

The Faithful And True Witness

15 Names Of The Lord In John Chapter 1

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The evangelist John was the youngest of the Lord's apostles. In his lifetime heresies arose concerning the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. By divine inspiration John wrote his gospel to combat these heresies and carefully emphasised both the Lord's divine and His human nature. One of the ways he accomplished this was by highlighting the different names of the Saviour. In the opening chapter of his gospel John attributes at least fifteen different names to the Lord. They are:

1. The Word (v. 1)

In the beginning of God's purpose to save His people and because of His will to bless His church in accordance with His eternal decree of election, the eternal Word stood forth to speak in the everlasting council of the Triune God.

Here is John's first name for the blessed Saviour. The Lord is so called for His role in speaking for and on behalf of the elect of God in the covenant of grace and council of peace. Here we behold the Saviour, the Word with God, discussing, covenanting, agreeing together the terms and responsibilities of salvation for the chosen people of God.

Isaiah reveals something of that glorious dialogue when he declares, Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isaiah 6:8). These words may speak of Isaiah's own calling but resonate with a deeper, more significant, appointment and voluntary sacrifice.

Zechariah, speaks of the living Word and confirms the counsel and advocacy that took place between the Father and the Son, Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both (Zechariah 6:13).

So, also, in creation the Word spoke into existence all things out of nothing that are created. Thus when read as we often do, "and God said", we ought to think of Jehovah the Son declaring the will and purposes of God to men. In this Christ may justifiably be called the Word. He speaks, interprets and reveals His Father's mind. He did so in Eden, then throughout the Old Testament, and also in the days of his flesh; and now the Word speaks in heaven for His church and saints.

2. God (v. 1)

The second name John gives us is God. The eternal Word was and is God. The Word was God! This fully accords with what John has written

elsewhere.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one (1 John 5:7).

Truly and properly the Word is God, He is not merely the voice of God but God in the highest sense. He is variously called; Jehovah God, our God, your God, their God, my God, God with us, the mighty God, God over all, the great God, the living God and true God

3. The Life (v. 4)

The Word who is God is also The Life. Christ is the origin, fountainhead and source of all life. He is Himself Life. He does not receive His life from the Father but possesses essential, divine life in Himself. Furthermore, all derived life comes from The Life. All natural, spiritual and eternal life comes from Christ. All creation; whether redeemed men or reprobate men, angels or demons, the Devil himself, possess life from Him.

This is a title taken by the Lord when He describes Himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

4. The Light (v. 7)

Here is a lovely name! As all life comes from Christ so, too, does all light. And what is true for nature and visible light is also true for wisdom, knowledge and all truth. How can science be opposed to God when the Word created, the Life sustains and the Light reveals all truth? Your God is too small! Your science too shallow. Pompous people talk as though they have outwitted the One in whom all wisdom, truth and knowledge dwell. It is an old story! Fallen man is blinded by Satan and cannot naturally comprehend the light. The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5), and again, He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not (John 1:10).

5. The Only Begotten of the Father (v. 14)

Now John introduces us to the Son of God. Begetting is the usual description of human generation in the Bible, but here the Son is the "only begotten" of the Father. This speaks of the unique union between the Father and Son in the divine nature but also of mutual love and respect in the eternal Father-Son relationship.

6. Jesus Christ (v. 17)

In verse 17 John the Baptist and John the Evangelist both emphasise the divine calling and purpose of the Saviour. Jesus is "Saviour" or Deliverer from the Old Testament name Joshua, and Christ is "anointed". This demonstrates that the Saviour was anointed or appointed to the great redemptive work in His role as Mediator of the covenant of grace as Prophet to, Priest for, and King over His people. The Messiah of the Old Testament dispensation is the Christ of the New Testament. The Gospel of God's grace and truth came by Him.

7. The Lord (v. 23)

Now John reminds us that Jesus Christ is Lord! This name is often used in Scripture. It speaks of Christ's pre-eminence and leadership and of His people following. The appointed Saviour is worthy of praise, respect, obedience and trust. Many people claim to "believe in Jesus" but we are reminded that believing on Him unto salvation is a profound and significant experience. It means acknowledging the unique Lordship of God's anointed Saviour. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31).

But, Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:22, 23).

8. The Lamb of God (v. 29)

What a suitable name for God's suffering servant! How innocent and harmless is the gracious Lamb of God. How useful to feed and clothe His people with spiritual blessings. How appropriate a sacrifice for sin. Christ is pictured extensively as the passover lamb and in the lambs of the daily sacrifice offered morning and evening. He was slain in type, in the morning of the world, from the foundation of the world, and in fact, in the evening of the world, when He came.

Thus are sins committed daily, washed daily in the blood of the Lamb to remove them. By continual looking by faith to Him whose blood has continual virtue, His people are cleansed from all sin.

9. The Son of God (v. 34)

Now John the Baptist testifies that the One who stands before Him is the reason and purpose for His ministry. This Jesus Christ, the essential, eternal Son of God; sent in the fulness of time, having assumed human nature, is none other than the Son of God. By divine revelation John confesses the God-man.

10. Rabbi / Master (v. 38)

The Lord is our Teacher. Two disciples of John the Baptist, Andrew and perhaps John the evangelist, observing the high admiration with which their master spoke of Jesus, bestow upon the Lord similar suitable reverence. Who knows but that one and another might discern the reverence with which we speak, graciously & carefully of the Lord. May our words and respect be employed to attract others to our Saviour.

11. Him of whom Moses in law and the Prophets did write (v. 45)

Now we are reminded we are in the presence of the long anticipated, eagerly expected Messiah. Philip tells Nathanael that this man, Jesus, is the One of whom all the Old Testament spoke. He is the seed of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head; the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the world would be blessed; the great prophet, like unto Moses whom God would raise up and whom the people would follow. The prophets had described His virgin birth; the location in the town of Bethlehem; His sufferings, His resurrection, His ascension.

12. Jesus of Nazareth (v. 45)

And who is this Great One? Philip gives the Saviour's usual title by which He was then known. The man is called Jesus, from the town of Nazareth. Nazareth was the town of Christ's childhood and early life though he rarely visited after His ministry began. When He did He was not well received. On one occasion the people of the town tried to kill Him. However, He was known by this name throughout His ministry and this title was written upon cross.

Though Nathanael scorned the town, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yet, the Saviour being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and willingly adopted the "despised" name as His own.

13. Son of Joseph (v. 45)

As was supposed. Joseph being married to His mother, Mary. Jesus spoke much of His Father in heaven but little is mentioned of Joseph. In His early ministry this identification with Joseph persisted. The miraculous events of the incarnation appear long forgotten.

14. King of Israel (v. 49)

... and Son of God. Nathanael seems a man of keen Bible awareness, and of genuine faith. He is waiting for the fulfilment of prophecy and promise.

What excitement must have filled the hearts of these men. Perhaps similar to that of Simeon and Anna at the time of the Lord's birth. Now thirty years later Christ's true identity is being re-discovered.

Nathanael is likely referring to Psalm 2:6, 7 in so speaking of Christ, Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Here we see Christ's kingly role. He is a king going forth to conquer; ruling and reigning in power and authority. This is true spiritually in the church over whom Christ is the head, and also in the world where the Sovereign power of God is manifest in all the affairs of men.

15. Son of Man (v. 51)

Finally, we have Christ's own preferred name for Himself. This speaks of the humanity of the One John has been emphatically presenting as divine. He is the God-man. The Son of God and the Son of Man, the Seed of woman.

The reference to angels ascending & descending speaks of heaven's glories being revealed in and through Christ's human body and nature while in the world.

Amen

There is one last point worthy of mention concerning the Lord's quoted words in verse 51. The phrase "Verily, verily" may be translated "Amen, amen" and is used frequently by the Lord. Its great force is derived from the authority of Christ's own great name for John elsewhere tells us it means "The faithful and true witness says ...".

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14).

Thus these various names of the Lord Jesus Christ reveal His true nature, power, glory and purpose in salvation. They come with all the authority of divine truth upon which our trust can safely be placed. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

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