

What does the Bible Say?

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John Mark Holland

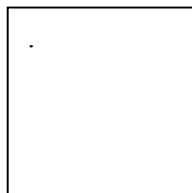
The Bible is like a tapestry, woven with threads of color, texture and beauty. Forty amazing artisans wove 66 panels into this single tapestry. Unfortunately, skeptics focus on the seemingly random - but deliberately entwined threads and knots of its back side and fail to view the completed masterpiece itself. Could it be that viewing the totality of this masterpiece will bring to light a *Revelation* that is beyond human imagination?

Is there any other book that an individual can study for an entire lifetime, continuing to unfold its splendor and magnitude, but realizing eternity's full disclosure?

The Bible itself speaks to that point:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33) KJV¹

Famous quotations from the Bible: (There are hundreds more.)



"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.
He restoreth my soul." (Psalm 23)

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." (Philippians 4:5)

Question: Have any famous people made statements concerning the Bible?

Abraham Lincoln, U.S. President

"But for this book we could not know right from wrong."

Dr. Robert Milikan, Nobel Peace Prize winner

"I consider an intimate knowledge of the Bible an indispensable quality of a well educated man."

But, What Does the Bible Say?

The Bible is unique because it begins at the beginning and ends at the ending. We can find at least two passages that describe the original creation's condition:

"And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

"He {God} has made everything beautiful in its time.

Also, He has put eternity into man's heart, [. . .]" (Ecclesiastes 8:17) ESV

It is our purpose to allow the reader to uncover the theme, purpose and the significance of the Bible's information.

Note: Many Bible scholars have concluded that the New Testament is a commentary on the Old Testament. Thus, we will begin our inquiry by looking at the New Testament Gospel written by the Apostle John.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are taken from the King James Version (KJV). The reason: there are no copyright restrictions for the KJV. However, "fair use" does allow limited quotations from other noted translations.

Links

Questions: Will we be able to find links from the Old Testament to the New Testament Gospels? What will be John's theme? Will it conflict or supplement the previous three Gospels?

The three Synoptic Gospels written by Matthew, Mark and Luke were written and distributed before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Then, John takes pen in hand to focus on what Jesus *said* and who He *is* rather on what He did. John does not include the birth account (Matthew and Luke had done that.) nor His parables. John focuses on Jesus' claims concerning Himself. More than half of John's Gospel centers on the last two weeks of His ministry.

Note: Reference to other portions in the Bible that relate to the passages being considered may be cited for linking background information.²

The Three Synoptic Gospels

Matthew: This Gospel is mostly written for a Jewish audience.
(about 55 pages of typical book pages)

Mark: This Gospel is the most brief and is written for a Gentile audience.
(about 35 pages of typical book pages)

Luke: This Gospel is the most chronological and written for a broad audience.
(about 60 pages of typical book pages)

The Gospel of John

John: This Gospel presents Jesus Christ as both Son of Man and Son of God.
(about 52 pages of typical book pages)

Background References

Genealogy of Jesus Christ: As heir to the throne: Matthew 1:1-17; As promised: Luke 3:23-38 The birth records of Jesus Christ: Matthew 1:18-25 Announcement to Mary: Announcement to Joseph: Announcement to Zacharias: Announcement to Elisabeth: Birth of Jesus: Luke 2:1-7 Shepherds proclaim Jesus' birth: Luke 2:8-18 Anna proclaims Jesus' birth: Luke 2:36-38 Wise Men proclaim Jesus' birth: Matthew 2:1-11	Early life of Jesus: Visit to the Temple (8 days old): Luke 21:38 Escape to Egypt: Return to Nazareth: Visit to the Temple (12 years old): Luke 2:40-52 Ministry begun: Luke 3:23 John the Baptizer Matthew 1:5-; Luke 1:5-80 Announcement: John's birth: John's mission: John's ministry: Luke 3:1-20 John's proclamation: John 1:36
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Question 1

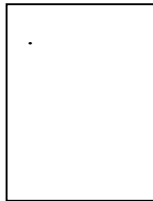
Is there any "Good News" in human history?

To find an answer to this question, we will look at the New Testament's Gospel written by John the Apostle.

John was a disciple of Jesus for more than three years. He was with Jesus, saw His miracles, heard His teachings and recorded Jesus' **words**.

We will note that Jesus made frequent reference to the Old Testament, realizing most of his hearers believed it to be God's revelation to them.

However, we also remember the clear good news statement:



"God made everything beautiful in its time." ^{ESV³}

Question: If we consider the statement, "God made everything beautiful," can we resist asking, "What happened?"⁴

Note: The Bible itself is filled with ancient records of greed, avarice, violence and brutality.

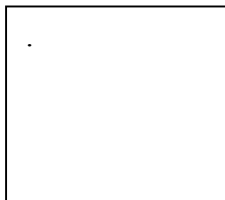
Activity: Briefly describe our "culture" as we know it today.
(Is it beautiful, peaceful and tranquil?)

Why do you think the "world" has been, and is in a chaotic condition?

Question: Why do you think that newspapers, magazines and TV specials focus on the negative and horror stories of both past and present?

Question: Have we heard people ask: "Why doesn't God do something about ___?"

Question: Would we like to see God intervene and do something to return both people and planet to beauty and tranquility?



Note: We will see many of John's attempts to show that the evil portrayed throughout history is the target for God's intervention.

³ Scripture quotation is from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® ESV®, copyright© 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

⁴ The first two chapters of the Bible describe God's "beautiful" creation. The remainder of the Bible presents evidence that something went wrong and is still wrong.

Question 2

Why the word, Word?

▲ Assignment: Read John 1:1-14

This passage seems begun with a strong initial declaration.

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the *Word*,
And the *Word* was with God,
And the *Word* was God."

Question: What is a definition of *word* and for what purpose do we use *words*?

Amazingly, John begins his writing with a unique use of the term - ***word***.

Question: Could the triple use of ***Word*** become a clue to the Book's theme?

Question: To what or to whom does, ***Word***, relate? _____

Can we consider the statement in John 1:14 as a plausible answer?

John 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
(and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,
full of grace and truth."

Question: Why do you think John waited until verse 14 to identify the ***Word***?

(See more questions related to the ***Word***.)⁵

Clarify: Referring again to the opening statement: can we complete the blanks?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Word: When?

Word: With?

Word: Was?

⁵ **Question:** Did the ***Word*** exist at the beginning?

Question: Does the word, *beginning*, in John 1:1 refer to our "time" or before "time" existed?

Question: When did God begin?

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding." (Isaiah 40:28)

"LORD, [. . .] Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Psalm 90:1-2)

John continues his account with an additional statement concerning the *Word*.

John 1:2-3

"The same was in the beginning with God.

³All things were made by Him⁶ and without Him was nothing made that was made."

(John 1:1-3)

Question: What phenomenon is attributed to The *Word* in verse 3?

Clarify: Concerning the triple *made*, what is implied?

Will completing the following blanks help clarify the impact of this triple?

"All things were made by Him⁷ and without Him was nothing made that was made."

Made: How much? _____

Made: By Whom? _____

Made: What? _____

John 1:3

"And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

Question: Who is the "we" in this passage?

("And we beheld His glory . . .")

John later wrote three short letters to his friends.

Here is the first verse from his first Epistle (*First John*).

1 John 1:1

"That {He} 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,
- of the *Word of life*;" (1 John 1:1)

We heard Him.

We saw Him.

We touched Him.

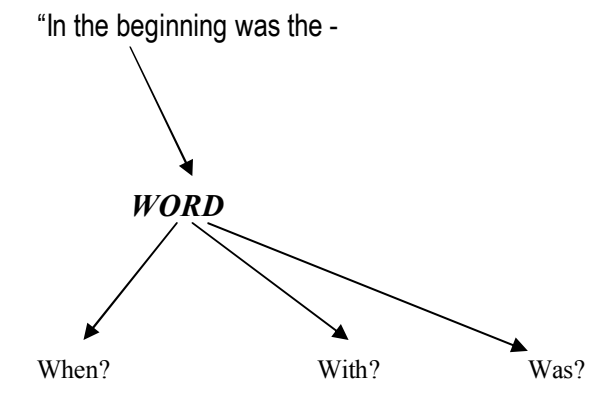
Question: If we compare John's introduction to his *Gospel* with the introduction to his first *Epistle* (*First John*), what interesting parallels can we identify?

⁶ "[. . .] for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were and are created." (Revelation 4:11)

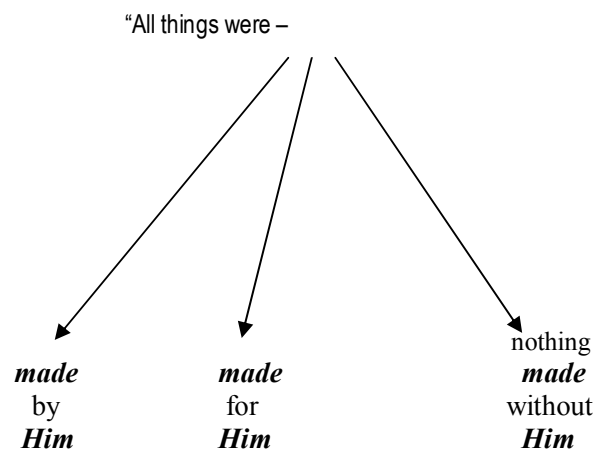
⁷ "[. . .] for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were and are created." (Revelation 4:11)

Revisit

Completing the following diagram may help pull some of the concepts into a logical structure.



"[. . .]The same was in the beginning with God."



Genesis 1:1-3

"In the beginning (time) God created the heavens and the earth. . . .

And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." {time, space, matter/energy}

John 1:2-3

"The same was in the beginning with God.

³All things were made by Him and without Him was nothing made that was made."

Question 3

Why is the “Word” also described as “Light”?

John continues with another characteristic of the **Word: Light**.

John 1:9-10

"That was the true **Light**, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

- He was in the world, and
- the world was made by Him, and
- the world knew Him not."

Question: Was the "**Word**" (The **Light**) welcomed upon arrival?

Question: Does the phrase, "the *world* knew Him not," mean each individual?

John 1:11-12

"He came unto his own, and
His own received him not.

But as many as received Him,
to them gave He power to become the sons of God,
even to them that believe on His name:"

Question: In what ways are the expressions, *received* and *believe* similar?

Question: Does the passage indicate that some will receive Him and some will not receive Him?

Note: A clarifying statement by Jesus is found in **John 6:36**.

But I said unto you, "That ye also have seen Me and believe not."

Question: Who was/is Jesus?

John was so convinced of who Jesus was that he clearly stated his purpose for writing this account of Jesus life. He wrote in the final section of the Gospel:

John 20:31

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

Question 4

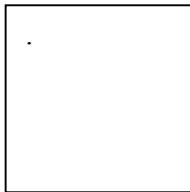
Who is the First Witness?

If we were to read through the entire Gospel of John (about 2 hours), we would find that John presents specific witnesses and many authenticating events to verify Jesus' claims about Himself.

John the Apostle, in John 1:6-8, introduces his first witness: John the Baptizer.

John the Baptizer

John 1:6 -8



"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
The same came for a witness,
to bear witness of the **Light**,
that all men through Him might believe.
He was not that **Light**,
but was sent to bear witness of that **Light**."

Question: What was John the Baptizer's mission?

Note: "He {John the Baptizer} was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of ____."

Question: If John the Baptizer was not that **Light**, Who was "that **Light**"?⁸

Note: The ministry of John the Baptizer was short but Old Testament passages foretold of John's ministry hundreds of years before his birth. One of these passages was written by Malachi about 400 B.C.

Malachi 3:1

"Behold, I will send my messenger,
and he {the messenger} shall prepare the way before Me {*Messiah*}:
and the Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple,
even the messenger of the covenant, [. . .]" {*Messiah*}

(See **End-Note** for John the Baptizer's entire birth account.)ⁱ

Note: Interestingly, the Gospels written by Matthew, Mark and Luke provide more information about John the Baptizer's short ministry.

(See: Matthew 3:1-17; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-18.)

Note: John the Baptizer as a witness will be mentioned by Jesus in John chapter 5.

⁸ Throughout the Old testament, the promise of a coming "light" is evident. The people of New Testament times were looking for and awaiting the arrival of *that light*.

Isaiah 9:2 "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light:
they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death,
upon them hath the light shined."

Isaiah 60:1 "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and
the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee." (c. 700 B.C.)

Question 5

What was John's Message?

John had introduced The **Word** as being The **Light**.

▲ **Assignment:** Read John 1:6-8; 1:19-37

***** *****

John the Baptizer introduces three new concepts: (1) **repent**, (2) the **Christ**, (3) the **Lamb**.

1) **Repent** (The initial message is found in the Gospel of Matthew.)

Matthew 3:1-2

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
²And saying, **Repent** ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. [. . .]" (See more. ⁱⁱ)

Question: Why do you think John the Baptizer spoke so harshly?

Note: The words "repent" or "repentance" are used multiple times in the Bible.
Each **repent** refers to *reversing one's direction/changing one's mind*.

Question rephrased: Can we conjecture as to the reason the religious leaders (the religionists) needed to repent? (See Jesus with Nicodemus.)

2) **The Christ**

John 1:19-20

"And this is the record of John, (John the Baptizer)
when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him,
Who art thou?

²⁰And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed,
I am not the Christ."

Question: Why did John the baptizer *need* to say that he was not The **Christ**?

3) **The Lamb**

John 1:15-29

"John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying,
'This was He of whom I spake,
¹⁶He that cometh after me is preferred before me:
for He was before me.
¹⁷And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.' [. . .]"

²⁹ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith,
Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. [. . .]"

Question: Why would John identify Jesus as being the "**Lamb of God**"? (p10)

Question: What was the historic significance of "*The Lamb*"?

Note: To answer this question, we must look at an event nearly 1500 years before Jesus was born. The Israelites had been held in Egypt for nearly 400 years. God struck Egypt with ten life threatening plagues to convince Pharaoh to release the Israelites. The tenth plague (the death of each first-born of both people and cattle) could be avoided if the Israelites obeyed Moses instructions to sacrifice a lamb and eat it at the *Passover Supper*. They were to apply its blood to the door posts of their houses. If the family did so, the death angel would "*pass over*" the house and the occupants would be safe.

The first Passover: (c. 1445 BC)

Exodus 12:1-11

" And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

²This month shall be unto you the beginning of months:
it shall be the first month of the year to you.

³Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying,
In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a **lamb**,
according to the house of their fathers, [. . .]

⁵ Your **lamb** shall be without blemish, a male of the first year:
ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:

⁶ And ye shall keep it up until the **fourteenth day** of the same
month:
and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall **kill it** in
the evening.

⁷ And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side
posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall
eat it.

⁸ And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and
unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. [. . .]

¹¹ And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and
your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste:

it is the LORD's **Passover**." (Written by Moses about 1400 B.C. ⁱⁱⁱ)

Note: The Israelites were to celebrate Passover festival, yearly. More than 1450 years after God gave Moses the initial instructions, John's Gospel includes three Passover festivals during Jesus' ministry.

Note: Jews have continued to celebrate Passover through the centuries.

Question: In what ways is the current Passover festival different from that of the first Passover 3400 years ago? (See: <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidaya.htm>)

Note: It is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians referenced the Passover Lamb:

1 Corinthians 5:7 "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:"

Question 6

What/Who is the Ultimate Witness?

Jesus' ministry began with His baptism and the triple temptation in the wilderness. (See Matthew 4:1-11.) Those events were possibly 2 or 3 months before He went up to Jerusalem for His first Passover of His 3+ years of ministry.

Note: During the years before His ministry began, He attended many Passovers with His parents. (See Luke 2:41-51.)

Jesus at Passover – in Jerusalem in the province of Judea.

Note: This was the first of three Passovers Jesus would observe during His ministry. The third would be His final, because on His final Passover Day, He was sentenced to death by three separate tribunals and was crucified on that Passover Day. (Probably in the year 30 A.D.; some say 33A.D.)

▲ **Assignment:** Read John 2:13-25

John 2:13

"And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

It was at this *Passover/Unleavened Bread Festival* (8 day festival), that Jesus made His spectacular entrance into public view. According to John's statement, Jesus gained attention by performing miracles in Jerusalem and in the Temple, itself:

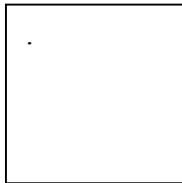
John 2:23.

"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did."

However, when Jesus entered the Temple courtyard, the sight of the religionists fleeing the worshippers met His eyes, ears and nose.

Jesus confronts the Religionists

This is the first of many confutations throughout His ministry with the corrupt, controlling religionists. (The Jews)⁹



John 2:14-17

"And {Jesus} found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

¹⁵ And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

¹⁶ And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise.

¹⁷ And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up."

Question: Why does organized religion, so often become mercenary?¹⁰

⁹ The religious leaders, rulers, were identified as "the Jews." This was not a complementary term. Actually, all the people of Israel were Jews. These religionists were, *the Jews*.

¹⁰ Any offering or item for sacrifice was required to be purchased with Temple money – obtained from the "money changers" in the Temple courtyard. Also, any "purchases" were at higher cost than the actual worth. Thus, the entire operation was a scam, lining the pockets of the priests and religious leaders. It was a "religious shakedown" of the genuine worshippers. "Ye have made it a den of thieves." (Matthew 21:13)

Question: Do you think this been a problem with religion throughout the centuries?

The KEY Question: The religionists confronted Jesus by asking: "By what authority do You take control of the Temple area"? If fact, they even asked for some sort of supernatural sign to confirm His authority.

John 2:18

"Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What **sign** shewest thou unto us, [. . .]?"

Note: Jesus responded by proclaiming a SIGN that would prove His authenticity. When we consider many of the events to follow, we will find that Jesus' proclamation of **The SIGN**, with its fulfillment - is the KEY to the entire Gospel message.

The SIGN

John 2:19-21

"Destroy this temple, and in **three days** I will raise it up.
Then said the Jews {the religious rulers; the religionists; the religious tyrants},
Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in **three days**?
But He spake of **the temple of his body**."

Question: To what event does Jesus' **sign** statement refer? _____

Note: Interestingly, no one - including His disciples understood this until three years later.

John 2:22 "

"When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

{**Note:** the **Sign** was stated three times by Jesus.}

► **Three Sign Statements:** On three occasions Jesus was asked for a specific *sign* of His authority (of *His deity*).

(1) In Jerusalem during Passover following Jesus cleansing the Temple: the religionists asked for a sign of His authority to perform this cleansing. His response:

John 2:19 "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

(2) In a Synagogue after Jesus had healed a man who was plagued with a withered hand. Again the religionists ask a sign.

Matthew 12:38-40

"we would see a sign from thee.

³⁹ But he answered and said unto them, [. . .] but the

sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

(3) In northern Galilee: the local religionists also asked for a sign. Jesus responded with a statement concerning their ability to recognize signs and then restates the Jonah sign.

Matthew 16:4

"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the **sign** of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed"

Question: Why do you think that Jesus identified the *Sign* on three occasions to three unique groups?

Note: It will become evident that the *SIGN* miracle was to be the ultimate witness as to Jesus authenticity.

The Temple miracles:

We again note that Jesus performed many miracles while in Jerusalem during this eight day Passover festival.

John 2:23

"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did."

Note: This chapter is ended by three interesting statements:

John 2:23-25

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day,
▶ many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

. "He knew what was in man."

But Jesus did not commit himself unto them,
▶ because he knew all men,
And needed not that any should testify of man:
▶ for he knew what was in man.

Question: What do you think the phrase, "He knew what was in man," is a reference to what concept?

Note: Many Bible scholars indicate that this statement is included at the conclusion of Chapter 2, to prepare the reader for the following encounter with the "righteous" Pharisee, Nicodemus.

Question 7

Why a Surprise Visitor?

▲ Assignment: Read John 3:1-18

John 3:1

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:
The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, [. . .]."

During this eight day festival of Passover/Unleaved Bread, Nicodemus simply shows up one night. Let's speculate that Nicodemus had been in the Temple area when Jesus entered the Temple's outer court yard and had cleared it of the merchants' corruption. We can safely assume that Nicodemus knew of Jesus' miracles and had even heard Jesus' response to the **sign** demand: "What sign showest Thou [. . .]?"

"Destroy this temple and in **three days** I will raise it up." (John 2:19)

Question: Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?

Question: Do you think that Nicodemus' mind and heart could have been affected when he saw Jesus' miracles and heard His words?

John 3:2

"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him."

Immediately after Nicodemus' flattering statement, Jesus goes to the heart of Nicodemus' inquiry.

John 3:3-7

"Jesus answered and said unto him,
Verily, verily, I say unto thee,
Except a man be **born again**,
he cannot see the kingdom of God.

"Except a man be
born again,
he cannot see the
kingdom of God."

How?

⁴ Nicodemus saith unto Him,
How can a man be born when he is old?
can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

⁵ Jesus answered,

Verily, verily, I say unto thee,
Except a man be born of water {natural birth}
and of the Spirit, {born from above, by God}
he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Natural birth.
Born from above.

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; {natural birth}
and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {born from above, by God}. [. . .]

⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee,
Ye must be **born again**. [. . .]"

Question: How might Nicodemus have known that a "new birth" was needed?
Had Nicodemus heard any of John's teaching concerning *REPENT*?

We reference John's previous statement:

John 1:13

"Which {whom} were born {a different kind of birth},
not of blood, {not a physical birth}
nor of the will of the flesh, {not a physical birth}
nor of the will of man, {not a physical birth}
but of God." {a different kind of birth, given by God}

Question: In what ways could Jesus' statement concerning two births be related to those earlier statements by John the Baptizer?

John 3:9-10

"Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

Note: Jesus statement to Nicodemus indicated that he should have known about the new birth requirement. Nicodemus was a knowledgeable scholar of the Old Testament Scriptures, including the 10 commandments.

Note: Here are four of the 10 Commandments: (From the Old Testament: Exodus 20.)

- Honor thy father and thy mother.
- Thou shalt not lie.
- Thou shalt not steal.
- Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Question: Nicodemus knew the 10 Commandments. Which ones might Nicodemus have violated at sometime in his lifetime?

Question: Why do you think that so many people consistently fail to obey God's commandments?

Question: Why do you think that some people do not want the 10 commandments displayed in public places, especially not in schools for children to see?

Also, consider these Old Testament passages that Nicodemus probably had memorized at sometime in his lifetime:

Psalms 14:2-3 "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Jeremiah 10:23 "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Question: What is a key point of these passages? _____

Question 8

What does it mean to believe?

Jesus continued His proclamation to Nicodemus by a **belief** statement:

John 3:15-21

"[. . .] That whosoever **believeth** in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸ He that **believeth** on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God."

Question: The popular claim, "just believe" seems inadequate. What **belief** is Jesus expecting or what is to be the object of **belief**?

Note: Consider John's purpose statement:

John 20:31

"But these are written,
that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God; and
that believing ye might have life through His name."

Question: What is to be the result of believing?

Note: Later in Jesus' ministry, a man speaking with Jesus, asked of Him:
"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Also, consider this amazing passage that the Apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 2:13

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Question: Again we ask, how could Nicodemus have known about being "born again" since this is the first time that expression is used in the Bible?

Note: The term: "born again," is used three times in the New Testament; thus, this should be a significant concept. Here are the three references:

John 3:3

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:7

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be **born again**."

1 Peter 1:23-25

"Being **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

²⁴ For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

²⁵ But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Question: What do you think Jesus is trying to say when He uses the phrase *born again* and the term *believe*?

Interestingly, John writes the summary of who Jesus was/is by quoting one of John the Baptizer's final messages.

John 3:27-36

"John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The account of Jesus and the *woman at the well*, may provide more insight into the meaning of *born again*. (See: John 4.)

Question 9

Who needs to be born again?

Following the *Passover/Unleavened Bread Festival*, Jesus returned to His home area of Galilee. Normally, travelers between Jerusalem and Galilee in the north, would go from Jerusalem down through Jericho (below sea level) and then north to Galilee. No good Jew would defile himself by following the shorter path through the Province of Samaria, an area occupied by "half-breeds" who had set up their own religions system.

Why Did Jesus Speak with the Woman at the Well?

However, on this occasion Jesus and His disciples¹¹ traveled into Samaria to the town of Sychar and stopped at the town well. His disciples went into town to buy food. John states:

John 4:3-4

"He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.
And He must needs go through Samaria."

Question: What is the meaning of "He must needs go through Samaria"?

Note: John reminded his readers: "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," however, Jesus, "MUST needs go through Samaria."

▲ Assignment: Read John 4:6-26

John 4:6-10

"Now Jacob's well was there.
Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey,
sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.
There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water:
Jesus saith unto her,
Give me to drink."

Question: Why would Jesus begin the conversation by asking for water?

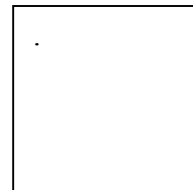
John 4:9

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him,
How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"

Note: Jesus did not give a direct answer to her question.

John 4:10

"Jesus answered and said unto her,
If thou knewest the gift of God,
and Who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink;
thou wouldest have asked of Him, and
He would have given thee living water."



¹¹ Note: Jesus and His disciples were Jews.

Question: Was the idea of “*Living Water*” a new concept?

Answer: Here are two Old Testament passages:

Jeremiah 2:13 (c. 625 B.C.)

“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters.”

Jeremiah 17:13 (c. 600 B.C.)

“O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, [. . .] because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.”

Later in His encounter with the Samaritan woman, three amazing key elements are included in the dialogue:

- ▶ Jesus stated that He was the *Living Water*.
This "living water" was offered to meet the need of her thirsty soul.
- ▶ "He told me all things that *I have done*."
Jesus knew her sinfulness.
She realized her sinfulness.
- ▶ “I that speak to thee, *am He!*” (I AM)

Question: Is Jesus saying: **I AM** Messiah and will provide *Living Water* for your thirsty soul?

Amazing!!! This is the FIRST recorded statement in which Jesus stated: "I AM."

Note: "I AM" is the name that God called Himself to Moses.

Exodus 3:13-14

¹³ And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

¹⁴ And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

Amazing!!! It was to an immoral woman of Samaria that Jesus first revealed Himself as the Jewish Messiah - The "I AM." (Also see John 8:24, 28, 58.)

Note: There are numerous women in the Bible who are given a vital role in God's revelation.¹²

Question: Why do you think Jesus revealed Himself as being the Jewish Messiah to this needy, *Samaritan* woman?

Question: What should be our desire?

¹² Eve, Sarah, Tamar, Rahab, Deborah, Hannah, Bathsheba, Huldah, Mary, Elisabeth, Anna, Priscilla, . . . ,

Note: Here are two Old Testament passages and one modern song that speak to the desire of a child of God.

Psalms 119:16-28

"I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget thy word.
Open thou mine eyes,
that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. [. . .]
Strengthen thou me according unto thy word."

Psalms 42:1-2

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God,
for the living God:
when shall I come and appear before God?"

This modern song is my Testimony:

*Like the woman at the well, I was seeking
For things that could not satisfy.
And then I heard my Savior speaking—
"Draw from My well that never shall run dry."
Fill my cup, Lord;
I lift it up Lord; ("My cup runneth over." Psalm 23:5)
Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.
Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more.
Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole.*

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Question: In what way was/is Jesus both "life" and "light"?

Note: John had introduced the fact of "light" in Chapter one when he wrote: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5). (ESV)^{iv}

In the next series, we will begin with **Light**.

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ⁱ **End Notes:**

¹ The birth record of this man, John the Baptizer, beginning with his father, Zacharias:
Luke 1:5-20 "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

And he shall go before Him {Who?} in the spirit and power of Elias {Elijah: 1 Kings 17:1 - 2 Kings 2:11}, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children {Malachi 4:5-6}, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord {Isaiah 40:3-5}.

And Zacharias said unto the angel,

Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

And the angel answering said unto him,

I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

And the angel answering said unto him,

I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

ⁱⁱ **Matthew 3:1-8**

"I those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

² And saying, **repent** ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

³ For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. [. . .]

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

⁸ Bring forth therefore fruits meet for **repentance**."

ⁱⁱⁱ **Question:** Could Moses have written the Pentateuch in 1400 B.C.?

Early writing: From: <http://www.ancient-egypt-online.com/ancient-egyptian-hieroglyphics.html>

Facts about Hieroglyphs

- Hieroglyphs originated in Egypt around 3200 B.C.
- Hieroglyphs represent sounds and ideas.
- Determinative signs reveal the classification, like male or female, of a word.
- The Rosetta Stone had the same message in Greek demotic and hieroglyphs allowing for the translation of demotic and hieroglyphs.

(See: <http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-writings-ancient-places-europe/disilio-tablet-oldest-known-written-text-00913?nopaging=1>)

(See: <https://www.ancient.eu/cuneiform>)

^{iv} Scripture quotation is from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® ESV®, copyright© 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.