

John 1 • Jesus the Son of God: His Names

Introduction

The theme of the Gospel of John is that Jesus is the Son of God.

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

John 20:30-31

The opening chapter of John introduces us to the first of many “sevens” listed throughout his gospel: seven names and titles of Christ, seven works performed by Christ, and seven witnesses who knew Christ personally and testify to who He is. (All this in the first chapter alone!) This study concentrates on the seven names of Christ revealed here which prove He is God’s Son and introduce some common themes regarding Christ throughout Scripture.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[Read v.1-3 & 14] Jesus is the Word

Q: What might be biblically significant about the fact that a word is composed of letters?

A: One of the descriptions of Christ is that He is the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, “*the Alpha and the Omega*”. It describes the fact that the very beginning and ending exist in Him, a fitting opening for John’s gospel as well as the allusions to His role as creator both of the universe as a whole and us individually.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”
Revelation 22:13

Q: In the account of creation given in Genesis 1, how did creation come about?

A: God created everything through His word. Each step of creation is prefaced with the phrase, “*Then God said*”.

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:16

For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,

2 Peter 3:5

Q: While God can be known through nature and history, how is He known in full?

A: Through His Son.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Hebrews 1:1-2

Q: According to v.14 & 17, what qualities are realized through Christ the Word?

A: "Grace and truth".

Q: But what occurs should someone decide not to receive Him?

A: This same Word which works "grace and truth" in the believer becomes wrath and judgment for the non-believer.

He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

Revelation 19:13

Q: How is all of this ultimately related to the Bible?

A: The Bible is the written Word of God and Christ is the living, incarnate Word of God ("the Word became flesh").

Point: *When we put the Word of God into practice we're actually experiencing the incarnation of His Word. That is, His Word changes our "flesh", our heart, soul, and mind. First there was creation followed by the new creation.*

[Read v.4-13] Jesus is the Light

⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

⁶There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

⁹There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Q: God first spoke (there was the Word) and then came forth creation. What was the very first thing created in Genesis 1?

A: God's first creative act was producing the light.

Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Genesis 1:3

Q: So what might be some of the reasons it's significant that Christ is the Light?

A: He's not just **a** light or **another** light, but **THE** original light from which all light – both physical and spiritual – has as its source.

Q: What might be significant about the fact that John says in v.5, "The Light shines" – present tense – "in the darkness"?

A: Throughout John's Gospel runs the theme of the conflict between light (God, eternal life) and darkness (Satan, eternal death).

Point: *A literal translation of "the darkness did not comprehend it" is "the darkness has not been able to put it out or lay hold of it".*

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

John 3:19-21

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

John 8:12

"I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness."

John 12:46

Point: In Paul's epistle to the Corinthians salvation is pictured as the entrance of light into the dark heart of the sinner, reflecting the greater meaning of "light" and "darkness" in Scripture.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

¹⁵John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" ¹⁶For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

³⁰This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' ³¹I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." ³²John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. ³³I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

⁴⁹Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

[Read v.15-18, 30-34 & 49] Jesus is the Son of God

Q: Why was this particular title the one that was probably most upsetting to those who, in Jesus' day, rejected Him?

A: According to John 10:30-36, this claim is what specifically aroused persecution of Christ.

The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

John 10:31-33

Q: Who are the seven witnesses in the Gospel of John who recognize Jesus as being God?

1. John the Baptist. (1:34)
2. Nathanael. (1:49)
3. Peter. (6:69)
4. The Healed Blind Man. (9:35-38)
5. Martha. (11:27)
6. Thomas. (20:28)
7. The Apostle John. (20:30-31)

Q: Why is this not merely a scholarly point of theology? What is the real-world effect of refusing to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God?

A: It's impossible for sinners to be saved unless they so believe He is the Son of God.

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

John 8:24

¹⁹This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

²⁰And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

²¹They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”

And he said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

And he answered, “No.”

²²Then they said to him, “Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”

²³He said, “I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, and said to him, “Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

²⁶John answered them saying, “I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. ²⁷It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

²⁸These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

³⁵Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

³⁸And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?”

They said to Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?”

³⁹He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means Christ). ⁴²He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas” (which is translated

[Read v.19-28 & 35-42] Jesus is the Messiah

Q: What does the word “Christ” literally mean?

A: “The Anointed One”.

Q: Why do you suppose it was the people who came and asked John if He was the Messiah?

A: They were all expecting the Messiah to appear. They recognizes that the “signs of the times”, so to speak, were meeting the conditions laid down by Scripture detailing when the Messiah would come. There had been many false Messiahs and false prophets in the interim and they were trying to determine John the Baptist’s precise role and claim.

Observation: *It’s interesting to note that the Samaritans (see John 4:25, 42) were also looking for the arrival of the Messiah. This is interesting not just because they were of mixed racial heritage with the Jews, but only acknowledged the first five books of the Law as Scripture. Even though they rejected the rest of what we now call the Old Testament, what little they had pointed to the imminent arrival of the Messiah.*

Q: What would ultimately happen in the course of Jesus’ ministry to anyone who publicly said that Jesus was the Messiah?

A: They were thrown out of the synagogue, excommunicated from the Jewish faith of the day.

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

John 9:22

Point: *Many who are unwilling to accept Jesus as the Messiah will put forth alternatives just like the crowd did with John the Baptist. They’ll suggest He was a good teacher or perfect man – even some other religions regard Jesus as a prophet. But to substitute anything in place of His being the Messiah is actually a denial of faith. The issue of who Christ is causes dramatic division between those accepting Him as Messiah and those rejecting Him as such.*

Peter).

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

³⁵Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!”

[Read v.29 & 35-36] Jesus in the Lamb of God

Q: Old Testament Trivia – Whose question might John actually be answering in announcing Jesus as “the Lamb of God”?

A: It’s actually the answer to Isaac’s question in the Old Testament example of how salvation through the Messiah would ultimately come about by God providing a blood sacrifice in Isaac’s place.

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Genesis 22:7

Q: What is probably the most prominent Old Testament reference to a lamb?

A: The Passover lamb (see Ex. 12). But one of the most prominent, well-known passages of Old Testament Scripture which everyone of Jesus’ time acknowledged as referring to the Messiah was Isaiah 53 where the Messiah is described as the sacrificial lamb.

Q: What did the blood of lambs slain in the tabernacle or temple accomplish?

A: It merely covered sin. It took Christ’s blood to take away sin.

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:1-4

Q: What is significant about the fact that John the Baptist declares that Jesus “takes away the sin of the world”?

A: The Old Testament sacrifices were for Israel alone; Christ’s sacrifice is for the sins of the whole world.

Point: *No true faith in Christ can be accomplished without fully embracing the work of the cross, the shedding of His blood for our sins.*

⁴³The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, “Follow Me.”

⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

[Read v.43-49] Jesus is the King of Israel

Q: What is ironic about the revelation that Jesus is the King of Israel?

A: This is exactly what the people of Jesus’ time desired most. Oppressed by Roman rule, they believed the Messiah would come and free them, even establish Israel as head over all the nations.

⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”

⁴⁸Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

⁴⁹Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

⁵⁰Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹And He said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Q: Was this a crazy idea? Did the Jews just come up with this on their own?

A: They saw two pictures of the Messiah in the Old Testament which they called the Messiah the son of Joseph and the Messiah the son of David. The Messiah the son of Joseph was also known as the “Suffering Servant” coming in the character of Joseph, and the Messiah the son of David as the “Conquering King” coming in the character of David. What they didn’t realize is that it was a picture of one Messiah, but two separate comings. By Jesus’ time they no longer wanted a “Suffering Servant”, just a “Conquering King”. [Note: There are a lot of lessons here about holding on to the wrong eschatological beliefs when it comes to the End Times.]

Q: How did the Jews of Jesus day treat Jesus in regard to the possibility He was the King of Israel?

1. At one point the multitudes **WANT** to make Him King, but not being able to accept His teaching wind up leaving Him. (See John 6:66-71)
2. At what we call “The Triumphal Entry” into Jerusalem, Jesus is hailed as King in word only – they don’t actually believe on Him and in reality they are ignoring the fact that He is coming as the “Suffering Servant” and instead incorrectly trying to turn His arrival into that of the “Conquering King”. (See John 2:12-15)
3. At His trial and crucifixion they come full circle to outright deny Jesus as their King, ultimately declaring, “*We have no King but Caesar*”. (See John 19:13-22)

Point: *Rejection of Christ’s sovereignty according to His own Word and standards is a rejection of Him personally leading to the personal crowning of something else as king over one’s life.*

[Read v.50-51] Jesus is the Son of Man

Q: What is significant about the title “the Son of Man”?

A: It’s really only used by Ezekiel and Daniel, originating in Daniel 7:13-14. The Jews of Jesus’ time universally accepted that it described God. This is why the people sometimes had questions about this.

The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”
John 12:34

Q: To Jews living at the time of John’s writing this Gospel, what would they have probably recognized as the greater significance of v.51? To what Old Testament event is Jesus alluding to?

A: It alludes to Jacob’s ladder. (See Gen. 28:10-17) Christ is “God’s ladder” between earth and heaven, the One who reveals God to men and takes men to God.

Point: *Jesus was the literal fulfillment of Scripture as the One Way to the Father.*

Overall Application

Each one of these attributes is expanded upon not just in the Gospel of John but throughout all of Scripture. They combine to eliminate the possibility that where Christ is concerned, anything less than His being the Son of God has to be rejected. There is no room for alternative “titles” or descriptions of Jesus except as each of these titles interlocks together into the overall picture of the True Christ as the Son of God.