

John 1 • Jesus the Son of God: Works & Witnesses

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

In our first study of John chapter 1 we went through the seven names of Jesus the Son of God. Here we go over two other lists of “sevens” presented by John in this chapter, seven works and seven witnesses which prove Jesus is the Son of God. John leaves no room for accepting anything less than Jesus being the Son of God not only by the works He performs, but by the witnesses who knew Him personally.

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. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: What is the first work of Jesus the Son of God?

A: He was the divine Agent through whom the world was created. He was present in the beginning with God and is in fact a member of the Godhead.

Point: Christ was responsible first for creation, then by His First Coming in effecting new creation through spiritual rebirth, and finally by His Second Coming in re-creation, the ultimate expression of a new heaven and new earth. It's a work that has a beginning, middle, and end for us.

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.

[Read v.9-13]

Q: What is the second work of Jesus the Son of God? How might it relate to the first?

A: He offers mankind salvation. Spiritual rebirth is akin to His work as Creator by effecting through salvation a new creation not induced by man's will but God's.

Q: What word is presented here as being synonymous with “believe”?

A: “Receive”. “Believing” and “receiving” are the same thing and reflects the choice each person has of accepting or rejecting the free gift of salvation offered by Christ. An example of not “receiving” is His general rejection by His own people (the Jews) of the day.

Point: Whereas the power and authority of Christ is first expressed as the Creator of the physical universe, it is extended to include His power to re-create spiritually through salvation, which is also a work with a beginning, middle, and end for us as the processes of justification and sanctification ultimately lead to eternal redemption.

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

[Read v.15-18]

Q: What is the third work of Jesus the Son of God?

A: He reveals God to mankind, particularly God's grace and truth.

Point: What was revealed through the Law given through Moses was the revelation and nature of sin and its resulting condemnation; revealed through Christ is the truth which actually redeems us of sin. This is why the Law was only a preparation for Christ to come and fulfill the work of the Father.

Father, He has explained 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.'

[Read v.33]

Q: What is the fourth work of Jesus the Son of God?

A: He baptizes with the Spirit. One of the things which makes this significant is that false messiahs baptize with water, but none can do so by the Spirit except the One True Son of God.

Q: How did John the Baptist recognize Christ?

A: It was only by the revelation of the Holy Spirit when He descended upon Christ.

Point: This is an insight into the working of the Trinity, all of which are mentioned in this opening chapter. The Father (v.14, 18), the Son (v.14, 18), and the Spirit (v.32-34) are all present and working. We cannot truly see Christ today unless the Spirit opens our eyes.

[Read v.42 & 47-48]

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 Peter).

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."

Q: What is the fifth work of Jesus the Son of God?

A: He has intimate knowledge of men.

Observation: The way that Jewish midrash (the methodology of interpreting the Scriptures widely applied by Jews of the day) would understand the encounter with Nathanael is that there was a much deeper meaning to this event. Yes, Jesus literally saw Nathanael under a fig tree, but in Scripture the fig tree was taught to represent the tree from the Garden of Eden. (As opposed to Western thinking which often makes it out to be an apple tree.) So in Jewish midrash Jesus was also saying, "From the beginning of the world I saw you", which makes Nathanael's response calling Jesus "the Son of God" (v.49) more understandable as to why He recognized Christ as much more than a "seer".

Point: Only God can see into the hearts of people, knowing them better than they know themselves. Christ's awareness of us individually goes beyond merely being discerning or perceptive to being all-knowing.

[Read v.29]

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

Q: What is the sixth work of Jesus the Son of God?

A: He forgives sin.

Point: Christ's role as the "Lamb of God" makes Him unique as the only suitable substitute to take away our sin. He's not just a moral reformer but the only antidote for sin.

[Read v.50-51]

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: What is the seventh work of Jesus the Son of God?

A: He is the way to heaven.

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: Just like Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17), sinners are away from home and surrounded by the night of sin. But Christ reveals the glory of heaven and provides a way for us to enter it. As the Son of God, Christ is God's "staircase to glory".

Summary to this Point

When someone is listing a person's accomplishments, they are provided to justify the position, titles, or authority of that person. John first establishes the seven names which prove Jesus is the Son of God:

1. He is the Word (v.1-3, 14)
2. He is the Light (v.4-13)
3. He is the Son of God (v.15-18, 30-34, 49)
4. He is the Christ – the Messiah (v.19-28, 35-42)
5. He is the Lamb of God (v.29, 35-36)
6. He is the King of Israel (v.43-49)
7. He is the Son of Man (v.50-51)

John then follows up with seven works which confirm that Jesus is truly the fulfillment of each of the above names:

1. He created the world. (v.1-4)
2. He gives mankind salvation. (v.9-13)
3. He reveals God. (v.15-18)
4. He baptizes with the Spirit. (v.33)
5. He has intimate knowledge of men. (v.42, 47-48)
6. He forgives sin. (v.29)
7. He is the way to heaven. (v.50-51)

From the outset John is establishing the fact that Jesus must either be accepted or rejected as nothing less than the Son of God and leaves no room Jesus was merely a good teacher, a good man, or just a prophet of God. John also reinforces this by listing seven witnesses to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God.

Witnesses that Christ is God's Son

Q: What is the biblical definition of a "witness"?


A: The witnesses of the Bible can be trusted because they had a personal contact with Christ and gained nothing from men by witnessing for Him. (In fact, the reverse occurred and they instead suffered for it.)

Point: There is no evidence that these witnesses lied and every assurance that their testimony would stand up in court today. These witnesses are:

1. John the Baptist (v.7, 15, 29, & 5:35)
2. John the Apostle (v.1:14)
3. The Old Testament prophets (v.30, 45)
4. The Holy Spirit (v.33-34)
5. Andrew (v.41)
6. Philip (v.45)
7. Nathanael (v.49)

Q: How are these examples of the many ways that God uses people and circumstances to bring people to His Son?

1. John and Andrew were saved through a preacher, John the Baptist.
2. Peter found Christ because of Andrew's personal work.
3. Philip was called by Christ personally.
4. Nathanael found Christ through the Word and Philip's testimony.



Point: God exhibits an infinite variety in how He brings people to Him through His Son, but they all converge onto a single path exclusively leading to Christ alone and no other.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 14:6