

John (Part 4)

Fulfilled Prophecies Establishing Christ's Messiahship

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The last Bible Study we had gotten into the first chapter of John, up to verse 18, and then I began a digression that is going to continue through most of the time this evening as well. That digression is to prove to you—something I guess you should already have had proved, but maybe re-prove to you, and give you a great deal more evidence of the veracity of what the apostle John said at the very beginning of John 1. That is, that Jesus of Nazareth *is* the Messiah. Your faith is built upon that—that He is exactly who He claimed to be.

I began that digression by showing you, I think very conclusively, that when Christ was put on trial it was not *what* He did that was put on trial, because that was easily seen. They saw the things that He did. They knew that He had done those miracles. There were how many witnesses to the feeding of the 4,000 and then the feeding of the 5,000? There were all kinds of witnesses to the casting out of demons, or the healing of people. They heard the words that He said. That was not the problem.

The problem was *who He was*. His identity was what was on trial, and when they finally got a charge against Him, it was the charge of blasphemy. It was the only one they felt they could make stick, because out of His own mouth, as it were, He "condemned" Himself. They said, "Are you the Christ?" And He said, "You say that I am," which is just the same as in English saying, "Yes I am. I am the Christ." Immediately the High Priest rent his clothes, and said, "What more need have we of witnesses? We have it right here." That was what was on trial—His identity.

Then I showed you a number of scriptures—and we are going to pick right up—from the very beginnings, whether it be in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, that He was always pressed on this question. "Who are you?" They wanted to know what His authority was. So they asked the question in many ways, but nonetheless it kept coming back to the same thing. "Who are you?"

You will recall in one of the Bible Studies I gave—I believe it was the one on the first chapter of John; it was two weeks ago—that the word "witnesses" came up. I told you it is one of the key words in the book of John, and I showed you that John gave eight witnesses that Jesus is the Christ. Some of these are individuals, as in the case of God. Some of them are things, as in the case of the Scriptures themselves. Some of them are groups of people, as in the apostles. Some are events, as in the miracles—which John

does not call miracles; he calls them signs, meaning they are a witness of who Christ is. That was the key issue: His identity.

We are going to continue with that. Again, I am not going to as many scriptures as I could go to, but nevertheless I am going to give you enough so that you have something very broad to work from, that your faith might be increased in knowing that Jesus is *exactly* who He claimed to be—that He is the Christ.

John 5:22-24 For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. [Do you see what He is doing there? He is claiming to be the equal of God and that He should receive the same honor that they give to God the Father.] He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

He is showing there that He has power of life and death; that believing His Word is the same as believing the Word of God; that He has power to give life. That is a tremendous claim—to be able to have the power to give eternal life.

There are scores and scores of scriptures where Jesus made it very plain what His identity was—that He is indeed God in the flesh, Christ.

John 8:19 Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

Again, it is just another way of saying, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father. I am an exact representation of Him." He did not mean that He is the same person, but that He is of the same nature. He has the same mind—the same heart, as we would say. The same purpose. The same life. "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father."

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

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He is saying that faith in *Him* is the same as faith in God. He audaciously—I mean, that is quite a claim!—makes Himself the object of their faith. Their *destiny*, for all eternity, hangs on *who He is*. Pretty audacious.

Matthew 5:20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

The phrase "For I say unto you," when taken in context of what surrounds it, He is equating Himself with the Lord of the Old Testament. He does not say, "Thus sayeth the Lord"—all the prophets said that. Isaiah said it, Jeremiah said it, Ezekiel said it, the twelve said it, David said it: "Thus sayeth the Lord." Jesus does not say that; He says, "I **am** the Lord. I say unto you..."

Matthew 5:21-22 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But *I say to you* [as He expounds the spirit of the law]. . . .(emphasis ours throughout)

His authority, He is saying, is as great as the authority of the Lord of the Old Testament.

Matthew 5:25-26 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, *I say to you*, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

He is equating Himself there with the Inspirer of the prophets of Old.

Matthew 8:2 And behold, a leper came and *worshiped* Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

The point here is that He received worship, and did not rebuke.

Matthew 14:33 Then those who were in the boat came and *worshiped* Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God. [This is when He walked on the water.]"

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John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he *worshipped* Him.

Let us give a contrast back in the book of Acts. We are going to cover a lot of scriptures tonight, but not spend much time expounding them. I want you to have a wealth of information at your fingertips so you know what your faith is based on.

The subject here is Peter, and God is leading him to Cornelius:

Acts 10:25-26 As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."

Peter rejected the worship of himself.

Revelation 19:10 And I [John, the writer] fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

So the angel rejected worship as well. But, again, here I have only shown you three scriptures. There are many others. Jesus openly accepted worship, and never rebuked anybody. Either He was God or He was not. If He was not God, He was a lunatic, or a very great actor—one or the other. But He was neither of those; He was indeed God in the flesh.

Let me show you some more claims that are made. I will give you the first one here because we just read it, not too long ago. In John 1:3, John makes the claim that Jesus is the Creator.

John 4:42 Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

He is Creator, and He is Savior.

John 5:21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

He has the power to bestow eternal life—the power to resurrect.

John 5:27 And has given Him [that is, the Father has given Him, the Son] authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

He is mankind's judge. There are all these things that equate Him with God.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world." ...

Maybe that does not mean a great deal to you and me, but the Jews knew who He meant, because they equated the light of the world with God! They equated the light of the world with the Messiah. It was just another name—pseudonym—for the Messiah. So when He said, "I am the light of the world," He was telling them, "I am God."

John 8:58 is the verse in which He said, "I AM," equating Himself with Exodus 3:15, where it says, "I AM that I AM." He is telling them, "I am the one who spoke to Moses. I am the one who released the children of Israel from their bondage. I am the one that divided the Red Sea. I am the one who provided the manna. I was the one who went before them. I AM." It is an audacious claim if it is not true. It has to be backed up some way. He backed it up with what He did.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd."

Again, to you and me it does not mean a great deal. Again, it is just a pseudonym. The Jews knew who He was talking about. It was just another name that they used for the God of the Old Testament. He was, again, claiming to be God.

In Revelation, He claims to be "the First and the Last":

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid

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His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last."

In Revelation 5:9, He is being pointed out as being the Redeemer of mankind.

The apostle Paul got into the act as well. Almost all of those were from the apostle John, but in I Corinthians 10:4, Paul said that Jesus of Nazareth was "the Rock"—the Rock that went with them in the wilderness.

In Mark 2:7 is a claim of Christ's, which again equated Him with God, in which He told the people after He had healed the man that He had the power to forgive sin—because He said, "Which is easier to say, 'Rise and walk' or 'Son, your sins are forgiven'?" (verse 9)

These are the claims either of someone who truly is what He said, or He is a liar and a lunatic. Let us examine that just a bit. I made myself a little chart, and I have at the top of this chart that "Jesus claims to be God." He makes the claim, and that leaves you and me with two alternatives: either accept the claim, or reject the claim.

I should explain that a little bit—accept the claim as true, or reject it as false. If it is false, then there are two more alternatives regarding Christ. One is that He *knew* His claims were false, and the other is that He did *not* know His claims were false. It is one or the other.

If He knew that His claims were false, then it was a misrepresentation, was it not?—a *deliberate* misrepresentation. That means that He would be a liar. That has drastic ramifications. He would be a liar, and a hypocrite, because He told others to keep the law. He told others to obey, while He himself would have been telling a colossal lie. Another possibility would be that He was a demon—if these things were false—because he told others to trust in Him as their Savior while, all the while, He was doing almost unspeakable evil. Well, if they were false, then He was a fool, because He died for telling a lie—horribly.

If He did *not* know that His claims were false, He was sincerely deluded, and therefore we can say, "Well, He was a lunatic."

The other alternative is that His claims were true, and that leaves us with two alternatives: either accept and obey, or reject. What is it? That is the question that you and I have to answer. Is He really the Lord, or was He a deluded lunatic, or was He a

liar? It is one of those three.

Your faith, and whether or not you are doing to grow, is going to be in direct proportion to how deeply—in your heart of hearts—you believe that Jesus of Nazareth's claims are true. I do not mean a belief that is merely intellectual, because many, many people who were never converted have *proven* that Jesus is the Christ. But if you really believe that they are true, you are going to find only one alternative, and that is you *have* to obey Him. There is no other course, if you really do believe. You have to submit to it, because He will not accept just an intellectual knowledge that He is the Christ. Faith without works is dead. The faith that God is looking for is going to be one that is based upon a belief that produces works.

Let us keep adding to the information that I gave to you. But that is what we are confronted with. Our salvation hinges on this—whether Jesus really is the Christ; whether He is the Savior.

How important is prophecy to this issue—I mean the issue of really believing that Jesus is the Christ, and believing deeply enough to really submit to Him, to trust Him, so that your destiny hinges on whether or not He really is the Christ? How important is prophecy? I will tell you—I do not know whether I can give you an exact figure, but it is overwhelming in its importance as to whether or not Jesus really is the Christ, because there is a great deal of scriptural proof to back up Christ's claim that He is the Christ. He can go around, walking and talking, and say, "I am the Christ," but is there proof that He is? You better believe that there is.

I am going to show you something that, if you know anything at all about mathematics, it is astounding. It makes your head spin. It has to do with prophecy, too.

Numbers 23:18-20 Then he took up his oracle and said: "Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor! God is not a man, that He should lie [Jesus of Nazareth was God. Did He lie?], nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? [Prophecy—has God said something, and He will not do it?] Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

Even this pagan high priest could not reverse the Word of God.

Has God made any prophecies at all about Jesus of Nazareth? If He has made

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prophecies, how many has He made? If He has made prophecies—and how many has He made?—has He backed them up? God is not a liar, like a man. Has He said, and not done? How many has He fulfilled? Have they been fulfilled without error? Is there any chink in the armor of evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ?

Do you realize that if God is wrong on *one thing* that He utters, we cannot then really trust Him? How do we know that He will not be wrong on something else? Let us go a little farther.

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'

There He is saying that if He has uttered it, He is going to bring it to pass—or He is not God!

Isaiah 48:3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.

Isaiah 48:5 Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.'

I want you especially to get the context for this next one. Luke 24 takes place at a time pretty much equivalent to John 21—that interim period between the resurrection of Christ and the ascension of Christ. And as Mr. Contardi was showing in his two previous sermons, the apostles were quite confused. Their faith had weakened. They had decided to go back to their former occupations. They were "going back to the world." They had not gone back completely, but Christ had to do some things to reassure them. What did He turn to? Certainly, He appeared before them, and that was very reassuring in itself. But He was going to disappear soon and go back to His Father, and they needed to have proof—in writing, right before their eyes—that indeed He, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Christ. What did He turn to? He turned to prophecy, just like we are going to do:

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to

them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself.

That is where the proof is! The proof of His claim that He is the Christ is not even in the miracles that He did—the walking on the water, the casting out of demons, the healing of people—or even in the things that He preached (unless those things also fulfilled prophecy). Unless He matched what the Old Testament said about Him prophetically, then there is nothing that we could turn to for reassurance that He really is the Christ. Otherwise all He is is a historical figure who did wonderful things. We could say, "Boy, I would like to have been around Him." But fulfilled prophecy is something that is awfully hard to refute.

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

John 5:46-47 For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. [Are you going to believe Moses?] But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?

It is the Old Testament that gave Christ His authority—the authority that you and I can rely on.

I bet that you did not realize that His identity was such a crisis. But that was the issue! They could not deny what He did. Everywhere you look, what they were trying to do was "crack this nut." (By "nut" I mean this hard problem they were faced with.)

Acts 3:17-18 Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

Acts 10:43 [Peter is speaking to Cornelius, and what does he give for proof?] To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.

If God became a man, you would expect certain things of Him. I have enumerated some of these things. These are just general categories:

(1) He would have an unusual entrance into life, or in an appearance before

man. There would be something unusual about it—it would be different from normal.

(2) You would certainly expect Him to be without sin. He would know how to live life perfectly, and He would do it.

(3) You would expect a God to do miraculous things. Even the Greeks expected that of their gods. So they wrote in all of the myths the miraculous things that their gods could do. Certainly we would expect that if God became a man He would be able to do things that were supernatural—above what a man is able to do by nature.

(4) He would have an acute sense of difference from His creation, but at the same time there would also be an acute sense of sameness.

(5) Of course you would expect Him to have the greatest words that were ever spoken.

(6) You would also expect Him to have a lasting and universal influence on man—which He certainly has.

(7) You would expect Him to be able to satisfy man's needs, especially his spiritual needs.

(8) You would expect Him to be able to exercise power over death.

We are just going to follow one of those things for a little while. I want to show you how *precisely* God prophesied of events in Christ's life. We are going to follow His unusual birth—His unusual entrance into the world. We are not going to totally follow this for the remainder of the Bible study, but I am going to give you enough so that you see that Christ is no lunatic. Christ is no liar. Christ *is* God. He is the Lord of the Old Testament.

Let us go back to Genesis 3. We are going to follow this for eight or ten scriptures. We will start with the broadest of prophecies regarding His unusual entrance into the world.

In pronouncing His judgment upon Adam and Eve, and upon Satan, and really upon mankind as well, God made a prophecy:

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and

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between your seed and her Seed [most Bibles capitalize this because they understand that He is the promised Seed. Here is the earliest prophecy that a Messiah—a Savior; a Redeemer—is coming.]; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

Eve was the mother of all of mankind. From Adam and Eve have come all the peoples of earth—billions and billions. How many billions—40 billion, 50 billion, 60 billion people—I do not know. I have heard estimates that as high as a couple of hundred billion people might have lived from the time of Adam and Eve. It all depends on what ratio you make up for the number of offspring as well as the years counted in a generation. But this could possibly be anybody who was ever born—that is the widest possible application of a prophecy.

In Isaiah 7:14, He narrows it down somewhat. Through Isaiah, He prophecies that, whomever this person is, He is going to be born of a virgin.

Genesis 22:17-18 [In] blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

This is the "promised Seed" prophecy, or promise, that God gave to Abraham. What He has done here, from the broadest prophecy that could be made that someone born of Adam and Eve would become the promised Seed, God has now narrowed it down to a descendant of one man—Abraham.

We all know that Abraham had a number of children. First there was Ishmael, and then there was Isaac, and then of course after that there were five or six others I believe that he had of Keturah.

Genesis 21:12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called."

Of the children of Abraham, He has now narrowed it down to the children of Isaac.

Numbers 24:17 I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult.

This is not the only prophecy, but I chose this one just to keep moving through the book here. This eliminates Esau (of the sons of Isaac), and now it is in the hands of Jacob from which the promised Seed is going to come.

Genesis 49:10 [Jacob had 12 sons, and one daughter] The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

Out of the 12 sons of Jacob (and one daughter) now the Seed is going to come out of Judah. See how God keeps narrowing it down?

Isaiah 11:1-2 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.

...

Out of all the families of Judah, it is now narrowed down to the sons of Jesse. We all know that was David. I could give you corresponding verses here for every one of these verses in the Old Testament that would prove that what God has prophesied here has come true.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

All of those things that I gave you can be proved from Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

That eliminates *all* the other cities on earth in which the Messiah—who would have to be a son of David—would be born. Did that come to pass (Matthew 2:1; John 7:42)?

I am going to stop right here, and I am going to give you a number of prophecies—just enough to give you an overview here.

Psalms 72:10, 12-15 says that *gifts* would be offered to the Child that was born.

The children would be killed (Jeremiah 31:15).

He would be called Lord (Jeremiah 23:6).

He would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

He would be a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15).

He would be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9).

He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. The money of betrayal (notice how specific this is) would be thrown away into God's house—it would actually be thrown away. The money would then be picked up and used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:13).

His disciples would forsake Him (Zechariah 13:6).

I want you to understand that most of these prophecies were things over which He had *no control*. They were not things that He could force the issue on; they were not things where He could manipulate events. These were things out of His control (though some of them were not).

He was dumb before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7). He was wounded and bruised (Isaiah 53:5).

He was smitten and spit upon (Isaiah 50:6).

He was mocked (Psalm 22:6-8). His hands and feet were pierced (Psalm 22:16).

He was crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12). He interceded for His persecutors (Isaiah 53:12).

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He was hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4).

His friends stood afar off (Psalm 38:11).

The people shook their heads in scorn (Psalm 109:25).

He was stared at (Psalm 22:17). They parted His garments (Psalm 22:18).

He would be fed gall and vinegar (Psalm 69:21).

He would give a forsaken cry (Psalm 22:19).

His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20).

His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

He would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9).

I am going to stop there. Do you know I have only given you 10 percent of the prophecies regarding Christ? There are over 300; I have given you just a little bit over 30.

Understand this: God has hung His reputation on this, and your salvation depends upon it. He cannot be wrong *even once*, or Jesus is not the Christ—not even one time can He be wrong!

Let us suppose that there are eight or ten prophecies over which Jesus had absolutely no control, something like the place of His birth—a baby cannot have control over that—or the time of His birth—it cannot have control over that—the manner of His birth (born of a virgin)—there is no control over that—the manner of His death—well, maybe there could be some control, but are you going to control the Roman government? No, you see by His life that He took no position in government.

How about the peoples' reactions—could He have arranged that? All of the many details: stared upon, people shaking their heads, hitting Him with their fists, spit upon Him . . . well, it is possible, but hardly likely. What about the piercing of His side? Maybe, but again, hardly likely. His burial in a rich man's tomb? Again, maybe, but again, hardly likely.

How about the fact that His birth would be preceded by a messenger (John the Baptist)?

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No way—you cannot do that before you are born. There is no way He could do something like that. We could go on and on here with the 300 or so prophecies.

What do you think the odds are that any man who has ever lived could fulfill even eight of those kinds of prophecies—eight prophecies over which it would be impossible to exert any kind of control? Some mathematicians got together and they came up with this figure: For any man—not just Christ—for any man to have fulfilled even eight of these prophecies, the chances are 1 in 10^{17} . That is a 1 with 17 zeros behind it. That is 1 in 100 quadrillion. 1/100 quadrillionth of a chance for any man to fulfill eight prophecies over which it was impossible for him to exert any control.

Let me tell you how big 100 quadrillion is. If you had 100 quadrillion silver dollars, that would fill the state of Texas—267,000 square miles—it would fill the state of Texas *two feet deep* with silver dollars.

That is not the end of it, because you still have one chance. Now what you do is this: you take one silver dollar—and we will even let you mark it; you can paint it red—and then you hop in an airplane, and while you are flying over Texas you flip it out the window, and it comes down and plinks somewhere in Alvin, Texas. But you do not know that. Maybe it is in Clyde, Texas.

Now here is your chance: you would have to find that one dollar. That is how big 1 in 10^{17} is—for any man to fulfill eight prophecies over which he had no control.

I am going to give you something even more astounding. What if a man were able to fulfill 48 prophecies? Admittedly, some of these would be things over which he might exert some control, but some he would not have control over. But we are going to say, you are going to fulfill 48 prophecies. These same mathematicians say that he would have 1 in 10^{157} . We cannot use silver dollars here, because they are too large. So we are going to have to use an electron, which is too small for you and me to imagine it, but nonetheless we are going to do this anyway just to impress you with the figures.

An electron is so small that it takes 2.5×10^{15} laid end to end, side by side, to fill one inch. That is 2.5×10^{15} to make a one inch long line. To give you some sort of an idea of how many electrons that is: if you counted at the rate of 250 per minute—that is awfully fast; that is 4 per second—it would take you 19 million years to count the electrons on that one inch line.

We are not done yet. That only gives you the number of electrons on that one-inch line. That does not come anywhere near—this 2.5×10^{157} —how many electrons there would

be. In order to get the number anywhere near correct, we are going to have to cube that. So it is going to be 19 million times 19 million times 19 million. That will give you 5 sextillion years. That is a 5 with 21 zeros behind it. Now we are getting near to the figure of the number of years it would take with you counting at the rate of 250 every minute to get somewhere near the chances—a significant kind of number—of how great the odds are against you fulfilling 48 prophecies.

Now what you have to do is just like you did with Texas. You take one electron and throw it in the midst of all of those electrons. We will even let you mark it. But we are going to make it harder—we are going to blindfold you, see, because that number is so big—so huge—that is how much of a chance you would have, blindfolded, to find one electron amongst 2.5×10^{157} . That is how much of a chance any one individual would have to fulfill 48 prophecies. Brethren, Jesus Christ has already fulfilled 60 without a flaw. Before this is all over, He is going to fulfill in excess of 300 of them.

That is why God has given the proof in prophecy, because anybody with any sense can begin to see that the chances of Jesus Christ *not* being the Messiah are so staggering. It is *impossible* for Him not to be the Messiah; He *is* the Messiah. There is no way to get around it. If a person wants to come upon it logically—which he should do—there is no way He cannot be the Messiah. Nobody could do what He did! He has fulfilled over 60 prophecies already, without a hitch. We are on our way.

Back to John 1. Can you remember what I gave you as sort of a title for the first section of John? It was "The Proposal for Belief." What John was doing there was making a proposition (John 1:1-18). This is the proposition: "Jesus of Nazareth *is* the Christ. You can believe that He is." That is the proposition

Beginning in verse 19—here comes the second section: "The Presentation of Belief"—he is going to present "God the man." He has given us His background: "This is the proposal. You can believe in Him. You can have faith in this individual, and here is why: He is the Christ."

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

Here is God, revealing Himself to man in Christ, because no man can look upon God and live. What God is doing here, through the life of Jesus Christ, is that man will never be able to come to God and say, "Well, we did not know what you were like. We heard about you, but we never saw you. We never saw you live; we never saw you in action."

So now He has us backed into a corner. Men *have* seen God in action as a man. They have not seen God in His glory, but they have seen Him live—and that is His glory. I went over that in verse 14: "We beheld His glory"—the way that He lived, because that is what brings praise and honor to a person.

John says three things about Christ here in this verse. One, He is the only begotten—that is, He is unique. We are begotten, but Jesus is the only one begotten in the way that He was—from birth. He was actually, begotten in Mary by the Father. We are begotten by the Father, but after we are born—after we have lived a period of time; after we have experienced sin and all the pain that goes with it. Christ is the only one who has ever lived who was begotten in that way.

The next thing he says is that He was in the bosom of the Father. That is, as I mentioned in the last time, it implies the deepest kind of intimacy. Look in Numbers 11:12 and Deuteronomy 13:6, where it is used in connection with a wife—"in the bosom of your youth" I think is the way the verse in Numbers 11 puts it. See, it denotes intimacy. The purpose of this is to say to you and me that there is **no one** who could possibly declare the Father the way the Son did. There was nobody ever close to the Father. He saw the Father, He heard His words, He received His orders from Him, and so there was no one who has ever been able to reveal the Father the way the Christ could.

The third thing that He says there is that He is God. What He is saying here is that He is not identical with the Father, but He is of the same mind and character. He is divine.

With that in mind, let us go on now. The proposal is made.

John 1:19-23 Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord," as the prophet Isaiah said."

With these verses, the story begins. I want you to notice as we go through this first chapter—and even on into the second—that the events occurred in very rapid order. As a matter of fact, it is probable from verse 19 over into chapter 2, verse 11 or 12—all of

those events took place in about one week's time. Here is how you can see this: in verse 19, the people come to John. In John 1:29, it says, "The next day, John saw Jesus coming." In John 1:35 it says, "Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples." In John 1:43, it says, "The following day, Jesus wanted to go to Galilee." The next one is in John 2:1: "On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there."

If you count those, I am pretty sure you are going to come up with about seven days. Something happened on each of those days, except one. It is possible that that one day that nothing happened might have been the Sabbath—just guessing that because of what it says in chapter 2 that "On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee," and I hardly think the wedding would have been on the Sabbath. So the one day that is not mentioned is probably a Sabbath day.

One more thing: three of the witnesses of John are all in this one brief section. First there is John the Baptist, then there is the beginning of the disciples, and then at the beginning of chapter 2, the signs begin. See, he is *presenting* the Christ. Also—you see the players are beginning to take the stage already—we find the first mention of the opposition. They are not mentioned in opposition to Christ—not yet—but they are already coming to question the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist. So we are seeing here that John's story is beginning to branch out. What we are beginning already to see is that it is not only the story of the revelation of God to man, but it is also the story of man's rejection of God. So we have God's offer, and man's refusal.

Notice who comes: the priests and the Levites, very likely representing religion and government. It is stated in John 1:24 that these people were sent from the Pharisees. The Pharisees controlled the Sanhedrin. It was part of the responsibility of the Sanhedrin to check up on religion, and we have to remember that John the Baptist was the son of a priest. We are setting the stage here so that you understand what is going on. His father was Zechariah. Zechariah was a priest. John the Baptist was therefore a Levite of the family of Aaron. He was to be a priest, but he was not being a priest in the normal way. A priest would have been serving in a synagogue, or he would have been serving at the temple. But John was obviously not doing those things. He was out preaching in the countryside. That is why the delegation came from the Sanhedrin.

Notice what they asked. Does it sound familiar? "Who are you?" The same things that they later asked Christ: "Who are you? Prove who you are. Who are you?" John denied that he was the Christ, and he also denied that he was Elijah. It will become a little clearer as we go on that there was a reason why they asked these questions. Part of the reason was that they *were* expecting the Christ.

You know that even today there is a general expectancy among those who have their nose in the Bible. I am talking about the Evangelical-type Christians. They recognize certain things from the prophecies that we are drawing awfully close to that time. We are getting to the end of a 6,000 year period. The signs of the times indicate the end of this system of things. So there are people who are expectantly looking for the Messiah's return. Well, the same thing with those people: they could read the book of Daniel. They had the Seventy Weeks prophecy before them. They knew that that thing pertained to the Messiah. They were able to count—they had some mathematicians among them—so they *knew* that they were getting awfully close.

So when John began to do the kind of preaching that he was doing, and it began to attract attention, they immediately began to think, "Are you *that prophet*?" The prophet that they were talking about was the one that was prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses had said—a thousand or so years before—that a prophet would rise up, like unto him—that is, like unto Moses—and "Him you will hear." That is the prophet they were looking for.

When John said, "No," then they asked about Elijah, because again, they could read the book of Malachi, and they expected that Elijah would come—that he would precede the coming of the Messiah. Of course, they were hoping, I am sure, that he was Elijah. But he denied it, which is kind of interesting, because I do not know of anywhere where John claimed to be Elijah. Christ later on identified him as Elijah: "This *is* Elijah who would come." (Matthew 11:14; 17:12) But John did claim to be a messenger preparing a way, and what he did do is quote Isaiah 40:3.

In John 1:25, they asked him another interesting question: "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" We normally do not hear very much about the Jews baptizing anybody. It is something that we kind of relate only to Christianity. But the Jews did baptize. But why would they question John? There is an interesting answer to that. Why was John baptizing? They expected the Christ to baptize. They expected Elijah to baptize. They expected the Prophet to baptize. But they *did not* expect John to baptize. What was John doing in baptizing people that was so unexpected to them? I will tell you what it was: Jews would baptize Gentile proselytes that they had converted to Judaism. But they *did not* baptize Jews. Yet John was baptizing Jews. That is what he was doing that was so different.

That was offensive to them. If it was not offensive, they never would have asked. Do you know what it implied? Do you know what baptism is? One of the symbols in baptism is that it is a purification. The person is made clean by water. What John was doing by baptizing these people is that he was telling these people that they were spiritually dirty!

That was offensive. Did not he later—you see it recorded in Matthew 3—he said, "Do not come to me saying, 'We have Abraham for our father.'" They thought they had it made because they were Abraham's children by natural descent.

This is the equivalent of us thinking that we are going to be in the Kingdom of God because we are a part of the church—because we sit here, occupying a seat. But John told those people to repent and bring forth fruits that were "meet for repentance"—fitting for repentance. And the same advice goes for you and me. If we do not, then we are dirty. We need to be cleaned up. So these Jews found it offensive that repentance, and baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and spiritual cleanliness were being required of *them*. Do you see the monumental pride and self-righteousness that was there? The feelings of "having it made?"

I want you to notice—it is kind of interesting here—John did not answer their question. He avoided a confrontation. He did not come right back and say, "You people are spiritually dirty—you need to get cleaned up." What he did is he deflected the question away, and actually gave a soft answer. He diverted their attention to something else, and that something else was what John's real responsibility was.

John 1:26-27 John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water [he did not deny that he was doing it] but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.

So he deflected the attention away—he actually deflected their *anger* away and their offense away—by making them think about something else. Very wise approach, because they could have had a knock-down, drag-out fight if he wanted to, but he did not choose to do that.

John 1:28-29 These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

This should chronologically arrange things for you. This had to take place after Christ's baptism—maybe within the next day or two; I do not know. We will see why we can say this positively in just a minute.

The apostle John, who is writing this, is setting the stage for the ministry of Christ to begin.

John 1:30-31 This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.

What does John mean, "I did not know Him"? After all, He was his cousin. The answer is this: he knew who Christ was in the sense of Him being Jesus of Nazareth, in the sense of Him being his cousin, the child of his aunt. But he did not know *what* He was. He did not know His real identity. Verse 33 will clear that up.

John 1:32-34 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. [This is how we know that this section took place after the baptism, because that is when John saw the Spirit descending.] I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

Back to verse 29. I just want to focus on something here for just a minute. John called Christ, "The Lamb of God." There might be several reasons why he said that. He may have been thinking of Passover, because if you look in chapter two there was a Passover not very far away. Perhaps that was on his mind. Undoubtedly some of the prophecies of Isaiah were on his mind, because he knew that this Man was destined to die for the sins of mankind—I mean he knew it at least intellectually. He knew that He was the Savior of the world.

We can see those things, but I want to pick something else out here, because I think it tells a great deal about the way Christ conducted His life. By nature, because of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, men want to be big. They want to be important. They want to be honored. They want to be respected. They want to have power. They want to have influence. You can see it very clearly in the life and ministry of Christ that His disciples had those drives. They each wanted to be the leader of the twelve.

But I think this tells a great deal about the way Christ looked at Himself in relation to man. He came as a *Lamb*. I think that that tells you about God's overall attitude toward

man—you see, as one to be slain, one to sacrifice, one to serve, not one to be the big shot, the ruler, the one having all the power, the one having all the influence. To me, it is a tremendous example—the Lamb of God.

You cannot find anywhere that Christ deviated from that approach. Instead, He restrained Himself in order to always be the Lamb. It is a great example for you and me in our relationships with other people, in the way that our attitude ought to be toward other people: as a lamb, and not as a lion. He *is* a lion, but as a man He was not the lion. He was the lamb as a man. It is a wonderful approach—a really good picture.

Look at John's attitude:

John 1:35-38 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" [Again he said it. He said this to his disciples.] The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

Notice John's attitude. We know later on that he had a crisis in his faith, and he stumbled there for a while, not really sure that Jesus really was the Christ. But at this point, he actually invited his disciples to leave him and go follow Christ. There are not many people who would do that. Most people want to hang on to the influence that they have over others, and certainly they would have influence over their disciples. But John *invited* these men to leave him and go follow the One who was greater. It took a great deal of humility—actually giving up his power to someone else, and doing it voluntarily (there was no forcefulness in Christ). It shows that he was loyal there.

In verse 37, the disciples then followed Jesus. Christ's response is interesting. There is a lesson there, I think. It is another one of those tiny indicators in that men do seek after God. But these men were not sure. They had heard, "This is the Lamb of God," but they were not sure. We will see this as we go on. But what did God do? He made it easy. He turned to them, and invited them. That is what He does with all of us. There are undoubtedly people in this room who are honestly and sincerely seeking after God. But you never would have found Him unless God turned, as it were, and invited you to come to Him. That is what He did here.

Let us look at something else. He said, "What do you seek?" "What are you looking for?" That is a great question. What were they looking for? When people are looking for

God, what are they looking for? If you look at this, our calling is encapsulated right here. Start asking yourself this question: what are you looking for in Christ?

Are you looking for security? Are you looking for a conquering hero—someone who is going to solve all your problems? Are you looking for freedom from guilt-trips? Once in a while, Mr. Contardi and I and others in here visit people who are looking for arguments. They are just religious hobbyists. Some people want to argue over technicalities—things that do not amount to a hill of beans, but are just so much intellectual vanity. Some people are looking for a career—they want to go into the ministry. Some people are looking for position.

When the Jews looked for the Messiah, what were they looking for? They were looking for a conquering hero, a political commander. We could probably go on and on. What Jesus asked them was very interesting. He said, "What do you seek?" He did not say, "Who are you looking for?" He said, "What do you want?" There is a big difference between the two. "What are you looking for out of life? What is it that you want?"

Not many people come to God *looking* to really serve Him. Not many people come to God *looking* to live their life by faith. That is not what they are looking for. That is how Protestantism, especially, misleads people, because they get people looking for the wrong thing. I wonder how many people come to Christ *looking* for the Kingdom of God. I wonder how many people come to Christ *looking* to sacrifice the entirety of their life. I wonder how many people come to Christ *looking* to give up their job because of the Sabbath, or to tithe.

See, God really does have to help us. That is what He did here. He turned to them, and He asked a key question, not "Who are you looking for," because He knew that they were looking for God, but "What are you looking for." That is the question that has to be answered.

What are you looking for? In this church, in Christ—what are you looking for? Are you looking for somebody to heal you? Are you looking for someone to appease your conscience? I am not saying that those things are wrong, evil, or anything. What is it that is big in your mind?

Their reply was very interesting. They did not answer His question. They said, "Where are you staying?"—like a game that is going on. What they said in reply was—they really did answer it, but they did it obliquely—what they were telling Him was, "We are not looking for a quick answer. We want to talk to you for a while." They wanted to spend a little bit of time. What they were really saying was, "Hey, can we go to your

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house?" They were inviting themselves in. I think they could do this because it is very likely that one of these two was John, his cousin—the author here—because we are going to see that he names one of the two in just a minute.

Then in verse 39, He invited them:

John 1:39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

John even tells you what time it was. Just a little detail—it was 4 o'clock in the afternoon that that little episode occurred.

John 1:40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

We can see why he was bold in saying, "Where do you live?"—it was his cousin. Andrew—the story deviates to Andrew a little bit—was Simon Peter's brother.

John 1:41-42 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

The Bible does not say very much about Andrew, but it does give one revealing little insight to him. Why, I do not know—why he always appears to be doing the same thing. That is, he was always bringing other people. He was always bringing someone. He appears in the story of the five loaves and the two fishes. He was the one who found the kid who had the five loaves and the two fishes. So he brought him to Christ. He was the one who brought the Greeks to Christ. You will find that in John 12:22. He was the one who brought Peter to Christ here. There are a couple of other places as well, but we will stop right there.