

John's Gospel - Study 3

1:1-17(continued)

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

⁶There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.

⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.

⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him.

¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' "

¹⁶From the fulness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

Last Week - Homework

What description would we use to connect with today's society?
(*God the Word, God is Love, God is Judgement and Hell, God is eternal life ?*)
[*C and I thought "God is Spirit"*]

That first Study not abstract theology - knowing who J really is helps us when reading about the more "ordinary" human Jesus in the gospels.

Questions

Life

What does John mean by "life" ? (1:4)

Darkness

What is the darkness ? (1:4)

Light

How is Jesus our light? (1:4, 9)

Why didn't the world recognize the light? (1:10)

Witness

What was John the Baptist's primary role? (1:7)

Children of God

How do we become children of God? (1:12)

What does it mean to believe?

How should being a child of God affect our lives?

Life (Jn 1:4)

1:4 In him was life and the life was the light of men.

John's Gospel begins and ends with life. (1:4) (Jn 20:31). The word is continually on the lips of Jesus. (Jn 5:40). (Jn 10:10). (Jn 10:28). (Jn 14:6). In the gospel the words "life", "to live" or "to have life", occur more than 50 times. What then does John mean by "life"?

Life is the opposite of destruction, condemnation and death. God sent his Son that the man who believes should not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). The man who hears and believes has eternal life and will not come into judgment (Jn 5:24). There is a contrast between resurrection to life and resurrection to judgment (Jn 5:29).

The Fourth Gospel uses the phrase "**eternal life**". Eternal life is, it is not simply life which lasts for ever. A life which lasted for ever could be a terrible curse; often the thing for which men long is release from life. In eternal life there must be more than duration of life; there must be a certain quality of life.

Eternal is the adjective which is repeatedly used to describe God. Therefore eternal life is that life which God lives.

How, then, do we enter into that life? -- by **believing** in Jesus Christ. The word to occurs in the Fourth Gospel no fewer than 70 times.

Believe can mean

(a) Intellectual belief. -- we must be convinced that Jesus is really and truly the Son of God.

(b) But there is more than intellectual belief in this. To believe in Jesus means to take Jesus at his word, to accept his commandments as absolutely binding, to believe without question that what he says is true.

For John, belief means the conviction of the mind that Jesus is the Son of God, the trust of the heart that everything he says is true and the basing of every action on the unshakable assurance that we must take him at his word. When we do that we stop existing and begin living. We know what Life with a capital L really means.

Light (Jn 1:4)

This word occurs in the Fourth Gospel no fewer than 21 times.

- (i) Jesus brings the light which puts chaos to flight. "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3).
- (ii) The light which Jesus brings is a revealing light. The light which Jesus brings is something which shows things as they are -- their true character and their true values.
- (iii) The light which Jesus brings is a guiding light. Without Jesus we are like people groping on an unknown road in a black-out. With him the way is clear.

Witness (Jn 1:6-8)

1:6-8 There emerged a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness, in order to bear witness to the light, that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; his function was to bear witness to the light.

This Gospel presents us with witness after witness to the supreme place of Jesus Christ.

- (i) There is the witness of the Father. (Jn 8:18).
- (ii) There is the witness of Jesus himself. "I bear witness," he said, "to myself" (Jn 8:18).
- (iii) There is the witness of his works. He said: "The works which the Father has granted me to accomplish ... bear me witness" (Jn 5:36).
- (iv) There is the witness which the Scriptures bear to him. Jesus said: "Search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me" (Jn 5:39).
- (v) There is the witness of the last of the prophets, John the Baptist. "He came for testimony to bear witness to the light" (Jn 1:7-8).
- (vi) There is the witness of those with whom Jesus came into contact.
- (vii) There is the witness of the disciples.
- (viii) There is the witness of the Holy Spirit. "When the Counsellor comes ... even the Spirit of truth ... he will bear witness to me" (Jn 15:26).

Children Of God (Jn 1:12-13)

1:12-13 To all those who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God. These were born not of blood, nor of any human impulse, nor of any man's will, but their birth was of God.

There is a sense in which a man is not naturally a child of God. There is a sense in which he has to become a child of God.

All men are the sons of God in the sense that they owe to him the creation and the preservation of their lives; but only some men become the sons of God in the depth and intimacy of the true father and son relationship.

We cannot make ourselves sons of God; we have to enter into a relationship which God offers us. No man can ever enter into friendship with God by his own will and power; there is a great gulf fixed between the human and the divine. Man can only enter into friendship with God when God himself opens the way.