

John 1

Ep 186: CFM

In the Beginning was the Word (John 1.1-14)

1. The prologue – John 1.1-18. Is this a hymn? Many assert that this is an early Christian hymn.¹
 - a. John is expressing a new creation. He is using ideas like “in the beginning,” “life,” “light,” and “darkness,” to evoke images that are contained in Genesis 1.² Genesis 1 describes God’s first creation, John’s theme here is God’s new creation, for here we have Jesus, God made flesh as the word or expression of the Father,³ coming into the world of darkness to save it.
2. In the Beginning was the Word (“The Logos”).

¹ Some see this as a hymn that existed originally in Aramaic. Raymond Brown, [*The Gospel According to John I-XII A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*](#), Doubleday, 1966, p. 10. This part of John may have existed as a prologue to the entire gospel (Brown, p. 8). Brown writes, “(this was) an early Christian hymn, probably stemming from Johannine circles, which has been adapted to serve as an overture to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate Word.” Brown, p. 2. Leon Morris, quoting G.Campbell Morgan, writes that “In these eighteen verses we have an explanation of everything that follows from the nineteenth verse of chapter one, to the twenty-ninth verse of chapter twenty. All that follows is intended to prove the accuracy of the things declared in the first eighteen verses ... it is a summation; everything is found in those first eighteen verses.” Leon Morris, [*The Gospel According to John*](#), Eerdmans, 1971, p. 71.

² Morris, p. 72-73.

³ President Nelson used this term when he said, “Under the direction of the Father, Jesus bore the responsibility of Creator. His title was “the Word,” spelled with a capital W (see JST, John 1:16, Bible appendix). In the Greek language of the New Testament, **that Word was Logos, or “expression.”** It was another name for the Master. That terminology may seem strange, but it is appropriate. ***We use words to convey our expression to others. So Jesus was the Word, or expression, of His Father to the world.***” Elder Russell M. Nelson, [*Jesus Christ: Our Master and More, April 2000 Conference*](#).

- a. Ἐν ἀρχῇ⁴ ἦν ὁ λόγος⁵ καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς⁶ τὸν Θεόν καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος “In the beginning was the LOGOS and the LOGOS was with God and God was the LOGOS” (John 1.1).

⁴ ἀρχῇ - Beginning, origin. Sovereignty, dominion, authority, the first place of power. The first principal element. The end or extremity of something. Command, that is, of a body of troops. Heavenly powers. See: Henry George Liddell. Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. revised and augmented throughout by. Sir Henry Stuart Jones. with the assistance of. Roderick McKenzie. Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1940.

⁵ Λόγος- That which is said: word, sentence, speech, story, utterance, or idea. The logos is also reason, consideration, computation, or reckoning. An account, explanation, or narrative. The idea of the logos in Greek thought harks back at least to the 6th-century-BCE philosopher **Heraclitus**, who discerned in the cosmic process a logos analogous to the reasoning power in humans. Later, **the Stoics**, philosophers who followed the teachings of the thinker Zeno of Citium (4th–3rd century BCE), **defined the logos as an active rational and spiritual principle that permeated all reality**. They called the logos providence, nature, god, and the soul of the universe, which is composed of many seminal logoi that are contained in the universal logos. **Philo Judaeus** (Philo of Alexandria), a 1st-century-CE Jewish philosopher, **taught that the logos was the intermediary between God and the cosmos**, being both the agent of creation and the agent through which the human mind can apprehend and comprehend God. According to **Philo and the Middle Platonists** (philosophers who interpreted in religious terms the teachings of Plato), **the logos was both immanent in the world and at the same time the transcendent divine mind**.

In the first chapter of The Gospel According to John, Jesus Christ is identified as “the Word” (Greek logos) incarnated, or made flesh. This identification of Jesus with the logos is based on Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) concepts of revelation, such as occurs in the frequently used phrase “the Word of the Lord”—which connoted ideas of God’s activity and power—and the Jewish view that Wisdom is the divine agent that draws humans to God and is identified with the word of God. **The author of The Gospel According to John used this philosophical expression, which easily would be recognizable to readers in the Hellenistic (Greek cultural) world, to emphasize the redemptive character of the person of Christ, whom the author describes as “the way, and the truth, and the life.”** Just as the Jews had viewed the Torah (the Law) as preexistent with God, so also the author of John viewed Jesus, but Jesus came to be regarded as the personified source of life and illumination of humankind. St. John interprets the logos as inseparable from the person of Jesus and does not simply imply that the logos is the revelation that Jesus proclaims.

The identification of Jesus with the logos, which is implied in various places in the New Testament but stated specifically in The Gospel According to John, was further developed in the early church but more on the basis of Greek philosophical ideas than on Old Testament motifs. This development was dictated by attempts made by early Christian theologians and apologists to express the Christian faith in terms that would be intelligible to the Hellenistic world and to impress their hearers with the view that Christianity was superior to, or heir to, all that was best in pagan philosophy. Thus, in their apologies and polemical works, **the early Apostolic (Christian) Fathers stated that Christ, as the preexistent logos, (1) reveals the Father to humankind** and is the subject of the Old Testament manifestations of God; (2) **is the divine reason in which the whole human race shares**, so that Heraclitus and others who lived with reason were Christians before Christ; and (3) **is the divine will and word by which the worlds were framed**. Britannica, [logos](#), accessed 7.1.2020. Raymond Brown explained it this way: **“It was the Stoics who really developed the concept of the Logos**. They abandoned Plato's heavenly archetypes in favor of the thought (more akin to Heraclitus) that **the universe is pervaded by the Logos, the eternal Reason**. The term Logos gave expression to their deep conviction of the rationality of the universe. They did not think of the Logos as personal, so they did not understand it as we would God. For them it was essentially a principle or force. **But the important thing is that if it was a principle it was the supreme principle of the universe**. It was the force that originated and permeated and directed all things. When John used the term Logos, then, he used a term that would be widely recognized among the Greeks. The average man would not know its precise significance to the philosophers (any more than his modern counterpart knows what the scientist understands by, say, “nuclear fission”). But he would know that it meant something very important. John could scarcely have wed the Greek term without arousing in the minds of those who used the Greek language thoughts of something supremely great

3. The Word was with God (John 1.1).⁷
4. The same was in the beginning **with God**. (John 1.2)
 - a. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ **πρὸς τὸν Θεόν**. To me, John is drawing a distinction. Jesus was πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, meaning that he was “with or near God.” Yet Jesus is God. So we have both the Father and the Son together in the pre-earth council preparing to “make all things.” This fits squarely into the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith with respect to the nature of God and the things designated in the temple with respect to creation. It is important to note that the early Christians struggled to define Jesus’ relationship with the Father. Debates ensued to pinpoint the orthodox position, and it came to a head in the 4th century. These Christians worked to write a document that expressed their views on Christ, his nature, and his relationship to the Father. The Nicene Creed was one of these documents, followed by the Athanasian Creed, which was probably composed in the 5th century.⁸
5. All things were made by him (John 1.3).
 - a. Jesus is the creator under the direction of his Father.⁹
6. Jesus is the light and the life of men (John 1.4-5).
 - a. The light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not (John 1.5).¹⁰
 - b. *I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world... And John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory, and the fulness of John’s record is hereafter*

in the universe. But, though he would not have been unmindful of the associations aroused by the term, his essential thought does not derive from the Greek background. His Gospel shows little trace of acquaintance with Greek philosophy and less of dependence upon it. **And the really important thing is that John in his use of Logos is cutting clean across one of the fundamental Greek ideas.** The Greeks thought of the gods as detached from the world, as regarding its struggles and heartaches and joys and fears with serene divine lack of feeling. John's idea of the Logos conveys exactly the opposite idea. John's Logos does not show us a God who is serenely detached, but a God who is passionately involved. The Logos speaks of God's coming where we are, taking our nature upon Himself, entering the world's struggle, and out of this agony winning men's salvation.” Raymond Brown, [The Gospel According to John](#), p. 116-117.

⁶ πρὸς - (gen.) to, for; (dat.) on, at, near, by; (acc.) to, toward; with; in order to; against. For uses of πρὸς in the New Testament, see Mounce, [Greek Dictionary](#), accessed 12.1.22.

⁷ This use of the Greek in John 1.1 (πρὸς τὸν Θεόν) does give the impression that the Word was “with” or “towards” or “next” to the Father. This lends itself to the way the Prophet Joseph Smith expressed the Son as separate in person yet one in purpose with the Eternal Father.

⁸ The Athanasian Creed deals, in two parts, with the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation. The first section operates primarily through **thrice-repeated assertions of equal attributes**-uncreated, unlimited, eternal, omnipotent-which are then **said to make the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not three but one**. The second section enumerates events from the life of Jesus in a way similar to the Apostles' Creed, but unlike the Apostles' or the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creeds, it includes anathemas. At the beginning of each section and at the end of the whole, it declares belief in its statements necessary for salvation. The Athanasian Creed forms an important part of Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Anglican liturgies... it was never accepted as an Eastern Orthodox confession. See: Everett Ferguson, [Encyclopedia of Early Christianity](#), Routledge, p. 137.

⁹ [“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles”](#) states: “Under the direction of His Father, [Jesus Christ] was the creator of the earth. ‘All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made’ ([John 1:3](#))” *Ensign or Liahona*, Apr. 2000, 2.

¹⁰ “I testify that Christ is the light to all mankind. He has pointed, marked out, and lighted the way. Sadly, many individuals and nations have extinguished that light and have attempted to supplant His gospel with coercion and the sword. But even to those who reject Him, He is ‘the light which shineth in the darkness’ (John 1:5).” Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, Bookcraft, 1988, p. 20.

to be revealed. And he bore record, saying: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was; Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation— The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. (D&C 93.2, 6-10)

7. John as witness (John 1.6-8).
 - a. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light (John 1.8).
 - i. Elder Bednar cautioned, “We must be careful to remember in our service that we are conduits and channels; **we are not the light**...It is never about me and it is never about you. In fact, anything you or I do as an instructor that knowingly and intentionally draws attention to self—in the messages we present, in the methods we use, or in our personal demeanor—is a form of priestcraft that inhibits the teaching effectiveness of the Holy Ghost.”¹¹
 - b. This is the beginning of John’s seven-fold witness of Jesus Christ (see below).
8. Jesus is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1.9)¹²
9. He came unto **his own**, and his own received him not (John 1.11).
 - a. εἰς τὰ ἴδια¹³ ἦλθεν καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον.
10. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God (John 1.12).
 - a. *And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. (Mosiah 5.7)*¹⁴
11. The Word was made flesh and **dwelt among us** (John 1.14).
 - a. Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν. This use of the verb σκηνώω indicates the Jesus “tenting” or “tabernacled” among men. John is using this word to hearken our minds back to the Exodus and God coming into the holy tent of meeting.

¹¹ David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," Address to CES Religious Educators, 3 Feb. 2006, 4, emphasis added.

¹² See D&C 93.2-10.

¹³ εἰς τὰ ἴδια “into his own,” neuter plural. The Greek term ἴδιος refers to one’s own, or pertaining to oneself. One’s own personal or private business. This term also applies to one’s own personal place of origin. C.K. Barrett writes, “εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν – He came to his own property, his home. The aorist points to a unique coming, the incarnation, and the ‘home’ to which Jesus came was Israel.” Barrett, [The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text](#) (second edition), Westminster Press, 1978, p. 163.

¹⁴ The scriptures use these terms **in two ways**. In one sense, **we are all literal spirit children of our Heavenly Father**. In another sense, God’s sons and daughters are those who have been born again through the Atonement of Christ. All humans are children of God. This verse in John (when read in connection with King Benjamin’s address) makes a distinction. We are to become children of Christ, through covenant. There is a difference. Paul taught that **humans are the offspring of God**. He taught: *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. (Acts 17.29)*. The author of Hebrews acknowledged that God is the father of our spirits (Hebrews 12.9). For texts that emphasize the importance of **becoming children of Christ** see the following: Romans 8.14 - *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*. See also 3 Nephi 9.17 - *And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name*. See also D&C 11.30 - *But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name*.

- b. "A remarkable doctrine is taught here. The same Jesus Christ who is God the Son *is also one of us. He was human in every respect* ('in all things')-right down to being tempted like other human beings. And because he personally has been tempted, Christ can understand what temptation is. From his own personal experience of the human condition, he understands what we are dealing with here, and he can empathize with us and help us overcome temptation just as he overcame it."¹⁵

John the Baptist bore witness of Jesus at Bethabara (John 1.15-28)

1. John the Baptist's testimony consists of acknowledging the greatness of Jesus: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." (John 1.15)
2. Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace (John 1.17).
3. 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 1.18).¹⁶

John's Interaction with the questioning Priests and Levites (John 1.19-28)

1. Who are you? (John 1.19).
2. "I am not the Christ" (John 1.20).
3. Are you Elias? Are you that prophet? (John 1.22).
4. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord!" as Isaiah the prophet said. (John 1.23).
5. Why do you baptize if you are not Christ or Elias, neither that prophet? (John 1.25).
6. He it is of whom I bear record. He is that prophet, even Elias, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose, or whose place I am not able to fill; for he shall baptize, not only with water, but with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. (John 1.26-27 JST change included).

Jesus comes to John to be baptized (John 1.29-34)

1. Behold the Lamb of God! (John 1.29).
2. "I knew him not" (John 1.31, 33).¹⁷

¹⁵ Stephen E. Robinson, [Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News](#), Deseret Book, 1992, p.112.

¹⁶ Joseph Fielding Smith approaches this text by asserting the many Biblical passages that show that God has appeared to mankind. He states, "passages that declare that no man has seen him, must be in error." Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 volumes, Deseret Book, 2:161-163. LeGrand Richards takes a different approach. He sees this as teaching that man can only see God when quickened by the Spirit of God. See: *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, Deseret Book, 1950, 20-21. To me, the best explanation is that of David Butler, which will take some time to unpack. See the commentary at the end of the notes. See: Butler, [The Goodness and the Mysteries](#), p. 33.

¹⁷ Bruce R. McConkie writes, "John is bearing record of what he saw and learned on the occasion of Jesus' baptism. Hence, he says "I knew him," rather than, "I knew him not," as the King James Version erroneously has it." McConkie, [The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary](#), Volume 1, Deseret Book, 2002. The [JST of John chapter 1](#) essentially has John testifying that he knew Jesus in both verse 31 and 34. Raymond Brown offers this possible explanation of this difficult passage: "The statement that until the baptism John the Baptist did not recognize Jesus as the one to come implies that John the Baptist was not too familiar with Jesus, although some would claim that *he knew Jesus, but not as the pre-existent one* (Bernard, I, p. 48). *It is not clear if this can be reconciled with the relationship between the two posited in the Lucan infancy narrative*. However, *Luke 1.80 does suggest that John*

- a. κάγω οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν = “I knew him not.”
 - b. The full verse reads: κάγω οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν ἀλλ’ ἵνα φανερωθῆ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι βαπτίζων. “I knew him not, rather, **in order that he is manifest** to Israel, through this I have come to the water and am baptizing *now*” (my translation).¹⁸
3. John bears witness that Jesus is the “Son of God” (John 1.43).

We have found the Messiah! Andrew and Simon Peter follow Jesus (John 1.35-42)

1. John says, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1.36).
2. Two disciples ask “where do you dwell?” (John 1.38).
 - a. Jesus takes the disciples to the place where he “dwelt.” We aren’t explicitly told where that is, but there are at least three curious indications. The first comes from context, and our observation that this entire chapter takes place symbolically in the temple, echoing the acts and actors of the Worship of the Shalems.¹⁹ John has presented Jesus as the high priest after the order of Melchizedek who is God, emerging from the Debir (The Holy of Holies) to be announced by the angel-priest John the Baptist. When he takes followers back to the place where he dwells, where can he possibly be taking

the Baptist grew up as a solitary in the desert of Judea, apart from any family contacts.” Brown, *The Gospel According to John, I-XII*, p. 65, emphasis added. D.A. Carson takes this approach to this difficult verse: “Apparently John the Baptist had baptized Jesus some time earlier. **Up to that point, John himself did not know him** (v. 31)– **which does not mean that John did not know Jesus at all, but only that he did not know him as the Coming One.** All John knew was that his own ministry of preaching and baptising with water (v. 31) was ordained by God to prepare the way for this Coming One, that he might be revealed to Israel (v. 31). But now the Baptist provides a testimony to Jesus that explains how he identified the Coming One. Referring to the aftermath of Jesus’ baptism, he testifies, I have seen (the perfect tense reflects a settled conviction) the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him (v. 32). In the Synoptic Gospels, the descent of the Spirit as a dove was something Jesus himself witnessed (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22), a symbol in tandem with the voice from heaven. Here in the Fourth Gospel, however, the dove assumes a different (though certainly complementary) role: it identifies the Coming One to John the Baptist. He had been told by God himself (the one who sent me to baptize with water, v. 33) who the Coming One, the promised Messiah, would be: The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (v. 33).” D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1991.

¹⁸ Barrett adds some insightful commentary here: “κάγω οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν. It need not be inferred that John did not know Jesus at all, only that he did not know that he was ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος (“the one coming after me” – John 1.27)... For the Jewish belief that the Messiah will be an obscure person until presented to Israel by Elijah see Justin, *Trypho* 8, 49, and cf. *Sotah* 9.15; *Eduyoth* 8.7. That the Targums speak of the Messiah as being revealed (McNamara, T. & T., 140) adds little to this. The word φάνεροῦν is characteristic of John (1.31; 2.11; 3.21; 7.4; 9.3; 17.6; 2 I.1, 14).” C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John, An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1955, p. 177. To me (Mike Day), I see John using φανερώω or φανεροῦν “to make manifest” as a way to emphasize the fact that Jesus’ signs made it known who he was. John emphasizes “signs” to show that these are proofs or examples showing Jesus to the world. Jesus literally “makes known” his father by his deeds and words. This word also denotes the idea of making things clear, or making things known or making a person or their deeds or words famous.

¹⁹ David Butler defines the “Shalems” as visionaries who have become initiates in the temple ordinances. These are the “visionary men” of the Old and New Testaments (men being humans, not necessarily just males). These “shalems” were the losers of history, as their story was written out of the Old Testament. They formed an “underground religion,” meaning that of Isaiah and Lehi. They had to write in code to protect their works, so that those with ears to hear would hear, and those who did not know the mysteries were protected from being responsible for their words and works.

them? ***The only answer that makes any sense of the stage and props we've seen so far is that he's conducting them back into the Debir.***²⁰

- b. Διδάσκαλε ποῦ μένεις “Teacher, where do you dwell?” This use is different than the use of Christ “dwelling among us” in John 1.14. In this use of the Greek, Jesus is “tenting” (σκηνώ) among his people, hearkening us back to the Exodus narrative, where Yahweh walked among them in the precincts of this holy structure.²¹
- c. Andrew and his brother Simon (Peter) follow Jesus (John 1.40).
- d. Jesus calls Simon “Cephas,” meaning “a stone.” (John 1.42).
 - i. Σὺ εἶ Σίμων ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωνᾶ· σὺ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται Πέτρος “You are Simon the son of Jona, you will be called Kephas, which being expounded upon, means Petros” (my translation).²²

Jesus speaks with Philip and Nathanel (John 1.43-51)

1. The next day Philip finds Nathanael, telling him, “We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1.45).
2. Nathanael asks, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1.46).
 - a. Ἐκ Ναζαρέτ δύναται τι ἀγαθὸν εἶναι – literally: “out of Nazareth can anything good exist?” or a better translation would be “Can anything good be that comes out of Nazareth?” This is an example of the genetic fallacy.²³
 - b. Frederic Farrar said, “Today, too, that question—“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”—is often repeated, and the one sufficient answer—almost the only possible answer—is now, as it then was, “Come and see.” Then it meant, come and see One who speaks as never man spake; come and see One who, though He be but the Carpenter of Nazareth, yet overawes the souls of all who approach Him—seeming by His mere presence to reveal the secrets of all hearts, yet drawing to Him even the most sinful with a sense of yearning love; come and see One from whom there seems to breathe forth the irresistible charm of a sinless purity, the unapproachable beauty of a Divine life. “Come and see,” said Philip, convinced in his simple faithful heart that to see Jesus was to know Him, and to know was to love, and to love was to adore. In this sense, indeed, we can say “come and see” no longer; for His earthly form has been visible no more. But there is another sense; no less powerful for conviction, in which it still suffices to say, in answer to all doubts, “Come and see.” Come and see a dying world revived, a

²⁰ Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 54, emphasis added.

²¹ Butler adds to this idea, “There’s a theatrical echo in the word, since the Greek skene, ‘tent,’ also means a performing ‘stage’ and is the source of our English words ‘scene’ and ‘scenery’; Jesus ‘staged a show among us.’ There’s also a temple echo in the word, since Israel’s first sanctuary was the tabernacle, a mobile tent-temple. The hint is that when the Lord comes out of the holy of holies, to be “among us,” the temple is with him, though his presence among us is temporary; he is putting on a show. A better word could not have been chosen, if John had coined one himself. The other two occurrences of ‘dwell’ in the chapter are different. When he’s “among us,” Jesus ‘tents.’ In verses 38-39, when the would-be disciples ask “where dwellest thou?” and Jesus shows them, the Greek verb is different. It’s *meno*, which means to ‘remain,’ ‘abide,’ ‘tarry,’ indicating enduring presence. ***By simple verb choice, John tells us that though Jesus lives among us temporarily, his true and permanent home is in heaven, and heaven—the temple—is where he calls his disciples.***” Butler, *Goodness*, p. 55, emphasis added.

²² Petros can mean stone, boulder, or rock. See: Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*.

²³ Day, [Can Anything Good Come out of Galilee?](#)

decrepit world regenerated, an aged world rejuvenescent; come and see the darkness illuminated, the despair dispelled; come and see tenderness brought into the cell of the imprisoned felon, and liberty to the fettered slave; come and see the dens of lust and tyranny transformed into sweet and happy homes, defiant atheists into believing Christians, rebels into children, and pagans into saints. And as you see them all, it may be that you too will unlearn the misery of doubt, and exclaim in calm and happy confidence, with the pure and candid Nathanael, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou, art the King of Israel!"²⁴

3. Philip's answer is classic: "Come and see!" (John 1.46).
4. Jesus relates something personal to Nathanael, "When you were under the fig tree, I see you!" (John 1.48).
 - a. ὄντα ὑπὸ τὴν συκῆν εἶδόν σε – literally, "Being under the fig, I knew you!" or it could be translated, "when you were under the fig tree, Nathanael, I saw you, I understood you, and I regarded you." (I am embellishing the use of εἶδόν here. εἶδόν is the aorist (finished action) of the Greek verb εἶδω, which means "to see," or "to perceive, know, discern, to have knowledge of or to regard").
5. Nathanael testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of Israel (John 1.49).
6. Jesus answered and he said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, **you believe. Greater things than these you will see!**" (John 1.50, my translation).
 - a. The Greek of John 1.50 reads as follows: ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ὅτι εἶπόν σοι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω τῆς συκῆς **πιστεύεις μείζω τούτων ὄψει**. Note that πιστεύεις is in the present indicative, and that **this statement is not a question**.²⁵ Nathanael's faith is grounded on a miracle right now, but he still has trust or πίστις in Jesus. The Greek word πίστις, which is usually translated as believe in John's gospel, also means faith, trust, or to have confidence. It is reciprocal, and in this case, Jesus tells him that he will reciprocate by showing greater things than these to Nathanael.
7. 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. (John 1.51).
 - a. Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν – "Verily, verily, I say unto you."²⁶
 - i. The fact that this uses ὑμῖν "you all" (in the plural) when Jesus is speaking directly to Nathanael (he should have said σοι "to you" in the singular) tells us something. There is more going on in this text. John is telling his hearers that

²⁴ Frederick W. Farrar, [The Life of Christ](#), electronic manuscript, Cumorah Foundation, 2008, p. 112.

²⁵ C.K. Barrett agrees with this, that John 1.50 is not a question. See Barrett, p. 186.

²⁶ In introducing this promise, Jesus employs, for the first time, the double 'Amen, amen' expression variously rendered 'verily, verily' (AV), 'truly, truly' (RSV), or 'in truth, in very truth' (NEB). The NIV adapts the entire construction 'Amen, amen, I say to you', making it 'I tell you the truth.' **The original Hebrew word for 'amen' comes from a root denoting certainty, steadfastness.** It was sometimes appended to the end of prayers (e.g. Ps. 41:13) to voice hearty agreement and solemn wish that the prayer be fulfilled; Jesus uses it before an utterance to confirm and emphasize its trustworthiness and importance. In the Synoptics the expression always occurs singly; in John, always doubled. The term is so characteristic of Jesus that it appears in transliteration even for the Greek-speaking readers of the Gospels. For this reason, Lindars (p. 48) takes the 'Amen' in these sayings to be a mark of authenticity. D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 127 electronic version, emphasis added.

what Jesus is telling Nathanael also applies to them. The message is clear: you, the hearers of this gospel will one day see the heavens open!

John's Seven-Fold Witness of Christ as a Temple Theme

John the Baptist's testimony is carefully marked by the repetition of the same word in the Greek text. The markers are hidden by inconsistent translation into English, and these markers are important for us to see so that we can understand the subtext to what John is saying.²⁷ The Greek word *martyreō*, 'witness,' or variants thereof, occur **seven times** in John 1:

1. John 1.7: The same came for **a witness**, in order to **bear witness** of the Light, in order that all men through him might believe. οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς **μαρτυρίαν** ἵνα **μαρτυρήσῃ** περὶ τοῦ φωτός ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ. (Note that John 1.7 uses *martyreō* twice).
2. John 1.8: He was not that Light, but rather *was sent* to bear **witness** of that Light. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς ἀλλ' ἵνα **μαρτυρήσῃ** περὶ τοῦ φωτός.
3. John 1.15: 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. Ἰωάννης **μαρτυρεῖ** περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων, Οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον Ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.
4. John 1.19: And this is **the record** of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ **μαρτυρία** τοῦ Ἰωάννου ὅτε ἀπέστειλαν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας ἵνα ἐρωτήσωσιν αὐτὸν Σὺ τίς εἶ;
5. John 1.32: And John **bare record**, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. Καὶ **ἐμαρτύρησεν** Ἰωάννης λέγων ὅτι Τεθέαμαι τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν.
6. And **I saw**, and **bare record** that this is the Son of God. καὶ γὰρ **ἑώρακα** καὶ **μεμαρτύρηκα** ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.²⁸

Detecting this unit of the Baptist's testimony shows us that the chapter has three divisions. The first division is John 1.1-5, showing Christ in the Holy of Holies. The second is John's witness, and the third focuses on Jesus' first disciples (John 1.35-51). Because the first division is a picture of the Debir (the Holy of Holies), we begin to suspect that the setting of John the Baptist's testimony may be the Hekal (the second room, the room containing the shewbread and the sacred seven-fold lampstand)...

Emphatically, the Baptist is a witness of the light. The light he bears witness to is Jesus, but implicit in the seven occurrences of the word "witness" is the other light, the seven-armed temple lamp of which Jesus is the flame. After the seventh "witness," John summarizes his testimony with the statement that Jesus "is the Son of God" (John 1:34). The Father and the Son are explicitly mentioned; the mother is implied, by necessity, by the emphasized image of light, and by the seven repetitions. ***John bears a seven-fold witness of a light that produces the Son of God.***

²⁷ Butler, *Goodness*, p. 29.

²⁸ The unit ends with verse 34, which in Greek is in the perfect tense. John's words there are *ἑώρακα καὶ μεμαρτύρηκα* - *heoraka kai memartureka*, which means 'I have seen and I have borne witness.' The Greek perfect tense verbs imply completed action in the past with continuing effect in the present. Wrapping up in John 1:34, the Baptist has given his testimony and it stands. Butler, *Goodness*, p. 29.

The testimony of John the Baptist is also a testimony of John the evangelist. It can't surprise us that the evangelist writes of the mother of the Son of God in a way that's reminiscent of the temple tree of life and light. Nephi's comment about the tree is that she's "precious above all" (1 Nephi 11:9), and his vision of John is that the evangelist will write "most precious" things (1 Nephi 14:23-24, 27). This implicit inclusion of the Virgin in the Baptist's testimony is consistent with his discreet mention of her in the Holy of Holies. She isn't the focus of what the evangelist wants to tell us, but her presence is necessary. John writes of her with a light touch, so those who don't know her symbols won't notice, and those who do know won't be able to miss her.²⁹

Titles Used for Jesus

In this chapter Jesus has been accorded several titles: the Logos (1), God (1), the light of men (4), the true light (9), the only begotten from the Father (14), a greater than John the Baptist (15, 26f., 30), Jesus Christ (17), the only begotten God (or Son, 18), the Lord (23), the Lamb of God (29, 36), he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit (33), probably God's Chosen One (34), the Son of God (49), Rabbi (38, 49), the Messiah (41), he of whom Moses and the prophets wrote (45), the King of Israel (49). We may fairly comment that by recording all these John makes a beginning on the picture of the Lord that he is to paint throughout the Gospel. He wants to show Him as the Christ, and this is how he begins to do it. But one more comment is fitting. All these titles have been used by others. Jesus calls Himself simply, "the Son of man."³⁰

The Son of Man

Raymond Brown explains the idea of "The Son of man":

"(This) is a curious expression, and just as unusual in Greek as in English. It is a literal translation of the Aramaic בר נשא which means "man" or "the man." In the Gospels it is used by Jesus as His favourite self-designation, occurring in this way over eighty times. **Nobody else ever uses it of Him except Stephen** (Acts 7.56)³¹ and the people in this Gospel who inquire who Jesus means by the term (12.34). The fact that they do so inquire shows that the term was not an accepted messianic designation. In general we can say that Jesus uses the expression in a threefold way: (i) as a periphrasis for "I," (ii) of the heavenly Son of man, who will come in glory, and (iii) of the Son of man who suffers to bring men salvation. The origin of the term is probably to be sought in Dan. 7.13f., where a heavenly Being is so designated... Jesus adopted the term, "firstly because it was a rare term and one without nationalistic associations. It

²⁹ Butler, *Goodness*, p. 29-30. After finishing Baring and Cashford's monumental work [The Myth of the Goddess](#) (Penguin, 1994), I would agree with David Butler here. Baring and Cashford lay out multiple examples of the goddess figure in several cultures of the ancient world that depict the divine mother figure associated with a dove. See pages 42-43, 60-61, 107, 124, 189, 193, 302, 358-359 for just a sampling of this imagery explained. They write (p. 359), "Perhaps the image common to all the cultures is the dove, which is sacred to Aphrodite as it was to Inanna-Ishtar, and recalls the dove resting on the top of the crown of the goddess in Crete. Remembering Aphrodite's rulership of Heaven and Earth, and her mediation between them, it is significant that the dove is preeminently the image of relationship in the Christian tradition as the missing feminine aspect of the godhead: the Holy Spirit who relates humanity to the deity, descending at the baptism of Christ and at Pentecost."

³⁰ Raymond Brown, p. 171-172.

³¹ Theo Preiss writes: "**The title which Jesus himself prefers** and remarkably enough, as in the Synoptics, is **found only on his lips - is that of Son of Man**. Do we not see there another proof, indirect but very substantial, of the definitely ancient character of the Johannine tradition?" Theo Preiss, [Life in Christ](#), (trans. Harold Knight), London, 1954, p. 24, emphasis added.

would lead to no political complications. 'The public would ... read into it as much as they apprehended of Jesus already, and no more.' Secondly, because it had overtones of divinity. J. P. Hickinbotham³² goes as far as to say, 'the Son of Man is a title of divinity rather than humanity.' Thirdly, because of its societal implications. The Son of man implies the redeemed people of God. Fourthly, because it had undertones of humanity. He took upon Him our weakness." ***It was a way of alluding to and yet veiling His messiahship***, for His concept of the Messiah differed markedly from the commonly held."³³

S. Kent Brown says this about the "Son of Man":

In ancient literature, there are two senses in which the title Son of Man is employed: in a generic sense with the meaning "human being" and in a more formal sense, employed largely in later Jewish literature, referring to the one who is to come on the clouds of heaven to deliver the righteous from their oppressors, and to judge the inhabitants of the earth (Higgins 15-17; Fitzmyer 8, 20; Daniel 7:13-14; I Enoch chapters 37-71). In the Old Testament, it is almost without exception that the phrase represents the less formal of the two. One thinks immediately of the phrase used by the Lord to address the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1-8; 3:1-10)... (in other literature) ***the Son of Man will come as a judge and conqueror of the wicked, especially those evil rulers who are guilty of opposing God's kingdom*** (see 1 Enoch 46:4-8; 38:3-5). He is doubtlessly ***the same heavenly figure*** who is called "the Righteous One ... Whose elect works hang [or: depend] upon the Lord of Spirits" (1 Enoch 38:2), the "Elect One of righteousness and faith" whose "dwelling-place" is "under the wings of the Lord of Spirits" (1 Enoch 39:6a-7a), even the "Anointed" one or Messiah (1 Enoch 48:10; 52:4). Furthermore, in a passage which reflects Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, it is asserted that the Son of Man is to be the "light of the Gentiles" ([1 Enoch 48:4](#)). Not least, however, is the assertion that "the Son of Man was named In the presence of the Lord of Spirits ... Before the sun and the signs were created, Before the stars of the heaven were made" ([1 Enoch 48:2-3](#); see also Abr. 3:21-28; D&C 121:28-32). In fact, because of his special premortal commission by God, the "chosen" Son of Man was then "hidden ... Before the creation of the world" in order to come forth among the "holy and righteous" to save them ([1 Enoch 48:6-7](#); see also John 1:5)... it safe to assert that, when compared with the concepts in the Similitudes of Enoch (48:2-6), the New Testament too presupposes that the Son of Man had received his commission in the premortal age (see John 17:5; Heb. 1:2). It is at this point that the view of the Son of Man in the New Testament goes beyond that of the book of I Enoch. We noted already in the passage from Mark's gospel that the Son of Man was to come in the glory of his father and with all his holy angels (Mark 8:38). But there are more details. The most prominent consist of the Son of Man coming both "in the clouds of heaven" and "with great power and glory" (Mark 14:62; 13:26). These two features do not appear in the Enochian literature but are recorded in chapter 13 of the Ezra Apocalypse. 4 According to this text, a Man who "flew with the clouds of heaven" was to come out of the seas (13:3) to reprove the wicked nations (13:37-38) and to gather out a peaceable multitude who were identified, rather interestingly, as the ten tribes of Israel (13:40). Further, God called this heavenly Man "my Son" (13:37). Both Enoch and Abraham were called "my son" (cf. Moses 6:27; Abr. 1:17). Such notions, to be sure, find their counterparts in the New Testament sayings of Jesus regarding the Son of Man. But there is more. Jesus spoke repeatedly of what is written concerning the Son of Man: "It is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought" (Mark 9:12; cf. 9:13; see also Bruce 175-76). This emphasis on the suffering of the Son of Man is not found in any written non-canonical source. Yet Jesus regularly referred to such. Why?

³² *The Churchman*, LVIII, 1944, p. 54.

³³ Raymond Brown, p. 172-174, emphasis added.

Because, in fact, such was written of the Messiah, but not under the denomination Son of Man. The suffering, redeeming Messiah was the portrait found in the Servant Songs of Isaiah (see note 3; also Bruce 175-77). It is here that we find the Servant of the Lord who was to suffer and die for his people:

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Thus, even though Jesus was not the only one in his day to associate the concepts of both the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah with that of the Messiah, it was clearly the Savior's intent to apply to himself the full range of attributes associated with these two figures in both scriptural and non-scriptural sources. Moreover, it is in the more formal sense that the term Son of Man is to be understood as applying to Jesus in the New Testament. Additionally, one can see that the mission of the Son of Man was to fall rather neatly into three phases: an earthly ministry, his suffering, and heavenly triumph.³⁴

John Portraying Temple Worship and the Ascent unto God in John 1

Probably my favorite³⁵ explanation of John 1 comes from David Butler. Butler describes the idea of coming from the courtyard into the Hekal, or the second room in the First Israelite Temple. This was the room where the table of shewbread and menorah existed. I pick up his commentary on page 33 of [The Goodness and the Mysteries](#):

I think the first chapter of the Gospel of John is best read as a sort of play. The play is set in Palestine, but many indicators in the chapter itself tell us the stage's scenery and props are taken from the temple, and the dramatic setup comes from the Worship of the Shalems ordinance. *John 1 shows us a lesser order of temple priests handing the shalems over into the care of the priest after the order of Melchizedek, who is the Lord emerging from behind the veil of the temple to administer the feast of bread and wine.*³⁶

First, as we've seen above, John is the witness:

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. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For **the law was given by Moses**, but **grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**. **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 1:15-18)

³⁴ S. Kent Brown, *Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, [chapter 4: Man and Son of Man: Issues of Theology and Christology](#) (edited by H. Donl Peterson and Charles Tate, Jr.), Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1989, p. 57-72.

³⁵ I do not use this word often when discussing scripture or commentary. I think it is overused. In David Butler's case, this is worth it. His commentary is stellar, but it takes a level of scriptural literacy to stay with him, and I would suggest reading both of his books to get the full idea of what he is teaching. See: Butler, [Plain and Precious Things: The Temple Religion of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men](#), 2012. See also Butler, [The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men](#), 2012.

³⁶ Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 24.

We have to place this testimony on the stage of the second room in the Worship of the Shalems,³⁷ together with the descent of the priest who is the Lord from the Debir. What we see in John is a priest who has brought the shalems through the second room, now introducing a priest of a higher order who has come out from behind the veil to meet them, bringing with him the Spirit of God (John 1:32- 33). Two details in John's testimony give color to its context in the Worship of the Shalems.

The first is John's statement that "no man hath seen God at any time," but only "the only begotten Son." This tells us the physical experience of the shalems. Even for the initiates who enter the Holy of Holies, God remains an invisible presence in the Debir, but they see the only begotten son incarnated in the priest who administers the feast of bread and wine and meets them at the veil. They will not see God the Father as they progress forward, but they do see God the Son. Some Greek versions of this verse have "the only begotten God" rather than "the only begotten Son," consistent with Matthew's indication that when the shalems are clothed and given bread and wine, it is done by God himself (Matthew 6:25-34). The second interesting detail is the phrase translated "in the bosom," "bosom" in the underlying Greek being kolpos. Among other things, kolpos is a fold in a garment. The word translated "in" is eis, which describes motion 'into,' rather than static position inside. The implication is that God the Son is incarnated by getting dressed, moving into the fold of a garment. This idea is reinforced by John the Baptist's later statement that he isn't worthy to undo Jesus' "shoe's latchet" (John 1:27). Jesus is a higher order of priest than John, an order of priests who become God the Son by being properly dressed, and John can't touch Jesus' priestly clothing. This is consistent with Nephi's image of the dressed high priest emerging from the temple as the Lord descending from heaven (1 Nephi 11:7, 24) and with the fact that the value of the high priest's garments recorded in Tractate Yoma appears to be the same as the value of Christ's body to the traitor Judas (PaPT 126/6). John the Baptist points to the physical body of Jesus and tells us it's the equivalent of the clothed body of the high priest, which for Nephi was the body of Yahweh to come.

A final curious note about this passage is John's inclusion of Moses... John the Baptist's role is described in a second way, in his self-identification to the priests and Levites: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (John 1:23). The other Gospels also use this passage of Isaiah to identify the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4). The placement of the passage in John 1, surrounded by the staging of the Worship of the Shalems, tells us the voice crying in the wilderness might be part of the ordinance. The Book of Mormon's uses of Isaiah's words strengthen that conclusion: Lehi cites the same verse in preaching that arises out of his great vision of the Worship of the Shalems in 1 Nephi 8 (1 Nephi 10:8) and Alma also quotes the line in his

³⁷ David Butler defines the "Shalems" as visionaries who have become initiates in the temple ordinances. These are the "visionary men" of the Old and New Testaments (men being humans, not necessarily just males). These "shalems" were the losers of history, as their story was written out of the Old Testament. They formed an "underground religion," meaning that of Isaiah and Lehi. They had to write in code to protect their works, so that those with ears to hear would hear, and those who did not know the mysteries were protected from being responsible for their words and works. Evidence for these people are throughout ancient history. Butler (Goodness, p. 15) explains, "If the thought-world of the visionary men predates the Bible, like the visionary men themselves claim it does (Alma 13:1-9), then we should expect to see shalem images in the religion, folklore, and literature of non-Biblical cultures, too. The Paradigm is a big idea, in other words, and we should expect to see evidence bearing on it all over the place. Our problem shouldn't be scarcity of evidence, but over-abundance, and understanding how to interpret what we find."

sermon to the people of Gideon as a prophecy of the impending birth of Christ together with the notice “behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Alma 7:9; compare with Matthew 7:21- 23).

We see the voice crying in the wilderness in its complete context in Isaiah 40:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. **The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.** Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And **the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,** and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. **The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass,** and all the goodness thereof is as **the flower of the field:** The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest **good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain;** O Jerusalem, that bringest **good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength;** lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. **He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:** he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. (Isaiah 40:1-11)

The cry of the prophet precedes the revelation of the Lord in his “glory.” We’ll see in a moment that “glory” ties nicely into John 1:14 and of course it reminds us of John’s image of the light shining in the darkness (John 1:5). The initiates give a guided collective cry of humility comparing flesh to grass; this is nothing short of astonishing when compared with Matthew 6:30, in which the shalams humbly compare themselves to grass in connection with God clothing them. The shepherd provides the feast, and his arrival gives “comfort,” exactly as we see in Psalm 23. “Good tidings” are brought, prompting song (compare with Luke 2:8-14). All this happens in connection with an invitation to continue up “into a high mountain.”

This is the Worship of the Shalams. Together with the phrase’s appearance in 1 Nephi 10, Alma 7, and John 1—all of which also show us or refer to the Worship of the Shalams—Isaiah 40 gives us the proper setting of John the Baptist’s words. The priest who has led the initiates to be clothed and feasted in the second room introduces the appearance of the priest coming from the Debir with the cry ‘make straight the way of the Lord.’

If John is the priestly witness who makes straight the path of the Lord, what kind of priest is Jesus? Jesus is a high priest “after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 5:10, 6:20). This makes perfect sense in light of the Worship of the Shalams. Who administers the shalem feast in the second room of the temple? According to Matthew 6, God. According to Isaiah 40 and Psalm 23, Yahweh the shepherd. According to Genesis 14, Melchizedek. In terms of the staging and cast of the Worship of the Shalams, these are all the same thing: a priest after the order of Melchizedek comes forward from the Debir to dress the shalams and administer the feast. In doing so he’s acting as God the only begotten Son, Yahweh the Lord, the shepherd of Israel, and Melchizedek, whose name means ‘the king of righteousness’ or ‘my king is righteousness’ and who is identified in Genesis as a shalem king (Genesis 14:18)...

Matthew quotes Malachi 3:1 to identify John the Baptist as a messenger, which in both Malachi's Hebrew (*malakh*) and Matthew's Greek (*angelos*) is an angel. In Hebrews 1:4, the Melchizedek priest Jesus is better than the *angeli*. The Baptist is specifically the angel who prepares the way, as in Isaiah 40. John "rises" because he is an angel-priest who ascends through the temple. None "born of women" is greater than John the Baptist, which is strange if you think of Christ's mother as mortal Mary, but makes perfect sense when you see Christ as the Lord, the son of the Virgin in the Holy of Holies. This understanding, in light of the first verses of John 1, also explains the statement that the "least in the kingdom of heaven" is greater than John. **The occupants of the kingdom of heaven, which is the Holy of Holies (Matthew 7:21-23), are God upon his throne, the Virgin who is a lamp who is a tree, and the Son who is the Word.** The least (*mikroteros*, 'smaller') of these is presumably the Son, and he is greater than John the Baptist (John 1:15). Why does the kingdom of heaven suffer violence? Because the false priests the evangelists call 'hypocrites' (a Greek word meaning 'actors') hold the Jerusalem temple, as Matthew says, "by force." John is Elias, a fact Matthew identifies as a mystery by saying "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"... Finally, Matthew succinctly draws the handoff of the shalams from the lesser angel priesthood exemplified by John to the priests after the order of Melchizedek: "John came neither eating nor drinking... The Son of Man came eating and drinking." The lesser priest leads the shalams through the second room, but it is the Lord who provides the feast.

So John the evangelist in John 1 stages the moment in the Worship of the Shalams when the veil opens and the high priest after the order of Melchizedek emerges in a burst of light. He is God the only begotten son and king of the saints, the king of righteousness, the *melekh shalem*. He was in the beginning and the creator, and he has power, dominion, and authority. As he descends and prepares to administer the shalem feast, the angel-priest who has led the shalams in the second room of the temple cries 'make straight the way of the Lord' to announce him, bearing witness that he is begotten of God.

Why does John write this way, constantly employing the symbols of a temple ordinance to tell a story that apparently happened on the highways and byways of mundane Palestine? What better way would there be to tell an audience familiar with the symbolism of the Worship of the Shalams that Jesus is Yahweh, the Lord God of Israel whose coming to administer the feast of his own flesh and blood has been prefigured by the high priests after the order of Melchizedek and their feast of bread and wine?³⁸

³⁸ David Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries*, p. 33-42, emphasis added.