply grace** so that the transgressor could be fully pardoned and helped in time of need. It was an immediate covering for sin, but it foreshadowed the coming of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who alone came to atone and take away our guilt and shame and cover us with divine grace. **The law did not supply ultimate truth**, the reality to which all the sacrifices and types pointed to in the sacrifices. Christ, by His atoning work at Calvary furnished both grace and truth. Notice in v. 17, that the law was given through Moses. It was given. But see the contrast, grace and truth came or were realized through the Person and Work of the One who here in John 1:17 is first called by His full Name, Jesus Christ. This is the Name beyond all others. My sister Marilyn was initially married to Paul Carlson, who died of congenital emphysema. Paul's older brother, Oliver Carlson, used to always remind me of what he appreciated most about my dad. Oliver often said it. "Rich, your Dad closed every prayer saying, "In Jesus' precious Name, Amen." I say the same phrase often. In 1946, Oscar C. Eliason wrote one of my favorite hymns, "A Name I Highly Treasure." I dedicate these words to every crushed heart here today.

"I've learned to know a name I highly treasure, O how it thrills my spirit through and through, O precious Name, beyond degree or measure, my heart is stirred whene'er I think of you. That name brings gladness to a soul in sorrow. It makes life's shadows, and its clouds depart. Brings strength in weakness for today, tomorrow, that name brings healing to an aching heart. That name still lives, and will live on forever. While kings and kingdoms, will forgotten be. Through mist or rain, twill be beclouded never. That name shall shine and shine eternally. My heart is stirred whenever I think of Jesus, that blessed Name which sets the captive free. The only Name through which I find salvation. No name on earth has meant so much to me." Now I know I have spoken a lot about this fullness of grace upon grace, but if you will, let me tell you a true story about Bruce Watson, a seminary student in Philadelphia, working his way to get his master's degree driving a taxi.

One day, he was out in front of a Philadelphia hotel, thinking and praying. That particular day, business had been extremely slow. Bruce was wondering where he was going to get \$60 to pay for the daily rent of his cab. If he lost the cab, he knew he would lose his livelihood, if he didn't come up with the money immediately—that day. Just then, a young woman got into his cab and said, "I know it will cost \$25 for this ride, but I can only afford to pay you \$15. I work for a charity, and that's all they gave me for cab fare." Bruce thought about it for a minute and thought, "I am probably going to lose my cab anyway. Why not help someone else have a good day?" He agreed to take the lady to her destination for \$15.00. At her destination, the woman paid the \$15 fare. Then reaching into her purse, she laid a \$100 bill next to Bruce on the seat! She said, "The \$15 fare was the charity's money. This is my own money. God told me you needed it." With that, she was gone. And through tears of joy, Bruce thanked God for supplying his need to pay the cab fare. "From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." Thirdly,

### **A UNIQUE EXPLANATION: THE FATHER IS SEEN IN JESUS CHRIST,**

When John said in verse 18, "No one has ever seen God," everyone would be

quick to agree. One of the great Greek thinkers at this time was Apuleius. He said, “At the best, men can catch a glimpse of God in a lightning flash, when lightning lights up a dark night; one split second of illumination, and then, the dark.” Most of you know the closest anyone ever got to seeing God, before Jesus came incarnate. Turn to Exodus 33:21-23. We read, “And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by Me where you shall stand on the rock, and while My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.” John knew the Old Testament, and he knew this famous story of Moses being able to see God’s back. But John was not stopping there. He had only just begun to go on to make the startling and tremendous statement that Jesus fully interpreted, exegeted, narrated, and explained to us—God, the Father in particular. John says in verse 18, “The only God, who is in the bosom of the Father, or who is at the Father’s side, He has made Him known.” How could anyone ever reveal and explain fully God the Father? But Jesus did just that. How?

**Jesus (1) is the only begotten God, the only God, who is at the Father’s side. Jesus has made Him known—Jesus has declared Him.** The Greek word for declare or made Jesus known is **exegeomai**. This Greek word is the place when we get our word exegete. **Exegeomai** means to rehearse, to consider out loud, to declare, to tell, to unfold in teaching, and to lead the way. Uniquely, John is referring here to Jesus’ Trinitarian Sonship. All other types of sonship imply a beginning in time, and thus, they fall far short of Deity. Jesus is God, the only begotten God the Son. If you want to see what God the Father is like, look at Jesus. Yet, in John’s day, no one would have disagreed with him when he said that no man had ever seen God. No one can understand God the Father apart from knowing His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus did what no one else has ever done. Jesus fully revealed to the world what God is like.

**Jesus (2) is at the Father’s side or in the bosom of the Father.** This phrase discloses the eternal abiding closeness of the Son with the Father. This Greek phrase, translated “at the Father’s side, or in the bosom of the Father,” is John’s Holy Spirit directed imagery of the closest, tenderest of all relationships. It speaks of the bond of a mother and her child, the child at her bosom, the intimacy of a husband with his wife, the wife of His bosom (Deut. 13:6). Between Jesus and the Father, there is total, complete, uninterrupted intimacy which eternally was never broken, until that day at Calvary when Jesus took our sins upon Himself, and the Father turned His face away. Jesus cried out in agony, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabathani.” His words mean “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” When the Father and the Son have always been eternally in abiding closeness, that’s why Jesus answered Philip’s question the way He did when Philip said to Jesus in John 14:8-10, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me, has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me.” Do you need further proof? Have you seen Jesus by faith? Someday soon, we will see Him face to face in glory! I John 3: 2-3. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God...Amen.