

John 1:15 Commentary

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

JESUS' RISE FROM OBSCURITY FOLLOWED BY OPPOSITION IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

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THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY GOSPEL OF JOHN (shaded area)

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John 1:15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

Greek: ioannes marturei (3SPAI) peri autou kai kekragen (3SRAI) legon, (PAPMSN) houtos en (2SIAI) on eipon, (1SAAI) O opiso mou erchomenos (PMPMSN) emprosthen mou gegonen, (2SRAI) hoti protos mou en. (3SIAI)

Amplified: John testified about Him and cried out, This was He of Whom I said, He Who comes after me has priority over me, for He was before me. [He takes rank above me, for He existed before I did. He has advanced before me, because He is my Chief.]

ESV: (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.' ")

KJV: 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.

NET: John testified about him and shouted out, "This one was the one about whom I said, 'He who comes after me is greater than I am, because he existed before me.'"

NLT: John pointed him out to the people. He shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before I did.'"

Phillips: And it was about him that John stood up and testified, exclaiming: "Here is the one I was speaking about when I said that although he would come after me he would always be in front of me; for he existed before I was born!"

Wuest: John is constantly bearing witness concerning Him and calls out aloud, saying, This One is He concerning whom I said, The One who comes after me was in existence before me because He preceded me,

Young's Literal: John doth testify concerning him, and hath cried, saying, 'This was he of whom I said, He who after me is coming, hath come before me, for he was before me;'

- **Testified:** A.M. 4030, A.D. 26, Jn 1:7,8,29-34, 3:26-36 5:33-36 Mt 3:11,13-17 Mk 1:7 Lk 3:16
- **He was:** Jn 1:1,2,30, Jn 8:58, Jn 17:5 Pr 8:22 Isa 9:6 Mic 5:2 Php 2:6,7 Col 1:17 Heb 13:8 Rev 1:11,17,18 2:8
- John 1 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

CAN I HEAR

A WITNESS?

John the Gospel writer first calls **John the Baptizer** to the witness stand to give his testimony. Recall that the **purpose** of John's Gospel is to testify that Jesus is the long expected Messiah...

But these (Contrast = Jn 21:30) have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:31)

Testified (3140) (**martureo** from **martus** = witness = one who has information or knowledge of something and can bring to light or confirm something. English = martyr) in its most basic sense refers to a legal witness. Thus the verb **martureo** means to be a witness, to testify, to give evidence, to give testimony, to bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something. The words testified related to fact, not opinion, as in a courtroom setting. As discussed below in the passive voice **martureo** takes on the sense of to be well testified of or to have a good report.

Vincent notes that testified is in the present tense - Present tense. Rev., correctly, beareth witness. The present tense describes the witness of the Baptist as abiding. The fact of the Word's becoming flesh is permanently established by his testimony.

John uses **martureo** more than any other NT writer (44/72 verses) - Jn. 1:7, 8, 15, 32, 34; 2:25; 3:11, 26, 28, 32; 4:39, 44; 5:31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 39; 7:7; 8:13, 14, 18; 10:25; 12:17; 13:21; 15:26, 27; 18:23, 37; 19:35; 21:24; 1Jn. 1:2; 4:14; 5:6, 7, 9, 10; 3 Jn. 1:3, 6, 12; Rev. 1:2; 22:16, 18, 20 **Martureo** is translated "witness," "testimony," "record," "report," "martyr") over sixty times.

John records his **eye witness testimony** in his first epistle..

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life--and the life was manifested, and we have seen and **bear witness** (**martureo**) and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was **manifested to us**--what **we have seen** and **heard** we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. (1Jn 1:1-4-note)

Comment: If John's proclamation of God's Son Jesus Christ is what made his joy complete, how should this apply to us? Could it be that the lack of joy we are experiencing is because we are failing (even refusing) to bear witness to the only One Who is Worthy of eternal praise, the only One Who can be called the Word of Life, the only One Who can give life to our lost relatives, neighbors, colleagues, random contacts, etc. **May God's Spirit embolden us even as He did to the disciples in the book of Acts, so that we might be faithful to proclaim His Name, while today is still called today. Amen Don't waste your life, beloved! God has given each of us "witnesses" the opportunity of a lifetime!**

Cried out (2896)(krazo) refers to a loud cry or vociferation, expressing deep emotion. **Krazo** is one of those onomatopoeic words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the hoarse cry (or "croak") of the raven. Clearly John the Baptizer gave a bold, public witness that the Messiah had arrived...

For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING (not **krazo** but **boao**) IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'" (Mt 3:3)

In the NT the first use of **krazo** is out of the mouths of the demons (Mt 8:29). Then we see **krazo** used by those in great need - Two blind men "crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (Mt 9:27, cp Mt 20:30-31). The disciples on seeing Jesus walking on water "cried out in fear." (Mt 14:26) As Peter was sinking in the water he "cried out, "Lord, save me!" (Mt 14:30). A Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon possessed cried out, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David." (Mt 15:22-23). The Jewish crowds went from crying out "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Mt 21:9) to "Crucify Him." (Mt 27:23). And the greatest use of **krazo** in all eternity was by the Lord Himself Who "cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit." (Mt 27:50)

Vincent - The verb denotes an inarticulate cry; a shriek. Aristophanes uses it of the frogs, and of the bawling of a boor. The verb denotes an inarticulate utterance as distinguished from words. When used in connection with articulate speech, it is joined with **legein** or **eipein** to say. A stronger word than **boao** which is merely to cry or shout, while this is to cry clamorously; to scream or shriek.

A T Robertson - Second perfect active indicative of **krazo**, old verb for loud crying, repeated in dramatic form again for emphasis recalling the wonderful Voice in the wilderness which the Beloved Disciple can still hear echoing through the years. (**Ed Note:** The perfect tense pictures his voice as still crying out even in our day to all who would hear his voice in the wilderness! Cp Jesus crying out [also **krazo**] in Jn 7:37-39!)

Krazo - 55x in 54v -

Mt. 8:29; 9:27; 14:26, 30; Mt 15:22-23; Mt 20:30-31; Mt 21:9, 15; Mt 27:23, 50; Mk. 3:11; 5:5, 7; 9:24, 26;

10:47f; 11:9; 15:13f; Lk. 9:39; 18:39; 19:40; Jn. 1:15; 7:28, 37; 12:44; Acts 7:57, 60; 14:14; 16:17; 19:28, 32, 34; 21:28, 36; 23:6; 24:21; Rom. 8:15; 9:27; Gal. 4:6; Jas. 5:4; Rev. 6:10; 7:2, 10; 10:3; 12:2; 14:15; 18:2, 18f; 19:17

NAS Usage: cried(20), cries(2), cry(5), crying(12), screaming(1), screams(1), shout(1), shouted(4), shouting(8).

Here are all of John's uses of **krazo**...

John 1:15 John *testified about Him and **cried out**, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

John 7:28 Then Jesus **cried out** in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.

John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and **cried out**, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

John 12:44 And Jesus **cried out** and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.

Rev 6:10 and they **cried out** with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

Rev 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he **cried out** with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

Rev 7:10 and they (**Beloved, while this is primarily identified as those who come out of the Great Tribulation, I think this cry probably includes the saints of the church age -- what not rehearse it today in your devotional time!**) **cry out** with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Rev 10:3 and he **cried out** with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.

Rev 12:2 and she was with child; and she (Israel personified as a woman for out of "her" would come the Messiah) ***cried out**, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

Rev 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, **crying out** with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe."

Rev 18:2 And he **cried out** with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

Rev 18:18 and were **crying out** as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?'

Rev 19:17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he **cried out** with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God,

He who comes after me has a higher rank than I - Jesus was born after John the Baptist, but "birth order" was trumped by Christ's eternal existence (**See God's Attribute of Eternality**) with the Father, which is what John goes on to explain.

D A Carson says this could be translated, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me," or "he was first with respect to me"

For - Always stop and interrogate this small but strategic **term of explanation**.

He existed before me - John came into existence in time, being born some 6 months before Jesus (Lk 1:24-31 speaks of the gestation and parturition of John's mother Elizabeth). Jesus has been in existence for eternity, outside of time. Clearly John the Baptist (and John the writer of this Gospel) is inspired to present this revelation (something he could not have known, had the Spirit not revealed it to him) and in so doing he testifies to the Deity of Jesus Christ (whether he fully understands he is doing or not). Why would this statement speak to the Deity of Jesus? Because as a medical doctor I know that before the ovum is fertilized, the egg is incomplete, and only comes into existence as a human being when united with the seed of the man. Yes, as a medical doctor I know from the moment of conception that life comes into existence, and as a believer I know that this life is sacred and unique and to carry out a voluntary abortion is to take a human life, regardless of its age or size! Embryology 101 (independent of the Bible) substantiates fact this regardless of how stridently the so-called "experts" argue it is not so! John is saying that Christ did not come into existence in this manner. The implication is not only that He pre-existed, reaffirming what he had already said about Christ's pre-

existence in John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Donald Grey Barnhouse - The history of every other human being begins at birth: but the Lord Jesus Christ exists eternally as the Second Person of the Godhead. Before He was born at Bethlehem, He lived; He was one with the Father in essence and being. Before He came to earth as a baby, He walked among men and revealed Himself to them. The Old Testament, which was completed four centuries before His birth, contains many stories of His appearing among men before He came as babe, child, and man. (The Cross through the Open Tomb)

Before me - A T Robertson - "In rank and dignity." (cp Mk 1:7, Mt 3:11) In John 3:28 (emprosthen ekeinou = before him, the Christ) does mean priority in time, but not here. This superior dignity of the Messiah John proudly recognizes always (John 3:25–30).

Steven Cole - John the Baptist began his public ministry before Jesus' ministry. So by the first part of that declaration, John was dispelling the common cultural view that the older man had greater honor than the younger one. He is saying that Jesus is the greater one....So, the apostle John wants us to see that Jesus is greater than John the Baptist and all the other prophets because, whether the Baptist fully recognized it or not, Jesus is the eternal Word. He had a higher rank than John because He existed before John, although he was younger than John. Jesus said that there were none greater than John the Baptist (Mt. 11:11). So if John himself testified that Jesus was greater than he, and if John's words about Jesus may be taken to point to His preexistence, then Jesus is greater than all the prophets. Thus we should believe in Him. ([Why You Should Believe in Jesus - John 1:15-18](#))

Jesus affirmed that He existed before John by testifying that He even existed before "father Abraham," in his confrontation with the Jews who had "believed" with the "belief of unbelief" in John 8 (Compare Jn 8:30 with Jn 8:45 - it could not be clearer for Jesus Himself says their "belief" is "unbelief!") for...

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I am**." (John 8:58)

Comment: "I Am" is the identical "ego eimi" statement with which God identified Himself to Moses in Ex 3:14 (as recorded in the Greek Septuagint): " God said to Moses "I Am Who I Am" ("ego eimi [present tense] hos on [present tense of eimi]") (Yhwh is Commonly known as the "[tetragrammaton](#)", the "four letters" which Jews over the ages have zealously avoided pronouncing). While scholars might argue on the meaning of "I Am" falling from the lips of Jesus was crystal clear in the ears of the Jewish audience. They recognized that He had just claimed to be Jehovah, to be God, and that they considered blasphemy and for that they sought to stone Him to death (Jn 8:59)!

Passages on Pre-existence of Christ - Jn1:1; 8:56–59; 16:28; 17:5; 1Cor. 8:9; Php. 2:6–7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3

In the night before He was crucified, in His high priestly prayer to His Father Jesus prayed...

"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You **before the world was**." (John 17:5)

Comment: Clearly Jesus is testifying to His eternal existence. Those who say Jesus never claimed God simply have not read and interpreted the Word of God in its natural, literal, plain sense. To conclude anything else is utter nonsense!