

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 8

“JOHN 1:18 *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.*”

.....John 1:18)

THE SON HAS DECLARED GOD

INTRODUCTION

No person can afford to hold erroneous views of God or His Son, Jesus Christ – and there are a lot of them floating about in the religious world. There are those who acknowledge there is a God, yet refuse to hear Him, obey Him, and live for Him. There are those who are willing to admit here is a Jesus, but they refuse to hear Him, follow Him, or obey Him. This kind of people can be found in every church, just as unbelievers and the disobedient could be found in Israel. However, when the Holy Spirit moves someone to affirm something about either God or Christ, there is never any accommodation to the flesh. The word is delivered just as though there was no such thing as an unbeliever, a doubter, or someone who is rebellious against the Lord. For example, God Himself said, *“I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God . . . Is there a God beside Me? yea, there is no God; I know not any”* (Isa 44:6-8); *“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me”* (Isa 45:5); *“There is none beside me”* (Isa 45:6); *“there is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me”* (Isa 45:21); *“there is no Savior beside Me”* (Hosea 13:4). It is because of this very circumstance that God must reveal Himself. Men do not have access to the unseen world, and of themselves cannot, therefore, comprehend or know God. Yet, God did not create man to live in ignorance of Himself, and those who attempt to do so are out of the will of God and subject to His wrath, whether they know it or not. In addition to this, God being real or truly God, the ideas men have about Him must not be wrong.

Through John, the Lord now shows us that one cannot consider Jesus the Son without also considering God the Father. Both must be acknowledged, and to some degree understood. Further, the reason for Jesus is in order that we might come to God (1 Pet 3:18). He is the One from whom men are alienated (Eph 4:18). He is the One with whom they are at enmity (Rom 8:7). He is the One to whom they must be reconciled (Rom 5:9-10). He is the ultimate One who must accept them (Eph 1:6). He is the One with whom they must be at peace (Rom 5:1). He is the One they must ultimately come to know (2 Thess 1:8). Our text will confirm the absolute impossibility of any of these things coming to pass independently of Divine involvement. Man has no aptitude to deal with such things, or to even be persuaded of their reality. Therefore, before John commences to confirm that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31), he will first encapsulate the role of Jesus in clarifying God. If this ministry does not take place, neither the significance of Jesus being *“the Christ,”* or *“the Son of God”* will make any sense to us.

NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME

“John 1:18A *No man hath seen God at any time . . .*”

THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING THAT GOD IS. God does not give any person the luxury of

not knowing that God exists, or proceeding in life as though **"God IS"** was not the absolute truth. The reality of the matter is that no man has a right to have a mere opinion about God. As the purposeful creation of God, man has no moral or spiritual license to proceed in life as though there really was no God. Further, he has no right to invent, as it were, his own God that meets his own specifications. Having said that, this is, and has been, one of the characteristics of fallen man – to invent their own god. It is found in the various idols created by the heathen, and the countless ideas about God that have been conceived and perpetrated by men.

By inspiration this affirmation is put before us: *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God **must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him**"* (Heb 11:6). Notice that it is not enough to be persuaded that God exists. There must also be the persuasion and acceptance of the fact that He is *"a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."* Right there we see the criticality of our subject. There are countless numbers of even professing Christians who are not diligently seeking or serving the Lord. The reason? – they do not believe God rewards such people. They see no advantage in living in such a manner. That is why they do not do so.

Believing that *"God is"* involves believing in the God who has been revealed in Scripture. And now, in the Person of Christ, it is being firmly established that God really **"IS."** This is not speaking of an intellectual acknowledgment of the possibility a God really exists. That is not a proper beginning point. At some point people must stop groping for God, and believe that He *"is."*

This matter is brought up in the first chapter of Romans, where the reality and nature of denying the true God is addressed. It is affirmed that the *"power and Godhead"* (or Divinity) of God *"from the creation of the world are **clearly** seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse"* (Rom 1:20). The reality of God cannot be questioned with impunity. The failure of God to be seen in the creation led to the moral and spiritual plummet of the human race (Rom 1:21-32).

NO MAN. Other versions read, *"no one,"* ^{NKJV} and *"No human eye."* ^{WEYMOUTH} We will now hear the statement of a fact that applies to the entire human race from beginning to end – including Adam. This is a universal statement, like *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"* (Isa 53:6); *"all have sinned"* (Rom 3:23; 5:12); *"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"* (Eph 2:3); *"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another"* (Titus 3:3).

HATH SEEN GOD. Other versions read, *"has ever seen God,"* ^{NIV} *"actually seen God,"* ^{LIVING} and *"has ever seen deity."* ^{IE}

This same thing is affirmed elsewhere: *"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, He hath seen the Father"* (John 6:46); *"whom no man hath seen, nor can see"* (1 Tim 6:16); *"No man hath seen God at any time"* (1 John 4:12). This should be obvious, for it is said that God is *"invisible"* (Col 1:15; 2 Tim 1:17; Heb 11:27). That is, He is not visible to the human eye. Men have no ability to see the true God with their natural eyes.

AT ANY TIME. Other versions read, *"has ever,"* ^{NIV} and *"not so much as a glimpse."* ^{MESSAGE} That is, there was not even a special occasion when the privilege of seeing God was granted to anyone or to any group.

The unlearned will object, saying that some people are said to have seen God. It is said of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, *"they saw the God of Israel"* (Ex 24:10). It is also said of the nobles of Israel, *"And upon the nobles of the children of Israel . . . also they saw God, and did eat and drink"* (Ex 24:11). Micaiah the prophet said, *"I saw the Lord sitting on*

His throne (1 Kgs 22:19). Amos said, *"I saw the Lord"* (Amos 9:1). Isaiah wrote, *"I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up"* (Isa 6:1). When the glorified Christ appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos, he said, *"and when I saw Him"* (Rev 1:17). Of course, this is not a contradiction. It is also said of Moses, *"he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible"* (Heb 11:27). Care must be taken not to skim across these words like a spider walking upon water.

These words do not contradict our text. They are referring to beholding **God's glory**, not His Person. Their eyes saw no shape, or physical form. Jesus said, *"Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape"* (John 5:37). Any heavenly voice they heard was actually that of an angel, not of God Himself – as in the giving of the Law (Acts 7:35,53).

Therefore, man will not learn of God by a personal and private revelation to the flesh. Without the Lord Jesus being in the matter, knowing God would be an impossible experience. Even the patriarchs, after God had revealed Himself to them, had a relatively limited understanding of God, and even that pertained largely to life in this world.

THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER

^{1:18B} . . . *the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father . . .*"

Thus far we have been introduced to the Lord Jesus in the capacity of *"the Word"* (1:1a); One who was *"with God"* (1:1b); One who *"was God"* (1:1c-1), the Creator of *"all things"* (1:2); the Source of *"light"* and *"life"* for men (1:4); One to whom a man sent from God bore witness (1:6-8); the *"true light"* which came into the world (1:9); the One who came into the world (1:9); the One who *"made the world"* (1:9-10); the one who was not known by the world, nor received by the Jews (1:11); the One who give men *"power to become the sons of God"* (1:12-13); the One who was *"made flesh and dwelt among us"* (1:14); the One of whose *"fulness we have all received"* (1:16); and the One through whom *"grace and truth come"* (1:17).

See the associations of the Lord Jesus with God's Word, God's Person, light, life, the world, the sons of God, Divine fulness, grace, and truth. **All of these are vital matters**, and all are involved in the salvation of God. Also, let us remember **why** John is writing this record: that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 20:31).

THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. Other versions read, *"the One and Only,"* ^{NIV} *"God the only Son,"* ^{NRSV} *"the only Son,"* ^{BBE} *"only and unique Son,"* ^{CJB} *"One and Only Son,"* ^{CSB} *"the only God,"* ^{ESV} *"God's only Son,"* ^{GWN} *"the only Son, God,"* ^{NAB} *"the only begotten God,"* ^{NAU} *"the only One, Himself God,"* ^{NET} *"the unique One, who is Himself God,"* ^{NLT} *"The unique God,"* ^{ISV} *"the only son, Deity Himself,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"This one-of-a-kind God-Expression,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"the only unique Son, or the only begotten God."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

One Greek manuscript (The Greek New Testament, edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, 1966) reads, *"the only begotten God."* There is at least one other Greek manuscript (1993) that reads the same way. I personally do not accept their posting. We have this word from Gabriel, **"He shall be called the Son of the Highest"** (Lk 1:31). And again, *"that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1:35). The phrase *"only begotten Son,"* therefore, is a proper rendering. The varying manuscript reading *"the only begotten God"* puts the stress on the One who beget. However, the text places the emphasis on the One who was begotten – the Son – that is the whole point of the text. This is the only Son God ever did beget in this manner.

It is true that those who are in Christ are said to have been *"begotten of God"* (1 John 5:18; 5:1). However that begetting, as James affirms, is stated this way: *"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures"* (James 1:18). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye*

not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you **through the gospel**" (1 Cor 4:15) – "the Gospel" is equated with "the Word of truth" of James. That begetting is different than the begetting of Jesus through Mary.

God has no other "begotten" like Jesus, or who is a replica of Jesus. While Jesus was the "express image" of God's Person, the entire church is "the fulness" of Christ, "who filleth all in all" (Eph 1:23). **Jesus is, in every way, unique!**

WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER. Other versions read, "who is at the Father's side,"^{NIV} "who is close to the Father's heart,"^{NRSV} "who is on the breast of the Father,"^{BBE} "who is identical with God and is at the Father's side,"^{CJB} "who is closest to the Father's heart,"^{GWN} "near to the Father's heart,"^{NLT} "who is on the bosom of the Father"^{YLT}, "is the companion of the Father,"^{LIVING} "in the arms of the Father,"^{IE} and "Who is in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father."^{AMPLIFIED}

In my judgment, some of the versions miss the point altogether. The point here is the oneness of the Father and the Son: one in nature, and one in purpose. Jesus indicated this during His earthly ministry. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man **which is in heaven**" (John 3:13). "And yet if I judge, My judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me" (John 8:16). "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). This closeness and absolute oneness with the Father was never interrupted until Jesus took away the sins of the world on the cross. For a period of three hours, the curse of God was on the Son (Mk 15:33), as what He had been "made" (2 Cor 5:21), was in sharp conflict with who God was. However as soon as sin had been judged in the Son, the Divine fellowship resumed.

The oneness of the Son with the Father, or being in His bosom, was brought to its fullest extent when Jesus returned to heaven, where He was when John wrote this book. Jesus looked forward to this when He prayed in Gethsemane: "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5). When some of Jesus' disciples murmured at one of His sayings, He responded, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (John 6:62). Peter wrote of Jesus, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Pet 3:22). From the standpoint of power and authority, He is on the throne. From the standpoint of His affiliation with the Father, and the Father's profound love for Him (John 3:35; 5:20), He is in the Father's bosom. Paul reflected this kind of identity when he wrote to the Philippians, "I have you in my heart" (Phil 1:7).

JESUS HAS DECLARED GOD

^{1:18c} . . . **He hath declared Him.**" Other versions read, "He has explained Him,"^{NASB} "has made Him known,"^{NIV} "has made clear what God is,"^{BBE} "has revealed Him,"^{CSB} "revealed God to us,"^{NLT} "told us all about Him,"^{LIVING} "unfolded the story,"^{IE} "interpreted Him,"^{MONTGOMERY} "that One described,"^{ABP} "shown us what God is like,"^{CEV} "declares Him,"^{LITV} "made Him plain as day,"^{MESSAGE} "He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known."^{AMPLIFIED}

The lexical meaning of the word translated "declared" is, "TO DRAW OUT IN NARRATIVE, UNFOLD IN TEACHING; A. TO RECOUNT, REHEARSE: TO UNFOLD, DECLARE."^{THAYER} "AS GIVING A DESCRIPTION OR DETAILED REPORT EXPLAIN, REPORT, DESCRIBE."^{FREEB} "TO PROVIDE DETAILED INFORMATION IN A SYSTEMATIC MANNER - TO INFORM, TO RELATE, TO TELL FULLY."^{LOUW/NIDA} AND "EXPLAIN, INTERPRET, TELL, REPORT, DESCRIBE. MAKE KNOWN, BRING NEWS."^{GNBROH}

First, considering that Jesus does not in any sense duplicate what is done by another, this necessarily means that there is no scholastic or observable way to come to know something valid about God. His nature and objectives cannot be unfolded by apologetics. He cannot be discovered by studying nature, or by archaeological digs. There is no form of human reasoning or logic that can produce a single valid concept concerning the

“living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9). If this is not true, then we have Jesus doing something for us that can effectively be obtained from another source – and that is a totally untenable idea that can in no way be supported.

Second, what Jesus declares about God is something that is essential to know – something without which a person cannot be saved. If this postulate is not true, then we have Jesus doing something that is not necessary, and that also is incapable of being defended.

HOW DOES HE “DECLARE” GOD. During His ministry on earth, the Lord Jesus taught people about God. A sampling of this teaching is provided below.

- *God had delivered all *things unto Him (Matt 11:27)**
- *only the Father knew who Jesus Himself was (Matt 11:27)**
- *God reveals who Jesus is (Matt 16:17)**
- *He told them some things that God would do (Matt 18:19)**
- *God determines places of honor (Matt 20:23)**
- *God appointed Jesus a kingdom (Lk 22:29)**
- *God is a Worker (John 5:17)**
- *God gives the “true bread” to men (John 6:32)**
- *He identified some things God wills (John 6:40)**
- *God honors Jesus (John 8:54)**
- *God commanded Jesus to lay down His life, and take it up again (John 10:18)**
- *God and Jesus are One, or perfectly united (John 10:30)**
- *Identified whom God especially loves (John 14:21)**
- *The person in whom God will make His abode (John 14:23)**
- *God is the Husbandman of the Vineyard of Christ’s people (John 15:1)**
- *God will remove from Jesus anyone who fails to bear fruit (John 15:1)**
- *God prunes every person who bears fruit, in order that they may bear more fruit (John 15:2)**
- *God gives good gifts to His children (Matt 7:11)**
- *God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Lk 11:13)**
- *God has sealed, or sanctioned, Jesus (John 6:27)**
- *whatever is asked the Father in Jesus’ name, He will give (John 15:16; 16:23)**
- *God will forgive us our trespasses if we will forgive those who trespass against us (Matt 6:14)**
- *God sends the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name (John 14:26)**
- *God shows Jesus what He is doing (John 5:20)**
- *the Father dwelt in Jesus and did the works He was doing (John 14:10)**
- *Jesus did what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19)**
- *God gave Jesus some works to finish (John 5:36)**
- *God gave some people to Jesus (John 6:39) 28 things**

It goes without saying that Jesus will not teach anything about God that cannot be confirmed with Scripture, the means through which the man of God is made *“perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Jesus is the Expositor of God, and we need His exposition, because eternal life is knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). The fact that the exalted Christ, is presently teaching His people is confirmed by Paul’s word to the Ephesians: *“But*

*ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have **heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus***" (Eph 4:20-21). And again, John affirms that this is one of primary reasons for Jesus abiding with us: "*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, **that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life***" (1 John 5:20).

If a person will not "*trod under foot the Son of God*" (Heb 10:29), and will "*cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart*" (Acts 11:23), and serve the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 16:18; Col 3:24), Jesus will "*declare*" God unto him. Once God is known because of Christ's teaching, everything about salvation will make perfect sense to the individual. Sin will be seen as totally unreasonable, self will no longer be the center of life, and the objective will be to "*ever be with the Lord*" (1 Thess 4:18).