

L. Newbigin: “What if the person [Jesus] is in fact the primal truth by which all else has to be confronted and questioned?” “The story one is going to read has a meaning which will radically redefine even his most fundamental terms.”

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. (John also wrote **1-3 John** & the book of **Revelation**.) For 60+ years the apostle John 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 20 days out of the 3-3½ years of public ministry. John is writing to 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> generation Christians, probably mostly Gentiles. He mainly covers events in Judea. The other 3 Gospels (Synoptics) focus on Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem.

When Jesus began His 3-3½ years of public ministry, Herod Archelaus had been appointed ruler over Judea (4/3 B.C.), 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 are the men God had put in place. GOD appoints and removes leaders. Jesus will begin His ministry in A.D. 26/27. A.D. 30 will cover Jesus’ last days on earth as the incarnate Word.

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’ lead us to recognizing Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God. They 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).

When John wrote from Ephesus around 90 A.D., all the other letters of the NT had been written. Christianity had gone out to the Gentile world. The Christian Church was no longer predominantly Jewish. His message is Jesus!

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.” This is the life of the Word

in eternity, before the world was (**1:1-13**). **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 I 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’ 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 is separate and distinct from God the Father, yet existed with or face to face with Him. One in essence and 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 (it is 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. **Read 3:19-21.** Men loved the darkness, for their deeds were evil. With Jesus’ coming, everything became clear. He is our absolute authority.

**: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.

This Word who was with God and was God and Creator and Life and Light (who is always shining) 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! It's all about Jesus! **:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**

**Read :6-8 There came (or came into being) a man sent from God, whose name was John. (Lit. This one) He came (lit. for testimony) as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. (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 end. 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 Jesus.

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.

**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 ("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 1<sup>st</sup> '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 2<sup>nd</sup> '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 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 when confronted with the Biblical Jesus?

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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).

When John wrote from Ephesus around 90 A.D., all the other letters of the NT had been written. Christianity had gone out to the Gentile world. The Christian Church was no longer predominantly Jewish. His message is Jesus!

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L. Newbigin: “What if the person [Jesus] is in fact the primal truth by which all else has to be confronted and questioned?” “The story one is going to read has a meaning which will radically redefine even his most fundamental terms.”

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. (John also wrote **1-3 John** & the book of **Revelation**.) For 60+ years the apostle John 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 20 days out of the 3-3½ years of public ministry. John is writing to 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> generation Christians, probably mostly Gentiles. He mainly covers events in Judea. The other 3 Gospels (Synoptics) focus on Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem.

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in eternity, before the world was (1:1-13). **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 I 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' 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 is separate and distinct from God the Father, yet existed with or face to face with Him. One in essence and 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. The Word is not a created being; He is the One who creates, yet later He 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 (it is 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. **Read 3:19-21.** Men loved the darkness, for their deeds were evil. With Jesus' coming, everything became clear. He is our absolute authority.

**: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

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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.

This Word who was with God and was God and Creator and Life and Light (who is always shining) 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! It's all about Jesus! **:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**

**Read :6-8 There came (or came into being) a man sent from God, whose name was John. (Lit. This one) He came (lit. for testimony) as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. (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 end. 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 Jesus.

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.

**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 ("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).

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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 when confronted with the Biblical Jesus?

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