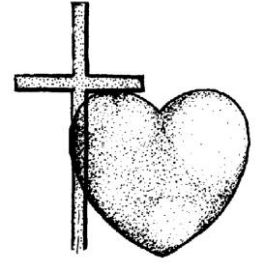


Journey Into Knowing Jesus



LESSON 1 . . . What Jesus Can Do for You (John 1:1-18)

The gospel of John is my favorite book of the Bible because, more than any other book, studying it is truly a “journey into knowing Jesus.” The fourth gospel was written by John who was one of Jesus’ disciples and the younger brother of another disciple named James. John’s gospel is different from the other three gospels because it contains no parables and doesn’t tell us about the birth, baptism, temptation, or transfiguration of Jesus. Instead, God inspires John to tell us about Jesus’ relationships. Therefore, John records Jesus’ dialogues with people like Nicodemus and the woman at the well.

NOTES

John didn’t write this gospel to give us a lot of facts **about** Jesus, but to help us get to **know** Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him. The purpose of this gospel is that we *may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God* (Jn 20:31a). Why does John want us to believe what he has *written* about Jesus, according to John 20:31b?

The key word, which appears over fifty times in this gospel, is the verb *believe* (PISTEUŌ, pist-you’-oh). It refers to actively trusting in Jesus. John begins his book with **four** things **Jesus can do for you** if you *believe*. First, He can . . .

Help with any problem (1:1-3)

John begins with an amazing statement: *In the beginning was the Word* (1:1a). Notice *Word* has a capital “W.” This is because the Greek word translated *Word* is LOGOS (log’-os) and is used as a title for Jesus. LOGOS refers to expression of thought or the spoken word that communicates. LOGOS means Jesus is God communicating with us.

John tells us Jesus, *the Word*, was *in the beginning* (1:2). There was never a time when Jesus did not exist because *in the beginning* of time, space, and matter, Jesus already existed because He is God. How does Jesus express this truth in John 8:58?

In the beginning, Jesus already existed in eternity past. If Jesus always existed, where was He before the beginning of creation? John tells us *the Word was with God* (1:1b). However, He was more than just *with God*; John tells us *the Word was God* (1:1c). How does Jesus express this fact in John 10:30?

Through the eternal Jesus *all things were made*, and *without him was not any thing made* (1:3). Therefore, through Jesus molecules and galaxies were *made*. More than that, what does Colossians 1:17b tell us?

Jesus, who is God, keeps the planets on course in their orbit around the sun; He keeps everything from disintegrating into chaos. This is great news for us because it means there is nothing too difficult for Jesus. He can help us with every problem. There is no wayward child, no sickness, no financial problem, and no troubled marriage too difficult for Him. Therefore, Jesus, who is God, can **help with any problem**, and He can . . .

Bring light to darkness (1:4-5)

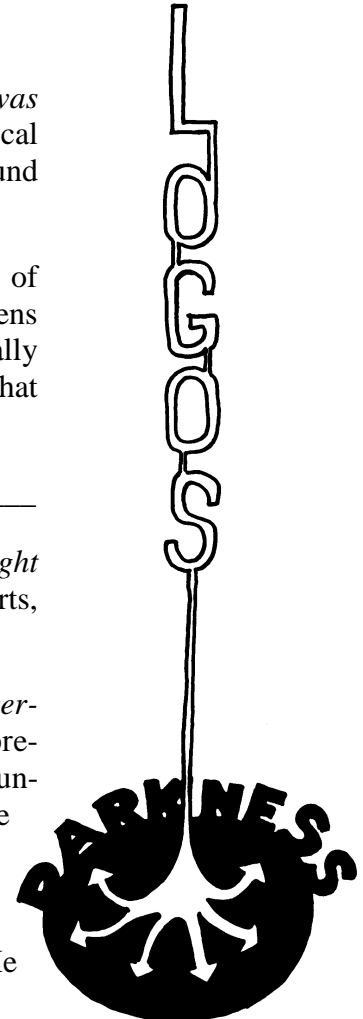
Not only is Jesus the great creator God, but John also tells us: *In him was life, and the life was the light of men* (1:4). Jesus is the source of physical and spiritual life. The word translated *life* (ZŌĒ, zoh-ay'), which is found fifty times in this gospel, always refers to spiritual life.

Jesus is the only source of eternal *life* and also of *light*. The purpose of *light* is to banish darkness. *Light* refers to the fact that Jesus enlightens our minds and consciences. He enables us to understand what is morally right and to discover God's purpose for our lives. This is because of what fact found in John 1:5a?

The verb *shines* is present tense, meaning continuous action. So, the *light* of Jesus continually—every day—*shines* into every corner of our hearts, minds, and consciences to reveal what is right and wrong.

John writes: *and the darkness has not overcome it* (1:5b). The word *overcome* (KATALAMBANŌ, cata-lam-ban'-oh) can also be translated "comprehended" or "understood." Satan, the prince of darkness, tries to hold unregenerate humanity in *darkness*, but he cannot *overcome* the divine *light* of Jesus.

Also, when you have a problem or a moral decision to make, Jesus is the *light* that *shines in the darkness*. In the darkest days of your life, He

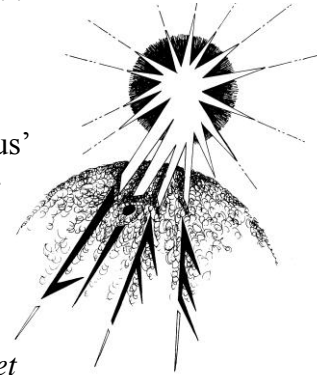


is always present, waiting to lead and comfort you. This *light* is found in the Bible, which Jesus also created because He created *all things* (1:3). Therefore, what do we read in Psalm 119:130?

Jesus can **help with any problem, bring *light to darkness***, and . . .

Give new life (1:6-13)

The apostle John now tells us about John the Baptist, who is Jesus' cousin but is not the author of this book. God *sent* John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus (1:6-7). *John was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light* (1:8). We'll get to know John the Baptist later in our study.



Jesus 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* (1:10-11). *His own* refers to His people—the seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel—through whom He chose to reveal Himself. Why did they not *know him* and as a result *not receive him*? Because they did not want to *know him*. If a person doesn't want to see the truth, he or she will not see it. Why do people today not see Jesus for who He really is? They don't want to because then they would have to acknowledge Him as Lord, or CEO, of their lives. In John 3:19b, why does John tell us the Jews of His day, as well as people today, don't *know* or *receive* Jesus?

In other words, people don't want to change. That's the bad news. But the good news is *all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God* (1:12). The vast majority of people in Jesus' day rejected Him, but some received Him as Savior and Lord. The same is still true today.

John explains: *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God* (1:13). John is referring to what Jesus later calls being *born again* (3:3). Being born in a garage doesn't make you an automobile; being born in a kitchen doesn't make you a biscuit; and being born in a Christian family doesn't make you a Christian. Only those who *receive* Jesus as Lord and Savior receive new life and *become children of God*.

Jesus can **help with any problem, bring light to darkness, give new life,** and . . .

Reveal what God is really like (1:14-18)

We now come to one of the most important verses in the Bible—John 1:14a. It is important because it is the most concise statement in the Bible about the Incarnation. Write this verse below:

In other words, God became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. The word translated *dwelt* (SKĒNOŌ, skay-nah'-oh) means “tabernacled” or “pitched a tent.” So, God “tabernacled” among us, or came to earth in a “tent” of flesh and blood, in the person of Jesus Christ.

John continues: *we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father . . .* (1:14b). The *glory* of God is often called the “Shekinah” (she-ki'-nah) glory, which is a Hebrew word used to describe the visible presence of God in the world. Probably the best example of Shekinah glory is when Peter, James, and John saw Jesus *transfigured* (Mt 17:2a). What does Matthew 17:2b tell us happened to Jesus?



The word translated *transfigured* (METAMORPHOŌ, me-tah-mor-fah'-oh) is the Greek word from which we get our English word “metamorphosis,” which is used to describe the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly.

Jesus is *full of grace and truth* (Jn 1:14c). The Greek word translated *grace* (CHARIS, kar'-is) means favor or kindness shown without regard to worth or merit of the one who receives it. Therefore, Jesus gives us something we don't deserve—forgiveness of all our sins. The Incarnation is the greatest expression of God's *grace*. Jesus is also *full of . . . truth*, which means He reveals what God is really like.

John reminds his readers that John the Baptist is another witness to Jesus' deity (1:15). John the Baptist was older and began his ministry before Jesus. However, what does he say about Jesus in the last phrase of John 1:15?

Jesus existed in eternity past, *before* John the Baptist, because He is the eternal God come to earth in human form. As a result, *from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace* (1:16). *Grace upon grace* means “grace replenishing grace.” In other words, the *grace* given in Christ can never be exhausted. How does Paul express this truth in Romans 5:20b?

No matter how much you and I sin, God’s grace is always greater. This is so beautifully described in the chorus of the hymn “Grace Greater than Our Sin.” It reads: “Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within; Grace, grace, God’s grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin” (Julia H. Johnston).

John concludes this section by writing: *No one has ever seen God* (1:18a). Many passages in the Bible record various people seeing representations of God (Ex 33:21-23), seeing visions of God (Isa. 6:1-5), or hearing the voice of God (Deut. 4:12). Some are described as seeing *God face to face* (Gen. 32:30), which suggests clear (Num. 12:8a) and friendly (Ex 33:11) communication. *Face to face* doesn’t refer to seeing the essence of God because it is described as God speaking *out of the midst of the fire* (Deut. 5:4). No one has ever seen the essence of God (1 Jn. 4:12a). Why, according to Exodus 33:20b?



Therefore, John tells us: *the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known* (1:18). The phrase *made him known*, or “declared him,” (EXĒGEOMAI, ex-ayg-eh´oh-my) is the Greek word from which we get our English word “exegesis” and “exegete.” In seminary I was taught to “ex-egete” the Scriptures, which means to explain from the original language. Jesus explains, or gives a full revelation, of the Father because He is the Original in flesh and blood (Col. 1:15a). How does Hebrews 1:3a express this fact?

What can Jesus do for you? He can **help with any problem, bring light to darkness, give new life, and reveal what God is really like.** This all begins when you receive Him as Lord and Savior. To do that, Jesus said, “*repent and believe in the gospel*” (Mk 1:15c).