

The Book of

John

The Essence of Jesus

Gerard Meerstadt

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by Gerard Meerstadt

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Cover illustration

Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) - Saint John the Evangelist - 266912 -

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I chose this historically incorrect picture because, without caring about the reality of John as a bearded old man, Pompeo Batoni captured the spirit of John, youthful and inspired, looking up to the guidance of Jesus to write what he shows him. The eagle sits next to him as a symbol of wisdom and sharp vision.

To the reader

In our time it is more urgent than ever to know the truth about the world we live in and where it is going. Many ages ago the truth about our world and its future has been written down in the scriptures of the new testament, the part of the Bible that tells us about Jesus Christ and his mission on earth. The old testament, the larger part of the Bible, was a precursor to the revelation of the truth in the New Testament.

This most important message has been opposed throughout the ages and cleverly hidden by the powerful opponents of this truth. They could not destroy the message itself, so it has been surrounded with complicated theology and religious tradition in order to obscure it.

The message is essential for every person on earth and needs to be understood simply and clearly. Many religious people have no clear picture of what the simple and powerful message is. It cannot be grasped through religion, for the message itself has no need for religion, which has mainly worked as a distraction.

Reading all of the new testament can be a lot of work for someone who wants to zoom in directly on the essence of the truth, and maybe later on wants to read the peripheral things that may become meaningful in the light of that core message.

So what do we need, to grasp the full truth of the message without going into too much detail? Can we zoom in directly on the essence of the message and the person of Jesus Christ? Yes that is possible, as it should be with a message that is supposed to be simple and clear. We can

do so with help of the works of Jesus' closest friend on earth, his disciple John.

John wrote his book about the revelation by Jesus Christ in old age at the close of the first century. It is the last book of the new testament and looks ahead into the future where everything and everyone will be united under God in total love and freedom, something that still lies in our future today.

After the book of Revelation, he wrote his account of Jesus' life here on earth. By that time, the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke on the life of Jesus had been around for several decades. So what was still lacking that made John write his version? What was it that John wanted to emphasise about Jesus? Or, better said, what was it that Jesus wanted him to emphasise?

John writes his story to show us one thing: That this man Jesus was actually the son of God. And that he came to earth to free the whole human race from sin and death. When we can grasp that, the rest will follow effortlessly. By carefully studying the life story of Jesus, as John has written it down, we come to see what it really means that Jesus is the son of God, an insight and realisation that induces our personal transformation.

Being able to believe Jesus' claim makes all the difference. It will teleport us into a new reality, in which a new behaviour will follow from that change in perception. It means a transformation from death to life by one single deep realisation.

That personal transformation, entering into a new reality, is the purpose of this 'book of John - the Essence of Jesus'. The sequel to this book is the 'book of Revelation As It Is',

which takes us through the general transformation of the whole world as it will change from darkness to light. With these two books you will be introduced to all of the essence of the centuries old story of God and mankind, which is about to find its fulfilment in a not too far away future. And on top of that, our personal transformation will be immediate, it doesn't have to wait for anything other than our own readiness.

The story of Jesus, as written by John, covered in these two books, is a radical story. It cuts right through to the essence. Knowing, understanding and believing these two accounts from the new testament, with some additional contributions from the apostle Paul, is enough to know the magnificent truth about our life and become fully part of it. For people in our fast moving age with an overload of information coming at us, this is the short track to come to the relevant life saving knowledge that is available to us if we search for it and are not easily diverted from our intention.

Gerard Meerstadt, September 26, 2020

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The startling truth

Some people believe that our life is temporary; when you die, the story is over. Others believe that at the death of the body, the soul, the actual conscious person, lives on and enters a new phase of its eternal journey.

Neither of these things is taught by Jesus Christ. He shows us surprisingly that eternal life is optional. Optional? Yes, some people will have eternal life and others won't. And the choice is ours. Not having eternal life has been our default state that we inherited from our parents. When we die we stop existing. Death is the absence of life, of any form of consciousness. Personal intervention by Jesus was required to provide us with the second option, which is eternal life, for everyone who wants to, including those that have already died. How can that be? Just read on.

Eternal life is not something we can earn or attain through our own action, however hard we would try to achieve it. It is a free gift of our loving creator, that is offered to us without any strings attached. In fact, all it takes is that we believe this to be true. And that's where the catch comes in. How can we believe that this is true?

Jesus has already opened up the possibility to have eternal life for every person, the job has already been done and he invites all humans to come and share in it. Now it is up to us to accept the invitation and live our lives from this new perspective. It does not require that we are 'good' people, for in our present state nobody is good enough to attain it by merit.

John shows us, in his description of Jesus' life on earth, who he really is and with what purpose he was among

us. And it all comes down to two things, of which the first is that we may believe that he actually is the son of God, not an ordinary human, but the great creator, who, in his Father's name, has made everything that is. John introduces him as the phenomenal power through which everything that exists has come into being. In modern terms we could say he is the programmer of the reality that we live in. This is an important clue to our understanding and thus believing.

He created the universe, life on our planet, our ancestors and all the processes that maintain life on earth. This immense power, which acts out of universal love, had a compelling reason to come to us, to enter the reality he has made himself, to be born as a human child, growing up to be a perfect human, to help us overcome death, something we could never achieve on our own.

The second reason he lived among us, which we can understand if we acknowledge the first, was to give his perfect human life as a ransom, in the name of mankind, to free us from the acquired bonds of sin and death and restore for us the eternal life that had been intended from the beginning. How this can be is also explained in the story of Jesus, as written by John.

So this is a story that goes far beyond everyday subjects. And we will see how most people would not believe Jesus, would reject him and demand for him to be sentenced to death.

Ever since his presence on earth there has been a fierce opposition towards the simple loving truth of Jesus, many layers of deception have been built around it, as to hide it from us in plain sight. Religious empires have been built around it, while none of their contribution is

needed, materialistic science has been developed to deny his truth, and many more hurdles have been erected to direct searchers for truth into blind alleys. So, we may have some work on our hands to be able to come to the simple acceptance of his gift to us.

On the other hand, Jesus wants us to find his truth and accept his invitation for eternal life, so he will help us as soon as we resonate from within with the truth that he presents.

This truth is plain and simple and here for us to discover and make our own. As soon as we accept his invitation into this new reality, the world around us will change, we will live in the same space, but from a new perspective of eternal life, with truth as our intent and love as our main driver. That changes everything!

In the beginning

(read John chapter 1, the whole book of John is in the appendix)

John doesn't start his story of Jesus with his birth as a child. No, he deliberately approaches the situation from the other side! He starts his introduction with the Word of God. The Word was with God, it exists in his presence, and the Word was God, of the same nature as God himself.

In the original Greek language God is being called 'the God' (ho Theos), and the Word is called 'God' (Theos), without the article 'the'. This illustrates well that the Word directly emanates from God and is an expression of his essence.

This is the text in the World English Bible (WEB)

John 1: 1,2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

In English it appears to be a confusing statement, but in Greek, with the article visible, the difference between 'the God' and the Word is evident:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with **'the God'**, and the Word was **'God'**. The same was in the beginning with **'the God'**.*

In our search for the exact meaning of a scripture, we can find the answer to many questions in the original Greek texts.

Who or what then, is the Word? John continues:

John 1: 3

All things were made through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made.

First there is God, he is the source of all, also of the Word. The Word then created everything that exists and all that is alive. So we can justly call the Word the creator of everything, be it on behalf of God, with the power that God has given him. One could say that after bringing forth the Word, God delegated the rest of creation to him. A little further on in the book John will use the terms father and son for God and the Word.

John 1: 4,5

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness hasn't overcome it.

As we see, the Word is presented as a person here, a powerful creator, with life in himself that was the light of men. Our life comes directly from him. We could see him as the programmer of our reality, comparable to a computer virtual reality that also has a programmer. As the creator he is outside of this world, but he defines all the rules by which it operates. So he is truly the source of this world.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness hasn't overcome it.

These words refer to what has happened after the creation of the world, where everything was perfect. Angels and humans were created in God's image with a free will, the freedom to follow the path of the light, or to choose any other path they wanted. In a perfect world God certainly wanted to have a creation that is really free, with

free choice and a personal responsibility. Their whole life would be a voluntary life, with everything in place to make it a wonderful experience.

That also implied uncertainty about what they would do, which path they would follow. As a consequence some angels have fallen away from the light and have dragged the first humans along with them into a path of darkness. Thus they introduced darkness into the world, which was inescapable for mankind, because the offspring of the first humans came forth after their descent into darkness, without the possibility to return to that perfect path of light and life.

While the human race was intended to live in the light, without death, they have fallen into a situation in which they could not evade death and were lost in a world of darkness, with no escape by their own means possible. That is why the prophets of old, those who have been shown future events in advance, had foretold that the Word itself would come into this world he had made, as the true light in the darkness, to free the human race from their prison of darkness and death and put them back on the road to life and light. And now, in the book of John, this is about to happen.

John 1: 6-8

There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came as a witness, that he might testify about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but was sent that he might testify about the light.

This is not John, the writer of this book, this is John the Baptist, who came to baptize the people in water as a sign

of repentance, in preparation of the coming of the light, that they might recognize the light as such when it would come.

John 1: 9-11

The true light that enlightens everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own, and those who were his own didn't receive him.

John starts his story about the light by revealing how it would end. The world would not recognize its own maker, would let this unique opportunity for a direct encounter slip by. They would not receive him. How sad is this, what an enormous misunderstanding must have been at the basis of this.

There is so much relevance in this little piece of text, that we can hardly grasp it as we read it. The people were dwelling in darkness, without any hope to escape from it on their own. And then this one comes, the true light, to deliver everybody from the bonds of darkness. What he is about to do, will open the way for everybody alive and who has ever lived, to return to the light. But yet they would not recognize him.

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world didn't recognize him.

We, the people, don't recognise our own creator, who wants us to enter the light of life, return home to the much higher plane that we were intended to live on.

He came to his own, and those who were his own didn't receive him.

Because of the dark condition of their mind, 'his own' did not receive him. But he, the true light, does certainly not come in vain. He enlightens everyone, so from that moment on all people would have the opportunity and the ability to come to the light, which was not possible before. But they would have to receive him in order to profit from his presence.

John 1: 12, 13

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become God's children, to those who believe in his name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Imagine what John says here, whoever receives him, which means, acknowledges him as the light that comes to liberate us, he has given the right to become children of God! These are born of God, he says. Human powers cannot establish this, but God himself accepts us as his children if we recognise and receive the light that has come into the world. Then we are born of God, like a new birth, with a new perspective!

John 1: 14-17

The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John testified about him. He cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me, for he was before me.'" From his fullness we all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

Now John reveals to us how the Word, the light of the world, came to us. He became flesh and lived among us! He transformed himself into a human being. Now he is also called the one and only Son of the Father. He turns out to be not only the Word of God, but also the Son of God. That is why he was also called 'God', but not God himself, not 'the God', as we saw in the beginning of the book.

And now John the Baptist reveals to us the human identity of the Word, of the Son of the Father. It is the man Jesus, also called the Christ, the anointed one, for he was anointed for a special assignment here on earth.

This is such a big truth that John shares with us here. 'The word became flesh', or in our normal language, the power that created the whole universe has become human and has lived among us.

This is John's narrative about the background of the man Jesus, he is not presented as just 'a good person', or a prophet, or a saint. He is an entity of far greater significance than we can imagine, who comes down to our level to liberate us from a dark pit of death and fear, from which we could never escape by ourselves.

This world is still living in that dark state now, but individuals can escape from it, ever since the time of Jesus opening the way. Eventually all the world will make that transition, but first individuals will come, through all ages, including now.

'He is full of grace and truth'. His grace is his love for us, regardless of what we do, a love because we are his creation. He knows the imperfect state we are in and he loves to see us happy. He understands that we stumble

daily in our good intentions. He looks beyond those things and has come to us to release us from the burden that we carry along in our lives.

For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

The law that God gave to the Israelites through Moses, was a perfect law and that was the reason no one of the imperfect people could live up to it. They couldn't keep that law, so it did not lead to freedom for them but to judgment. The law makes us aware of sin, said Paul, without the law there would be no definition of sin.

About the concept of 'sin'

The word 'sin' has become so loaded with incorrect meaning in religion, that its real meaning needs some clarification. Sin is a general condition to which all people are subjected, it is the cause of death, and everybody dies. We are all 'under sin'. It relates to our imperfect nature, our inability to do the good things we want to do, our weaknesses, our repeatedly falling back to doing things we do not wish to do. So in the scriptural sense everybody is a sinner, not only the thieves, liars and fornicators, but also the people who are examples to their communities, who do many good works and are known for their unconditional love and helpfulness. All of mankind has to be raised from this condition to a much higher level of life and fulfilment than we are experiencing now.

Thus by means of the law of Moses, people were made aware of sin, but they were not set free from it.

And now 'grace and truth' come to us through Jesus Christ. What a giant leap ahead for all of mankind, for the grace and truth were not just for the Israelites, who lived under the law of Moses, but for all people.

The grace means that through our faith in Christ in his role as our liberator, we are accepted as children of God. For the time being we will remain in our imperfect nature, but we will no longer be held accountable for it, because now we are born of God, we are a new creature. We are considered as being without sin, while yet we remain in our imperfect, sinful, body. We no longer identify with it! But it is still there and that is an issue that can be troublesome for many.

This 'grace and truth' makes a very relevant and decisive difference in our lives. Many people are held back by the guilt and shame they feel for the things they have done wrong in their lives. In many ways they have been taught that they are not good enough to receive God's love and have started to believe this through repetition. The burden of guilt through sin is very common among the peoples of the earth. Religion and cultural beliefs have played a big role in this.

Through his grace Jesus actually says, I know you are imperfect, that you make mistakes and misjudgments, that people may feel that you have hurt them, but all these things are inherent to your present nature. They will be forgiven you, you do not have to feel guilty about them anymore. So even while you will make these kinds of mistakes again tomorrow, you may feel free of them and be a child of God anyhow, and let your spirit be lifted up by that truth, not be bogged down by the notion of sin and guilt.

And the truth has come through Jesus. He explained who God is, how everything is fitted together and how the world will grow towards the intended state of perfection, and how everybody can be part of that world, just by

wanting it, seeing it for the reality that it is, and keep acting accordingly.

John 1: 18

No one has seen God at any time. The one and only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.

The only way in which we can truly get to know God is through the Son, who has lived on earth as the man Jesus and who has taught us. He shows in his own being who God is. They are so much one that further ahead in the story Jesus says "Who has seen me has seen the Father, for the Father and I are one." This means that studying the life and teaching of Jesus and practicing his ways, will bring us in close contact with God, our Father.

The story continues as John the Baptist is at the water to baptize people and Jesus comes to him.

John 1: 29

The next day, he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!"

John the Baptist makes this enormously profound statement. "Behold, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!" Just think about the history of the world, where sin and imperfection have reigned, under the loveless manipulations of the fallen angels, the millions of people who have died through violence and famine, the enormous exploitation and slavery, all those horrible circumstances, that are only increasing in our day, from which no man can deliver us, and then see how indescribably valuable that one line is . . . 'the lamb . . . that takes away the sin of the world!' . . .

Here he comes walking toward John, ‘the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!’ Just think about that, nobody can deliver us from the increasing misery on earth, nothing has ever had a lasting effect, and now Jesus has come to establish a world without sin, where nobody will do any harm and nobody will be unhappy or lonely. If we can really come to see that this statement is actually true in this life, then we will be utterly thrilled by this prospect.

This must be the greatest gift that humanity has ever received! And why is Jesus called the lamb of God? Because the literal lamb, that was sacrificed yearly by the Israelites to atone for their sins, was foreshadowing the sacrifice that Jesus would bring, giving his own life to liberate the people from sin and death. Why and how he saved mankind by this specific act is a theme that needs proper explanation, which will follow in a later stage in this story.

John does not mention that Jesus had come to John the Baptist weeks before, to be baptized himself too. We know that from the other reports about Jesus’ life. First John refused to baptize him, for as a perfect human being he had no reason to repent. Jesus had not been conceived by a father and a mother in the natural way, he was born from a virgin by Divine intervention, in order not to be a descendant of Adam, born under sin, but yet to be a true human being. The reason for all of this is that it required a human being not born under sin, but completely equal to Adam, to undo the consequences of the original sin and the resulting fall from grace.

But Jesus told John it had to be so, and when he baptized Jesus he saw the spirit of God, in the appearance of a dove, descend on Jesus. This was the formal start of his

assignment as Messiah, as Christ. (Both have the same meaning, the first from Hebrew, the second from Greek). Right after his baptism Jesus withdrew into the desert, where he fasted for forty days and was tempted by the devil. But he withstood that test and was fully prepared to start his public task, which was now to begin as he approached the place where John was still baptizing.

The next day Jesus is walking along that place again and John repeats his saying: 'Behold the lamb of God!' Two of the disciples of John hear him say this and they go up to Jesus to be his followers. Thus on this second day back in the public eye, Jesus attracts his first disciples. They tell their story to others who are also coming to follow Jesus. This was the start of Jesus' work among the people as the Christ.

This first chapter of John has shown us the majestic origin of Jesus and the magnitude of his task on earth. Nothing in human history can even come close to this most important 'visit' to earth by the son of God himself. We have now seen how he began this task at the age of thirty, a task that would lead to his death as 'the Lamb of God', with which he would release all mankind from the bondage of sin and death. All of this had been foretold by many Jewish prophets and would now become reality, just as it had been written.

Water to wine

(read John chapter 2)

Everything advances quickly. Jesus has returned from his preparatory withdrawal in the desert on the first day of his public mission, the next day he gathers his disciples around him and on the third day, as a group, they are invited to attend a wedding.

John 2: 1-5

The third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. Jesus also was invited, with his disciples, to the marriage. When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with you and me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever he says to you, do it."

This is an amazing and amusing event at the start of Jesus' mission as the Christ. You could say he makes a relaxed start, for he takes time to attend a marriage feast.

It may have been a very lively party, for too soon all the wine was gone. That was certainly not a problem of global proportions, but it was a pity for the guests who were having a good time. And there was Jesus' mother, telling him that they have no wine anymore, as if to say 'You can do something about that.'

He takes her remark as such indeed, for he gives her a somewhat reluctant reply in the sense of 'that is not my concern'. But his mother obviously senses that something is going to happen, for in spite of his answer she tells the servants to do whatever he may say.

And then we get a first glimpse of how Jesus is connected to his origin and to his power as the creator of life itself. What is going to happen here is very interesting for us, for it will teach us much about Jesus and about how life is constructed.

He asks the servants to fill six stone water pots, that happen to be there, with water, then draw out some of it and take it to the feast leader, who does not know where the drink comes from. He tastes it and then he calls the bridegroom and praises him for saving the best wine for last.

And the guests could drink on merrily. But what do we see happening here? There was no process of turning the water into wine, no effort from Jesus' side, no ritual, nothing. He needed to do nothing more than to will it and instantly the jars contained wine of superb quality.

Remember the Word of God, he speaks it and it is there. 'Let there be light' and the light was there. It is this same creative power that Jesus demonstrates here on a small scale. It shows that he has complete mastery over matter, over reality, and that he can change that reality at will, without any effort.

He can obviously still work from outside of our world, is not subjected to its natural and physical laws. It was a miracle for those inside our reality, who cannot understand how he can do these things. To him it is not a miracle, he does what he is used to do on a much larger scale. On his level of awareness it is a routine thing to do.

Here we see how John shows Jesus to us, as the original creator of the world. He is the only one of the four biographers of Jesus to record this event. Providing some