


THE GOSPEL OF JOHN—PART 1

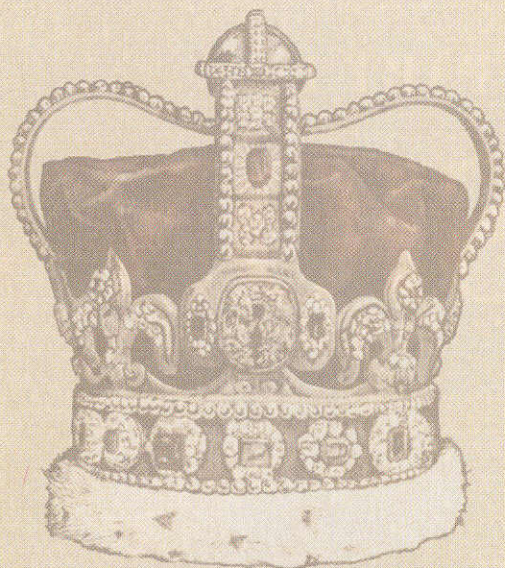
# ROYAL VISION

MAY-JUNE 2006



The  
Light  
of the  
World





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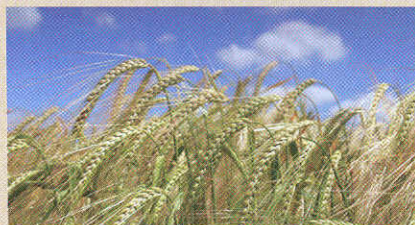
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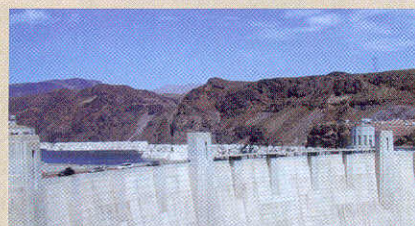
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**ABOUT OUR COVER** God's people must never let their light shine by burning the oil God supplies and remember that they are the light of the world. *Dreamstime.com*

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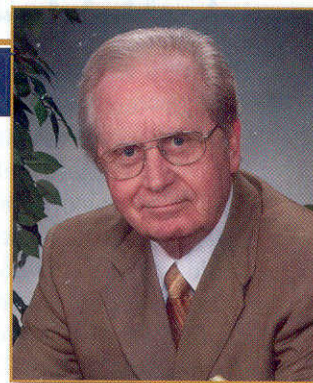
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# The Word Made Flesh



*How deeply do you know why the Word came to this Earth as a human being? The Apostle John provides a vivid and inspiring vision of just what Jesus Christ did and why. It opens up to us all eternity and the universe!*

*By Gerald Flurry*

## *The Gospel of John part 1*

**PETER, DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT HOW I WORK** with John—you just follow me!

The Apostle John recorded this statement of Jesus Christ near the end of the 21 chapters of his Gospel.

Jesus Christ, after enduring a brutal beating and execution, was resurrected and returned to show Himself to His disciples (John 21:1). After instructing Peter to “feed my lambs” and “feed my sheep,” Christ said to him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not” (verse 18). Then verse 19 explains the significance of that statement: “This spake he, signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

Peter knew he was going to be a martyr for God. That is not an easy burden to live with. Of course, Christ endured the same trial in a spectacular way. But how difficult would it be to do God's Work when you know you're going to be KILLED in service to God?

Jesus Christ told Peter very bluntly, *Just follow me—don't worry about anything else.* This was a mild rebuke for Peter.

Those were pretty strong words for Peter—as well as for the other disciples who knew they would be martyred. Following Christ meant that they would be brutally murdered. Of course, these men had an inspiring vision that propelled them forward in God's Work, *and they also had the ultimate example of Jesus Christ*, who had given Himself to be martyred for God's cause.

Each of those 12 apostles is going to rule over one of the 12 tribes of Israel in God's Kingdom (Matthew 19:28). They will all be rewarded handsomely for what they did.

But at this moment, Peter had doubts. Peter looked at John, and thought, *Why should I have to die if he gets to live?* This really bothered Peter. Knowing he would be a martyr became more difficult for Peter when he learned that John would not be martyred. So he asked Christ about it.

“Jesus saith unto him, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me*” (John 21:22).

*What is that to you, Peter?* Christ asked him very directly and personally.

Christ asks the same question of you—of each one of us. God gives each of us different responsibilities, but we are all *critical* to the functioning of the body of Christ, and to finishing God's Work.

After Christ's statement, Peter and the other disciples talked about it like it was big news that one of them wouldn't die (though Christ didn't say that—verse 23). But the truth is, it is appointed for all men once to die—and God says that **THE DEATH OF ONE OF HIS SAINTS IS PRECIOUS!** (Psalms 116:15). **PRECIOUS!**

Which one of us wouldn't trade places with Peter and the apostles today—when you consider what God is going to give them? Those men glorified God, and God is going to glorify them in a spectacular way!

You'll never go wrong if you follow Christ. Glorify God now and He will glorify you *forever!*

**THIS IS A VISION WE MUST CLING TO.** Then nothing can stop us—not even death.

## **IN THE BEGINNING**

The Gospel of John may have as much depth as any book in the Bible.

John the apostle was a deeply spiritual man, and had an unusually close relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ gave him special instruction during their time together like no other.



The first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke—are called the Synoptic Gospels, meaning they all cover essentially the same sequence of events in Jesus Christ's life.

John was different. He had quite a radically different message than the other Gospel writers. John didn't write this book until about 30 years after the events it depicts, so he had a lot of time to contemplate what had occurred and what it all meant.

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

In the first verse of his Gospel, John takes us back to a time when there was just God and the Word. What a way to introduce his Gospel. It is unlike any other introduction in the Bible—it talks about BEFORE ANY ANGELIC OR MATERIAL CREATION—BEFORE TIME BEGAN!

*Westcott Commentary* says, "In the Synoptic Gospels, there is no direct statement of the pre-existence of Christ." But John introduces his Gospel talking a *great deal* about the preexistence of Christ—when He was inhabiting eternity with God as the Word (Isaiah 57:15). John went back to the origin—to before there was an angel or a universe or a man—to before these two Gods were Father and Son.

The synoptic Gospels discuss the history of Christ on Earth. John focuses more on the history of the Word—the great God whom Christ was before He came to this Earth. John brings us in at the beginning of the movie. John also gives great emphasis to the end of the spiritual movie. He gives a deeper meaning to the synoptic Gospels. John was used to show us that God the Word had to be sacrificed. Only the death of God could pay the terrifying penalty for our sins.

Follow John's story flow in the first 18 verses, and you will see that he skips over Plan A—the angelic plan. He goes from that earliest beginning straight into the plan for man. Plan A had obviously failed in a grandiose way. That should sober us, because WE CAN FAIL TOO!

Lucifer and one third of the angels were commissioned by God to govern the Earth God's way, so that all of the angels could be given rule over the universe. However, the angels failed this test. At that point, God knew that *only He* was qualified to rule the universe. So He implemented Plan B—that of recreating Himself in man.

John totally omits the angelic Plan A. There is a hidden but extremely ominous *warning* in that omission.

The angels failed because they refused to administer God's government on Earth. Today, God's firstfruits are being tested to see if we can administer God's government in His Church and in our own lives.

At the same time, we see that the angelic Plan A has been blotted out—it is no more. That knowledge should sober all of God's people in this most majestic calling. We have seen 95 percent of God's people turn

away in this Laodicean era, so we realize how dangerous this knowledge is.

John immediately began talking about Plan B, the plan that would *work*.

"So mark well this super-vital truism," Herbert W. Armstrong explained in *The Incredible Human Potential*, "that perfect, holy and righteous *character* is the supreme feat of accomplishment possible for Almighty God the Creator...." God's supreme feat is to RE-CREATE HIMSELF. Plan B was His plan to do just that.

"Now came the CROWNING PINNACLE of even God's unmatched creative POWER!"

Mr. Armstrong continued. "Now came the very zenith of all divine accomplishment! Now came a project so *incredulously transcendently AWESOME* it is hard for the human mind to grasp." GOD WAS GOING TO RE-CREATE HIMSELF IN MAN!

But there was tremendous risk involved in Plan B. It required sending a God to Earth—in order to die for the sin of the world.

## WITNESS

"The same was in the beginning with God" (John 1:2). The Word was "with" God. That means He had been perfectly united with Him for all eternity!

There was no disunity in the entire universe until Lucifer rebelled.

Can you see why God is trying to bring us together and unify us? That is how God and the Word have lived forever! They know that their eternal Family MUST have that unity if it is to extend peace and beauty throughout the universe.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (verses 4-5). Some prejudiced people say the Jews are to blame for Christ's death. God tells us that, in fact, the WHOLE WORLD IS RESPONSIBLE! Anyone who can't recognize that is spiritually *blind*! The world is in darkness—and it is about to get far darker if people don't heed God's

*"Now came the crowning pinnacle of even God's unmatched creative power! ... now came the very zenith of all divine accomplishment! Now came a project so incredibly transcendently awesome it is hard for the human mind to grasp." God was going to re-create Himself in man!*



message! This whole world desperately needs to receive the light of God. HERE IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE AND LIGHT.

The Apostle John captured the Word's eternal past, which sheds a bright light on the present and our transcendental future. We see the whole movie—and it is full of God's magnificent light and eternal glory!

With this history, we can understand who Christ was before He came to this Earth. We get a deeper understanding of the penalty that had to be paid for our sins. John is used to open up a vision of when we become God beings!

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [the Baptist]. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (verses 6-8). God is the source of all that light. John the Baptist came to *bear witness* of that Light.

No writer in the Bible even comes close to emphasizing the word *witness* as the Apostle John does. He uses the word eight times in his epistles and 21 times in his Gospel. The other Gospels use it a *combined* total of 18 times. The *Anchor Bible* says the verb *martyrein*, which means to bear witness or testify, and the noun *martyria*, which means witness or testimony, occur *64 times* in the Gospel of John and his epistles. The Apostle John emphasized these two words, *witness* and *testify*, far more than all the other apostles.

You can see that those words are closely related to our English word *martyr*.

If you *witness* for God, sometimes you end up being a martyr! Witnessing for God can be rough in some situations. We don't *know* exactly what God is going to require of us.

Did people love John the Baptist because he bore witness of Christ? No, actually he was thrown in prison—where he did his greatest work. To his last moment of life, he was a witness for God. Herod had John's head delivered on a platter. What a noble ending!

Why was he a witness? "[T]hat all men through him might believe"! God used John to try to get some hard-headed people to BELIEVE—both in John's day and, because his example is recorded in Scripture, through the ages to today! Being a witness for God can bring trials—but it also brings a multitude of blessings now, and a beautiful outcome!

### THE WORD MADE FLESH

"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and

the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (verses 9-11). John didn't spend any time pleading with evolutionists. But he did imply that they were rebels! Christ created mankind—and they rejected Him. That means the world rebelled and continues to rebel against Christ. There is something dangerously incomplete about man.

But notice: "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" (verse 12).

IT TAKES POWER TO BECOME SONS OF GOD! THE WORD AND GOD GAVE THIS *POWER* TO YOU AND ME—AND WE MUST *USE* IT!

The word translated *power* also means *right* or *privilege*. And what a privilege it is. How can we not be excited about this right and privilege? We have a birthright to become sons of God! How deeply do we understand that?

God's firstfruits are the most blessed people on Earth many times over! These words ought to RATTLE THE UNIVERSE! We have the RIGHT AND THE PRIVILEGE TO BECOME SONS OF GOD AND RULE WITH GOD AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST FOR ALL ETERNITY!

This is what John was trying to get everyone to see. What a future! How can we be Laodicean about that?

Look at a close relationship between a father and a son in a strong physical family. Take that up to the God level, and that is GOD AND YOU—GOD AND HIS SON. THAT IS WONDERFUL TIMES WONDERFUL TIMES WONDERFUL!

Fiery, brilliant angels were never given the opportunity to become sons of God. This is the ultimate creation of God.

Man has now been given the transcendental potential to rule the entire universe forever—not as angels, but as sons of God!

We will be God beings like you read about in the first chapters of Ezekiel and Revelation. Even God can create nothing greater than Himself! This vision should take our breath away.

To none of the angels—which are so powerful and fiery that we would faint if we saw them—did God ever say, "You are my son" (Hebrews 1:5). That potential is reserved only for men. What a calling we have!

Do we understand that truth as John understood it? It truly challenges our thinking!

"And THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH..." John 1:14 begins. That statement is the essence of these first 18 verses in John's Gospel.

The Word was made flesh. We need to understand

*It takes power to  
become sons of God! The  
Word and God gave this  
power to you and me—  
and we must use it!*



why He was made flesh—and why John took us back to this earliest beginning.

That verse continues, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us....” The Word became Christ, who dwelled, or *tabernacled*, on Earth as a flesh-and-blood man. He is not asking us to do anything He didn’t do. He became a human being and assumed a “temporary booth,” a physical, corruptible body, just like you and I have. He had to die, just as we have to die.

GOD BECAME DUST—so that we might become SONS OF GOD!

John was different from the other Gospel writers—and *all* of the biblical writers, for that matter—in a number of ways. He is the only one who wrote about *the Word*. John provided an overview and showed us how God views everything! JOHN GIVES US A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE WORD—FROM GOD HIMSELF! Christ helped him in a special way to achieve that perspective.

The Word was made flesh. Why? How wonderful and exciting this is!

Look at these events from God’s view, and it will just about make you faint. Imagine the God of Revelation 1, whose face is like the sun in its full strength, DECIDING TO BECOME DUST! And why? So God could have a Family, and give people the RIGHT AND THE PRIVILEGE TO BE A SON OF GOD! And so His Family could extend His Work out into the universe, which many people say is still expanding.

How do you describe a love like that? It should cause us to squeal with delight! This is THE LOVE OF GOD: There is nothing like it in this world—nothing to even *compare* it to. Look at the world and see what happens without God’s love—nothing but rebellion, chaos and destruction.

We now have a transcendent potential: The Messiah and the Father are re-creating themselves in men! Men now have the privilege and the honor to be sons of God. The problem is, we don’t see that as fully and as powerfully as we should.

This is revelation about two Gods expanding to billions of Gods! Not an easy feat. The God of Revelation 1 became *dust* and risked His eternal life to make it happen!

THIS WORLD HAS NEVER UNDERSTOOD GOD’S LOVE. The Father took a chance on losing His only eternal Son so He could have a Family of billions.

It takes the Holy Spirit to fathom this love of God. The Eternal was made flesh that we might be made eternal Family members.

## DECLARE THE FATHER

“John bare witness of him [Christ], and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:15-16).

The word *cried* means to speak with a strong voice, to cry out publicly. John cried out boldly about Christ’s first coming. We have to publicly proclaim about Christ’s Second Coming—the greatest event ever to occur in the universe!

WILL OUR VOICE MATCH THE EVENT? This is the greatest news that mankind has ever heard! You and I have the honor to introduce Christ to the world.

Grace keeps being heaped upon grace. Each blessing received becomes the foundation of another blessing. THE MORE WE KNOW, THE BETTER IT GETS. THE MORE WE SEE, THE

MORE WONDERFUL IT IS, TO THE POINT WHERE WE CAN FACE DEATH AND REJOICE!

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (verse 18). That was Christ’s number-one job, and He passionately declared the Father.

That is exactly what God wants us to do! If you don’t declare THE FATHER, you don’t understand about the Family of God and the gospel. If you don’t get beyond Jesus Christ, you don’t get it! CHRIST DECLARED THE FATHER. We are commanded to follow His example. Study John’s Gospel and take note of how often he refers to the Father. It far exceeds any other book in the Bible. When John talks about declaring the Father, it doesn’t mean Christ just mentioned His name. This subject just keeps unfolding and unfolding and unfolding because it is so, so deep. This is Plan B, and Christ’s mind was ABSOLUTELY FOCUSED ON THE FATHER. THE WHOLE TIME HE LIVED ON EARTH, JESUS CHRIST FOCUSED ON HIS FATHER CONTINUALLY AND ALWAYS! He was passionately loyal to His Father, and totally committed to His Family! THIS WORLD HAS NEVER SEEN SUCH AN EXCEPTIONALLY BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF FAMILY DEVOTION.

*Thayer’s Lexicon* defines the word *declared* as “to draw out in narrative; unfold in teaching.” *The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* defines it, to “declare thoroughly and particularly ... unfolding through teaching.”

Learning this profound message is a lifelong process of hard work. We must study long and hard to

*John provided an overview and showed us how God views everything! John gives us a perspective from the Word—from God Himself! Christ helped him in a special way to achieve that perspective.*



show ourselves approved.

Traditional "Christianity" has no concept of what Christ is teaching here. If we are ever going to understand the God Family—the gospel—we must focus on the Father. This is the foundation of all that Christ taught! That teaching was followed by a *perfect masterpiece of submission* by the Son to the Father! The Word—this *uncreated God*—came to this Earth to declare His Father.

Christianity and the world have been blinded to this most inspiring message there ever will be. You could spend your life studying the Gospel of John and never reach its full depth, and it all revolves around the Father—the God Family. THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH TO DECLARE THAT MESSAGE—NOT TO TEACH A MESSAGE ABOUT HIMSELF!

Christ prepared John in a special way to write this message in a book for all mankind. John had a unique and awesome gift for writing. He was used to give an inspiring depth to all the Gospels—and to the entire Bible.

This is the vision that Satan tries to confuse or destroy first and foremost. That is exactly what happened to the Laodiceans today. In the first verse addressed to the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14), Christ discusses "the beginning of the creation of God." God warns them very severely about where they have gone astray. The Laodiceans lost the Word, or *Logos*, vision first. They have forgotten *why* the Word came to this Earth as the Son of God!

Satan knows that this is the foundation of all deception. If he can deceive us here, our spiritual house will collapse.

What a marvelous introduction John gives us here. This is an introduction like no other in the Bible. THE WORD BECAME FLESH. The other three Gospel writers touch on it, but John puts this epic event on center stage.

## FINISHING THE ELIJAH WORK

Now let's see where *you* come into the picture.

Right after his introduction, John records a conversation between some religious leaders and John the Baptist. He is the *only* Gospel writer to record John's statement: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (John 1:23).

Like John the Baptist, Herbert Armstrong made that statement, quoting Isaiah 40: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Both of those men

were *types* of Elijah. Both of them were voices crying out in the wilderness.

John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's first coming. Mr. Armstrong prepared the way for Christ's Second Coming. He was a type of Elijah doing the Elijah work. However, the Elijah work didn't end with Mr. Armstrong.

The Philadelphia Church of God continues the Elijah work until Christ returns (Revelation 11:1-15). There is also a voice crying out in the wilderness of religious confusion today. (Isaiah 40:1-9—explained in our Isaiah booklet. All of our literature is free.)

This final voice crying out introduces Christ to the world—"Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9).

The original Elijah revealed the true God to Israel. John the Baptist introduced the true Christ at His first coming—continuing the Elijah work. Mr. Armstrong prepared the way for Christ's Second Coming. We finish the Elijah work he did and introduce the all-powerful Christ to this deceived world.

Elijah means "my God is God"—implying that all other gods are false. So those firstfruits who did and do the Elijah work throughout the ages will be used by God in the educational institutions of the World Tomorrow. We will teach the whole world about the true God—the God Family.

We are *being prepared* for those jobs today. The original Elijah had three colleges. Elisha finished his work. Herbert W. Armstrong had three colleges. The PCG finishes his work with one college—a *type* of Elisha's work.

There is a great emphasis on education in the Elijah work. We are being prepared to establish colleges all over this Earth!

We must get ready for this job. Are you ready?

The Apostle John gets very specific about how we finish the Elijah work.

In verses 21 and 25 of John 1, the religious leaders mention a prophesied individual called "that prophet." *Lange's Commentary* says it was "the 'well-known' prophet, a personage in their messianic theology presumed to be familiar." This prophet was familiar to them because of their

knowledge of prophecy. "This particular prophet, therefore, is meant, who should COMPLETE THE FORE-RUNNING OFFICE OF ELIJAH..." (ibid.). In other words, *that prophet* and those people supporting him would FINISH THE ELIJAH WORK. (This passage is thoroughly explained in our free booklet *Who Is "That Prophet"?*)

This is a prophecy of our work today!

*There is great emphasis on education in the Elijah Work. We are being prepared to establish colleges all over this Earth. We must get ready for this job. Are you ready?*



Why was John the *only* one to write about this? He was the only one to talk about the voice crying out—a prophecy we know a lot about in this end time—and also the *only* one to discuss the work that carries on the Elijah work. This all *immediately follows* the introduction to John's Gospel.

This is where John's message starts right after the introduction—and it is about YOU! You who support this Work of God!

There is a connection between THE WORD MADE FLESH and the WORK OF GOD TODAY.

God wants us to realize that when He talks about the Word becoming flesh, those people who finish the Elijah work in this end time had better know that Jesus Christ's Second Coming is almost here! They must realize that HIS BECOMING FLESH WAS NOT THE END: HE IS COMING AGAIN, THIS TIME TO SAVE HUMANITY FROM DESTROYING ITSELF!

John the Baptist, in his Elijah work, was honored to introduce *the Word made flesh*—a mind-staggering event. But it gets better. The PCG is privileged to introduce the omnipotent, almighty, glorified Christ to this world!

What a grand-smashing climax to the Elijah work!

There is a reason John discusses *that prophet*. There is a reason that John, in his epistles, reveals the truth about "the last [hour]" and our specific work in the same context (1 John 2:18-20). There is a reason that John, in the book of Revelation, talks about the little book and "prophesy again" (Revelation 10), and describes the inner court (Revelation 11). The PCG is specifically discussed in three of John's books.

The Apostle John *only began* discussing that prophet and his supporters in his Gospel message. He would discuss them much more in two of his other books, which mostly emphasize this end time.

This is the Apostle John—surely one of the two or three top apostles of all time—talking about *you*!

Do you realize who you are? I'm not trying to appeal to your vanity; I'm trying to help us all to see REALITY! We do not accept the world's evaluation of us, because this world doesn't view things the way God does. WE ARE WEAK AND FLAWED, BUT WE MUST REALIZE WHO WE ARE!

The PCG has a fuller understanding of Scripture than any of God's churches ever. God used Mr. Armstrong to *restore all things*. Now He has given much revelation to the PCG.

No two eras have been given more revelation

than the Philadelphia and Laodicean eras. God has revealed more to these last two eras than all the other eras combined!

God knew that the Philadelphians would play a key role in educating the whole world. So the Apostle John was used to enrich our education, which will help us build God's colleges around this Earth.

These future colleges will be filled with God's revealed truth, produced by the best technology this world has ever had. There will be many printed books and booklets from the Philadelphia and Laodicean eras.

GOD IS GETTING US READY TO EDUCATE THE WORLD!

Realize who is really behind John's message. When John wrote this, he thought he was talking about his own time—but he was a couple thousand years off! We must not look to men—we must look to God and the Word! Only GOD can reveal to us

about John the Baptist and Elijah and that prophet. Everything we are doing would amount to nothing if the Word wasn't behind it.

We must always look to our Head Jesus Christ. The Laodiceans have failed here (Colossians 2:19).

To have the High Priest of the true Church mention your work is quite an honor! Just to be mentioned in that group is an honor of the highest magnitude.

THIS IS A DIRECT PROPHECY ABOUT YOU. Christ is giving us specific encouragement.

John made a direct connection between the Word that was made flesh and *us*. It is no exaggeration to say that we are *a key player in this end time*. We must warn the world about what is happening and prepare for the return of Jesus Christ! Why wouldn't we be a vital piece of the puzzle? How exciting to be on the scene, prophetically just "*minutes*" before Christ returns! We can look at the cities of Judah, which are steadily being attacked and besieged, and we have the privilege to say to them—even more emphatically than what we have—"Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9).

We must tell people that GOD is the only solution to their problems and THEY DON'T YET KNOW GOD! That is a message that will upset people!

Remember what happened to Christ? But did that make Him wrong?

What an exhilarating opportunity the people of God have—to *speak for God*!

If you speak for God, you know you're a son of the Father and the bride of Christ. Nobody else *speaks for*

*John the Baptist, in his Elijah work, was honored to introduce the Word made flesh—a mind-staggering event. But it gets better. The PCG is privileged to introduce the omnipotent, almighty, glorified Christ to this world!*



Him. You are a part of something truly spectacular.

The Apostle John did a marvelous job of bringing this truth alive!

This should help us conquer our trials. Of course we experience rough times—but this is the real world, this is the real Work of God, this is the real coming of Jesus Christ we are talking about! It is going to happen! NOBODY can change that!

There is a reason we are mentioned right in the context of John's introduction, of the Word made flesh, and of Elijah and that prophet. The reason is simply this: IT'S ALL ONE. Unless we become locked into the Word the way the Word is locked into God, nothing happens. It is all one unit. Christ prayed to His Father that we would all be one as God and Christ are one! (John 17:11). That is the only way we can achieve anything.

### THE LAMB OF GOD

When John the Baptist saw Jesus Christ coming, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). To strengthen the point, John repeats this in verse 36: "Behold the Lamb of God!" An exclamation point gives emphasis to this Lamb.

What lamb could take away the sin of the world? Could a goat do that? Could an angel, or just any man? No—this was THE LAMB OF GOD! A Lamb who WAS GOD had to die for our sins. It couldn't happen any other way.

Christ was a Lamb—He truly was a martyr. All the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to that Lamb. *John 1:29 connects the Old Testament and the New Testament through that Lamb.*

The fact that the Jews wouldn't believe Christ unless He gave them a sign is almost a joke! ALL THE PROPHECIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT pointed to that man who was the Lamb! How can you explain those people's ignorance?

But THESE FEW DISCIPLES WERE REALLY EXCITED, SAYING "WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAS!" (verse 41). WE HAVE FOUND THE GOD WHO WAS PROPHESED TO COME TO THIS EARTH! MOSES AND THE PROPHETS PROPHESED ABOUT THE MESSIAH AND HE'S HERE! (verse 45).

The Greek expression *Messias* means *the Christ* or the Anointed One. Christ was anointed by the Father to come and deliver us from sin.

THERE HAD NEVER BEEN A BIGGER EVENT IN HISTORY TO THAT TIME. This was *the first coming of Jesus Christ!* These men had every reason to be excited—and they didn't even have God's Spirit yet. *John gives us all the names of the people who received this news with such gladness—like Philip and Nathanael—and none of the other Gospel writers do.* Why? John was

bringing all this to life—to make it as real as he possibly could. HERE WERE MEN, JUST LIKE US, RUNNING AROUND WITH EACH OTHER AND BURSTING WITH EXCITEMENT OVER THIS EPIC EVENT!

John was emphasizing the search for and finding of the Messiah! There was nothing more important ever in the history of man. This was the most epoch-making event mankind had ever experienced to that point.

What did the Jewish people think? They didn't even know what it meant!

Neither do most people today know what our work means. But they shall know. We are introducing that same Christ to this evil world. Every person on Earth will know why our work was here!

God's true Church today has the Messiah leading us, revealing truth to us, giving us guidance, helping, providing us everything we need. WE HAVE THE MESSIAH! So we need to be running around with some excitement! The Messiah is here! The Messiah is directing this Work—the one prophesied to come and take away the sin of the world and open up the God Family to ALL MANKIND!

If we don't get excited about that, we have to acknowledge that we have some Laodicean traits we need to overcome. There is nothing more exciting than this.

God works with real men and women. I'm sure people called them nobodies—but they recognized the event of the ages! Everybody else was in darkness.

Let people scoff if they want to, but the truth is that we recognize something the world doesn't recognize. We know that the Word is directing this Work, and that this is the only hope of mankind. We know the Messiah is here! We KNOW this is all leading to the return of Jesus Christ. All these other events have been fulfilled to the letter, and so shall the Second Coming be!

"And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see" (verse 46).

Can anything good really come out of Edmond, Oklahoma? Only if the Messiah's there! If the Word who became flesh is there, GREAT THINGS will come out of that city! It doesn't have anything to do with the city—it has to do with knowing God and understanding what He is doing on Earth.

"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael had a somewhat *negative* question and attitude.

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (verse 47). Christ led him to think about his strengths and become more positive.

Christ does the same for us today, unless we shut



Him out as the Laodiceans have (Revelation 3:20).

We need Christ's encouragement to endure. The Messiah is here now to help us.

Christ knew the thoughts of Nathanael. He also knows your thoughts and my thoughts. We must change our thoughts in order to have Christ's mind (Philippians 2:5).

## UPHOLDING PETER'S OFFICE

"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* [in Greek, *Peter*], which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42). Mark 3:16 shows that *Peter* was the surname, or title, that Christ gave to Simon, designating him as the chief apostle.

Here is what Mr. Armstrong wrote in *Mystery of the Ages*: "In Mark 3:14, 16, we read: 'And he [Jesus] ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.... And Simon he surnamed Peter.' A surname is, according to Webster, 'an added name derived from occupation.'

"The surname Peter had for centuries been a surname or TITLE, designating a religious LEADER, HEAD OR HEADQUARTERS. Peter was the first and chief apostle. An apostle is 'one sent forth to proclaim or preach.'"

What is interesting is that the other three Gospel writers often referred to Peter as *Simon*. John always used the name *Peter* (or *Simon Peter*). Why?

I believe this also shows John's depth. In those 30 years he was mulling events over, he must have considered this carefully. In writing his Gospel, John was speaking from the perspective of the Word. HERE WAS AN OFFICE THAT THE WORD—GOD HIMSELF—ESTABLISHED AND GAVE TO SIMON PETER.

Certainly Peter had his problems. But this was the man who God chose to lead the Church—over John and all the others. I believe that the more John thought about it, the more he realized, *I don't believe it's right for me to write about the leading apostle of God's Church as "Simon." I'm going to call him Peter and respect that office. I want to view it the way the Word does!*

Every time John wrote about Peter, it was a reminder of who he was and that the Father and the Son gave him that office! He always tried to see God behind the man.

Do we deeply see who is behind this Work?

John took on God's perspective and tried to deeply

respect everything He does! We need to do the same. That doesn't mean we follow men; that means we follow God, who uses the men who lead us.

I certainly wasn't perfect in this myself, but for the life of me I could not understand how the ministers who left after Mr. Armstrong died—who had preached all their lives about Mr. Armstrong being the end-time Elijah—could begin to talk about how

they didn't really think he *was* the Elijah. What hypocrites! They *used* to refer to him as the end-time Elijah when Mr. Armstrong was alive—what happened?

The end-time Elijah was used to restore ALL THINGS in the Church of God! He did in God's Church what Christ is going to do in the whole world. That is a rather prestigious calling!

If those ministers had learned the lesson that John did, they would still be doing God's Work today.

John had the Word's view. That is why I believe it is inspiring that he specifically describes the *inner court* in Revelation 11. By the time he wrote that vision, he *knew* he was talking about this end-time Church. In fact, God used him to put everything in a time frame. John didn't just use the word *temple* in the book of Revelation. He spoke of a people who would reside in the *inner court*, dwelling right there with God.

*Do you deeply understand who you are? That is the challenge that John hurls at us in this Gospel.*

Nathanael was astounded. "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. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:48-49). Nathanael was now convinced that Christ was the Son of God. He knew this was the King of Israel. Soon the whole world will become Israel, when the Gentiles are grafted in.

The King of kings and Lord of lords is about to rule this world. We are being *prepared* to be the kings and lords under Christ.

Are you ready to be a king and a priest? We all must work hard to qualify for those eternal positions!

The Word was made flesh to make this spectacular future possible. This is not some religious fantasy. This is our future, and we can't qualify for these offices by acting like this vision is some hazy dream. This coming world is more real than the world you see around you.

*Every time John wrote about Peter, it was a reminder of who he was and that the Father and the Son gave him that office! He always tried to see God behind the man.*



## BORN AGAIN

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:1-2). Nicodemus saw Christ's miracles and knew no man could do that—but that is not a good basis for faith. Faith does not come from what we can perceive with our senses.

This Pharisee had a wonderful opportunity to be right there with Christ—but he was afraid to come to Him except at night! Later on, he was also present when Christ was crucified, which, it seems to me, is rather pathetic. Perhaps that assuaged his guilt.

Then Christ explained to Nicodemus the truth about being born again. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," He said. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (verses 6, 8).

Nicodemus was clearly puzzled by the explanation, and Christ said, "Are thou a master [or teacher] of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (verse 10). Nicodemus was one of the leaders in the Sanhedrin—their supreme court at that time—and Christ said, *And you mean you don't know this?* He couldn't even understand the physical analogy. Jesus Christ was talking about a new creation.

Again, *John is the only Gospel writer who records this discussion with Nicodemus.* He chose examples that fit the theme, or the specific purpose, of his message—and this one illustrates that beautifully. It's simply that **WE ARE GOING TO BE BORN AGAIN!** Jesus Christ, who cannot lie, said we will experience **ANOTHER BIRTH**—and what a birth it will be! We will receive a *new body*, and a *much more complete mind*. **BORN AGAIN!**

The Word became flesh so that we could be born into the God Family as God beings! There are no parallels of this in the other Gospels. John kept hammering away at our magnificent potential.

**CHRIST PERSONALLY PREPARED JOHN TO MAKE THIS CALLING AND BIRTH MORE REAL TO US.** John understood this subject more deeply than most of God's apostles.

Exalted scholars like Nicodemus can't get this because they won't humble themselves so God can reveal it to them. This future is breathtakingly awesome, *if we comprehend it.*

Satan has totally blinded the people of this world to their astounding potential. He hates this subject with intense passion, because it was never promised to him. Angels never had the potential to be sons of God. Only man has this mind-stunning potential.

You *must* let John's message sink deeply into your mind. **IF YOU DO, IT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!**

The Word became flesh in order to make this birth possible!

Satan never received this potential, and it really agitates him! He has blinded the whole world from such transcendental truth because he hates it so much!

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (verses 16-17). What a price the Father and the Son had to pay in order to give us that potential!

## HUMAN NATURE

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*" (John 3:19).

So many people believe that men are essentially good. At the burial site of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan is a plaque stating that he believed man is basically good.

But is that true? Is that what Christ said? No, He says **THEIR DEEDS ARE EVIL**. Just look at this world—read your newspaper! There is a tremendous amount of *evil* in this world.

The profession of psychology also believes that man is essentially good. If it starts with a false premise, then the whole field of psychology is tainted and dangerous. It is built on a foundation of sand.

Men trust their own human reasoning. God says that man's heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).

This world would destroy all human life if Christ didn't intervene and save us (Matthew 24:21-22). How evil is that?

People hate light and love darkness! Just look at what they did to John the Baptist. Jesus Christ said there was none born of women greater than John the Baptist—yet the people cast this great man of God into prison and cut off his head!

Scripture indicates John the Baptist knew he would be martyred. He knew and he lived with that. You would think that knowledge must have depressed him horribly, but actually it didn't.

Do you know why?

## THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE

The Apostle John uses John the Baptist to illustrate an important point. Here is an earth-shaking statement he quotes John the Baptist as making: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom..." (John 3:29).

**THE OTHER GOSPELS TALK ABOUT THE BRIDEGROOM, BUT ONLY THE APOSTLE JOHN MENTIONS THE**



BRIDE. We know how Jesus Christ suffered. So it shouldn't surprise us if His bride needs to suffer as well. But there's another part of the picture we must never forget!

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, REJOICETH GREATLY..." (verse 29). John is not talking about something of the world. He is talking about *something spiritual* that really makes you rejoice GREATLY! Not just rejoice, but REJOICE GREATLY.

What is it?

Verse 29 concludes: "... REJOICETH GREATLY BECAUSE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

Only the bride hears the Bridegroom's voice. Who is "the friend of the bridegroom" John the Baptist mentioned? It is THE BRIDE OF CHRIST! We are honored to be THE FRIENDS OF GOD!

When John heard the BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE, he really REJOICED—his joy was fulfilled.

THIS VOICE COMES FROM BEYOND THE STARS. God always speaks to His very elect.

Any husband who loves his wife gives her a lot of attention. Do you think Jesus Christ, the perfect Husband, is different? Look at the attention He gives His bride. Christ woos His bride because He loves her so. He gives you His attention because He wants your attention. There is nothing like this in the history of man before the Word became flesh, except in a few isolated cases. What a wonderful Husband we have.

John the Baptist continued, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (verse 30). John knew it was winding down for him. He probably knew he was going to die. But at the same time, he was talking about REJOICING—*because he listened to the Bridegroom's voice!*

WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM SPEAKS, THAT MEANS HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE BRIDE AND THE WEDDING!

John the Baptist listened to the wonderful, spiritually romantic voice of his Husband. It inspired him so deeply that he wondered how he could be so honored to have his head cut off for the Bridegroom!

How about that for a real mind-blower?

Yes, we suffer. We suffer with the Bridegroom. BUT DON'T FORGET THE MARRIAGE!

Realize *why* you have trials and tests. It is suffering that gets us ready for the marriage!

A righteous death only means *you've got it made!* Of course there is sadness in death; it's not that it doesn't matter. But look at the whole picture!

John was about to be thrown into prison and have his head lopped off, and he was listening to the Bridegroom's voice! I suppose he knew Christ's evaluation of him, and as a result his joy was made full.

How easy would it be to get depressed in a situation like that? John could have said, *Here I am, doing everything I'm told—and I'm about to have my head cut off and presented on a platter to a bunch of pagans!*

*I've got to find another religion!*

But that isn't the way he reacted at all. John the Baptist knew that the marriage to the Bridegroom was *real*—and, no matter the physical circumstances he faced, he really REJOICED WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM SPOKE AND HE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT MARRIAGE.

Why did John the Baptist discuss the *bride* and the *Bridegroom* shortly before his head was cut off? He was keeping this eternal and most exalted marriage in his mind! He knew that this trial was getting him *ready* for that marriage without equal, which would last forever.

That vision caused John the Baptist to rejoice in the worst situation he ever faced.

As it says in Revelation 19:7, "Let us BE GLAD and REJOICE, and give honour to him: for THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB IS COME, and *his wife* hath made herself ready!"

We must have this vision to get ready! Without it we will fail.

Do you have deep joy that you have been invited to be a part of this marriage? That you have been honored to be called out of this world and to serve God for a short time—and in the end MARRY JESUS CHRIST?

IF WE DON'T KEEP THAT WONDERFUL MARRIAGE IN OUR MINDS, WE WON'T BE POSITIVE AND STIRRED AND INSPIRED. But if we think about it deeply, we will say—even when we're in the midst of trial—even if, like John, *we're in prison and facing execution*—that we "REJOICETH GREATLY BECAUSE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE: THIS MY JOY THEREFORE IS FULFILLED!"

Is that marriage vivid in your mind? Do you think about when the marriage is consummated and you're in that headquarters temple with Jesus Christ? I know that God's very elect have this vision in their minds. But IS IT DEEP ENOUGH IN YOUR MIND TO CAUSE YOU TO REJOICE IN YOUR WORST TRIAL? You need to ponder that question!

We must suffer, but let's never forget *why* we suffer.

Throughout eternity, people will be looking at us and saying, *Why, that is the bride of Christ!* Is that vision deep enough to keep you stirred and moved to real-

*Any husband who loves his wife gives her a lot of attention. Do you think Jesus Christ, the perfect Husband, is any different? Look at the attention He gives His bride. Christ woos His bride because He loves her so.*



ize where all this is leading—even if you have to die?

WE WERE *BORN* TO ACHIEVE THIS FUTURE!

THIS IS THE GREATEST MARRIAGE THERE EVER WILL BE—FOR ALL TIME—IN ALL THE UNIVERSE! THIS IS AN EPIC EVENT THAT WILL NEVER BE DUPLICATED!

BUT THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY IS THAT 95 PERCENT OF GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY ARE TOO LUKEWARM TO WANT IT!

Unless you have this vision in your mind, you will be susceptible to falling away. Unless you see that *marriage*, YOU WON'T GET READY! We MUST have this vision in order to be motivated to make the changes that we need to make.

Jesus Christ—your Husband, your Friend—is doing EVERYTHING HE CAN to try to woo you so you won't turn away like the Laodiceans! He is spreading the table and offering EVERYTHING to His bride! And He wants us to keep the marriage in mind so we won't be drowned in our problems and want to give up.

This marriage is a million times more exciting than any physical marriage ever was!

Think about what our Laodicean brethren are missing! It is a terrible tragedy. *Dying* is not a tragedy. MISSING OUT ON THIS MARRIAGE is a tragedy!

THIS IS ALL THAT EVEN GOD CAN GIVE US!

## THE GLORY OF STARS

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). That is going to happen.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED" (verses 50-51).

RIGHT NOW, THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN THE TRUTH ARE ONLY *SLEEPING* FOR A LITTLE WHILE—IT ISN'T EVEN DEATH! IT'S THE *OPPOSITE*, AS A MATTER OF FACT. IT'S ETERNAL LIFE!

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (verse 52). What a wonderful, beautiful change that will be.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... But thanks be to God, which giveth us the

victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye *know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*" (verses 55, 57-58).

None of your efforts in advancing the Work of God are in vain. Paul tells us to *ABOUND* in that Work! We are going to be rewarded beyond our imagination! That reward is worth all the trials and tests and difficulties many times over!

1 John 3:1-3 say that when Christ appears, we are going to *BE LIKE HIM*. And if we have that hope in us—and *ONLY* if we have that hope in us—we will *purify* ourselves. If we see the Family of God and the marriage, that causes us to do *WHATEVER WE HAVE TO* in order to be pure and righteous and good the way God is.

Here is a verse you will want to remember: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one star differeth from another star in glory*" (1 Corinthians 15:41).

Look up in the sky at night, and you can see that the stars differ from one another in glory. God is saying that the same is true of us spiritually. In the Kingdom of God, we are going to be rewarded according to what we do. We will be given brilliance, the brightness of the firmament—AND WE WILL SHINE LIKE THE STARS—ACCORDING TO OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ACCORDING TO HOW MANY PEOPLE WE HELPED TURN TO GOD (Daniel 12:3). That is how we

gain our spirit brilliance. *The more we do that, the more brilliance we will have.* That's what the Bible teaches. As we will see in the next article, God is right now building that resplendent temple, and creating our offices in it! He is preparing our wonderful future—and He is going to reward us according to what we have done.

Is it worth that effort?

OH, IS IT EVER WORTH IT! IS IT EVER WORTH IT!

Even on a physical level, when a man and woman are going to marry, they are filled with excitement about planning that wedding, and preparing for that marriage.

They can see the marriage so vividly! It's so stark and striking in their minds that they work to do everything they need to do to be ready for that marriage.

That is what John is telling us we have to do. We must see it very clearly! Only then will we be motivated to make the changes necessary to become the bride of Christ. □

*In the Kingdom of God, we are going to be rewarded according to what we do. We will be given brilliance, the brightness of the firmament—and we will shine like the stars—according to our righteousness, and according to how many people we helped turn to God.*