

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John's Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.



CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING

AUTHOR: A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24-25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23-24; 18:15-16; 20:2-9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3-4; 8:14-25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1-4).

BACKGROUND: The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1,14,18; 10:30; 20:28).

The testimony of the early church also favors a date after AD 70. Clement of Alexandria (cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.14.7) stated, “Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain [in the other canonical Gospels] . . . composed a spiritual gospel.” The most likely place of writing is Ephesus (Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 3.1.2; cp. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.1.1), one of the most important urban centers of the Roman Empire at the time, though the envisioned readership of John’s Gospel transcends any one historical setting.

John’s original audience was probably composed of people in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus and beyond toward the close of the first century AD. Hence

John frequently explained Jewish customs and Palestinian geography and translated Aramaic terms into Greek.

MESSAGE AND PURPOSE

The purpose statement in 20:30-31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

THE DEITY OF JESUS: John emphasized the deity of Jesus from the beginning of his Gospel. The prologue affirms that he is the eternal Word (Gk *logos*) who was with God and was God. Jesus used the significant phrase *I am* seven times in John, claiming the personal name of God as his own. In John, Jesus is always in charge and knows what will happen in advance.

KNOW AND BELIEVE: Eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ (17:3). Further, knowledge of God comes from believing and knowing Jesus. *Knowing* and *believing* are key terms for John. Both occur more than ninety times in this Gospel and are always used as verbs. Jesus’s teaching in John reminds us that knowing God and believing in Jesus are expressed in action.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE

Of all the Gospels and any of the New Testament books, the Gospel of John most clearly teaches the deity and preexistence of Christ (1:1-2,18; 8:58; 17:5,24; 20:28). Together with the Gospel of Matthew, it provides the most striking proofs of Jesus’s messiahship. It does so by narrating seven messianic signs (see note at 2:11), by seven “I am” statements of Jesus (see note at 6:35,48), by specific fulfillment quotations, especially at Jesus’s passion, and by showing how Jesus fulfilled the symbolism inherent in a variety of Jewish festivals and institutions. Jesus’s messianic mission is shown to

AD 18–29

Caiaphas is high priest. **18–36**
 Pontius Pilate is prefect of Judea. **26–36**
 John the Baptist’s ministry begins. **29**
 Jesus’s baptism **29**
 Jesus’s wilderness temptations **29**
 Jesus’s call of his first disciples **29**

AD 30–33

Jesus cleanses the temple at Passover. **30**
 Jesus’s ministry in Galilee **Autumn 30 to Spring 32**
 Jesus’s feeding of the 5,000 during Passover **32**
 Jesus’s teachings at the Festival of Shelters **Autumn 32**
 Growing opposition to Jesus at the Festival of Dedication **Winter 32/33**

originate with God the Father, “the One who sent” Jesus (7:16,18,28,33; 8:26,29; 15:21), and to culminate in his commissioning of his new messianic community in the power of his Spirit (20:21-22). John’s Trinitarian teaching is among the most overt presentations of the tri-unity of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit—in the entire New Testament and has provided much of the material for early Trinitarian and Christological formulations in the history of the church.

STRUCTURE

John is divided into two main parts. In the first section (chaps. 2–11) the focus is on both Jesus’s ministry to “the world” and the signs he performed. Jesus performs seven signs that meet with varying responses. The second major section (chaps. 12–21) reveals Jesus’s teaching to his disciples and the triumphant “hour” of his passion. John’s record of the passion focuses on Jesus’s control of the events. He had to instruct his adversaries on how to arrest him (18:4-8). Pilate struggled with his decision, but Jesus knew what would happen. Jesus died as the Lamb and was sacrificed at the very time lambs were being sacrificed for Passover (19:14).

OUTLINE

- I. Prologue: Christ as the Eternal Word (1:1-18)
 - A. The Word (1:1)
 - B. The Word and creation (1:2-5)
 - C. The Word and the world (1:6-18)
- II. Presentation of Christ as the Son of God (1:19–12:50)
 - A. By John the Baptist (1:19-34)
 - B. To his disciples (1:35-51)
 - C. Through miraculous signs (2:1–12:50)
- III. Instruction of the Twelve by the Son of God (13:1–17:26)
 - A. The Last Supper (13:1-38)
 - B. The way to the Father (14:1-31)
 - C. The true vine (15:1-27)
 - D. The gift of the Spirit (16:1-33)
 - E. Jesus’s high-priestly prayer (17:1-26)
- IV. Suffering of Christ as the Son of God (18:1–20:31)
 - A. His arrest, trial, and death (18:1–19:42)
 - B. His triumph over death (20:1-31)
- V. Epilogue: The Continuing Work of the Son of God (21:1-25)
 - A. Appearances to his disciples (21:1-14)
 - B. Assignment to his disciples (21:15-25)

AD 33

Jesus raises Lazarus from death. **Winter 33**
 Jesus’s last journey to Jerusalem by way of Samaria and Galilee **late Winter 33**
 Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem **Sunday, Nisan 9, 33**
 Jesus’s second cleansing of the temple **Monday, Nisan 10, 33**
 Jesus teaches in the temple and prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem. **Tuesday, Nisan 11, 33**

AD 33

Judas bargains with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus. **Tuesday evening, Nisan 11, 33**
 Jesus celebrates Passover with his disciples. **Thursday evening, Nisan 13, 33**
 Jesus’s trials and crucifixion **Friday, Nisan 14, 33**
 Jesus’s resurrection **Sunday, Nisan 16, 33**
 Jesus’s ascension; forty days after his resurrection **33**
 Day of Pentecost; seven weeks following Jesus’s resurrection **May 24, 33**

PROLOGUE

1 In the beginning^a was the Word,^b and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.^c **2** He was with God in the beginning.^d **3** All things were created^e through him,^f and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. **4** In him was life,^g and that life was the light^h of men. **5** That light shinesⁱ in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome^j it.^l

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John.^k **7** He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.^m **8** He was not the light, but he came to testifyⁿ about the light. **9** The true light^o that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.^{p,q}

10 He was in the world, and the world was created^r through him, and yet the world did

^a1:1 Gn 1:1; Col 1:18
^bJn 1:14; 1Jn 1:1; Rv 19:13
^cJn 20:28; Php 2:6
^d1:2 Jn 8:38; 17:5; Ac 26:4
^e1:3 Col 1:16;
Heb 1:2
^fRm 11:36
^g1:4 1Jn 2:5
^hPs 36:9; Jn 12:46
ⁱ1:5 1Jn 2:8
^jPhp 3:12
^k1:6 Mk 1:4
^l1:8 Jn 15:26
^m1:9 Jn 12:46
ⁿJn 18:37; 1Jn 2:8
^o1:10 Jn 1:3
^p1:12 2Jn 10
^qJn 5:43
^rMk 1:22; Ac 9:14
^sLk 1:7
^tMt 5:9; Jn 11:52; Rm 8:16; 1Jn 3:1
^uJn 3:16
^vJn 10:25; 1Jn 3:23
^w1:13 1Pt 1:3

not recognize him.¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.¹² But to all who did receive^p him,^q he gave them the right^r to be^s children^s of God,^t to those who believe^u in his name,^v **13** who were born,^w not of natural descent,^f or of the will^x of the flesh,^y or of the will of man,^z but of God.^z

14 The Word^{aa} became flesh^{ab} and dwelt^{ac} among us. We observed his glory,^{ac} the glory as the one and only^{ad} Son¹ from the Father, full of grace and truth. **15** (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, "This was the one of whom I said, "The one coming after me^{ae} ranks ahead of me,^{af} because he existed before me."^{ag}) **16** Indeed, we have all received

¹Co 7:37; 16:12; Eph 2:3; 2Tm 2:26; 2Pt 1:21 ^rPhp 3:3 ^s1Pt 1:3; 1Jn 2:29 ^t1:14 Jn 1:1 ^uPhp 2:7; 1Jn 4:2; 5:20 ^vMk 10:37; Jn 17:24
^wHeb 11:17; 1Jn 4:9 ^x1:15 Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7; Jn 1:27,30 ^yCol 1:19 ^zJn 3:13; 8:58; 10:30; 14:7-9,23; Php 2:6

^A1:3-4 Other punctuation is possible: . . . not one thing was created. What was created in him was life ^B1:5 Or grasp, or comprehend, or overtake; Jn 12:35
^C1:7 Or it (the light) ^D1:9 Or The true light who comes into the world gives light to everyone, or The true light enlightens everyone coming into the world.
^E1:12 Or become ^F1:13 Lit blood ^G1:13 Or not of human lineage, or of human capacity, or of human volition ^H1:14 Or and dwelt in a tent; lit and tabernacled ^I1:14 Son is implied from the reference to the Father and from Gk usage.

1:1-18 John's prologue presents Jesus as the eternal, preexistent Word-become-flesh (vv. 1,14) and as the one-of-a-kind Son of the Father who is himself God (vv. 1,18). Jesus brought God's plan of salvation to a culmination. Previous to Jesus this plan included God giving the law through Moses (v. 17), his dwelling among his people in the tabernacle (v. 14), and the sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6-8,15). The prologue introduces several themes that are emphasized later in the Gospel, including Jesus as life, light, and truth, believers as God's children, and the world's rejection of Jesus.

1:1 In the beginning was the Word echoes Gn 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John located Jesus's existence in eternity past with God. **The Word was God:** Not only did Jesus exist before creation, he is also the same God who created the heavens and the earth. "The Word" (Gk *Logos*) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (Ps 19:1-4). God's Word is effective. He speaks, and things come into being (Gn 1:3,9; Is 55:11-12).

1:2-3 Everything that exists owes its existence to Jesus.

1:4-5 The references to life . . . light, and darkness continue to draw on Genesis themes (cp. Gn 1:3-5,14-18,20-31; 2:7; 3:20). Light symbolism is also found in later OT messianic passages (Is 9:2; 42:6-7; 49:6; 60:1-5; Mal 4:2; cp. Lk 1:78-79).

1:6 Unlike Jesus, John the Baptist was merely a man, but like Jesus he had a particular mission to perform.

1:7-8 On John as a witness to Jesus, see note at 5:31-47.

1:9 As the rest of John's Gospel makes clear, all did not in fact receive the light, though the light was available to all.

1:10-11 His own people did not receive him refers to the Jewish people, the recipients of God's covenants, the law, and promises of a Messiah (Rm 9:4). Messiah's rejection by the Jews despite convincing proofs of his messiahship (esp. the "signs") is a major subject in the first half of John's Gospel (cp. 12:37).

1:12-13 Reference to children of God builds on the OT characterization of Israel as God's children (Dt 14:1; cp. Ex 4:22). **Born, not of natural descent . . . but of God** makes clear that true children of God come into being through faith in Messiah, not physical birth or ethnic descent (8:41-47; cp. 3:16). This opens the way for Gentiles to become God's children (11:51-52; cp. 10:16).

1:14 **The Word** continues the theme of 1:1. **Become flesh** does not mean the Word stopped being God; rather, the Word was made flesh. **Dwelt among us** literally means "pitched his tent" (Gk *skenoō*), an allusion to God's dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8-9; 33:7). In the past God demonstrated

his presence to his people in the tabernacle and the temple. Now God has taken up residence among his people in the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). The references to God's glory hark back to OT passages that describe the manifestation of God's presence and glory in theophanies (appearances of God), the tabernacle, or the temple (Ex 33:22; Nm 14:10; Dt 5:22). The Greek word *monogenēs* underlying **one and only Son from the Father** means "only child" (Jdg 11:34; Jr 6:26; Am 8:10; Zch 12:10). "Only" may mean "one of a kind," as in the case of Isaac, who is called Abraham's "one of a kind" son in Gn 22:2,12,16 (in contrast to Ishmael, cp. Heb 11:17). In the OT, Israel and the Son of David are called God's "firstborn" son (see Ps 89:27). The reference to God's "giving" of his "one and only Son" in Jn 3:16,18 may allude to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gn 22).

Full of grace and truth recalls "faithful love (Hb *chesed*) and truth (Hb *emet*)" in Ex 34:6 (cp. Ex 33:18-19), where the expression refers to God's covenant faithfulness to his people Israel. According to John, God's covenant faithfulness found ultimate expression in his sending of his "one and only Son," Jesus (see textual note at 1:14).

1:15 John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (Lk 1:24,26), and he started his ministry earlier than Jesus (Lk 3:1-20). Usually, priority in time (such as being the firstborn) implied preeminence, but Jesus's preexistence overrode John's temporal precedence.

1:16 This verse resumes the thought of 1:14. **We** refers to the same group as "we" and "us" in v. 14, that is, the apostolic circle or the whole believing community.

logos

Greek pronunciation	[LAH gahss]
CSB translation	word
Uses in John's Gospel	40
Uses in the NT	330
Focus passage	John 1:1,14

Like the related verb *legō* (to speak), the noun *logos* most often refers to either oral or written communication. It means *statement* or *report* in some contexts, but most often in John's Gospel (and in the NT in general) *logos* refers to God's Word (that is, the OT) or to Jesus's words. Thus, the primary use of *logos* is to denote divine revelation in some form or another. John uses the term in its most exalted sense when he personifies *logos* to refer to Christ. *The Logos* eternally existed as God (the Son) and with God (the Father)—he was in fact the Creator (Jn 1:1-3)—but he became a human being (v. 14), Jesus of Nazareth, so that he could reveal the Father and his will for humanity (v. 18).

grace^a upon^a grace from his fullness,¹⁷ for the law was given through Moses;^b grace and truth^c came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The one and only^d Son, who is himself God and^b is at the Father's^e side—he has revealed him.^f

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY

¹⁹ This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem^g sent priests^h and Levitesⁱ to ask him, "Who are you?"

²⁰ He didn't deny it but confessed: "I am not the Messiah."^j

²¹ "What then?" they asked him. "Are you Elijah?"^{kk}

"I am not," he said.

"Are you the Prophet?"^{ll}

"No," he answered.

²² "Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?"

²³ He said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord^{mm}—just as Isaiahⁿ the prophet said."

²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.^o ²⁵ So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?"

^a1:16 Ac 15:11; 2Pt 3:18
^b1:17 Ps 77:20; Mt 8:4; Heb 3:2
^cPs 119:142; Jn 14:6; 2Th 2:10
^d1:18 1Jn 4:9
^eMt 5:16; 11:27; Jn 8:42
^fMt 11:27; Lk 10:22; 1Jn 2:24
^g1:19 Mt 23:37
^hAc 4:1
ⁱEx 6:19; Lk 10:32
^j1:20 Mt 11:17; Eph 5:2
^k1:21 Mal 4:5; Mt 11:14; 17:10-13; Mk 8:28; Lk 1:17
^lDt 18:15; Mt 2:23
^m1:23 Is 40:3
ⁿMt 3:3; 4:14; 12:17
^o1:24 Mk 7:3
^p1:26 Mk 1:8
^q1:27 Jn 1:15
^r1:28 Mk 10:1; Lk 3:3
^s1:29 Is 53:7; Ac 8:32; 1Pt 1:19; Rv 5:6
^tJn 15:22; 1Jn 3:5
^u1:31 Jn 7:28
^v2Co 4:11; 1Jn 1:2
^w1:32 Ps 51:11; Jn 1:33; Ac 2:4; Rm 8:9; Gl 5:25; Ti 3:5; 1Jn 5:8; Rv 3:22
^xJms 4:5
^y1:33 Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Ac 11:16
^z1:34 Mt 3:17; 4:3; Jn 1:49; 5:19; Heb 1:2

²⁶ "I baptize with^o water,"^p John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him.^q ²⁷ He is the one coming after me,^{r,q} whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."²⁸ All this happened in Bethany^f across the Jordan,^r where John was baptizing.

THE LAMB OF GOD

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God,^s who takes away the sin^t of the world!"

³⁰ This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'³¹ I didn't know him,^u but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed^v to Israel."³² And John testified, "I saw the Spirit^w descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him.^x ³³ I didn't know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on— he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'^y ³⁴ I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."^z

³⁵ The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples.³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

^a1:16 Or in place of ^b1:18 Other mss read *The one and only Son, who* ^c1:23 Is 40:3 ^d1:26 Or in, also in vv. 31, 33 ^e1:27 Other mss add *who came before me* ^f1:28 Other mss read in *Bethabara* ^g1:34 Other mss read *is the Chosen One of God*

1:17 The contrast between the law and grace and truth is not that the law was bad and Jesus was good; rather, both the giving of the law and the coming of Jesus Christ mark stages in God's reaching out to humanity. Jesus, however, marks the final, definitive revelation of God's grace and truth. He is superior to Abraham (8:53), Jacob (4:12), and Moses (5:46-47; cp. 9:28).

1:18 No one has ever seen God—not even Moses (Ex 33:18-23). God is spirit (4:24), and humans are sinful, preferring darkness to light (3:19). Thus humans are unable to see God in his fullness. But Jesus Christ, the one and only Son who is himself God (1:1), has revealed God the Father in a way that Moses and the law (1:17) never could. As Jesus says later in John's Gospel, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9).

1:19-2:11 This introductory unit presents the first week of Jesus's ministry: day 1, John's witness about Jesus (1:19-28); day 2, John's encounter with Jesus (1:29-34); day 3, John's referral of two of his disciples to Jesus (1:35-39); day 4, Andrew's introduction of his brother Peter to Jesus (1:40-42); day 5, the recruitment of Philip and Nathanael (1:43-51); and day 7, the wedding at Cana (2:1-11). During this early stage Jesus was hailed by John the Baptist as the "Lamb of God" (1:29, 36), gathered his first disciples, and performed his first "sign"—turning water into wine (2:11).

1:19-21 John denied being the Messiah (cp. vv. 8, 15; 3:28), Elijah, or the Prophet. "The Messia-

h" refers to the coming greater Son of David, predicted in the OT (2Sm 7:11-16; Hs 3:5). Elijah, who never died (2Kg 2:11), was expected to return in the end time (Mal 4:5) to "restore everything" (Mt 17:11; cp. Lk 1:17). John the Baptist resembled Elijah in his rugged lifestyle (Mt 3:4; cp. 2Kg 1:8) but denied being Elijah. Moses predicted the coming of "a prophet" in Dt 18:15, 18 (cp. Ac 3:22; 7:37), who was expected in Jesus's time (Jn 6:14; 7:40); John denied being this prophet as well (though he was a prophet; see 10:40-41; Mt 11:11-14).

1:22-23 John was a voice . . . crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord in keeping with Isaiah's words (Is 40:3; cp. Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4). This messenger of God was to prepare the way for the Lord's coming by preaching repentance and divine judgment. Isaiah's vision in Is 40-55 drew heavily on exodus typology and envisioned a new exodus of God's people in which God's glory would be revealed and his people delivered. This would be accomplished by the coming of the Servant of the Lord (see esp. Is 52:13-53:12).

1:24-27 To untie and remove another's sandal was the task of a slave. John the Baptist does not fully answer their question until the next day, in 1:32-34. The purpose of his baptism was to prepare people for the Messiah.

1:28 John was baptizing at the Jordan River. Luke 3:1 places this event in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius (AD 14-37), or AD 29. John would have been about thirty-three years old. The Bethany across the Jordan (cp.

10:40) was probably not the village near Jerusalem where Lazarus was raised (cp. 11:1, 18) but the region of Batanea in the northeast (called Basha in the OT).

1:29 On the next day, see note at 2:1-2. John the Baptist's references to Jesus as the Lamb of God may echo the lamb led to the slaughter mentioned in Is 53:7. John may also have proclaimed Jesus as the apocalyptic warrior lamb who would bring judgment (Rv 5:6, 12; 7:17; cp. Mt 3:7-12; Lk 3:7-17). Takes away the sin of the world refers to Jesus's sacrificial, substitutionary death, which appeased God's wrath against sin and sinners (1Jn 2:2; 4:10).

1:30 Again the fact of Jesus's preexistence is declared.

1:31 By I didn't know him John probably meant that he did not know Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the sign from God mentioned in vv. 32-33.

1:32-34 The Spirit did not just descend on Jesus, he rested on him (cp. 3:34)—a sign of Jesus's divine anointing. In the OT, the Spirit came upon people to enable them to accomplish specific tasks. Isaiah predicted that Messiah would be full of the Spirit at all times (Is 11:2; 61:1; cp. Lk 4:18; see note at 5:31-47).

1:35 In 1:35-4:42 John narrated events that fell between Jesus's baptism and the start of his Galilean ministry. On the next day, see note at 2:1-2.

1:36-37 John the Baptist shows great humility here as he recommends Jesus as the greater teacher. What exactly the disciples

INCARNATION AND CHRISTOLOGY

Stephen J. Wellum

The word *incarnation* derives from a Latin word developed from *in + caro* [flesh], which literally means “in the flesh.” In Christian theology the term refers to the supernatural act of God, effected by the Holy Spirit, whereby the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead, took into union with himself a complete human nature apart from sin. As a result of that action, the Son of God became the God-man forever, the Word made flesh (Jn 1:1, 14; Rm 1:3-4; 8:3; Gl 4:4; Php 2:6-11; 1Tm 3:16; Heb 2:5-18; 1Jn 4:2).

The means whereby the incarnation came about is the virgin conception, commonly known as the virgin birth—the miraculous action of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary—so that what was conceived was fully God and fully man in one person forever (Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:26-38). He did this in order to become the Redeemer of the church, our Prophet, Priest, and King, and thus to save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21). By becoming one with us, the Lord of Glory not only shares our sorrows and burdens, he is also able to secure our redemption by bearing our sin on the cross as our substitute and being raised for our justification (see Rm 4:25; Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 1Pt 3:18).

THE HUMANITY AND DEITY OF JESUS IN SCRIPTURE

Biblical evidence for the full deity and humanity of Christ is abundant. In regard to his humanity, Jesus is presented as a Jewish man who was born, underwent the normal process of growth and development (Lk 2:52), experienced a full range of human experiences (e.g., Mt 8:10, 24; 9:36; Lk 22:44; Jn 19:28), including growth in knowledge (Mk 13:32), and the experience of death (Jn 19:30). Apart from his sinlessness, which Scripture unequivocally affirms (Jn 8:46; 2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1Pt 1:19), he is one with us in every way.

Scripture also affirms that the *man* Christ Jesus is also the eternal Son of God and thus God equal with the Father and Spirit. From the opening pages of the NT, Jesus is identified as the Lord: the One who establishes the divine rule and inaugurates the new covenant era in fulfillment of OT expectation—something only God can do (e.g., Is 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Jr 31:31-34; Ezk 34). That is why Jesus’s miracles are not merely human acts empowered by the Spirit of God; rather they are demonstrations of Jesus’s own divine authority over nature (e.g., Mt 8:23-27; 14:22-23), Satan and his hosts (Mt 12:27-28), and all things (Eph 1:9-10, 19-23). Because he is God the Son, Jesus has the authority to forgive sin (Mk 2:3-12), call himself the fulfillment of Scripture (Mt 5:17-19;

11:13), view his relationship with the Father as one of equality and reciprocity (Mt 11:25-27; Jn 5:16-30; 10:14-30), and do the very works of God in creation, providence, and redemption (Jn 1:1-18; Php 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-3).

THEOLOGICAL EXPRESSION OF JESUS’S NATURES

Later church reflection, especially at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), affirmed that we cannot do justice to Scripture without confessing that Jesus of Nazareth was fully God and fully man. God the Son, who gave personal identity to the human nature he had assumed and did so without putting aside or compromising his divine nature, must be confessed as one person who now exists in two natures. Additionally, Chalcedon affirmed that we must not think that the incarnation involved a change in the properties of each nature so that some kind of blending resulted which was neither divine nor human, as the Eutychians wrongly affirmed. Rather, we must affirm that the properties of each nature (human and divine) were preserved so that Jesus is all that God is in all of his perfections and all that we humans are except in terms of sin.

This affirmation entails at least two important points. First, *the man* Jesus from the moment of conception was personal by virtue of the union of the human nature in the person of the divine Son. At no point were there two persons or two centers of self-consciousness, as the Nestorians wrongly affirmed. That is why in our Lord Jesus Christ we come face-to-face with God. We meet him, not subsumed under human flesh, not merely associated with it, but in undiminished moral splendor. The deity and humanity coincide, not because the human has grown into the divine, but because the divine Son has taken to himself a human nature for our salvation. He is the divine Son who subsists in two natures, who has lived his life for us as our representative head, died our death as our substitute, and been raised for our eternal salvation. This is why the Lord Jesus is utterly unique and without parallel and thus the only Lord and Savior. Second, since in the incarnation the eternal Son took to himself a human nature, he can now live a fully human life. Yet he was not totally confined to that human nature as if for a period of time the divine nature was divested of its attributes or function. That is why Scripture affirms that even as the incarnate One, the divine Son continued to uphold and sustain the universe (Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:1-3) even while he lived out his life on earth as a man dependent upon the Father and empowered by the Spirit (Jn 5:19-27; Ac 10:38).