

## Article of the Month – May 2014

### Missionary Aspects in the Gospels – John (1)

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John ministered in Ephesus, where he wrote his gospel, three letters and the Revelation in the nineties of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The first section of his gospel proves Christ's deity and equality with God.<sup>1</sup> The first five verses define His status by His names. Names intimate identity in Hebrew thinking and culture. Also His role in Creation<sup>2</sup> is emphasized.<sup>3</sup>

How far humanity had drifted away from God becomes obvious from the words 'did not recognize Him' and 'did not receive Him'.<sup>4</sup> The good news is that Jesus re-opened the way to God<sup>5</sup> and gave people a new start, so drastic that only the term 'new birth' describes its powerful dynamic. Christ's deity is also proven by John the Baptist's words 'He was before me'; an argument for Christ's pre-existence<sup>6</sup> since John was six months older than Jesus.<sup>7</sup> John was *not* talking about Jesus' humanity.

Christ in the flesh dwelt among us<sup>8</sup> in a dual nature: truly God and truly Man. The term 'only-begotten Son of God', (Greek: *μονογενής Θεός, monogenes Theos*) can better be translated as 'only begotten God'.<sup>9</sup> The Father begot only once; the result was the God-Son. This took place before the foundation of the world, when the salvation plan was also designed, hence the Son was revealed as the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world.<sup>10</sup> The begetting had nothing to do with His incarnation. God did not get a Son when Jesus was born in the flesh. The Son has neither beginning nor end, typified by Melchizedek.<sup>11</sup> As Man He does have a beginning.

No mere human could bring about as big a change in dispensation from law to grace and truth as Christ did.<sup>12</sup> All this needed to be established clearly in order to validate the title 'Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world'.<sup>13</sup> Only a Man without sin qualifies for such a task.<sup>14</sup> John the Baptist adds his testimony of the deity of Christ because he saw the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus and remain on Him. He received this recognizable fact by divine revelation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fil. 2:6

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 1:2

<sup>3</sup> Compare John 1:10 with Col. 1:16

<sup>4</sup> John 1:10,11

<sup>5</sup> 1:12,13; 14:6

<sup>6</sup> 1:1-3

<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:24,26

<sup>8</sup> John 1:14

<sup>9</sup> 1:18

<sup>10</sup> Rev. 13:8b

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:15-17

<sup>12</sup> John 1:14,16,17

<sup>13</sup> 1:29

<sup>14</sup> Heb. 4:15

<sup>15</sup> John 1:30,34

Two of Jesus' expressions, which we see frequently in this gospel, are: 'I tell you the truth' and 'the Father Who sent Me'. These make sense in the light of the above. The *Holy Spirit* as third person of the Godhead is also very visible in John's Gospel.<sup>16</sup>

John's Gospel differs from the others. He wrote it about AD 90; the others were written before AD 65. John wrote for the churches in Asia Minor (now Turkey). They knew the other gospels. So, why did he write another? All gospels show different sides of Jesus. Matthew shows Him as *King*; Mark as *Servant*, and Luke as true *Man*. These would not have been complete without John's story in which Jesus is shown as *Son of God*. He is shown complete: as King (the highest), Servant (the meekest), Man (the limited), and God (the unlimited). He wrote the gospel probably in Aramean, the language spoken by Jesus. He may have translated it into Greek, the lingua franca in Ephesus, but this is not certain. This gospel is written with only about 700 different words, similar to a child's vocabulary.

First John ministered in Jerusalem. How then did he end up in Ephesus? In AD 44 his brother James was killed by Herod.<sup>17</sup> The persecution that broke out at that time may have caused John to leave. We do not know where he stayed all the time, but according to old writings he ministered in Ephesus during his last years, before Rome became the center of the Church. This becomes clear from the fact that he knew the seven churches in Asia Minor.<sup>18</sup>

In AD 95 he was exiled to Patmos by Emperor Domitian. In 96 he was allowed to return to Ephesus where he wrote down the revelations, which now form our book of Revelation. After 98 when Trajan had become Emperor, he died as the last of Jesus' apostles.

Christ's deity is the key to this gospel.<sup>19</sup> With the name 'I AM' God revealed Himself to Moses.<sup>20</sup> All Jews connected that name with God. They became furious when Jesus used it to point to His own position as God's Son. Fourteen times He said I AM: the Messiah;<sup>21</sup> the Bread of Life;<sup>22</sup> the Light of the world;<sup>23</sup> from above and before Abraham was;<sup>24</sup> the Door of the sheep and the Good Shepherd;<sup>25</sup> One with the Father and the Son of God;<sup>26</sup> the Resurrection and the Life;<sup>27</sup> Master and Lord;<sup>28</sup> the Way, the Truth and the Life and in the Father, the Father in Me;<sup>29</sup> the True Vine.<sup>30</sup>

The last time 'I AM' spoke, at His arrest, He revealed such power that the demons accompanying the army shuddered. Frightened and confused they backed off and threw 600 armed men off their feet.<sup>31</sup> It is obvious that Jesus surrendered voluntarily!

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<sup>16</sup> 1:32,33; 3:34; 6:63; 7:37-39; 14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:7-11,13-15 and 20:22

<sup>17</sup> Acts 12:2

<sup>18</sup> Rev. 2 & 3

<sup>19</sup> John 20:31

<sup>20</sup> Ex. 3:14

<sup>21</sup> John 4:26

<sup>22</sup> 6:35,48,51

<sup>23</sup> 8:12; 12:46

<sup>24</sup> 8:23,58

<sup>25</sup> 10:7,9,11,14

<sup>26</sup> 10:30,36

<sup>27</sup> 11:25

<sup>28</sup> 13:13

<sup>29</sup> 14:6,10

<sup>30</sup> 15:1,5

<sup>31</sup> 18:6