

L. Newbigin: “What if the person [Jesus] is in fact the primal truth by which all else has to be confronted and questioned?” I want us to approach this book as disciples of Jesus, seeing Jesus’ works and listening intently to His words. Let’s be there with others as they were introduced to Jesus and came to know Him. In this book we have John’s recollection of those 3-3½ years of being with Jesus on earth. By the time the apostle John writes, for 60+ years he had been reflecting on Jesus and sharing Jesus’ life & words (he’s probably 85-90 years old). The Holy Spirit had brought to mind the many activities and words of Jesus (14:26). John had vivid memories of this One who had changed his life. In this Good-News account, John shares intimate memories of one who was there, walking/talking/listening/observing Jesus in action (1 Jn. 1:1-4).

Key verse: **20:31** **These [signs] have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is THE Christ, THE Son of (THE) God; and that believing you may have life in His name.** There’s only One who was this; His name is Jesus! The signs were selected to produce conviction: that you may believe! As we travel with John, we’ll be convinced Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but more, that believing we may have life. John uses the word ‘believe’ 98 times.

John calls Jesus His name 247 times! Christ is mentioned 21X, Son of God 9X. John highlights Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God sent to earth to do the work of the Father. Really, what we have is only about 25 days out of His 3-3½ years of public ministry. John is writing mostly to ‘Gentiles’.

When Jesus began public ministry about A.D. 26/27, Herod Antipas had been appointed ruler over Galilee, Tiberius Caesar had become Roman emperor (A.D. 14), Caiaphas had become high priest (A.D. 18), and Pontius Pilate had been appointed governor of Judea (A.D. 18). These were the men God had put in place; GOD appoints and removes leaders. A.D. 30 will end Jesus’ public ministry on earth. When John wrote from Ephesus around 90 A.D., his were the last of the NT. Christianity had gone out to the Gentile world. The Church was no longer predominantly Jewish. His message was clearly Jesus!

The book revolves around signs, discourses, & attendance at national feasts. John gives 7 signs/miracles (proofs) to reveal the Person and ministry of Jesus; 5 are not mentioned in the other Gospels. The ‘signs’ are designed to get us to believe in HIM, not His works/words. John was interested not so much in the signs as the meaning of the signs. For example, the Word did not just open the eyes of a blind man; He is the Light of the world (1:4,9, 8:12, 9:1f, 12:46).

There are also 7 ‘I AM’ statements of Jesus: Bread of Life, Light of the world, the Gate, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection & the Life, the Way, the Truth, & the Life, the True Vine. I AM—the meaning of God’s OT name (Yahweh).

In 1:1-18, we have the identification of “the historic Jesus with the eternal Word who was with the Father and who is God.” **Read 1:1,14,18. 1:1-13** The Pre-Incarnate Word. **1:14-18** The Incarnate Word. Use as your pattern of study: What does the passage say and mean, and then, how can you apply?

Read 1:1-5. :1 **In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God** (NLB). **In the beginning:** The Word is eternal: He has always existed. When you go back to creation, the Word was already there (17:5). The pre-existence of Jesus is also taught by Paul (Phil.

2:6, Col. 1:17) & in **Heb. 1:2**. Here is One whose existence lies beyond time.

Was the Word: As a NT designation of Jesus, the term Word (Logos) occurs only in **1:1,14, 1 Jn. 1:1, Rev. 19:13**. It means to pick out or select words in order to express one’s thoughts. Look at the ‘Word (Jesus)’ and you’ll see the expression of the mind and thoughts of God! The wonderful ‘signs’ were “windows opening on to the reality which is God.” In every sign John saw the glory (display) of the reality of God breaking into time and into human affairs.

And the Word was (imperfect tense, something continuous) **with God:** The Word was separate and distinct from God the Father, yet existed with or face to face with Him. One in essence/nature, yet personally distinct.

And the Word was God. There was never a time when the Logos was not fully God. The Bible asserts the Word’s full deity and perfect humanity (**1:1,14,18, Mt. 1:23, Is. 9:6, Mic. 5:2, Phil. 2:6-11, Col. 2:9, Heb. 1:1-3, Rev. 19:16**). The Word was very God, fully God. **:2** Lit. **This one (He) was in the beginning with God.** In time He came to be with man.

:3 **All things came into being through Him [Creator], and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.** The Word was involved in creating everything that exists (**1 Cor. 8:6, Col. 1:16-17, Heb. 1:2**). He and the Father thought it and then spoke it into being (see **Rom. 4:17**). The Word is not a created being; He is the One who creates, yet later became part of His creation!

:4 **Life and Light:** two essential things each needs. Jesus is both. **In Him was life.** We must go to the One who is life and gives life if we truly want to have life that is eternal (in both duration and quality of life). Life occurs 36 times in John’s Gospel. Remember **20:31**, **“You may have life in His name.”** Life is the opposite of perish, judgment, death (**3:16, 5:24,29, 10:28**). Those who believe in the Son will have life (**6:40**). Life is knowing Jesus (**read 17:1-3**).

And the Life was the Light of men. When Life is given, there comes with it Light. The Word is the Light. It is characteristic of light to shine. Only in Jesus (the Light of the world **8:12, 9:5, 12:46**) can we see people and things as they truly are. Only in Jesus can we see who we are, why we are here, and get the answers. With Jesus’ coming, everything became clear.

:5 **The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome or overpower it. Read 2 Cor. 4:6:** God shone in the midst of perishing, blinded, and unbelieving mankind! Only Jesus could do this! The Light shines (present tense, the Light has always shone and is still shining)! The darkness has never extinguished the Light. Comprehend = lay hold of something, to make one’s own, to seize. “I have come as Light into the world” (**12:46**). It was only when Jesus came that they saw fully and completely who God is and what Jesus has always been: the always-shining Light. Yet, people deliberately rejected the Word, God, their Creator, Life, Light. Unbelievers are eternally lost not because they do not know the truth, but because they reject it. **Rom. 1:18-21.**

:14 **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.** The Biblical Jesus is the Word who became flesh! This always-existing Word who was with God and was God/Creator/Life, and the always-shining Light, and who became flesh and dwelt among us is at the center of our faith. The Word’s name is not mentioned until **1:17**, and then 246 more times! The book is all about Jesus!

Read :6-8 There came (or came into being) a man sent from God, whose name was John. :7 (Lit. This one) He came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. :8 (Lit. That one) he was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. “It is in the worst of times that God’s best servants emerge.” With John the Baptist’s ministry, the 400 silent years between Malachi and the Gospels ended. The Baptist was to prepare the way for the LORD! (By the way, whenever the name John appears in this Gospel, it’s always referring to John the Baptist, not the writer John the apostle.) What was needed at that moment in history were witnesses to the Light. John will mention 7 who bore witness (testimony occurs 47X in this Gospel): John the Baptist, the Father, Jesus Himself, the Spirit, the works of Jesus, Scriptures, and other men. (The OT talks about the truth of a matter was to be established on the basis of multiple witnesses **8:17-18, Dt. 17:6, 19:15**). A witness is someone who tells the truth about something. We are simply called to give an account, the facts, not our opinions. This is why we must know the truth about who Jesus is. Living in the desert, John began pointing to the people’s need for repentance and belief in the Coming One. John pointed away from himself and toward the Lamb of God. John came, not to bring some new message, but to talk to men of that which had always been shining, the Light. “Repent! Turn around! Admit your need! Believe in the One who is coming!” Remember, **so all might believe (:7)**.

John was just a man (who didn’t even perform any miracles **10:41**)! He didn’t minister for more than a year and then our Lord took him home! John was a humble man, having a clear understanding of his mission and acceptance of his limitations. We preach not ourselves but Jesus as Lord (**2 Cor. 4:5**). We’ll see more of John the Baptist and his ministry later in **1:27,30,34, 3:28-30**.

Read 1:9-13. The apostle resumes his summary of who Jesus is & always has been. Keep in mind: This is still talking about Jesus before He became flesh.

:9-10 There was the true (real, substantial, genuine) Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. The real Light (“in Jesus the full ‘radiance of His glory’ **Heb. 1:3**) was revealed. Jesus is none other than the fullest revelation of God”), always-shining Light, coming to His own creation and people. The created world is characterized by darkness. (World used 78X in John, mostly with negative overtones.) Yet the true Light gives light to every person. There is no one who has not heard some truth about God (**Rom. 1:19-21, 10:18-20**). Every person has enough light to be responsible (general revelation in creation, conscience, Jesus showing up as Light).

:10 The Light/Word was in the world; it was even made by Him, and yet the world knew Him not. Incredible! **:11 He [even] came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.** He was (:1); He was in the world (:10); He came to His own (:11). The 1st ‘His own’ is in the neuter gender, meaning His own things, His own place, His own creation: He came into His own created world, and they did not receive Him. The 2nd ‘His own’ is in the masculine gender: His own family, people, a reference to the land and people

of Israel. Yet even His own people did not believe in Him and receive Him. Not much has changed through the years! The world still doesn’t know or receive Him, even though He’s still enlightening every person. His own also failed to believe in and receive Him even when He became incarnate. **Did not receive** (aorist tense denotes a decisive act). **Read Is. 1:2-4**; it’s the best commentary on the Jewish rejection. So all rejected the ever-shining Light, with the exception of those to whom reference is made in **:12-13**. **The first 12 chapters** of John stress the rejection of Jesus. **Chapters 13-21** focus on the believing remnant who received Him.

John softens the sweeping rejection of the Light by emphasizing a believing remnant. **:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born (begotten), not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.** Though the Word/God/Creator/Life/Light was mostly rejected, in the midst of that rejection God began to produce a whole new creation. A new humanity came into being: the result of reception versus rejection.

There were many who received and believed in Him (Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, the prophets, OT saints). **Receive**, a definite act of the will entrusting oneself into the keeping of another. **Believe in His name** means to put our trust in who and what He is. The Word gave them the right (liberty of action, a legitimate right). Each receiving and believing person was **given** (it’s a gift of God!) **the legitimate right/power** to do something. Yes, we are all children of God due to His creation and preservation of our lives; yet only some of us become **children of God** in the depth and intimacy of the true parent-child relationship. They literally became what they were not before. Teknon, children, born ones. It starts with believing and receiving. When you do, you are ‘born again’ (**1 Pet. 1:3**). You become God’s child (**1 Jn. 3:1-2**). You become a partaker of God’s nature (**2 Pet. 1:4**). As a child you bear the image of our Father. Not only born as His children but also adopted as His sons. Do you identify yourself as God’s child?

One does not enter the family in a crowd; we come one at a time, personally. **:13 Not by blood**: not by human ancestry, physical descent: for example, from Abraham. Heritage and race, even the Jewish race, are irrelevant to spiritual birth. **Not of the will of the flesh**: you can’t make yourself one. **Not of the will of man**, of others; nobody can make you a Christian.

Becoming a child of God is strictly an act of God, by the Holy Spirit. It is beyond any human effort. When faith meets the Word of God, and the Word/God/Creator/Life/Light is received as Lord into a life, a new life begins spiritually. “It contains no human element; nor does it lie within the scope of human achievement.” One becomes outwardly who God has made him/her inwardly by the renewing of his/her thinking (see **Rom. 12:2**). How do these 13 verses renew your mind? What thinking needs to be adjusted in your life when confronted with the Biblical Jesus? And this ‘Word’ became flesh and dwelt among us for a period of time. **THIS** is the Jesus of the Bible! Do you know Him? Do you assess everything in your life by who He is and what He’s done?

Read 1:14-18. Jesus is unique, the most unique Person who ever lived. Before His incarnation (becoming flesh), Jesus (who has always existed) was the Word, with God, was God, the Creator, Life, the always-shining Light. Jesus was the only begotten God and Son (**1:14,18, 3:16,18, 1 Jn. 4:9**). Yet He became a man. He took on our full humanity. The essence of who Jesus (God) is was revealed at a point in time: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We saw His glory!” God, contained in a body of flesh. There Mary was, holding in her arms Immanuel (= ‘God with us’). The eternal Word is now identified with the Jesus of history.

:14 And the Word became flesh. And THE Word flesh became! Jesus took on humanity (**Heb. 1:1-3, 2:14-18**). The Word did not cease to be God/Creator/Life/Light but understand, the only one-of-His-kind God (**:18**) became human flesh!

And dwelt (tabernacled) among us. Just as the shekinah (glory), the bright cloud and fire of God’s glorious presence, settled upon the mount and tabernacle (**Ex. 24:16-17, 40:34-35**) and later filled the temple of Solomon (**1 Kings 8:10-11**), so the Word pitched His earthly tent among us, and John and his fellow believers beheld God’s glory: God present in bodily form. One can’t fully see God and live (see **Ex. 33:20**), so God took on a shape we could see and understand. The God we see described in **Ex. 34:6-7** (compassionate, gracious, patient, abounding in loving-kindness, abounding in truth, forgiving, just), became flesh and dwelt among us for a while! He took up His residence in a tent (earth suit) among us.

And we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten (unique, only one of His kind) from the Father, full of grace and truth. What caught John’s attention was the glory he saw inside the tent. God’s glory was revealed not only in majesty and power (as in the OT), but also in grace and truth. “We saw the visible manifestation of God in the Word who became flesh.” When we examine the person of Jesus, we suddenly discover that we’re standing in the presence of God! When we see the essence (display) of His being (which is what glory is), we see the essence (display) of God. We’ll see later in this Gospel that by knowing Jesus the Son, we also know God the Father. Jesus set aside His glory while He was here on earth (see **Phil. 2:5-8**) so we would see the Father’s glory through Him. Jesus was seeking the glory of the One who sent Him (**7:18, 8:54**). Later in **17:5**, Jesus prays, “**Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.**”

Full of grace and truth. Jesus was the full expression of God’s grace and truth. **Grace** is undeserved favor, love giving itself with no conditions. Jesus was the fullest expression of love giving itself. **Truth** is the unveiling of reality (like Light in **:4-5,9**). To understand truth, we must look at Jesus. Remember what Jesus said to Pilate in **18:37**: “**For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.**” We know God’s Word is truth (**17:17**) and Jesus also stated HE is the truth (**14:6**). Jesus in **8:31-32** says, “**If you continue in My word (logos), then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**” Grace and truth are how we best see His glory.

The Word who has always existed became truly human. The Word who was with God and was God dwelt among mankind for a while in a human body. He who was God was full of grace and truth. From that point on, He was the issue.

:15 John [the Baptist] 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 (lit. has become before me).’” When the Baptist talked, people listened. He called all people to repentance, held public baptisms, and gained many followers. Yet he wasn’t affected by his role. To John the highest place belonged to Jesus (see **1:27,30,34, 3:28-30**). “He who comes after me in terms of time/birth ranks higher than I, for He existed before me.” Jesus has always existed. “All I am doing is preparing the way for His coming.” The Baptist had one of the most important responsibilities in history (even told about in the OT, **Is. 40:3-5, Mk. 1:2-3**), yet John understood his ministry and his message, and stuck to it. Humbleness marked his ministry.

:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace (lit. grace for grace). Fullness = all that is in God, that which is complete in itself. **Col. 2:9** says, “**For in Him [Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.**” The superabundance of grace has been fully revealed in the Word becoming flesh. Grace upon grace, day after day—we received it yesterday & today; we’ll receive it tomorrow. Of Jesus’ fullness and grace, we’ve all received, and it just keeps on coming; it never stops, a never-ending flow. Like the Light is always shining.

:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized (lit. came to be) through Jesus Christ. Moses had asked to see God, and God had given him the Torah. Yes, even though the Law was an expression of God’s grace to His people (it has important purposes: to reveal/condemn/stimulate sin/show every person’s need of a deliverer), yet Jesus is the fullest expression of God’s grace and truth. The writer is contrasting the law of Moses (requiring obedience from mankind yet powerless to give life) with the Person of Jesus and His grace and truth. The Law demands; there was nothing wrong with it; it prepared people for the grace and truth that came through Jesus. Jesus was the fullest expression of love giving itself and of truth.

Here for the first time in John’s Gospel, we have the Word/God/Creator/Life/Light named: His name is Jesus. He’s the Jewish Messiah, God’s anointed One.

:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom [fold, closest to the Father’s heart] of the Father, He has explained Him. We cannot see God; He is spirit. He had to become flesh so we could ‘see’ Him (see **1 Jn. 1:1-4**). Those who ‘saw’ God saw Him in a tent, a form He took on Himself for a few years. In Jesus, people could see God (**14:8-9**). Jesus has made God known. He wasn’t simply the only begotten Son, but God only begotten, God the one and only. Jesus as God is alone of His kind.

In the bosom (like the fold in a robe) of the Father. From the deepest intimacy possible, Jesus came to ‘reveal’ the essence, the heart, the mind of God. Literally, He has exegeted God, brought God out into the open. The Word revealed and interpreted the Father to men. He has unfolded, explained, what God is like. If we want to see God, we can look at Jesus! “In His words we hear God speaking; in His deeds we see God at work; in His love we feel God’s heart beating. God will never be a stranger to us again.” Get to truly know Jesus, the only begotten God! “What if the person [Jesus] is in fact the primal truth by which all else has to be confronted and questioned?” I believe He is. I pray you do the same.