

The Incarnation of God #2

What Proof Did Jesus Give to Back Up His Claims? #1

Intro: In our lesson last week we saw that Jesus claimed to be the incarnation of God. First He claimed that He had an existence prior to his birth on earth. Second He claimed that He had been sent by the Father for a unique mission on earth. When we are confronted by such amazing claims, it is reasonable to ask, “Should I believe this just because Jesus claimed it? What proof did Jesus offer to back up His claims?”

And it is clear that Jesus did not expect people to believe in Him simply based on His claims. Instead He offered witnesses that could testify as to who He was and why He had come. Consider this text from John 5:

If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. But the witness which I receive is not from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. (John 5:31-35)

Jesus is discussing in this chapter the witnesses that verify His claims. As in all earthly courts the personal claims of an individual are inadequate as proof. Therefore Jesus acknowledges that there must be other witnesses besides Himself. The first witnesses Jesus point to was John the Baptizer. Jesus affirmed that the testimony he gave was truthful testimony. The importance and power of his testimony is seen in the fact that the Jews, who ultimately rejected the Lord as Christ were willing at least “for a while to rejoice in his light.” But what was John’s testimony about Jesus? John the Baptist gave four powerful testimonies about Jesus.

John testified that Jesus was the pre-existent Lord of the OT

John’s testimony about Jesus really started with questions the Jews were asking John about himself. The apostle John writes:

*And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he *said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” They said then to him, “Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said. (John 1:19-24)*

John refers to the opening paragraph of the second great division of Isaiah, the book of comfort. Isaiah’s prophecy was an important announcement to Israel. He declared that the Lord was coming in His glory (a promise vouchsafed by the everlasting word of God) to redeem and shepherd His people. If John himself was “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,” then the one he was preparing the way for was none other than the Lord Himself!

Consequently John would also testify that as the Lord of the OT Scriptures Jesus had an existence even before John's birth.

"This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' (John 1:30)

It is clear that in terms of human birth order, John was born by Elizabeth and Zacharias before Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. So then how could Jesus "exist before Him?" It could only be if Jesus had an existence prior to his birth on earth.

For this reason, John acknowledged he had a "higher rank" and that he would be so far greater than he, that he was unworthy to perform the most servile task for Him:

"among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." (John 1:26-27)

The clear implication is that Jesus, the coming one for whom John was preparing the way, was in fact the one to whom the OT referred to as "the Lord," the great "I am" who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush and to all of Israel at Mt. Sinai—Yahweh of OT Scripture!

John testified that Jesus was the atoning sacrifice for a world lost in sin.

*The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him, and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn. 1:29)*

John was the son of a priest, Zechariah, a direct descendant of the first Levitical priest, Aaron. If anyone knew the significance of the term "Lamb of God" John did. In the OT law the sacrifice of a lamb was the means by which God offered forgiveness to sinners.

When John called Jesus "the Lamb of God" he was declaring one of the profoundest truths of the gospel.

No animal sacrifice offered by man was adequate to atone for sin. Real atonement could only come through the sacrifice of something of infinite worth that God Himself would offer—the life of His own Son!

John testified that Jesus was the divinely-powered provider for His future witnesses.

How did John know Jesus was the one for whom he was preparing the way? It was a matter of divine revelation to the prophet. A sign was given to him that would identify the coming one.

"And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." And John bore witness saying, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. "And I 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.' (John 1:29-33)

Notice how God described Jesus—"this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit." John indicated that the Holy Spirit's descent upon Jesus was not merely a momentary endowment like that received by other prophets, but rather a full and permanent anointing from which Jesus would also baptize his future witnesses so that they too could reveal and

confirm God's truth to man. Jesus promised this baptism to the apostles before his ascension to heaven:

And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)

By this baptism of the Spirit Jesus would be the divinely-powered provider for his future witnesses enabling them to testify concerning Him and confirm their testimony with miracles.

John testified that Jesus was the Christ of OT prophecy, the very Son of God.

In John 3 we read that John's disciples were troubled by the fact that Jesus and his disciples were baptizing and that everyone was now coming to them. John acknowledged that his feelings about that were the same as those of the best man at his friend's wedding.

He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full. He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:29-30)

And we should not quickly dismiss the comparison of Jesus with the "bridegroom"; for through such figures God had often spoken of His relationship to Israel as their husband the Christ as "married" to the land of Israel. However, the ground of John's humility was his realization of who Jesus really was in comparison to himself!

John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'" (John 3:27-28)

But John was not only convinced through the revelation given to Him that Jesus was the Christ; he affirmed on the basis of God's revelation that He was the very Son of God.

And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (Jn. 1:34)

Conclusion: John's four-fold testimony pointed to Jesus as the eternal Son of God who came to reveal heaven's truth, to make atonement for sin, and to empower its credible proclamation to the nations. His credentials and character as a prophet are impeccable, confirmed by the miracles associated with his birth and by his willingness to die for his testimony. Jesus Himself pointed to that testimony as positive proof of His claim in be God in the flesh.

Of course, Jesus did not need a man to testify who he was; but He has graciously condescended to use even those of lower rank to testify to His greatness "that you (and I) may be saved".

The testimony of John was profound and powerful! Are you willing to walk in his light? He testified to the things Jesus claimed for himself.

Will you acknowledge Him as Lord? Will receive His heavenly truth? Will you accept His atoning sacrifice? Will you believe the testimony of His

apostles? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God? If so, you can have the eternal life Jesus came to bring to us!