



John 1 Study

Who is Jesus? For two thousand years people from every walk of life have wrestled with that question. In writing this, John wanted to make the case that Jesus is the Son of God. His gospel is meant to be both a testimony to the deity of Christ and an evangelistic tool.

All false religions reject the Jesus of the Bible. Satan is the father of lies, and one of his ploys is to assault Christ—and he does this very well through misrepresentation. Redefining Jesus has always been a popular industry.

The identity of Christ demands clarity. It's not enough that someone simply "believes in Jesus." The demons believed in Jesus. So many people today believe Jesus existed but limit him to being a man whose ethical teachings are worthy of respect.

Charles Spurgeon, known as the prince of preachers, said that *discernment is more than knowing right from wrong. Discernment is knowing right from almost-right.* Jesus asked Peter *what about you? Who do you say I am?* Nothing else matters if the right answer is not given to that question. A sturdy house cannot be built on a wrong foundation.

In 20:31 John writes *these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* In that one verse John emphasizes three things—the veracity of the written Word, the true identity of Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation. A church is on a slippery slope to irrelevance and apostasy when one or more of those three things is deemed no longer necessary.

Considering John 1:1-5:

What facts or descriptors did John use when referring to the Word?

What aspects of the Word do you most appreciate?

Looking at John 6:35, 11:25, and 14:6—what layers of meaning are involved in the word *life*?

I-Revelation

John 1:9 reads *the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.* We know that that *true light* is none other than Jesus Christ. A couple of verses before this, we're

introduced to John the Baptist, whom we know was the forerunner to Jesus. The assignment of John the Baptist was predicted all the way back in Isaiah 40:3—to *make straight the way for the Lord*.

In this vein, John *came as a witness to testify concerning that light*. What light? The *true light*. God was invading his created order, so to speak. The pre-existent, eternal son of God was entering into time, taking on human flesh. He was born of a woman, and at the time of John's writing had lived a sinless life, was killed as an atoning sacrifice for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven.

Read the first three verses of this gospel of John alongside the first three verses of Genesis.

How are the three members of the Trinity seen in both places?

How is the coming of Jesus symbolized in Isaiah 9:1-2?

How did the light of Jesus make himself known in your life?

Consider four characteristics of the light of Christ:

First, it is inclusive:

John tells us this *true light*, Jesus, *gives light to every man*. This too was predicted in the OT—listen to Isaiah again: speaking to Israel, the prophet wrote *I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth*. (49:6) You might recall a scene right after Jesus was born, when Joseph and Mary brought him to the temple and the old man Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and said these words: *for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel* (Luke 2:30-32).

(The apostle John was Jewish, as was Paul. In Romans 9 Paul makes note of the people of Israel: *theirs is the adoption as sons, theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all*. Considering all that, it was easy for the Jews to think that with all that spiritual blessing, they had the inside track on God's favor. But John makes note—as did Isaiah—that Jesus, the true light, gives light to *every man*.)

Secondly, as the *true light* Jesus was infinite:

Consider Colossians 1:16 and Revelation 1:17-18. These are good verses to have in mind when people say, as some do, that Jesus was a created being.

Thirdly, as the *true light* Jesus is incorruptible: He is pure and undefiled. God didn't just send Jesus down for a weekend to be killed on the cross and rise again—no, Jesus would be

conceived by the Holy Spirit and live in perfect obedience to the law of God. Why was this important? Hebrews 4:15 says *for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.*

Do you think of Jesus as your high priest, your mediator? What do such words mean to you, and why might they be important?

Finally, as the *true light* Jesus is invincible: John writes in 1:5 that *the light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not overcome it.* The Greek word used here is *katalambano*, which means to “pounce on” or to “overpower.” Light overpowers darkness—it’s never the other way around.

(It’s worth knowing that Satan’s original name was *Lucifer* which meant “light-bearer” or “shining one.” It was when he rebelled against God that he lost his place in heaven and became Satan, the “prince of darkness.” All through this gospel and the others, during the life of Jesus we see Satan do everything he can to extinguish the light of Christ, but he cannot. In fact, the powers of Hell will throw everything they can at Jesus, but they can no more overcome him than physical darkness can extinguish physical light.)

In John 8:12 Jesus said *I am the light of the world.* In Matthew 5:14 he said to his disciples *you are the light of the world.*

What does being the “light of the world” mean to you?

(Are you bringing Christ’s light—his revelation, into where you work, or whatever it is you do from Monday to Saturday? Ephesians 2:10 says *we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* Have you thought about and discovered what those good works are that God’s prepared for you?)

II--Regeneration

The revelation of Jesus can never be overpowered by the darkness of sin, but when faced with that reality we have a choice—we can either reject that light or we can say *Lord, I am undone.*

What do verses 10-11 say happened? Why shouldn’t it surprise us when people reject the light which is Christ?

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

(I don’t think there’s any greater evidence of the sinful heart of man than the rejection of Jesus Christ while he lived on this earth—that is as depraved as humanity can be.)

Against that sad reality, how is John 1:12 encouraging?

But—there's that great word, *but...to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

(This is a process of adoption that God alone conceives and initiates in us. *Believing in the name of Jesus*, as John puts it, is not about giving assent to facts and information. No, this is about believing that Jesus is who he says he is, and what this implies about the choices we make and who we follow. We're going to see very soon that Jesus invites us into a life of follower-ship.)

And, John makes it clear that being children of God is not about being in the right family, or bloodline, or ceremony. Nor is about being a good enough person.

Why would this be unsettling to the religious mind?

(Religion is about us "doing" for God. Christianity is about what Jesus has done for us.)

How does John say we become children of God?

(This is important, because there's a misconception that every person is a child of God. We are all God's *creation*, the *imago dei*. But in our natural state we were at enmity with God because of our sin nature. Jesus bridged the chasm between us and God.)

Are you, then, a child of God? Have you been adopted into his family? Could you give credible testimony to that effect? More to the point, would those closest to you testify in your favor?

III--Resolution

Jesus is not only the *revelation* of God, in whose work we have *regeneration*—in him is the *resolution* for the human condition. The dictionary defines *resolution* as *the action of solving a problem, dispute, or contentious matter*.

When sin invaded the human race it created a gulf, a chasm, between God and man. We are shot through with sin and cannot, through any effort of our own, bridge that chasm. Nor can God violate his own character by allowing our sin to go unpunished. This called for a divine resolution.

From Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers: *If all the mightiest intelligences God has ever made had sat together in solemn conclave for a thousand years, they would not have been able to solve this problem: How can God be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly? Infinite wisdom devised that matchless way of substitution by which, through the death of the Son of God, we might be saved.*

Jesus was sent here to *save us from our sins*. That was the stated mission of Jesus back in Matthew 1:21. John 1:14 says *the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us*. A paraphrase translation says *he moved into the neighborhood*. God took on humanity so that his righteousness could be imputed to us—and both humanly and divinely speaking, he's the embodiment of grace and truth.

Only by knowing the truth about Jesus can we ever receive the regeneration he came to bring. John writes in verse 17 *for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*.

What does it mean that Jesus was the embodiment of grace and truth? How do people tend to err to one side or the other?

(We can emphasize truth at the expense of grace, which can lead to legalism. And we can emphasize grace at the expense of truth, which can lead to moral relativism. Neither extreme honors God.)

If everyone at Grace City were walking in the Spirit as you are, would we be a grace-filled church?

On the same token, if you were the standard for spiritual maturity here at Grace City, how would we be doing?

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The light has been revealed. If you haven't accepted God's offer of regeneration through Jesus, it's on the table. In Christ, our enmity with God was resolved once and for all. If you know Jesus personally, then let us *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!*

