

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

The One and Only John 1:15-18

Intro: We've now come to the 2nd narrative section in John's prologue. I previously stated that these 2 sections were not inserted haphazardly but for the purpose of reminding the reader that the timeless truths expressed about Jesus Christ are actually anchored in human history. The reality of God the Son that existed in eternity literally & physically appeared on this earth, walked in this world and expressed Himself to humanity. This 2nd section serves an additional function in that it anticipates the narrative which is to follow, starting in vs19. The Apostle describes the witness of John the Baptist in vs19-34 but vs15 provides a summary of that witness, just to make it clear that the **Light** that John the Baptist bore witness of in vs7-8 is identical to the incarnate **Word** described in vs14.

15- bore witness – By the time the Apostle wrote his Gospel, John the Baptist had been long dead. But, take note: his witness of Christ survived some 60 yrs later and it still survives **to this day!** This is the power of a good testimony – not what I have done for Christ but who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for me! In a similar way, it says John “**cried out**” implying his declaration was a **past event**, but the **substance** of what he declared is **permanently true!**

The ministry of John the Baptist is intriguing to me because he was giving the task of announcing the coming of the Messiah but yet, he didn't have a clue who the Messiah was. That had to be disconcerting to some degree. Today, we have the complete revelation of God's plan in His Word & people balk at God's call to ministry all the time. It seems John didn't let this small gap in critical info slow him down. I can just imagine him being interviewed by the Pharisees: “Are you the Messiah?” No. “Well, who is it then?” I don't know. “Then what are you talking about?” Hey, I might not know who the Messiah is but I certainly know what the Messiah is going to be like (**Mt 3:11-12**). It wasn't that John was completely clueless – he did have **some inside information** (**33**). I'm sure John the Baptist had his suspicions of who the Messiah was, but notice: he didn't act on his **suspicions** but rather on the **fulfillment** of God's Word. There's also a lesson here on obedience. Had John waited until he had complete information, he'd have never seen the

Messiah. He had to get out there and preach & baptize with what he knew because, as it turns out, the Messiah would only be revealed at His baptism. John didn't & couldn't know it. He simply had to trust & be obedient.

preferred - So, John was tasked with announcing the soon appearance of the Coming One **before** he was able to point to a particular person and say, "That's Him!" That means the Messiah appeared later in history than John did but John declares that Messiah will **take precedence over** himself. Of course, he's not talking about order of birth – he's 6 months older than Jesus. John's not just saying "He was before me" but more literally: "**He is 1st in respect of me**" or "**he has absolute primacy over me.**" One translation renders this phrase, "**Before I was born He already was.**" John's witness is clear: he's speaking of **the Word** that existed in eternity with God became **incarnate among men.**

16- fullness – logically, this verse follows the thought expressed at the end of vs14 (vs15 is parenthetical). The incarnate Word was **full of grace and truth** and it's from that fullness of His that we have all drawn. "**We...all**" certainly refers to the Apostles, those who saw the glory of the Word made flesh; but it also applies to all those who read this Gospel and receive the blessing pronounced by Jesus in **20:29**. But, what is this fullness? In **Col 1:19**, Paul restates this truth but doesn't answer our question. The answer comes in **Col 2:9 the fullness of the Godhead**... Everything the Father & the Spirit are existed fully in Jesus. The divine glory & goodness which are contained in Jesus Christ is an **ocean** from which all of His people can draw without ever diminishing its capacity. Let that truth sink in. No matter how much water you draw out of the ocean – there's never a threat of the ocean going dry!

The imagery of divine grace as an ocean is helpful for explaining the last phrase. The word "for" in the Greek is **anti-** which means **instead of** but the use of that definition makes no logical or practical sense here. A better translation would be "**upon.**" What believers in Christ draw from the ocean of divine fullness is **grace upon grace** – one wave of grace constantly being replaced by a fresh wave. Do we understand that there is **no limit** to the supply of grace that God has placed at our disposal in Christ? That's why Jesus told Paul, "**My grace is sufficient for you**" (2 Cor 12:9).

17- law – John's not suggesting here that grace & truth were absent from

the Law God delivered to Moses. On the contrary, we saw last week in Ex 34 that part of the name of the Lord that was declared to Moses stated that God was **abounding in goodness** (grace) **and truth** (Ex 34:6b). God's character is repeatedly described thru-out the OT using similar language (Ps 86:15). No, what John's doing here & will do thru-out this Gospel, is setting the **old order** of law under Moses in stark contrast to the **new order** of grace in Jesus Christ.

Again, the Law of Moses was **not lacking** in allusions to grace and truth at all. Every sacrifice was an expression of God's grace. The Law also contained & revealed God's truth. What John's simply saying is that all the allusions to grace and truth contained in the OT were finally revealed in **concentrated fullness** in the person of Jesus Christ! He displaces the Law of Moses as the focus of divine revelation as well as the believer's way of life. John goes to great lengths in his Gospel to show how the new order fulfills, surpasses and eventually replaces the old order: wine of new creation is better than water used in Jewish religion (2:10); new temple of His body supersedes the old temple (2:19); new birth is greater than natural birth (3:3, 5); living water of Jesus is better than water in Jacob's well or the water poured out in rituals at the temple; bread of heaven is better than manna. Moses was the Mediator of the old order but Jesus doesn't just mediate grace and truth – He embodies it!

18- seen – Since God is pure spirit, He's invisible to physical eyesight. Not even Abraham, the “friend of God” or Moses, whom **the Lord knew face to face** (Deut 34:10b) could view the divine glory in all its fullness. When Moses asked to see God's glory he was told, “**You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me and live**” (Ex 33:20). God told Moses to stand in the cleft (hollow place) of a rock & He would cover him with His hand as He passed by. What Moses actually saw was the **afterglow** of the divine glory. In that sense, it's right to say that Moses had seen **the form of the Lord** (Num 12:8) but the actual glory that Moses could not look upon is now on open display among men.

Sages of the ancient world ponder this question about God: “Who has seen him and can describe Him?” They left that question unanswered by necessity but John answers it here: the One who's not only seen God but has existed thru-out eternity in His bosom **has declared Him**. The Gk word translated “declared” also gives us the term **exegete**: to unfold, rehearse,

narrate. That's exactly what we do here on Sunday morning with God's Word: we read it, explain it than make application. That's what the God the Son does with & for God the Father: He exegetes Him to us.

How can we rely on His ability to do this? He spent eternity past in the **bosom of the Father**. This phrase should remind us of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom in Lk 16:22 or John's proximity to Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23). The phrase refers to a place of special favor next to the principal person at a banquet but more than that, it speaks of the mutual love & understanding of the father and the Son as well as the Son's complete dependence on the Father.

Jesus came to declare the Father. It stands to reason that only One who fully knows the Father can make Him fully known. To explain **how** Jesus declares the unseen God to man is the purpose for which John penned this Gospel

We've now looked at the details of today's text but; is there more to it? What about the big picture? If the purpose of this prologue is to declare timeless truths concerning Jesus Christ, what is the Apostle declaring to us here? The secret lies in a particular phrase used to describe Jesus – **only begotten**. John introduced this phrase in vs14 and it appears again in vs18. What does it mean? The Gk word **monogenes'** can literally be translated "One and Only" or what the French would call **Unique!** What John is presenting to us here is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Jesus is unique because there's no one quite like Him & because He can do for humanity what no one else can do.

1) Unique in His **origins** (15) – The history of every other human being begins at birth: but Jesus existed eternally as the Second Person of the Godhead. Before He came to earth as a baby, He walked among men and revealed Himself to them. Jesus was preexistent – at what point in His humanity did He recognize His own divinity?

2) Unique as the **source of all God's blessings** (16) – in 1 sense, all men are recipients of God's grace. Everything good that comes into their lives – health, prosperity, knowledge...comes from God. This is true even if they don't acknowledge Him as the source of those blessings. But, Jesus is also the source of all spiritual blessing. He is a blessing Himself & the believer has the opportunity to be spiritually enriched by Him personally. We don't

always jump at those opportunities because of the sin still in us & the strong pull of the pleasures of this world. This world does have its pleasures but the problem with them is that they cannot satisfy us for **very long** and they will never satisfy us **completely**. It's like every meal you eat when you're on a diet – it may taste great but an hour later, you're hungry again. Jesus isn't like that! He satisfies our every need & He does it completely!

3) **Unique** as the **source of grace and truth** (17) – The contrast John presents is between the **old order** of law with all its **regulations** and the **new order** of Jesus Christ: **salvation by grace thru faith apart from the works of the law**. It is a great contrast. Under the **law**, God demands righteousness from people; but under **grace**, He **gives** it to people. Under **law**, righteousness is **based on Moses and good works**; under **grace**, it is based on **Christ and Christ's character**. Under **law**, blessings accompany **obedience**; under **grace**, God grants His **blessings as a free gift**. The **law** is powerless to secure **righteousness and life** for a sinful race. **Grace came in its fullness** with Christ's death and resurrection to make sinners righteous before God.

4) **Unique** in that He's **the only One who can reveal the Father to us** (18) – The true character of God can only be known thru Jesus Christ. There is no true knowledge of God apart from Him.

Has the uniqueness of Christ had an impact on your life? Do you recognize Him as the preexistent God? Have you found Him to be more than just a good man but the Son of God & God the Son? Have you experienced Him as the source of all blessing? Only Jesus can provide forgiveness of sin; a clear, guilt-free conscience and best of all; the peace of God. But, you can't have the peace of God in your heart until your heart has come to peace with God.

Has the world proven itself to be empty & unsatisfying? If it hasn't – it will! Don't waste another day of your life pursuing something that doesn't have the capacity to fulfill or satisfy you. If alcohol was satisfying, there wouldn't be any alcoholics...drugs...sex...money...etc. Jesus is the only One who can fill the empty void in your life. He's the Only One who can satisfy your deepest longings & keep them satisfied!

Jesus is the answer to the problems of this world & He's the answer to the problems in your life. He's the only One who can answer your problems completely. ☺