

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

John 1:1-13
Key Verse: 1:4

Lesson 1

The author of this Gospel was John, Jesus' disciple and an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' life and death. He describes himself as the "beloved disciple." He knew that Jesus loved him, and he loved Jesus. He had a clear purpose in writing, a purpose which he states in 20:31: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." As we study this Gospel, may we come to Jesus, and know him personally, and love him and have life in his name.

1. Jesus the Creator God (1-4)

Verse 1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." It sounds like Genesis 1:1--"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "Word" is capitalized. The writer is talking about a person. That person is Jesus. (14) These first 5 verses are about Jesus before his incarnation--before he became a man and dwelt among us. He is the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God; he is God. He is the one through whom all things were made. Genesis 1 repeats the phrase, "And God said...and it was so." God created all things by his word. Jesus is the Creator and the author of life. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of men." (3,4)

A world without God is dark, because it is God's life in men that gives light. God is the source of all life--physical and spiritual. Life belongs to him. I do not own my own life, nor do I own the life of anyone else. My parents don't own my life, either, and parents do not own their children's lives. The tragedy of mankind is that our lives have been cut off from God by sin. So we have no direction, and can find no meaning in life. We live in the dark. It is the darkness of ignorance. Such darkness is characterized by fatalism and hopelessness. People living in such darkness are slaves to sin. When we live in this kind of spiritual darkness, we don't know where we came from or where we are going. But God did not abandon us in our sin and darkness. He shined his true light into the world.

2. Jesus the true light (5-13)

Because men living in the darkness of sin could not understand the light God which was shining into the world, God sent a witness, John the Baptist, to testify to the light. People need a witness so that they can believe. God wants us to have belief that is rooted in historical fact. The truthfulness of historical events is established by witnesses. John the Baptist is the first witness.

Jesus is the true light that gives light to every man. He came into the world which he had created, but the world did not want to acknowledge him as Creator, because people did not want to accept his rightful rule in their lives. He came to his own people, the Jews--but they did not receive him. They did not want their lives to be changed. The unbelief of men is deliberate. People don't believe because they don't want to believe. They know that to accept God as Creator and Sovereign means to accept his standards and his ways. To accept his Son is to accept him, and to reject his Son is to reject him.

Look at verse 12. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." A remnant of people received him. To believe in his name is to receive him. To these people, God gives the right and power to become his children. To become a child of God is to transfer from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom. It means that we are no longer God's enemies; we are his precious children. We love God and we know that he loves us. It means that his life is in us. His life is light. We can overcome the darkness of the world. When we have the light of his life, we know who we are, and why we are living in the world. Our lives have direction. We do not have to live meaningless lives. We do not have to live as slaves to sin. We are children of the heavenly king. We live for his glory. We bear his name. We share his goals and purposes. We live in the light, not in the dark. All the people of God who seek to do our Father's will are our true brothers and sisters.

Look at verse 13. "...children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." We cannot become children of God by our own effort--just as we cannot be born into the world by our own decision or action. No one can make another person into a Christian. We cannot even make our selves into children of God. Only God can give us new birth into his family. We are born into God's family by God's work. This is a miracle. We are changed in the inner person by the work of God's Spirit. What, then, can we do? We must receive Jesus, and believe in his name. Verse 12 says, "Yet to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." This is God's sure promise.

One Word: Jesus is the light of life

