

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 13

“JOHN 1:32 *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him.* ³³ *And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.* ³⁴ *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*”John 1:32-34)

THIS IS THE SON OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

This text speaks of John the Baptist bearing “**record**” (1:32,34). The apostle John begins his revelation about John by saying, “*And this is the **record** of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?*” (John 1:19). Moses once said, “*I call heaven and earth **to record** this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing*” (Deut 30:19; 31:28). Jesus spoke of the “**record**” He gave (John 8:14). It is said of the people who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, “*The people therefore that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, **bare record***” (John 12:17). John said of his experience of seeing Christ die on the cross, “*And he that saw it **bare record**, and his **record** is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe*” (John 19:35). Testifying of the misplaced zeal of the Jews Paul wrote, “*For I bear them **record** that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*” (Rom 10:2). In his letter to the Colossians Paul said of Epaphras, “*For I bear him **record**, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis*” (Col 4:13). John said of the Revelation he wrote, “*Who **bare record** of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw*” (Rev 1:2).

What does it mean to “*bare record*?” First, this is not the giving of an opinion, the statement of a philosophy, or some form of idle chatter. A “**record**” is rather a factual report of something. We are living in a time when much of what is being said in the realm of religion is nothing more than human opinion, either public or private. Those who are privy to Bible discussions will find an astounding amount of opinion and human sentiment being offered, with very little substantive communication or personal experience. In such an environment, truth will fall in the street of dialog (Isa 59:14). Only personal agendas and factions can be supported by the communication of opinion. But when it comes to a “**record**” like that which is provided by John, previously by Moses, and later by Jesus Himself, faith can take hold of such reports, and skewed thinking can be straightened.

JOHN BARE RECORD

“JOHN 1:32 *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. . .*”

John does not give the actual account of Jesus’ baptism. Matthew, Mark, and Luke give the detailed account.

MATTHEW. Matthew reports Jesus coming to John to be baptized by him, and

John, at first, forbidding Him, saying, *"I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?"* (Matt 3:14). Jesus rejoined, *"Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him,"* or *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him*" (Matt 3:15). When Jesus was baptized, and *"went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him"* (Matt 3:16), It was then that there was *"a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt 3:17).

MARK. Mark simply reports, *"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan"* (Mark 1:9). He then records, *"And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Mark 1:10-11).

LUKE. Luke give the following abbreviated account: *"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My Beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased"* (Luke 3:21-22). He then adds, *"And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli"* (Luke 3:23).

Matthew says Jesus *"came from Galilee,"* and **Mark** adds that He came *"from Nazareth of Galilee."* **Luke** and **John** omit the place from which Jesus came to John. Only **Matthew** records John refusing to baptize Jesus at the first, saying that Jesus ought to baptize him. Only **Matthew** records Jesus saying it was fitting to *"fulfill all righteousness."* **Matthew** says the heavens were *"opened to Him,"* and *"He saw"* the Spirit descending *"like a dove, and lighting upon Him."* **Mark** says, *"He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him."* **Luke** says that Jesus was baptized, heaven was opened, and the Spirit *"descended in a bodily shape like a dove."* **John** says the Spirit descended *"like a dove"* and *"abode upon Him."*

IT BECOMETH US, OR IS FITTING FOR US. Insisting that John baptize Him, Jesus said, *"Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"* (Matt 3:15). Other versions read, *"is fitting,"* ^{NKJV} *"is proper,"* ^{NIV} *"it is right,"* ^{BBE} *"is necessary,"* ^{CEB} *"we should,"* ^{CJB} *"this is the way for us,"* ^{CSB} *"we must,"* ^{NLT} *"we ought to,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *"this is the fitting way for [both of] us."* ^{AMPLIFIED} Lexically, the word translated *"becometh"* means *"TO BE BECOMING, SEEMLY, FIT,"* ^{THAYER} *"SUITABLE, PROPER,"* ^{FRIBERG} and *"THAT WHICH IS SEEMLY, FITNESS, PROPRIETY."* ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

This is a Kingdom manner of thinking. The flesh thinks, "What should I NOT do?" Therefore people ask questions like, Does the Bible say anything against that? This, however, is not a proper way of thinking. The question that needs to be answered is, "Is this right?" Or, "Is this what the Lord has told me to do?" The conclusion that should be reached is, "Whatever God has told us to do, we should do!"

FULFILLING ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS. Other versions read, *"make righteousness complete,"* ^{BBE} *"do everything righteousness requires,"* ^{CJB} *"do all that uprightness demands,"* ^{NJB} *"carry out all that God requires,"* ^{NLT} *"fulfil every religious duty,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"do our full duty to God,"* ^{WILLIAMS} and *"perform completely whatever is right."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The meaning here has more to do with character than with duty. It reveals a holy character to insist on doing what the Lord has required. A child of God would be acting out of character to do otherwise, which is another way of saying a lack responding appropriately reveals obedience to Satan, not to God. In the case of John, it was only right

to baptize Jesus, for he was told that in baptism the Lamb of God would be revealed. Not to be baptized, would have made Jesus disobedient. For Jesus it was the right thing to do because that is where it had been determined He would be revealed by a confirming Word from heaven. He could not fail to do everything God told Him to do, without being disobedient.

This is the manner in which we are to reason. When we are tempted to not do what is right, we must think how fitting it is for us to fulfill the will of the lord by doing what we are told to do. This necessarily means that it is always unreasonable to fail to do what is right. *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"* (James 4:17). Admittedly, this is not a popular way of thinking, but it is the only right way to think. For one who is dead, and whose life is hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3), and who is living unto Him who gave Himself for him (2 Cor 5:15), there is no other way.

I KNEW HIM NOT, BUT ...

"³³ And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

I KNEW HIM NOT. There was nothing about Jesus' outward appearance that distinguished Him from other honest and good people. The prophet Isaiah said of Him, *"when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him"* (Isa 53:2). The NIV reads, *"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him."* John knew He was Jesus of Nazareth, but until it was revealed to him, as it later was to Peter (Matt 16:16-17), He did not know this was the One for whom he was preparing the people.

I am persuaded that this same circumstance exists today, even though it has been abundantly made known that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, Savior of the world, and has been made *"the Head over all things."* Those who oppose Him as the Jewish leaders and princes of the world did, do so because they, like them, do not know who He is (1 Cor 2:8). Why is it that people do not believe on Jesus, follow Him, and obey Him? **It is because they do not know who He is!** Why do people seek resolution to their difficulties from the wise men of the world, summarily ignoring the Christ of God? **It is because they do not know who He is!** Why does the professing church use the worldly-wise as their chief resource, attempting to achieve religious success without Jesus? **It is because they do not know who He is!** And why does this ignorance exist? It is because they have not paid attention to Jesus, and have not been willing to do the will of God (John 7:17).

HE THAT SENT ME. John knew who sent him! He knew this because of at least two things. First, his parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, must have made this known to him. They raised him in strict accordance with the Nazarite vow, and therefore must have explained this to him at an early age. Secondly, when he was in the wilderness, as it is written, *"Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness"* (Luke 3:2). Note carefully, normally, the word of the Lord would have come through the high priests – but not in this case. It was while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests that *"the Word of God came unto John"* – not to them. John the Baptist will now reveal some of what He was taught at that time.

THE SPIRIT DESCENDING AND REMAINING. *"Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him . . ."* Matthew records this happening: *"He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him"* (Matt 3:16). Mark

records the same, *"He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him"* (Mark 1:10). The Beholder in both of those texts was Jesus Himself, and the voice that spake from heaven was addressed to Him: *"Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:11). Here, however, we learn that John had been told that this was the identification of the One for whom he was preparing the people. Matthew says the Spirit in the form of a dove *"lighted"* upon Jesus. Mark says He descended upon Jesus. John the Baptist says that He would remain on Jesus. Like the dove of Noah's ark (Gen 8:9-12), the Holy Spirit of God found a resting place in Jesus, and therefore remained.

THE SAME IS HE THAT BAPTIZETH WITH THE HOLY GHOST. Other versions read, *"baptizes with the Holy Spirit,"* ^{NKJV} *"baptizes in the Holy Spirit,"* ^{NASB} *"gives baptism with the Holy Spirit,"* ^{BBE} *"immerses in the Holy Spirit,"* ^{IE} *"who is to baptize in the Holy Spirit."* ^{WILLIAMS} This, then, is something that distinguished the Christ, and John told it to the multitude. Matthew (Matt 3:11), Mark (Mk 1:8), and Luke (Lk 3:16), also record this statement. Could it be that Jesus would only baptized the apostles with the Holy Spirit, and that John would make such an announcement to the multitudes – before Jesus Himself was baptized? Why would John say to the people listening to him, *"He shall baptize YOU"* (Matt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16)?

The baptism Jesus performs is distinct from John's baptism. John's baptism was *"with water."* Jesus' baptism is *"with the Holy Spirit and fire"* (Matt 3:11; Lk 3:16). While some say that *"and fire"* refers to Jesus burning the chaff with *"unquenchable fire,"* this cannot be true. The baptism of Jesus occurs at the inception of newness of life, the burning with unquenchable fire is at the conclusion, after the Judgment (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:15). This text is rather referring to the prophetic statement of Isaiah who spoke of washing and purging as being accomplished by *"by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning"* (Isa 4:4). It is burning of *"the refiner's fire"* (Mal 3:2), which speaks of the removal of spiritual contaminants, not the destruction of sinners.

This was confirmed at the house of Cornelius, where, according to Peter, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles in the same manner as it was on the disciples of Jesus in the beginning (Acts 10:44-47; 11:15). The speaking in tongues that occurred at Pentecost (Acts 2:11), the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:46), and with the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:6), were special signs indicating the commencement of the day of salvation, the acceptance of the Gentiles, and the end of John's baptism. All of these were epochs, but they were not the only time Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit. This is still His baptism – with the Spirit.

THIS IS THE SON OF GOD

" 34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. "

The record of John is especially important, because, unlike the Elijah of Malachi's prophecy (Mal 4:5-6), it is through his ministry that the identity of the Savior was established. In fact, that is the principle reason for his ministry.

I SAW. What John is going to say he saw, is the heavenly attestation that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. In this case, the word *"saw"* includes the ideas of discernment, perception, and comprehension. It is possible to see something, and not perceive what was seen (2 Sam 18:29). Of old time, Joseph's brothers saw him, but did not know who he was (Gen 42:8). When God healed Israel (called "Ephraim"), He said *"they knew not that I healed them"* (Hos 11:3). But this will not be the case with John. He not only saw, he knew what he saw, and received it in faith.

I BARE RECORD. Other versions read, *"testified,"* ^{NKJV} *"have borne witness,"* ^{NASB} *"gave testimony,"* ^{DOUAY} *"have declared,"* ^{GWN} *"telling you the truth,"* ^{LIVING} *"I am become a witness,"* ^{MONTGOMERY} and *"I actually did see it] and my testimony is."* ^{AMPLIFIED} This is the kind of record, or witness, to which Jesus referred when He said to His apostles, *"ye shall be **witnesses unto Me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). In a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia Paul referred to these witnesses: *"And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are **His witnesses** unto the people"* (Acts 13:31). John was this kind of witness – one that would relate what he had seen and comprehended.

THIS IS THE SON OF GOD. This was John's indispensable witness: **"THIS IS THE SON OF GOD!"** –i.e. the One on whom the Holy Spirit descended and remained. The one, who, when He was baptized by John, was confirmed from heaven, by God Himself, as being His *"Beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased"* (Matt 3:16).

The phrase *"the Son of God"* (upper-case "S" in Son), or *"son of God"* is used a single time in Moses and the Prophets: *"He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like **the Son of God**"* (Dan 3:25). In fact, that is the only time the phrase is ever used in any sense until Matthew 4:3. It is never mentioned from Genesis through Malachi in the NASB, NIV, and NRSV. Even then, the reference is not to the Christ, but an *"angel,"* sent from God to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3:28). Other versions translate the phrase *"son of the gods"* (ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV, BBE, CSB). The NRSV reads, *"a god."* Other versions read, *"one of the gods"* (CEB, CJB, ERV, ESV). DARBY reads *"son of God"* (lower case "s"). The NLT reads, *"looks like a god."* This was the response of one of Nebuchadnezzar's *"counselors"* (Dan 3:24). He doubtless meant that this was, to him, some form of Deity.

The phrases *"My Son"* and *"the Son"* are used prophetically of the Messiah. *"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art **My Son**; this day have I begotten Thee"* (Psa 2:7). *"Kiss **the Son**, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him"* (Psa 2:12). He is also referred to as *"a Son"* – *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear **a Son**, and shall call His name Immanuel"* (Isa 7:14). And again, *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us **a Son** is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"* (Isa 9:6). Daniel also saw one *"like **the Son of man**"* being given dominion over all (Dan 7:13-14).

The point is that this was not a common way of referring to the coming Messiah. It required some understanding to put these texts together and comprehend that the Messiah would be God's own Son. This truth was largely hidden from men. The very first word of Him was spoken by God Himself, who referred to Him as *"the Seed"* of the woman (Gen 3:15). Later He would be referred to as Abraham's *"Seed"* (Gen 22:18), and even David's *"Son"* (2 Sam 7:12-16; Psa 89:3-4; Isa 9:7). But even these texts were somewhat ambiguous, even though discerning people knew in some sense the Messiah was *"the Son of David"* (Matt 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9; 22:42).

But John declares Jesus to be *"the Son of God,"* which is principle identity. This is what a certain centurion saw when Jesus died (Matt 27:54). This what the Ethiopian eunuch confessed (Acts 8:37). This is what Paul preached as soon as he was converted (Acts 9:20). God dwells in the person who confesses this, and that person dwells in God (1 John 4:15). The person who believes this overcomes the world (1 John 5:5). This is the

fact that Satan challenged (Matt 4:3,6). The perception of this unites believers: *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God"* (Eph 4:13).

"The Son of God" means Jesus is the principle Spokesman and Worker for God. It means all of God's fulness dwells in Him (Col 2:9). He is the only means of becoming favorable identified with God, for He is *"the Firstborn of many brethren"* (Rom 8:29). He is the only One who can bring us to God (1 Pet 3:18). He is the Person who must have our undivided attention (Matt 17:5).