

John 1

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 18 November 2014 10:50

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος

This first verse of John is awe-inspiring and contains some of the most dramatic, magnificent words in any literature! The first three words appear in Hebrew at the very start of scripture, Genesis 1:1. In these words, written by the Apostle John, brother of James, and much loved by Jesus, we have all the majesty of God-given (inspired) text. We know very little of John apart from what we find in the Bible – the rest is assumption and historical guesswork. He wrote this book before he was exiled to the Greek island of Patmos, where he wrote The Revelation.

His book appears to ‘fill in the gaps’ left by the other apostolic writers, though we ought not imply from this that the others forgot to include these details. This is not possible, because the scriptures are inspired and men wrote what God gave them to write, without contradictions. Thus, it was John’s task to complete his own book, by direct command of the Holy Spirit, who spoke to him of ta *pneumatika* – spiritual things.

(Note that the first few verses are necessarily ‘technical’, to deal with misconceptions and the inroads made by cultic teachings).

Verse 1

1.

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

Note that ‘Word’ in this text has a capital letter ‘W’. It was inserted to mark this ‘word’ as special – it refers to the Person, Jesus Christ, Son of God. In a sense there was no real need to place this emphasis on ‘word’ because a proper reading of the text shows us that the ‘word’ (in this text) means ‘Jesus Christ’, Who is the very embodiment of what God as a Trinity says to mankind. This can be known even without use of the capital ‘W’, because of its context and reference to Him as ‘God’, and, in this case, the inclusion of the Greek definite article, οἱ, before ‘logos’. (Note: when used without a definite article, it is known as an anarthrous noun). Even if the definite article was not in the verse, ‘word’ means, in this case, Jesus Christ, Who was with the other two persons of the Trinity and was/is God Himself.

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The reader should understand that though the Greek is the same – *logos* - there are two meanings for ‘word’ in scripture... and almost all Christians (including seasoned writers, pastors and theologians) get it wrong! The word ‘word’ can mean either Jesus Christ, or the things said by God. They are two different meanings, but many believers use them as if they were the same (See my article, A-087: ‘The Word and the word’), which causes some texts to lose their meaning.

So, Jesus Christ was “the Word”, Who was “in the beginning”. The beginning of what? He was there when time began and when everything was made, *archē*... the origin of everything. The statement also means it was Jesus Who was there personally to commence everything – creation. This does NOT mean Jesus was created or did not come into being until the Creation. He has been, because he is God. The term simply means Jesus was instrumental in Creation.

The Word, Jesus Christ, was “with God”, *theos*, at the beginning of creation. That is, He existed with Him. This means He is also extant – He just ‘is’... he exists by His own will, and was not created, as the verb *ēn* testifies. This verb is also a testament to the fact that God Himself gave this message to John, for it also means “I was (in the beginning)”. The preposition, ‘with’ (

pros

), shows us that Jesus was ‘with’, or in the same position as, God. It is of interest that in Genesis 1, the word ‘God’ is used to describe more than one Person in the Godhead, though, in Genesis, it does not

obviously

expand to include three people, only a minimum of two, and possibly more than two. Here, *theos*

is used to describe the Trinity in full. However, in this text, ‘God’ is more accurately taken to mean the supreme deity, the One true God, the ‘Three in One’.

The third reference, “the Word was God”, clearly identifies the Word (Jesus Christ) as being God Himself. Or, as we now know, the second person in the Trinity. And, as we have seen, the verb ‘was’, *ēn*, means “I was”. Thus, God is telling us that the Word, Jesus Christ, is God! (The New World translation, the corrupt Bible of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, omits the definite article that was in the original text and inserts an indefinite article, ‘a’, thus making out that Jesus was not ‘The’ God, but only ‘a’ god, a lesser being than God. This is ludicrous, because in koine Greek there is no indefinite article and so it cannot be found in the text!). The construction of this first verse is very ‘tight’ and precise, and means what it says! It is a beautifully formed verse.

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Verses 2&3

1.

The same was in the beginning with God.

2.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Verse one gives the overall statement, and verse two repeats the last phrase, saying that Jesus was there with the Trinity at creation. 'Beginning', *archē*, does NOT refer to the beginning of God or Heaven, but to the start of time, which only applies to this creation, the whole cosmos, and not to anything uncreated – God or where He is. "The same",

houtos

– means this, or this man, or he: 'this same Jesus was with God at the start'.

Everything was made by 'him'. Who is 'him'? It was Jesus Christ, or "this person here", an emphatic phrase that usually precedes some other statement. That is, 'he' made everything, and nothing that exists could exist unless He had first made them. By 'He' is meant God, the Trinity.

Verses 4&5

1.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

2.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

"In him was life", or "by Him was life"; the preposition, 'in' (*en*), indicates that He was the

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instrument through Whom life came. What is meant by 'life',

z

ōē

? The noun can mean several things; in this text it means that He gives the very breath we need to live on this earth; it also means He animates every living soul (the mind, etc) and gives fullness of that life, when it is committed to God and is faithful. This new life (the spiritual kind) is only found in those who are elect. The principle of human life is found in every man who is ever born, but the inward, spiritual life is only found in the elect who are saved following their rebirth or regeneration. This life was the "light",

phōs

, of men. By this is meant the light of God, Whose very presence emits light, of purity, holiness and truth, and gives those who are saved the ability to think truly. (This is why atheists make no sense and cannot think or speak logically).

This ability or light shines through the darkness, *scotia*. That is, in a world made blind by sin; wickedness; from *skotos...* ignorance concerning God, leading to misery and hell. Sadly, because darkness causes men not to see, they cannot see or understand the light when it shines into their lives. Rather, men hid from the light because it hurt their spiritual eyes. Because they hid they did not understand and so could not grasp the truth. Their minds remained ignorant and unsaved. This means that Arminian-style preaching and 'persuasion' have no effect on the unsaved mind and heart... unbelievers CANNOT understand, and will not, unless the Holy Spirit brings them to new birth.

Verses 6-9

1.

There was a man sent from God, whose name [was] John.

2.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all [men] through him might believe.

3.

He was not that Light, but [was sent] to bear witness of that Light.

4.

[That] was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

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Having dealt with preliminary, vital definitions, John starts to relate the account of John the Baptist, who was “sent by God”. The word ‘sent’ indicates that John was the first New Testament apostle, as well as the last of the Old Testament prophets. ‘Sent’, is the verb, *apostellō*. It means that John was commanded by the Holy Spirit to do what he did, ‘sent forth’ as the messenger of God. This verb, *apostellō*, is akin to the masculine noun, *apostolos* (apostle), which is used in several other contexts (e.g. Matthew 10:16, “behold I send you...”; *apostellō* is the root of *apostolos* and can be used in the same way.

It should be noted that the word and role of apostle is much maligned today, with some saying that apostles no longer exist, and others claiming to be apostles even though their characters and work are definitely sinful! Both beliefs are erroneous and based on ignorance of the biblical interpretation. An apostle is a man sent by God with His message, and whose effect on the people is strong, very obvious, and true. That is, an apostle is an eminent preacher (not because he says so of himself, but because it is obvious to all who hear or see him).

Though few are known today because of their lack of spiritual truth and personhood, we should not discount their existence in every age. Some attempt to point to someone like Billy Graham, but his liberal and often heretical stance disallows him from being an apostle. The same can be said of all men in the charismatic movement who claim the title for themselves. Note that the twelve Apostles were superior to, and different from, any other apostles who have arisen since their time, including the other apostles mentioned in Paul’s writings.

John the Baptist, then, was both the first apostle of the New Testament and the last great prophet - the greatest - of the Old. He was sent by God to prepare the way for the Messiah, as an herald of His coming. This can be gleaned from his name, John, *Iōannēs* (said ee-oh-an-ays), meaning “Jehovah is a gracious giver”. He was the prized son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, both of whom were holy and devout, and close relation of Jesus. His name is Hebraic rooted, as *Yowchanan*

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(‘Jehovah has graced’, the Hebrew version of John).

He came as a witness to Jesus (verse 7), called here “the Light”. He came so that “all (men) through him might believe”. A witness is one who actually sees what he tells others about. John (Baptist) knew Jesus as his relative and as the Christ/Messiah, therefore his word about Him was to be trusted. The word ‘witness’ also foretells the end of John, who was beheaded... witness is based on the word for martyr – *martyria*. John was sent to testify prophetically about Jesus the Messiah, and his words had all the weight of a legal statement (*martys*) or testimony.

“All men” does NOT imply literally everyone who is ever born. This would be against all biblical logic and actual fact, for, evidently, not all are saved. The word ‘all’, *pas*, can, at times, mean everyone, but, in this context (as in, say, John 3:16 and ‘whosoever’), it has the collective meaning of ‘some of all types’. That is, some from every nation and kind of person.

Those who are saved are saved “through” the Light, Jesus Christ. ‘Through’, *dia*, is a preposition indicating the channel of an act, so the phrase, in this context, can be put as: “many of all kinds will be saved because of the actions and will of the Messiah’. There is, then, no other means to be saved, other than by and through Jesus Christ. All other claims to salvic action are therefore false, including the claims made for Allah and any/all cultic gods. “Might believe” can read: “Will believe”, for those who are elect have no option but to be saved by and through Christ. There can be no option because God cannot make a mistake, nor does He call someone knowing they will not respond as He wishes and wills.

To “believe”, *pisteuō*, means to be fully persuaded that what one believes in is absolutely true. This leads a man to have utter confidence in the One he believes in, and acts accordingly, with high moral and ethical tone. The root, *pistis*, shows that this belief also trusts implicitly in the relationship between God and the saved man, and this engenders an active testimony amongst men in general. It also means a total belief and trust that God made everything and rules what was created; trust that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah. Thus, to believe is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth, but an active faith in the One Who saves, changing the life into one of discipleship and obedience. In essence, then, it is like marriage, where the bride and groom become ‘as one’.

The witness, John the Baptist, was “not that Light”, but was only the bearer of facts to the world,

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that the Light was about to be manifest, and so the Jews must be prepared spiritually for His coming, because when He finally came, He would demand that all who believe will submit to Him and live lives of faith.

Verses 10-14

1.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

2.

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

3.

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:

4.

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

5.

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.

John then says that though the Messiah came, and He was the One Who created everything, "the world knew him not". This tells us that the word 'all' in verse seven cannot possibly mean 'everyone without exception'. This is also how we should view the term 'world' (kosmos - world) in 3:16. The teaching in both 3:16 and here refers not to everyone, but to the elect, as opposed to the ungodly masses who hate God and Christ. In particular, it refers to the Jews who rejected their own Messiah.

We certainly see this today as ungodly, wicked men persuade others to join them in their hatred

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and sin. Today, as then, they “knew him not”... though His words and actions were obviously godly and miraculous, the unsaved peoples refused to accept Him and did not understand what He was saying or doing. This, friends, is ultimate spiritual blindness, when minds and hearts reject what they have seen and heard with their own eyes and ears! It is illogical and irrational! Worse, this rejection came from those who were privileged to have Him born of their own stock.

Those who accepted the Messiah and His Gospel (‘received Him’) became “sons of God”. The words “as many as” shows conclusively that only some were saved, not all, which itself tells us that election was the controlling factor, and NOT human will and choice. Those who were saved “received Him” – they took Him to themselves, claiming His promises. Because of this faith (which can only come after regeneration/being born again), He “gave them power to become the sons of men”. Thus, only Christ can sanction a man to belong to God. He does so by giving them the “power”, *exousia*, to do so.

Exousia can have one of several meanings, and any meaning is always dependent on context. In this context this ‘power’ refers to people who were now married to the bridegroom, and so were given permission to become sons of men, the *teknon* or offspring of God, who were now learners or disciples, led by the Spirit... something that can only happen to those who are elect and saved. In other words, a salvation given to “them that believe on his name”. That is, they believe totally in God and His Son, and everything They command.

Such saved people were not just born of blood (through being born of Jewish bloodline), or of a mother (flesh) nor did they become sons of God by willing it on themselves (choice – Arminianism). Rather, they could only be sons of God because God chose them in the first place. There is no other route to salvation.

The Word (note the capital, showing that this word has a prefacing [often silent] definite article, making this ‘Word’ Jesus Christ) was “made flesh”... He was born in human form, taking on human life, whilst retaining His godhood. As an human being He lived amongst men. In this way those who saw Jesus saw the divine glory belonging to God: “the only begotten” – or Son. And on this earth He was filled with divine grace and truth. He could not exist any other way!

Verses 15-18

1.

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

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2.

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

3.

For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

4.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [him].

John spoke publicly of the Messiah, telling everyone that Jesus was the very One he preached about, the reason for the countless Jewish baptisms of repentance. John proclaimed that it was Jesus, not he, Who must be preferred. The word 'preferred', in this context, means to suddenly appear on the world stage, or, in public. It includes coming miracles. And, said John, "he was before me"... the first in time and first in rank and honour... the Alpha, especially as He is uncreated.

We have received "of His fullness". This means that if we are saved we have, in us, God's power and presence, and have blessings He has promised. Because of this we have grace piled upon grace... overflowing. Moses gave the Jews the law, which can never be satisfied or fully followed, but Jesus gave us grace and truth, bounded by free salvation through grace. Jesus fulfilled the law on our behalf, so that we are never again brought to our knees by its demands. He paid the price of the law, instead of us, that we, the elect, might not have to suffer the consequences of our sin. Sadly, the same does not apply to the non-elect, the unsaved.

Nobody has seen the Father in all of history, but Jesus Christ, the Son Who is loved by His Father, has shown Him to us. As Jesus once told His followers, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father (14:9).

Verses 19-24

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1.

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

2.

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

3.

And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

4.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

5.

He said, I [am] the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

6.

And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

When the Sanhedrin sent priests and Levites (Pharisees, who became the perpetual harassers of Christ) to ask John who he was, he replied "I am not the Christ/Messiah". They pressed him for an answer: 'Are you, then, Elijah?' Again, John rejected the idea: "I am not". They repeated their query "Are you that prophet (Elijah)?" He said "No". But, they would not leave him alone and again demanded to know who he was, so that they could report back to the Sanhedrin.

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John finally gave them an answer, telling them that he was a messenger from God, preaching in a spiritual wilderness, as spoken of by the prophet Isaiah. 'It is my task to prepare the path for the Messiah.'

Verses 25-28

1.

And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

2.

John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

3.

He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

4.

These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Pharisees were irritated by his answer. 'If you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah or Isaiah... why do you baptise people?' John then made plain what these religious leaders did not comprehend: "I baptise with water", and then he said that the One Who was preferred by the Father, and Who was not yet known to them, was the worthy One. Compared to Him, John, said, he was not even worthy to untie his shoes! And so came the first show of anger from the Sanhedrin against John, but also against the Christ they would soon come to know. At that time John was baptising in Bethabara ('house of the ford'), which was 'beyond Jordan'. 'Beyond', *per an*, means the other side of the Jordan.

Verses 29-34

1.

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

2.

This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

3.

And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

4.

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

5.

And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

6.

And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

After his confrontation with the messengers of the Sanhedrin, John was again baptising, probably in the same place. Suddenly, he saw Jesus making His way to the river bank, and said "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world"! Immediately, this told the Jews waiting to be baptised that Jesus was the Messiah and sacrifice spoken of in prophecy, and, that He had the authority and power to remove the penalty for sins. Only God could do that, so the news was electrifying to the assembled Jews.

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It is most likely that the Pharisees who had badgered John the previous day were still there. Hence John's next words 'This is the One I told you was better than me, and Who lived before I was born.' He acknowledged that until that moment he "knew him not". That is, he had not seen Him until that day, which suggests that though he was related, they had not met before Jesus was aged thirty (John was six months older). But, now, John said, Jesus, the Messiah, appears before men, before you all. He said it was his humble role to baptise Jews who repented, with water. (Note that this Jewish act of repentance was NOT the same as being baptised as a believer).

John testifies that, as Jesus walked into the river, he witnessed a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, descend from the sky and sit upon Jesus. As the dove landed on Him, John was reminded by God of what He had told him previously – that the Person the dove descended upon was the Messiah, the One Who would baptise with the Holy Ghost! Therefore, as soon as John saw it happening, and was reminded of what God had told him, he declared "This is the Son of God". God was protecting John to that point, for anyone who said that a man was the Son of God was, in the eyes of the Pharisees and Sanhedrin, uttering grave blasphemy deserving of death.

Verses 35-42

1.

Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

2.

And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

3.

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

4.

Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

5.

He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him

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that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

6.

One of the two which heard John [speak], and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

7.

He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

8.

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

The next day, two disciples who followed John the Baptist, were nearby when he said of Jesus "Behold the Lamb of God". The two disciples immediately followed Jesus. Jesus turned around and asked them what they wanted. The two disciples asked Him, 'Master, where do you live'? He replied "Come and see", so they followed Him and stayed with Him for the day, because it was, by then, between about 2pm and 4pm (depending on the season). We can be left in no doubt that Jesus spoke to them of His ministry and God's word.

One of the men was Andrew, brother of Peter, who went to find Peter to tell him he and his fellow disciple had found the Messiah (*Messias* is the Greek form of the Hebrew, *Messiah*, which is itself the English transliteration of *mashiyach*, 'the anointed one'). In Greek, the Messiah is also known as the Christ, or *Christos*

Excited by his find, Andrew took Peter to see Jesus. Jesus immediately knew who he was, having divine knowledge: 'You are Simon, son of Jona. You will now be called Cephas!' Simon is the Hebrew name *Shim'own*, (said, Shim-orn: 'heard'); he was the son of Jona ('dove'). Peter

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is the Greek form of Simon. It means a small rock or stone. Jesus used a form of this name, by calling Simon 'Cephas', which emphasises the fact that Simon/Peter was a 'stone'.

This is an important distinction, for a stone is much smaller than a rock, 'Rock' being the name given to Christ as God. The Aramaic root, *keph*, adds to this smallness, because it means a hollow in a rock, and not so much the rock itself. The difference is vital when reading such passages as, say, 1 Corinthians 10:4, which states,

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

This definition immediately tells us that when Jesus referred to the 'rock' in Matthew 16:18, He was talking about Himself and not about Peter: Jesus was the larger 'Rock', and Peter was the much smaller 'stone'.

Verses 43-46

1.

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

2.

Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

3.

Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

4.

And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Next day, after renaming Simon, Jesus went back to Galilee. There, He saw Philip (*Philippus*, 'lover of horses') and told him to follow Him. The word 'findeth' implies that Jesus looked out for him. The term "follow me" tells us that Philip was commanded to be Jesus' disciple. And he did

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so, immediately.

Philip came from Bethsaida, the small home village of Andrew and Peter. (Bethsaida, 'house of fish', which is appropriate when considering Peter's occupation. It is at the top western coast of Lake Galilee/also known as Lake Gennesaret).

Like Andrew and Peter, Philip was excited by this new meeting and went off to find his friend, Nathanael ('gift of God', who some believe to be Bartholomew). Philip told him that he had now seen the One prophesied by Moses and the prophets – Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph! This was a significant thing to say, for 'Jesus' means 'Jehovah is salvation', thus acknowledging that Jesus was the Saviour, God come as man. Nathanael quoted a common saying of his day: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (Nazareth was thought at that time to be a dilapidated place from which no-one of note came). Philip simply said, possibly with a broad smile, "Come and see"! What better way to know Christ than to "Come and see"? Nathanael was roused to look for himself and followed his friend.

Verses 47-51

1.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

2.

Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

3.

Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

4.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

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5.

And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Before he reached Jesus, Jesus said 'Here comes a true Israelite, who is as honest as they come – he does not use craftiness or deceit!' Nathanael was taken aback by Jesus' friendly and knowledgeable greeting. He asked Jesus how He knew him. Jesus told him that He had seen him earlier in the shade of a fig tree, even before Philip went to find him. Nathanael was immediately convinced! 'Master, you are indeed the Son of God, the King of Israel'!

Jesus said, 'What? You believe in me though all I did was tell you I saw you under a fig tree? I can tell you, Nathanael, you will come to see far greater things than that!' Jesus then told the four men something amazing – they would see angels come down from the skies to greet Him and return to Heaven, because He is the Son of Man. This was a wondrous thing to hear from someone they had only just met! And, as today, the proof is not in what one says, but in what he says actually coming true. Many so-called 'Christians' today tell lies; they teach that they have a power they do not have, proving themselves to be deceivers.

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