

The Son Reveals the Father (John 1:18-23)^a

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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].¹

1. **No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son . . . has declared [Him] (John 1:18)**

A. Only begotten (μονογενής [monogenēs])

I. Manuscript variation: *only begotten son/God*: “oldest” (God) vs. majority (Son)

II. Does not mean generated, but “one of a kind,” “unique”

a. Isaac’s relation to Abraham (Heb. 11:17)

i. Abraham’s other children: Ishmael (by Hagar, Gen. 16:11-15), Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, Shuah (by Keturah, Gen. 25:1)

B. *No one has seen God at any time* - unveiled glory impossible to approach

I. *God alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see . . .* (1Ti. 6:16)

II. God’s full glory surpasses all the energy and power in the created universe (even after throwing in all its mass, $e = mc^2$)

III. Moses: *please show me your glory* - God: *You cannot see My face, for no man shall see Me, and live* (Ex. 33:18-20)

IV. Talmudic legend

The Talmud tells the legend of how Hadrian the emperor asked Yehoshua b. Hananya (c. A.D. 90): “I would like to see your God.” Yehoshua replied: “You cannot see him.” The emperor said: “Indeed I must see him.” Then the rabbi took Hadrian and placed him in the full blaze of the sun and said to him: “Look into it.” He answered: “I cannot.” Yehoshua replied; “If of the sun you say ‘I cannot look at it,’ which is only one of the servants who stand in the presence of God, how much more is it true of the Shekinah.”²

V. Jesus, the fullness of God, but approachable, viewable - the revelation of God to man

a. Col. 2:9

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (σωματικῶς [sōmatikōs]) (Col. 2:9)

b. 1 John 1:1-3

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1Jn. 1:1-3)

VI. Angel of Yahweh

a. And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. (John 5:37)

b. Ezekiel's vision of God's chariot throne

And above the firmament over their heads [was] the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne [was] a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. (Eze. 1:26)

c. Theophany, Christophany

James Borland's definition of "Christophany" runs as follows: "those unsought, intermittent and temporary, visible and audible manifestations of God the Son in human form, by which God communicated something to certain conscious human beings on earth prior to the birth of Jesus Christ." . . . When the biblical account associates "the Angel of Yahweh" with a theophany, "Messenger" is a better translation than "Angel," because this title denotes the function or office of the individual, not His nature. In addition, He is spoken of as actually being God, He bears the name Yahweh, He speaks as God, He displays divine attributes and authority. Most significantly, however, He receives worship." [William D. Barrick, *Inspiration and the Trinity*]³

d. The LORD appeared to Abraham (Gen. 18:1)

e. Staid the hand of Abraham regarding offering of Isaac (Gen. 22:11)

f. Wrestled with Jacob (Gen. 32:24)

g. At the burning bush (Ex. 3:4-5)

- h. Moses' failure to circumcise his son (Ex. 4:24-26)
- i. Balaam's donkey (Num. 22:31)
- j. His Presence (Deu. 4:37 cf. Jdg. 2:1)
- k. Commander of the LORD's army (Jos. 5:15)
- l. Fourth man in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:25)
- m. Many others⁴

C. "Declared" is from ἐξηγέομαι [exēgeomai] = to "tell fully," "make fully known," "explain," "interpret"

I. exegesis - laying open

II. Teachers of scriptures are "exegetes" - they explain that which may not be clear

III. Not a creative act, but a revelatory act: "not a cook, but a waiter"

IV. Verses

- a. *And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.* (John 12:45)
- b. Seeing Jesus is seeing the Father (John 14:8-9)

Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (John 14:8-9)

- c. *He [Jesus] is the image (εἰκὼν [eikōn]) of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* (Col. 1:15)

V. Why was man made in the image of God?

- a. In part, so that mankind would be a *visible* revelation of the *invisible* God
- b. The Fall marred mankind, conformance to the image of Christ is the goal of sanctification, restoring God's original creative purpose
- c. We conform to Christ . . . Who is the incarnate revelation of God

D. *who is in the bosom of the Father* - an ongoing, intimate relationship

F.F. Bruce: "Only one who fully knows the father can make Him fully known."⁵

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."⁶

1. Priests and Levites had expectations: where did they get them?

A. The Christ (Ps. 2:2)

I. The "anointed one" from Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ [māšîaḥ], the Messiah

II. Luke 3:15, people wondered if John was the Christ

B. Elijah (Mal. 4:5)

I. John says he is NOT Elijah

II. Gabriel announces to John's father, *He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, . . .* (Luke 1:17)

III. John served in an Elijah-like role during the kingdom offer, which would be refused (Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:9-13)

a. Matthew 11:13-14 - if they would receive [it]

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive [it], he is Elijah who is to come (Mat. 11:13-14).

b. The pronoun "it" is not in the Greek text

c. Speaking to the multitudes (Mat. 11:7), *And if you [all] are willing to receive/accept he is Elijah*

i. receive/accept what?

ii. the Messiah?

iii. the King? (the kingdom offer in the person of the king)

C. The Prophet (Deu. 18:15)

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear (Deu. 18:15-18).

2. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1)

A. Isa. 40:3

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. (Isa. 40:3)

B. Mal. 3:1

"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts (Mal. 3:1).

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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV, John 1:18-23](#)
2. [Ref-0023, 191](#)
3. [Ref-0164, 24/2 \(Fall 2013\)](#)
4. See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/reference/tony_garland/christophanies_in_the_old_testament-20191016124549.pdf.
5. [Ref-1517, 45](#)
6. [NKJV, John 1:19-23](#)

Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0023** Arthur W. Kac, *The Messiahship of Jesus: Are Jews Changing Their Attitude Toward Jesus?* (MI: Baker Book House, 1980).
- Ref-0164** Richard L. Mayhue, ed., *The Master's Seminary Journal* (Sun Valley, CA: Master's Seminary). [www.mastersem.edu].
- Ref-1517** F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983). ISBN:0-8028-3407-8^d.

Links Mentioned Above

- a** - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/John_by_Tony_Garland/006_John_1_18-23/index.htm.
- b** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- d** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-8028-3407-8>.