

The Light of Life

John 1:1-14

Introduction

Toward the end of the first century, the last surviving member of the apostles Jesus chose penned the words we look at this morning. The rest of the band of those closest to Jesus during His earthly ministry had died martyr's deaths rather than turn from the good news the risen Lord Jesus had sent them to proclaim to all the world.

This time of year we celebrate the birth of Jesus the Messiah. But John does not begin his Gospel with the birth of Jesus when God the Son was born in human flesh. If you're going to appreciate what happened at Bethlehem, if you're going to come to know Jesus Christ, you must know that His existence did not start in Bethlehem. John goes back beyond ancient times, beyond the beginning of everything, into eternity past. God the Son was already there before anything else came into being.

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of

men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1. His Identity (1-5)
2. His Coming (9-13)
3. His Witnesses (6-8, 14)

1. His Identity (1-5)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God.

Beginning (2x)—before the creation of the heavens and the earth. The ultimate beginning.

Not became, but already was. His eternity.

The Word—the logos; to the Greeks the logos was the foundational principle of reason and order

To the Jews, the logos was personal revelation from God. They had received and guarded the word of God spoken to them and written in their Scriptures.

A word communicates meaning to those who understand the language. Jesus communicated to us who God is. He made God knowable.

John 1:18

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

He has exegeted him. Just as a faithful preacher draws out from a scriptural text what it says, Christ made God known to us.

Hebrews 1:1-3a

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the

world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

The Word was with God.

The distinct personhood of God the Son, in a face-to-face relationship with God the Father and God the Spirit.

The Word was God.

This is not new revelation but a terse summary of what both OT and NT declare.

The OT prophecies regarding the coming Messiah reveal that He would be God in the flesh.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

And the NT apostles affirm that Jesus matched those prophecies. Like the OT prophets, they declared His deity. They were eyewitnesses of His divine glory.

He did miracles only God can do—healing the blind, the lame, the lepers, raising the dead, and Himself rising from the dead.

He revealed what no one but God could know.
He forgave sin.

He received and accepted worship.

He predicted He would call people to life from the grave in the resurrection at the end of the age, and that He would be the final judge of all the world.

John 5:21-24

²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

On the night He was betrayed He declared, “I and my Father are one.” John 14

Then John reiterates the close relationship between God the Father and God the Son in verse 2,

He was in the beginning with God.

This relationship of love among the members of the Godhead flows out to produce the relationship of love within the community of those who believe in Christ, reflecting the Triune God who created us and has redeemed us to life.

John 1:3-5

³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Jesus the Word is also the Creator. Nothing came into being that He did not create. His fingerprints are everywhere.

The Life—as the Creator God
The Light—the revealer, the Word
Truth versus falsehood; life versus death;
holiness versus corruption.

John uses the imagery of light and darkness throughout his Gospel.

Light dispels darkness, and darkness hates the light because it exposes what is there.

But the darkness has not overcome the light.

“Overcome” translates a word that means to seize or overtake. In some contexts it can mean to grasp or understand—to comprehend. But the meaning here is that the darkness has not conquered the light. The darkness could not snuff it out.

Not that the darkness did not try:
Herod slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem in his effort to destroy the newborn Messiah King.

Satan, the prince of darkness, tried to get Jesus to sin in the wilderness.

Satan’s demons screamed out against Him in the synagogues and streets.

Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat.

Satan filled Judas to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

The scribes, chief priests, and Pharisees conspired to murder Jesus.

Luke 22:52-53

⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³ When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

They succeeded in their plot, crucifying the Lord Jesus. But they accomplished only what

God had foreordained. And He rose again three days later.

Herod's executed James the brother of John with the sword and imprisoning Peter with the intent to do the same with him.

The Sanhedrin had Stephen stoned to death. Saul ravaged the church from city to city until Jesus stopped him cold on the road to Damascus and set him making disciples of Jesus all over the Gentile world.

Nero sought to destroy Christianity, executing Paul and Peter, among many others.

But the darkness could not and cannot and will not prevail. Light conquers the darkness.

Applications

- In what ways do you acknowledge that Jesus is God the Creator of everything (the Life) and the Revealer of truth (the Light)?
- In what ways has Jesus the Light of the world dispelled your darkness?
- In what areas does the darkness still rule your life, and why?

2. His Coming (9-13)

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came

to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

The true light which enlightens every man. God has given light to all the human race through His creation, human conscience, and His Son. There's nowhere we can turn where we don't find evidence of God. His handiwork is everywhere whether we look through a telescope or a microscope or observe our world with the naked eye. Even in the dark we know He's there because of our conscience telling us right from wrong, accusing or excusing us.

The eternal Word, the true Light, broke into human history just as the prophets had foretold.

Isaiah 9:1-2

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

He created the world; He was in the world some 33 years; but the world did not know Him. Why is that?

He chose to come in humble circumstances. He did not make a big deal about Himself. Instead He did the work God the Father sent Him to do. He was treated not as King of the world but as a blasphemer and criminal, despite the fact no charge could be leveled against Him of any untruth save alleging that He was not the One He said He was. He never sinned against anyone in any way. He always did what pleased the Father. Humanity knows He was no liar, no blasphemer, no criminal. Even religions that trust in some other manmade way of salvation hold Him as unique, a good man and a prophet. But they refuse to know Him as God and Lord and Savior. They will not bow the knee to Him.

He came to His own things—His world, His land given to His people—**and His own people did not receive him.**

Not that every Jew rejected Him. The apostles were Jews. Nicodemus was a Jew, a member of the Sanhedrin, a teacher of the Scriptures. But most who led the nation of Israel, the scribes and priests, the teachers of the law, the Pharisees and Sadducees, would not receive Jesus. Their pride would not allow it. He exposed their hypocrisy. He threatened their power. He interfered with their greed.

They followed in the footsteps of many Israelites in the generations before them who

stoned the prophets God sent and pursued their own ways instead.

John 3:19-20

19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 12:46

I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were

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

To receive him is to believe in his name—as God has revealed Jesus to be. The Messiah. The Savior. His beloved Son. The Lord.

All who thus receive Him, He has authorized everyone of these individuals to become children of God. Born of God. Not a natural human birth, a spiritual birth accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Not on the basis of ethnic origin—not of blood. Not by human power—the will of the flesh. Not by some manmade system—the will of man. To see the kingdom of heaven you must be born again, born of the Spirit, just as Jesus told Nicodemus. No man can will himself a child of God. It is God's will that accomplishes it.

Applications

- All of humanity falls into those who received Christ, believing in His name, and those who don't. Which group are you in?
- If you are trusting in Jesus as your Savior, how does being a child of God shape how you view your life and how you live it?
- What part of your world if any do you not treat as belonging to Him—what should you hand over to Him as rightful owner?

3. His Witnesses (6-8, 14)

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John the Baptist was a prophet from God, the last in a long line of messengers from God who predicted that the Messiah would come. It had been 400 years since Malachi had prophesied of John the Baptist, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you" (Malachi 3:1). Jesus declared that John was a prophet and more than a prophet, that among those born of women there had arisen no one greater (Matthew 11:11).

So John was the last in a long line of prophets from God who declared that the Messiah is coming. John was also the prophet to announce, "He's here!" He clearly sent from God, his own birth a miracle, for he was born to an elderly couple past childbearing years. The angel Gabriel told his father Zacharias what to name him—John—grace of Yahweh. You remember that Zacharias found the angel's prediction so incredible that the angel made it impossible for him to speak until John was finally born.

John was full of the Holy Spirit in the womb, and when Mary came to visit Elizabeth, John's mother, six months into her pregnancy, the baby in the womb leaped at the sound of Mary's voice, and Elizabeth knew Mary was to be the virgin mother of the Lord, the Messiah.

John preached in the wilderness, subsisting on locusts and wild honey, dressed in camel's hair, a rough sort of man. Yet people in the neighboring towns flocked to hear him preach and many from every walk of life were baptized in the Jordan with a baptism of repentance from sin in preparation for the coming of the Messiah king. John was clearly a prophet from God.

John made it clear he was not the Messiah, the light, he was a voice of one crying in the wilderness, as Isaiah 40 had predicted, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Mark 1:7-8

And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John 1:29-30

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God,

who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'"

John the Baptist was born six months before Jesus, so he is not talking about birth order. He's talking about the pre-existence of Jesus.

The prophets are not the only ones who bore testimony to the Messiah. The apostles join their prophetic testimony with that of eyewitnesses. Having spent three and half years traveling with Jesus in His ministry, John the apostle testifies in John 1:14
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Became flesh—a real human being with flesh and blood and bones, not a phantom. He ate and drank. He grew tired and slept. John and many others saw him, heard him, touched him. Yet they testify that He is God in human flesh, just as the prophets had foretold.

Dwelt among us—pitched his tent among us

We have seen—closely observed

His glory—His shining splendor; what kind of glory—glory of God the Son

The only (monogeneis—one of a kind) **Son from the Father**. No one else like Him.

Full of grace and truth—the full measure of God’s goodness and favor necessary to our salvation. The full measure of truth—nothing that is deceptive or false. Completely reliable. Worthy of our full trust. Jesus is the gospel we must believe to receive God’s gracious gift of salvation from sin and death and hell.

Applications

- What have you done with all the prophetic testimony to who the Messiah would be and all the eyewitness testimony to who Jesus is?
- If Jesus is the One the prophets and apostles declared Him to be as He Himself confirmed (unless you are prepared to claim they were all fools or liars), how have you personally responded to Him?
- What about your life shows that you are experiencing God’s grace and truth through Jesus Christ?

Conclusion

Why has John shared this profound opening to his Gospel? It has the same purpose that the rest of his Gospel has:

John 20:30-31

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; **31** but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

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Closing Song: Glorious Light

Summary of Applications

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- If Jesus is the One the prophets and apostles declared Him to be as He Himself confirmed (unless you are prepared to claim they were all fools or liars), how have you personally responded to Him?
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