The Gospel of John

**A FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT – JOHN 1:18**

**INTRO FROM DR. STEVE SCHELL:**

I don’t think anyone goes through life without experiencing events that make us ask the question, “Where was God?” We’ve all prayed prayers that seem to go unanswered. We’ve all observed suffering and evil that seem to go unopposed. But to be fair, we’d have to admit that we’ve also seen things that are beautiful and very good, and that there have been times our prayers were answered quickly and powerfully. Yet it’s the apparent failures and the darkness that seem to capture our attention. And whether we admit it or not, those things can shake our faith. They can make us question the goodness of God. And there’s something else that can shake our faith in the goodness of God. It’s those passages in the Bible that tend to make Him look cruel or unfair, particularly in the Old Testament. Yes, such passages also exist in the New Testament, but since most are in the Old Testament, some people have concluded that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament. Some assume that it’s God the Father whom we meet in the Old Testament, and that God the Son, whose name is Jesus, only arrives in the New Testament. And this Jesus seems to have a very different personality from His temperamental Father. He’s kind, loving and merciful while the Father is ... well, mean. If that view of the Father becomes part of a person’s thinking, it becomes very hard to trust Him. The bold statement of John 3:16 comes as a shock: “For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son.” We might think of Jesus as loving us, but we don’t think of the Father the same way. He’s the One who does all those mean things in the Old Testament, yet John 3:16 says our salvation is the Father’s idea and that He sent Jesus because He loved every human being so much. So who is He really? Is He mean, or is He loving like Jesus? Today, using only one verse, John will reveal a truth that destroys false assumptions about the Father and the Son. He explains something that will help us trust our heavenly Father even when bad things happen, even when we read passages in the Bible that we find troubling. This single truth will steady us when doubts try to shake our confidence in the goodness of God. What an important verse! Let’s look at it carefully.

**John 1:18 (ESV)** No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

# FOUR POINTS

## V18.1 – “No one has ever seen God”

John opens this verse with this startling statement.

Literally translated, it says: “No one, up to this time, has ever seen God...”

Yet there were numerous appearances of a divine Person in the Old Testament whom people worshiped and even identified as God. For example:

1. The Bible says the “Lord God” (Yahweh Elohim) walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8–10).
2. Abraham and Sarah served a meal to a man whom Moses identifies repeatedly (in the Hebrew) as “Yahweh” (Ge 18:13, 17, 19-20, 22, 32) and whom Abraham called “the Judge of all the earth” (v. 25).
3. Fleeing from Sarah, Hagar met an “Angel of the Lord,” and then she called the name of the One who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees,” for she said, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him” (Gen. 16:7–14).
4. Jacob actually wrestled with a man whom he said was God (Elohim) and afterward named the place “the face of God” (Peniel) for he said, “I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved” (Gen. 32:30).
5. Moses and Aaron, along with Aaron’s two eldest sons and seventy elders, went up on Mount Sinai and “saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement... yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank” (Exod. 24:9–11).
6. Moses, on another occasion, was hidden in the cleft of a rock on Mount Sinai while the glory of God passed by, and he was allowed to see His “back” (Exod. 33:21–23).
7. Joshua encountered “a man” just before the battle of Jericho who said He was “the captain of the host of the Lord,” and before whom Joshua bowed down (Rev 19:10) and was told to remove the sandals from his feet “for the place where you are standing is holy” (Joshua 5:15; Exod. 3:4-6). This “man” then gave Joshua instructions concerning the upcoming battle and is identified as “Yahweh” (Joshua 6:2).
8. Isaiah said he “saw the Lord (Adonai) sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the Temple” (Isa. 6:1).
9. The angelic beings who worshiped Him called Him “Yahweh of hosts” (Yahweh Sabaoth; Isa 6:3), and then Isaiah said, “Woe is me... for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:5).
10. Ezekiel named a specific date upon which he “saw visions of God” (Ezek. 1:1), and in one of the visions he saw His form and the glory which radiated from Him (Ezek. 1:27–28). The experience seemed so real to him he responded by falling on his face.

**SO IF NO ONE, UP TO THAT TIME, HAD EVER SEEN GOD, THEN WHOM DID ALL THESE PEOPLE SEE?**

**THEY MUST BE THAT THEY WERE ENCOUNTERING THE PRE-INCARNATE SON, THAT IS, THE SPIRIT OF JESUS BEFORE HE BECAME A MAN.**

This truth helps us understand such statements by Jesus as this: “‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw [it] and was glad.’ So the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am’” (John 8:56–58).

## V18.2 – “The only God”

“the only” are translated from one Greek word (*monogenes* / mo-nō-yeh-**nēce)** (used 9x in the NT), and depending on the gender of the word, masculine, feminine or neuter, it would mean an “only son,” an “only daughter” or an “only child.” It’s, of course, masculine here, meaning “the only Son” or “the only begotten Son.”

Remember, Jesus was not created or made … He was begotten as God’s only Son.

All of us as believers were born again … Jesus was begotten of Father God.

## “God” and “God” – used twice in this verse,

 Greek – “theos” (**thā**-ōce) used over 1300x in the NT = God or god.

 1st = Father God

 2nd = God the Son

**THE CSB TRANSLATE THIS VERY CLEARLY…**

## V18.3 – Who is “at” the Father’s “side”

Greek word (kolpos / **kōl**-pōs), translated here as “at” the Father’s “side.”

The NKJV & NASB translate it, “in the bosom of the Father” … the word often refers to the place where a robe folds across a person’s chest … that area close to a person’s heart.

John uses a verb tense which implies an ongoing condition, so this statement must mean that Jesus was there before He became a man, and returned there after He ascended into heaven, and is there now. And during His ministry on earth, we observe that Jesus maintained unbroken fellowship with the Father except for those few hours on the cross when the judgment for our sin fell upon Him (Matt. 27:45–46).

## V18.4 – “He has made Him known”

**John 1:18 (NKJV)** … He has declared Him.

**John 1:18 (NASB95)** … He has explained Him.

**John 1:18 (NLT)** … He has revealed God to us.

The Greek word translated “has made Him known” (exhegeomai / ex-ē-**yeh**-ōh-meh) is used in the New Testament when someone is explaining or reporting something they saw.

For example:

1. In Luke 24:35 two disciples report seeing Jesus on the road to Emmaus.
2. In Acts 10:8 Cornelius reports what an angel told him about seeking for a man named Peter in Joppa.
3. In Acts 15:12 Barnabas and Paul report to the Jerusalem Council what God did among the Gentiles.
4. At the same meeting James reminded everyone of the things Peter had reported about the first time he preached to the Gentiles (Ac 15:14).
5. And in Acts 21:19 Paul reported to James and the elders in Jerusalem “one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles.”

So by choosing this particular word, John pictures Jesus as not only someone who explained God by modeling His heart and character, but also as someone whose teachings about God were completely accurate because He was reporting things He had seen face-to-face (John 6:46; 8:14, 42; 13:3; 16:28).

**John 14:8–11 (ESV)** Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” **9** Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? **10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. **11** Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

**EVERYTHING JESUS DID AND SAID WAS TO FULFILL HIS ASSIGNMENT TO GIVE US A FIRST-HAND AND ACCURATE REPORT OF FATHER GOD**

**SO WHAT DID JESUS REPORT ABOUT FATHER GOD?**

* How He taught
	+ About the Father’s love for the world (John 3:16)
	+ About loving and serving each other
	+ About sin (adultery of the heart)
* How He confronted leadership who were taking advantage of people
* How He served people
	+ Work very long hours to counsel, minister to, and help people
	+ Washed disciples’ feet
* His love and compassion for people
	+ Children who were brought to Him
	+ Sinners
		- Zacchaeus and his tax-collecting friends
		- woman caught in adultery
		- the woman at the well
	+ Sick people
	+ Demonized people (man from Gadera)
	+ People who lacked faith
		- man whose only child was an epileptic
		- Peter sinking on the water

**ALL OF THIS WAS AN ACCURATE REPORT OF FATHER GOD … AND GOD IS OFFERING HELP TODAY**

* What do you need from God today?
* Do you need forgiveness from sins?
* Do you need something washed or cleansed from your life?
* Do you need Him to teach you or advise you on a matter?
* Do you need Him to heal you? Or a loved one?
* Are you being tormented by demons?
* Do you feel like you’re sinking and need Jesus to catch you?