



John the Baptist

John 1:6-36; John 3:23-36

John 1:14; 3:16—Only-begotten

- ✦ Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. (*GC* 493.1)

✦ The Greek word for son is υἱός (*huois*), and the Greek word for God is θεός (*theos*). The Textus Receptus reads *only begotten son*, while the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts read *only begotten god*. Trinitarians using the corrupted Catholic manuscripts do not believe that there can be a “begotten God”; therefore, they declare that the word *monogenēs* must, instead, mean unique or only one. (Allen Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, chapter II; <https://smyrna.org/books/>)

✦ *Monogenēs* is used in reference to Jesus five times in the Bible, always by John (John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18; 1 John 4:9). There are three passages in the book of Luke and a passage in Hebrews. *Monogenēs* means only born. (Ibid.)



Nicodemus

But Jesus was acquainted with the soil into which He cast the seed. **The words spoken at night to one listener in the lonely mountain were not lost.** For a time Nicodemus did not publicly acknowledge Christ, but he watched His life, and pondered His teachings. In the Sanhedrin council he repeatedly thwarted the schemes of the priests to destroy Him. **When at last Jesus was lifted up on the cross, Nicodemus remembered the teaching upon Olivet:** “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The light from that secret interview illumined the cross upon Calvary, and Nicodemus saw in Jesus the world’s Redeemer. (*DA* 176.2)

After the Lord's ascension, when the disciples were scattered by persecution, Nicodemus came boldly to the front. He employed his wealth in sustaining the infant church that the Jews had expected to be blotted out at the death of Christ. In the time of peril he who had been so cautious and questioning was firm as a rock, encouraging the faith of the disciples, and furnishing means to carry forward the work of the gospel. **He was scorned and persecuted by those who had paid him reverence in other days. He became poor in this world's goods; yet he faltered not in the faith which had its beginning in that night conference with Jesus. (DA 177.1)**

Nicodemus related to John the story of that interview, and by his pen it was recorded for the instruction of millions. The truths there taught are as important today as they were on that solemn night in the shadowy mountain, when the Jewish ruler came to learn the way of life from the lowly Teacher of Galilee. (*DA* 177.2)

In the interview with Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation, and His mission to the world. In none of His subsequent discourses did He explain so fully, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the hearts of all who would inherit the kingdom of heaven. (*DA* 176.1)

- ✦ His mission on earth was to establish a spiritual, instead of a temporal, kingdom.
- ✦ This involves a work of grace on the heart.
- ✦ The Jews were zealous to maintain an appearance of holiness, but they neglected holiness of heart. While they tenaciously adhered to the letter of the law, they were constantly violating its spirit. Their great need was a new moral birth, a cleansing from sin, and a renewing of knowledge and holiness.

- ✦ The most rigid obedience to the mere letter of the law as applied to the outward life could entitle no man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

- ✦ How, then, are we to be saved? [1] “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” so the Son of man has been lifted up, and everyone who has been deceived and bitten by the serpent may look and live. “**Behold the Lamb of God**, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. (*DA* 175.5)

- ✦ The people well knew that in itself the serpent had no power to help them. It was a symbol of Christ. As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made “in the likeness of sinful flesh” was to be their Redeemer. Romans 8:3. Many of the Israelites regarded the sacrificial service as having in itself virtue to set them free from sin. God desired to teach them that it had no more value than that serpent of brass. **It was to lead their minds to the Saviour.** Whether for the healing of their wounds or the pardon of their sins, they could do nothing for themselves but show their faith in the Gift of God. They were to look and live. (*DA* 174.4)

- ✦ Like Nicodemus, we must be willing to enter into life in the same way as the chief of sinners. Than Christ, “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12. **Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing.** It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God. The Scripture says of Christ, “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Acts 5:31. Repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon. (*DA* 175.4)

- ✦ (How then can we be saved?)
- ✦ “**Behold the Lamb of God**, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. **[2]** His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. **[3]** Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a **new life in the soul**. The thoughts and desires are brought into **obedience** to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created **anew in the image of Him** who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is **written in the mind and heart**, and we can say with Christ, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God.” Psalm 40:8. (*DA* 175.5)

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 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. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. (Matthew 3:1-6)







Jordan River

- ✦ The Jordan River flows through the land of the Bible 156 miles, draining into the Dead Sea.
- ✦ Its sources are in the mountains where Lebanon, Syria and Israel meet. It passes through the Sea of Galilee and ends in the Dead Sea. Much of it flows below sea level, until it reaches the Dead Sea and is 1,358 feet (414 meters) below sea level.

- ✦ In many places the Jordan River is a small creek less than 6.5 feet deep and 32 feet wide. In the time of Christ and until the mid-twentieth century, flooding in the winter season expanded the river to nearly a mile wide, but because of dams in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Israel the Jordan River does not flow or flood like it use to.

- ✦ Genesis 13:10—The plain of Jordan like the Garden of Eden
- ✦ Joshua 3:14-17—The waters of the Jordan River divided.
- ✦ 2 Kings 2:8—Elijah smote the Jordan River with his mantle.
- ✦ John 1:28, 31—John baptized in Jordan River.
- ✦ John 3:22—Jesus' disciples also baptized in the Jordan River.
- ✦ 2 Kings 5:10—Naaman washed in the Jordan River.
- ✦ Deuteronomy 3:27; 31:2—Moses to not go over



Jericho



Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, 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: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

(Matthew 3:13-17)

Many had come to him to receive the baptism of repentance, confessing their sins and crimes; but John could not understand why the only sinless one upon the earth should ask for an ordinance implying guilt, virtually confessing, by the symbol of baptism, pollution to be washed away. He remonstrated with Christ, acknowledging his superiority, and refused to administer the ordinance, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" With firm and gentle authority Jesus waives the refusal of John and his plea of unworthiness, saying, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." (2SP 58.2)

Christ came not confessing his own sins; but guilt was imputed to him as the sinner's substitute. He came not to repent on his own account; but in behalf of the sinner. As man had transgressed the law of God, Christ was to fulfill every requirement of that law, and thus show perfect obedience. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" Christ honored the ordinance of baptism by submitting to this rite. In this act he identified himself with his people as their representative and head. As their substitute, he takes upon him their sins, numbering himself with the transgressors, taking the steps the sinner is required to take, and doing the work the sinner must do. (Ibid.)

His life of suffering and patient endurance after his baptism were an example to converted sinners of what they should endure and patiently suffer in consequence of their transgressions and sins. John finally yielded to the request of Christ, notwithstanding his feelings of unworthiness to baptize him, and performed the service. He led the Saviour of the world down into the river Jordan in the presence of a large concourse of people, and buried him in the water. (2SP 59.1)

After Christ rose up from the water and from the hand of John, he walked out to the bank of Jordan, and bowed in the attitude of prayer. The eyes of John were fastened upon Christ with the deepest interest and amazement. His heart was stirred with emotion as he looked upon him thus bowed as a suppliant. Christ's hands were raised upward, and his gaze seemed to penetrate Heaven. As the believer's example, his sinless humanity supplicated support and strength from his Heavenly Father, as he was about to commence his public labors as the Messiah. Jesus poured out his soul in earnest prayer. (2SP 60.1)

A new and important era was opening before him. His former peaceful, quiet life is to here end. He had been happy in a life of industry and toil, while fulfilling the duties devolving on a son. He was an example to those in childhood, youth, and manhood. His deportment showed that he felt the importance and solemnity of the hour. He knew that trials, toils, conflicts, sufferings, and death, were in the path his feet had entered. He felt the weight of the responsibilities he must bear. He was about to engage in new and arduous duties. A sense of the sinfulness of men, and the hardness of their hearts, which separated them from God, convinced him that but few would discern his merciful mission, and accept the salvation he came from Heaven to bring them. (2SP 60.1)

Never before had angels listened to such a prayer as Christ offered at his baptism, and they were solicitous to be the bearers of the message from the Father to his Son.

But, no; direct from the Father issues the light of his glory. The heavens were opened, and beams of glory rested upon the Son of God, and assumed the form of a dove, in appearance like burnished gold. The dove-like form was emblematical of the meekness and gentleness of

Christ. While the people stood spell-bound with amazement, their eyes fastened upon Christ, from the opening heavens came these words: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (2SP 60.2)

The words of confirmation that Christ is the Son of God was given to inspire faith in those who witnessed the scene, and to sustain the Son of God in his arduous work. Notwithstanding the Son of God was clothed with humanity, yet Jehovah, with his own voice, assures him of his sonship with the Eternal. In this manifestation to his Son, God accepts humanity as exalted through the excellence of his beloved Son.

(2SP 60.2)

The work of John was foretold by the prophet Malachi:
“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.” [Malachi 4:5, 6.] John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to turn the people to the wisdom of the just. **He was a representative of those living in the last days**, to whom God has intrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. And the same principles of temperance which John practiced should be observed by those who in our day are to warn the world of the coming of the Son of man. (*CTBH* 39.1)

For a time the Baptist's influence over the nation had been greater than that of its rulers, priests, or princes. If he had announced himself as the Messiah, and raised a revolt against Rome, **priests and people would have flocked to his standard.** Every consideration that appeals to the ambition of the world's conquerors Satan had stood ready to urge upon John the Baptist. But with the evidence before him of his power, he had steadfastly refused the splendid bribe. The attention which was fixed upon him he had directed to Another.

(DA 178.1)

Now he saw the tide of popularity turning away from himself to the Saviour. Day by day the crowds about him lessened. When Jesus came from Jerusalem to the region about Jordan, the people flocked to hear Him. The number of His disciples increased daily. (*DA* 178.2)

. . . the disciples of John looked with jealousy upon the growing popularity of Jesus. They stood ready to criticize His work, and it was not long before they found occasion. A question arose between them and the Jews as to whether baptism availed to cleanse the soul from sin; they maintained that the baptism of Jesus differed essentially from that of John. **Soon they were in dispute with Christ's disciples in regard to the form of words proper to use at baptism,** and finally as to the right of the latter to baptize at all. (*DA* 178.2)

The disciples of John came to him with their grievances, saying, “Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.”

Through these words, Satan brought temptation upon John. Though John’s mission seemed about to close, it was still possible for him to hinder the work of Christ. If he had sympathized with himself, and expressed grief or disappointment at being superseded, he would have sown the seeds of dissension, would have encouraged envy and jealousy, and would seriously have impeded the progress of the gospel. (*DA* 179.1)

John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, **but the touch of divine love had transformed him.** He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy. He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way. (*DA* 179.2)

Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, **until they should rest upon the Lamb of God.**

He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. **Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity,** that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life. (*DA* 179.4)

Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. No rivalry will mar the precious cause of the gospel. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. They will lift up Jesus, and with Him humanity will be lifted up. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, **with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,** to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Isaiah 57:15. (*DA* 179.5)

The soul of the prophet, emptied of self, was filled with the light of the divine. As he witnessed to the Saviour's glory, his words were almost a counterpart of those that Christ Himself had spoken in His interview with Nicodemus. John said, "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.... For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." Christ could say, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." John 5:30. To Him it is declared, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Hebrews 1:9. The Father "giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." (*DA* 180.1)

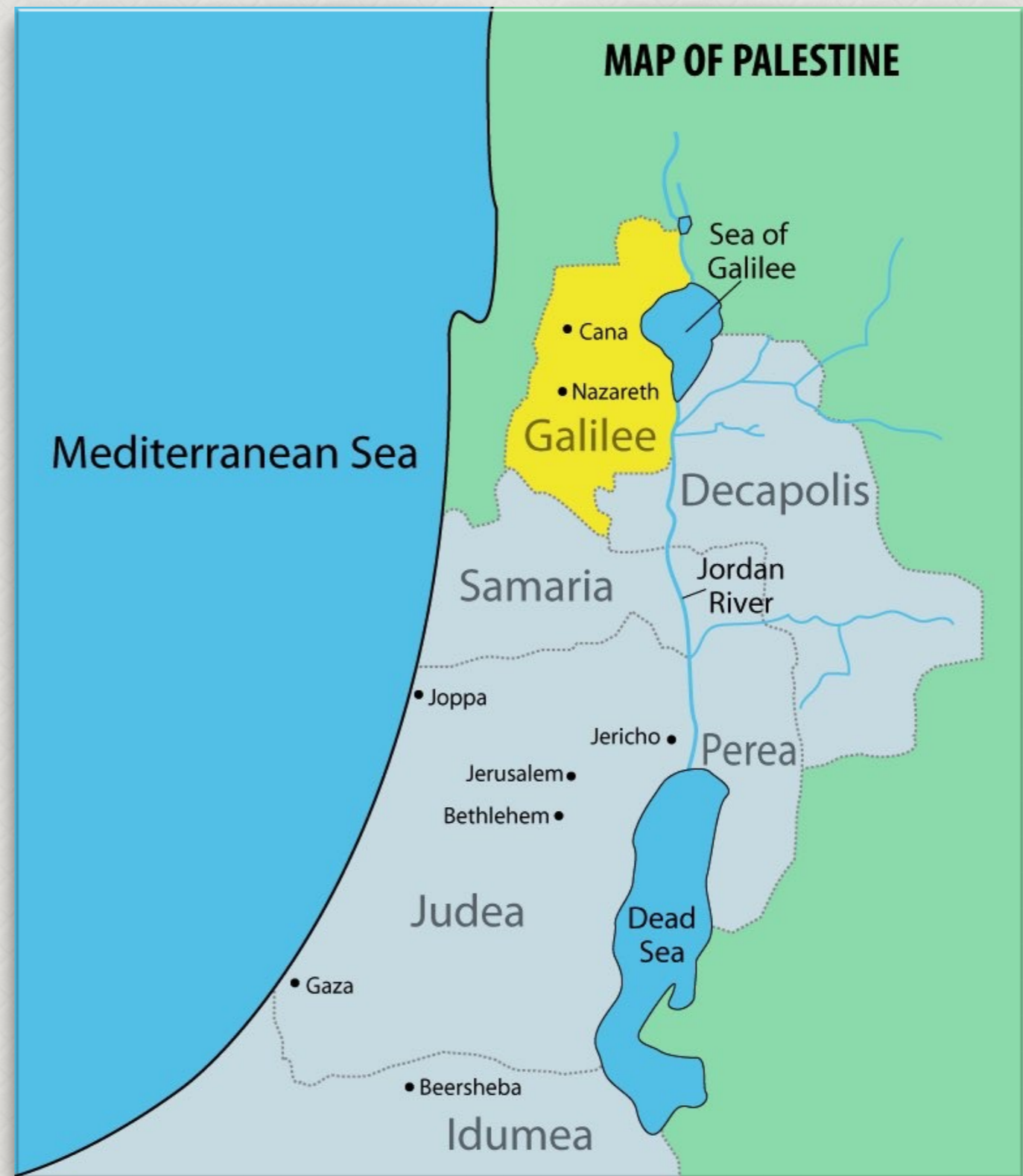
The soul of the prophet, emptied of self, was filled with the light of the divine. . . . So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure. (*DA* 181.1)

Jesus knew that they would spare no effort to create a division between His own disciples and those of John. He knew that the storm was gathering which would sweep away one of the greatest prophets ever given to the world. **Wishing to avoid all occasion for misunderstanding or dissension, He quietly ceased His labors, and withdrew to Galilee.** We also, while loyal to truth, should try to avoid all that may lead to discord and misapprehension. For whenever these arise, they result in the loss of souls. Whenever circumstances occur that threaten to cause division, we should follow the example of Jesus and of John the Baptist. (*DA 181.4*)

Jesus started his ministry in Jerusalem (John 3:1–21) and then extended it to the towns and villages of Judæa where he labored from about April to December AD 28.



1. Opening ministry was in Jerusalem and Judæa during part of AD 28)
2. Jesus then retired temporarily to Galilee (4:3)
3. Returned to Jerusalem for Passover AD 29
4. Then back to Galilee



1. Most likely John was not imprisoned until a year or more after the baptism of Jesus (*DA* 214; cf. p. 213) at approximately the time of the Passover of AD 29.
2. He remained in prison until the early spring of AD 30, and was beheaded a few weeks before the Passover of that year (see *DA* 360, 361, 364).



1. The ministry of John continued at least till after the time of Jesus' temporary withdrawal from Judea about December, when John was arrested and imprisoned.
2. He was in prison for about one year, from the Passover time, AD 29, to the Passover of AD 30.



When Jesus came from Jerusalem to the region about Jordan, the people flocked to hear Him. The number of His disciples increased daily. Many came for baptism, and while Christ Himself did not baptize, He sanctioned the administration of the ordinance by His disciples. (*DA* 178.2)