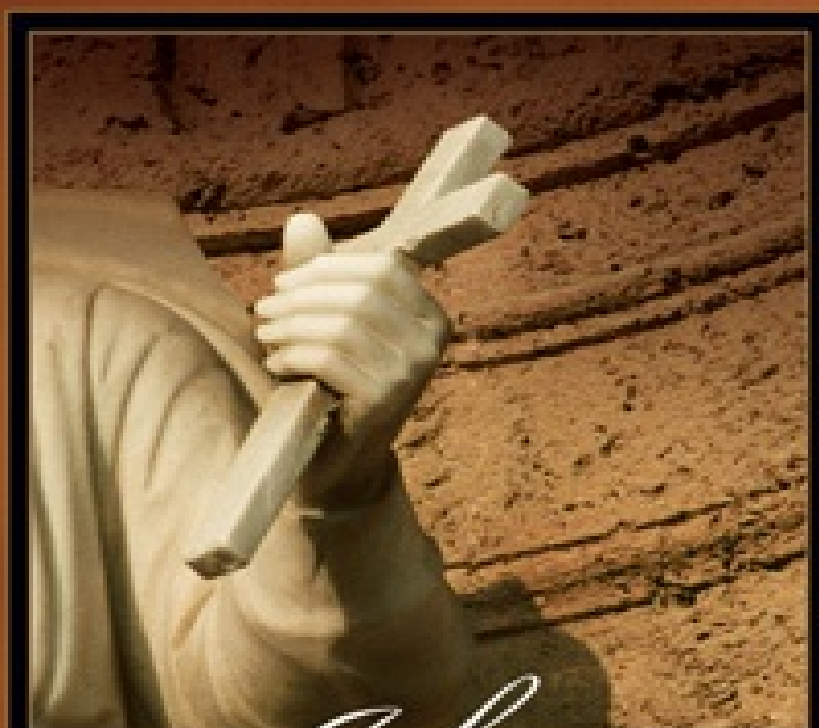


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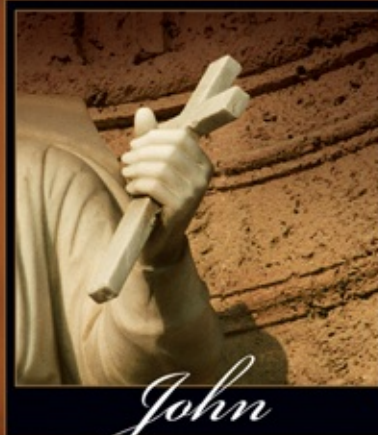
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Holman New Testament Commentary

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To my mother,  
Rose Marie Gangel,  
long in heaven.  
A Swiss immigrant,  
converted when I was  
three years old,  
who taught me the  
essentials  
of the gospel  
and foundations of  
Christian theology.

---

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# Editorial Preface

Today's church hungers for Bible teaching, and Bible teachers hunger for resources to guide them in teaching God's Word. The Holman New Testament Commentary provides the church with the food to feed the spiritually hungry in an easily digestible format. The result: new spiritual vitality that the church can readily use.

Bible teaching should result in new interest in the Scriptures, expanded Bible knowledge, discovery of specific scriptural principles, relevant applications, and exciting living. The unique format of the Holman New Testament Commentary includes sections to achieve these results for every New Testament book.

Opening quotations from some of the church's best writers lead to an introductory illustration and discussion that draw individuals and study groups into the Word of God. "In a Nutshell" summarizes the content and teaching of the chapter. Verse-by-verse commentary answers the church's questions rather than raising issues scholars usually admit they cannot adequately solve. Bible principles and specific contemporary applications encourage students to move from Bible to contemporary times. A specific modern illustration then ties application vividly to present life. A brief prayer aids the student to commit his or her daily life to the principles and applications found in the Bible chapter being studied. For those still hungry for more, "Deeper Discoveries" take the student into a more personal deeper study of the words, phrases, and themes of God's Word. Finally, a teaching outline provides transitional statements and conclusions along with an outline to assist the teacher in group Bible studies.

It is the editors' prayer that this new resource for local church Bible teaching will enrich the ministry of group, as well as individual, Bible study, and that it will lead God's people to truly be people of the Book, living out what God calls us to be.



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Twelve volumes designed for Bible study and teaching to enrich the local church and God's people.

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## John

More than fifty years ago, the New Testament scholar Merrill C. Tenney entitled his commentary on the Fourth Gospel, *JOHN: The Gospel of Belief*. An apt theme to be sure, and one which captures the essence of the apostle's purpose. With profundity wrapped in simplicity John sets forth his case. His Gospel is not always chronological like Luke, yet it is logical and highly theological. From the manifestation of the Word in chapter 1, to the post-resurrection appearance to the disciples in chapter 21, we find John emphasizing over and over again the excellence and eternality of the Son of God.

In this series, we emphasize practical exposition—not literary and exegetical detail—so commentary on introductory material will be brief. For full coverage of background materials, see the Introduction to Gerald Borchert's work in *The New American Commentary*.

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### AUTHORSHIP

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Historically, few have challenged the concept of Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel. As early as A.D. 180, Theophilus referred to John as the author, and ten years later Irenaeus used 100 quotes from the Fourth Gospel, mentioning John. At the turn of the century in A.D. 200, Clement of Alexandria used John's name frequently in connection with this Gospel. And Tertullian cited passages from almost every chapter, attributing them to the apostle. Opponents of this view have usually come from theological camps outside mainline orthodoxy, such as the Gnostics.

Internally, the author of this book refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 21:7,20,24). He was clearly an eyewitness to Jesus' earthly ministry, knew Jewish life well, and was Jesus' intimate friend to whom the dying Lord committed his mother (19:25–27). Whether the son of Zebedee actually wrote the scroll is certainly a matter open to question. We do not challenge Peter's authorship of the epistles which bear his name, even though we know Silas helped with the text (1 Pet. 5:12). Borchert spells it out for us: “When all of the arguments both internal and external are set together, there seems little reason to reject the idea that the son of Zebedee was the towering figure and the authentic witness involved in the writing of this Gospel. I would not think it necessary that he himself was the actual scribe.”

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### DATE OF WRITING

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Most conservative scholars place the development of John's Gospel toward the end of the first century about A.D. 90. However, as in many arguments of this type, one's view of authorship colors one's view of date. Scholars have argued that the more highly developed theology of the Fourth Gospel suggests that it originated later, but that is hardly definitive. Other scholars, particularly those who deny Johannine authorship, set a date somewhere in the second century.

So there are those who want to date this book earlier than the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and others who would like to see it dated well into the second century. My own inclination is to adopt the

traditional view of an aged John writing some sixty or seventy years after the resurrection of Jesus.

That we are right in regarding the Gospel of John as the fourth and last of the Gospels is clear not only from the fact that in the majority of manuscripts it is found in this position, but also from patristic references. Clement of Alexandria, for example, who died in A.D. 212, stated on the authority of the elders of an earlier age that John wrote his Gospel last of the evangelists. If the work was published during the last days of the life of John the son of Zebedee, as the evidence suggests, it can be confidently dated in the last decade of the first century, probably at its close. Irenaeus stated that John survived until the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan, which began in A.D. 98.

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## PURPOSE OF JOHN

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Luke wrote for an individual (Theophilus). Matthew and Mark targeted Jewish audiences with their record of Jesus' life and work. John wrote for the world, living as he did at the end of fifty years of church history, knowing that the gospel had already permeated the entire Mediterranean world. Indeed, he stated his purpose clearly: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30–31).

The Gospel of John radiates faith. I like to say that John offers the motto, "Believing is seeing." John focused on Jesus' teaching, avoiding most of the miracles and all of the parables. Writing with a clear grasp of Jewish culture, his logic appealed to Greek readers as well as he set forth a distinct evangelistic theology. John carefully selected his material and unashamedly targeted unbelievers. Four ideas emerge in the theme verses quoted above:

*Sign:* The miracles of Jesus were not just demonstrations of power, but signs of Jesus' person and authority. The Greek word *semeion* connects the sign with what it signifies. This accounts for John's unique selection of the miracles of Jesus which he chose to record.

*Selection:* John chooses certain signs of the many in order to accomplish his purpose. Traditionally, seven miracles can be found in John, although some interpreters count as many as ten.

*Significance:* John intended his historical, theological record to produce thinking conviction that would lead to changed lives.

*Salvation:* John's favorite word for new birth in Christ is *life*, as we will see repeatedly in this study.

John wrote this Gospel so that the Holy Spirit could produce faith in the hearts of those who could not have an earthly, eyewitness experience like his own.

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## STYLE OF JOHN

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For several decades theologians have been "finding the historical Jesus." Actually, the search is not that difficult since four ancient writers have provided ample material. This particular Gospel, however, sets the history in a theological setting. John adds a geographical flavor, identifying numerous sites around first-century Palestine to connect history to the culture of the day. He uses simplicity, repetition, and great detail. He arranges his material carefully to offer interpretive analysis to his readers.

Several “keys” fall into our hands throughout this book. We could probably identify the *key verses* in the passage we noted as the purpose statement (20:30–31). We shall soon discover that the *key chapter* is the first. I also suggest that the *key thought* in the book comes to us in John 1:18—“God the One and Only.” The *key words*, which are many, include “believe,” “life,” “word,” and “world.”

Do we find intentional structure in this Gospel? Several patterns have been suggested, though attributing any of them to John's intentionality seems out of the question. They do, however, help us grasp the material a bit more efficiently.

For example, the Fourth Gospel could be outlined on the basis of *Christ's relationship to earth*: I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father (16:28).

- From the Father (1:1–18)
- Into the world (1:19–12:50)
- Leaving the world and going to the Father (13:1–21:25)

On the basis of *Passovers* (though it is impossible to absolutely discern the number of Passovers in the text):

- Life up to the first Passover (1:1–2:12)
- First year of ministry (2:13–4:54)
- Second year of ministry (5:1–6:71)
- Third year of ministry (7:1–12:50)
- From the last Passover to the end of the crucifixion week (13:1–21:25)

On the basis of the *prologue division*, a system which allows 1:1–18 to set the pattern for the entire book:

- Revelation (cf. 1:1–4 with 1:19–6:71)
- Rejection (cf. 1:5–11 with 7:1–12:50)
- Reception (cf. 1:12–18 with 13:1–19:42)

On the basis of the *testimony about Christ*:

- The testimony of the evangelist (1:1–14)
- The testimony of the Baptist (1:15–36)
- The testimony of the first disciples (1:37–51)
- The testimony of the public ministry (2:1–12:50)
- The testimony of the private ministry (13:1–17:26)
- The testimony of his death (18:1–19:42)
- The testimony of his resurrection (20:1–21:25)

Martin Luther said that if we should lose all the books of the Bible except two—John and Romans—Christianity could be saved. Perhaps, but inspiration and application of the whole Bible is the goal.

of evangelical Christianity. Nevertheless, this book is special with its wonderful portrait of Jesus, the Savior of the world. An old story suggests that an agnostic was challenged by Henry Clay Trumbell to study the Gospel of John. After emerging from his skeptical analysis, the man told Trumbell, "The one of whom this book tells is either the Savior of the world or He ought to be."



# John 1

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## The Lamb of God

### I. INTRODUCTION

Confusing Pictures

### II. COMMENTARY

A verse-by-verse explanation of the chapter.

### III. CONCLUSION

Father and Sons

An overview of the principles and applications from the chapter.

### IV. LIFE APPLICATION

Sparrows in Winter

Melding the chapter to life.

### V. PRAYER

Tying the chapter to life with God.

### VI. DEEPER DISCOVERIES

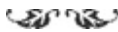
Historical, geographical, and grammatical enrichment of the commentary.

### VII. TEACHING OUTLINE

Suggested step-by-step group study of the chapter.

### VIII. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Zeroing the chapter in on daily life.



“Veiled in flesh the godhead see;  
Hail the incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.”  
Charles Wesley

---

#### GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILE: BETHANY

---

- Name means “house of unripe figs”
- The modern city is called el Azariyeh
- Suggested site of ruins claims to include the tomb of Lazarus and the house of Simon the Leper

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#### GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILE: BETHSAIDA

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- Name means “house of fishing”
- Located on the Sea of Galilee close to Capernaum
- Rebuked by Jesus for unbelief (Matt. 11:20–23; Luke 10:13–15)
- Not to be confused with Bethsaida on the east side of the Sea of Galilee where the feeding of the five thousand and the healing of the blind man took place (Mark 8:22)

---

#### PERSONAL PROFILE: JOHN THE BAPTIST

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- Born six months before Jesus to Zachariah and Elizabeth
- Appointed by God to be Jesus’ forerunner
- Last of the Old Testament prophets, first of the New Testament prophets
- Jesus’ cousin beheaded by Herod the Great

---

#### PERSONAL PROFILE: ANDREW

---

- The name means “manly”
- Son of Jonas, brother of Simon Peter
- Friend of Philip, who was also from Bethsaida
- Never mentioned in the Bible after Acts 1:13

---

#### PERSONAL PROFILE: SIMON PETER

---

- Simon was his original name; Peter (rock) was a name given by Jesus
- 
- A fisherman from Bethsaida
  - The only disciple we know was married (Mark 1:30; 1 Cor. 9:5)
  - With James and John, part of Jesus' "inner circle" (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33)
  - Leader of the Jerusalem church in the early chapters of Acts

#### PERSONAL PROFILE: PHILIP

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- The name means "lover of horses"
- Philip the apostle of the Gospels should not be confused with Philip the evangelist Acts 6, 8, and 21
- Probably the first disciple of John the Baptist
- Not mentioned in the Bible after Acts 1:13

#### PERSONAL PROFILE: NATHANIEL

---

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- The name means "God has given"
- Praised by Jesus for his integrity
- Also known as Bartholomew



**I N A N U T S H E L L**

*John wastes no time in introducing Jesus to his readers as the Word of God, the Son of God, and the Lamb of God. Unlike the writers of the three Synoptic Gospels, John introduces Jesus at the age of thirty and includes no information about his birth.*

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# The Lamb of God

## I. INTRODUCTION

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### Confusing Pictures

**D**uring the years I pastored my first church, my wife spent some time each week tutoring a young girl who had fallen behind in her reading at school. Since Linda was from a Christian family, part of the reading centered in Bible story books. One day Linda asked a penetrating question about the pictures she found in those books: “How do I tell the difference between Jesus and God? They both look alike to me.”

The artists, of course, had included all pictures of Jesus since God the Father is Spirit and cannot be shown by anything but symbols such as light or sound. But Linda had learned that Jesus was God, so she kept looking for pictures of both of them throughout her books. A natural mistake, and one which reinforces John's point throughout this book and especially the early verses of this first chapter.

In the first eighteen verses of his book, John introduces the Lord. He begins by proclaiming that Jesus reveals God the Father and tells us that when he came to earth, God's Son showed the human race what the Father was like—eternal, personal, and the source of all life. The word *life* appears more than thirty-six times in this Gospel along with several other key words. We could say that *life* establishes the central theme for the book.

We need only read the first verse of the Bible (Gen. 1:1) to understand the central issue of life, and it centers on the reality of God. If there is a God (and there is), and if that God has spoken in history (and he has), then the most important thing in the world is to find out what he has said.

The Gospel of John is a loved and familiar book, but many who can quote important verses from its pages have a less-than-satisfactory grasp of its important theology. Yet John wasted no time in introducing the key question: “Who is Jesus Christ?” In his presentation of Jesus as the Son of God, John started out with creation. Everything that was ever made was made through him; and without him, nothing has ever been created. Jesus was the source of power in the original physical creation and in the spiritual creation by which people are brought to new life in Christ.

Do not forget that key word *life*. John used it frequently in his Gospel, and he also used it thirteen times in his first epistle and seventeen more times in Revelation. Here in this Gospel we have more than twenty-five percent of all New Testament references to life. John wanted to make sure that everyone knew life is possible only through the Son of God.

## II. COMMENTARY

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### The Lamb of God

**MAIN IDEA:** *Jesus Christ is the heart and core of the gospel. Christianity is not a*

## ▲ Revelation of the Lamb (1:1–5)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Like his heavenly Father, Jesus reveals eternity, personality, deity, creativity, life, and light.*

**1:1–2.** Some interpreters have translated the opening phrase of this Gospel, “Before there was beginning, the Word had been.” Indeed, the familiar repetition of Genesis 1:1 almost looks as if John wrote a Gospel of two beginnings—a creation account that parallels physical birth and spiritual rebirth. But it is important to notice that we are dealing with two *beginnings*, not *creations*. The central focus of this verse is eternity. Like his heavenly Father, Jesus always was and therefore existed at the beginning of time.

It is interesting that John should call Jesus **the Word** rather than some other name to introduce his book—interesting, but not surprising since the Jews often referred to God in such terminology. The doctrine at stake here is the deity of Christ. Jesus is God, and John wanted to make that point immediately. In fact, this prologue (vv. 1–18) begins and ends with a strong statement of this doctrine.

The term **Word** (*logos*) would have been familiar to the Greeks as well. Their understanding centered on ultimate reason or the rationale of the universe rather than the personal God revealed to Abraham and his descendants. John claimed that the God of creation, the ultimate mind of the universe, had taken on human form; he had become *incarnate*.

The Bible allows no place for atheism and no room for doubt about how God has spoken—through the Word. Before there was a beginning, the Word had been coequal with God throughout all eternity. But what did the apostle mean by **with God**? The Greek word is *pros* which literally means “toward” implying a face-to-face relationship. John would have neither atheism nor unitarianism. He told us later in his Gospel that the Godhead consists of a trinity, but here in verse 1 we learn plurality.

So Jesus, the Word, is eternal and personal. Nothing can separate the heavenly Father from his Son. Verse 2 merely emphasizes verse 1. I like the way Gary Vanderet puts it: “John intends that the entire book be read in light of this verse. The deeds and the words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God” (Vanderet, *Prelude to Deity*).

**1:3.** Unlike the Gospel writers before him, John tells us that Jesus participated in creation and again states his case twice for emphasis. Surely this is a deliberate link with Genesis, and it sets the stage for other New Testament Scriptures which show us Jesus’ involvement in creation: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Col. 1:16). “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Heb. 1:1–2).

Creation is a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. Virtually every other aspect of theology rests upon our understanding of God as the origin of all life and of the role Jesus Christ, the Word, played in creation. John could hardly say it more clearly: **without him nothing was made that has been made**—everything from subatomic particles to galaxies. Only God who created all things can redeem them. Creation is the foundation stone of the gospel. Christ could not have been created, for he created all things. There was a “historical Jesus,” but this terminology refers only to his thirty-three years on earth. His life had no beginning, and it will have no end.

**1:4.** Here we find the first appearance of our key word—**life**. The revelation of the Lamb was all

the revelation of life. No fewer than thirty-six times in John, we find the word *zoe*. Jesus Christ the Creator provides physical life; Jesus Christ the Redeemer provides spiritual life; and Jesus Christ the Savior provides eternal life. In verse 4 John also introduced another key word—**light**. The light becomes the light of men. Notice these positive terms. What a wonderful contrast to death and darkness.

In the Word, God's person and power were revealed to humanity. Here again we see a reference to creation since, in the Genesis account, light was the first evidence of God's creative work. God is always the source of light and life. Christ the Son, the Creator, provides life and light to humanity. He alone is the life-giver and the light-bearer. John is getting ready to write new lyrics to an old melody: "With you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (Ps. 36:9).

**1:5.** In this verse John picked up a common first-century theme, the symbols of light and darkness representing good and evil. The word **understood** might be rendered "overcome." All the forces of Satan tried to prevent life and extinguish the light—but they could not.

These five verses tell us that Jesus came to the world with a message of hope, and he came from heaven where he had lived eternally with the Father. Often I find myself humming the theme of the television miniseries *Winds of War* which aired in the mid 1980s. Based on the Herman Wouk book, the series ran for a total of eighteen hours. This theme played over and over again—in the key of minor. John's key words are like that, especially "life" and "light." The word rendered "understood" in the NIV is translated "seizes" in Mark 9:18 and "overtakes" in John 12:35. God sent his light into the world, but mankind did not understand it, could not grasp it. But the world will never be able to defeat it.

## **B Purpose of the Lamb (1:6–13)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Eternal life and heavenly light come to those who trust Jesus and are born again from above.*

**1:6–7.** We've already noted the recurring themes of life and light; here is another—**witness**. In order for John the apostle to introduce the Son of God historically, he had to first introduce John the Baptist. We should notice, however, that John emphasized the *function* of the Baptist, not his *identity*. Luke tells us much more about John the Baptist's birth and life; John focuses on why he came and why he sent him.

A good witness does not attract attention to himself but to the person or facts which he represents. The Greek word for "witness" by John in this Gospel appears only three times in Mark and only once in Luke. The verb (usually rendered "testify") shows up thirty-three times in John and only once each in Matthew and Luke. All this points up the uniqueness of each account and particularly the intensity with which John will seek to fulfill his purpose. As Tenney puts it, "Although vv. 6–8 seem alien to the general content of the text, they are not irrelevant. As the Word came to bring the heavenly light to humanity, so John came to speak from a human level and to awaken people to their need of God's revelation" (Tenney, *EBC*, p. 31).

How interesting that John the apostle should write about John the Baptist and tell us he was **sent**. He used a verb form upon which the word *apostle* is built. Actually, both men were apostles in the functional sense because they were sent from God with a message to people who needed to hear it.

As implied above, the words **witness** and **testify** are essentially the same word from which we get our English word *martyr*. John used it often, accounting for forty-seven out of seventy-six times the word appears in the New Testament.

**1:8–9.** John had no problem using repetition to make a point. Though John the Baptist's message was enlightening, he was not the **true light**. We have created virtually every kind of artificial light possible for special effects on television and films. But nothing can compare with watching God's sunrise or sunset, or perhaps staring from the blackness of an Arizona desert into the night sky at stars and planets God has made. Jesus is the **true light**, not some imitation.

But what does it mean to say that Jesus **gives light to every man ... coming into the world**? The intended contrast between the Master and the messenger strikes us dramatically: John was a man; Jesus is God; John was a witness, Jesus is the Word; John was a servant, Jesus is the Son. The latter phrase of verse 9 surely refers to the incarnation of Jesus, though some have interpreted it to mean the conscience God provides every human being, or even the natural revelation everyone can see. The structure of the verse, however, favors a reference to Christ's birth even though the past tense seems awkward in this context. A major theme of this section is regeneration, and these first four verses provide its announcement.

**1:10–11.** Immediately after describing the announcement, John tells us about apathy toward the message of regeneration. The **world** (*kosmos*) is another of John's theme words; he used it seventy-seven times. With the device of repetition, John taught incarnation, creation, and rejection all in one verse (v. 10). Depravity and blindness thwarted God's efforts to reach out to his own creation—and still do. As Marcus Dods declared,

There He was, the Creator Himself, that mysterious Being who had hitherto kept Himself so hidden and remote while yet so influential and supreme; the wonderful and unsearchable Source and Fountain out of which had proceeded all that men saw, themselves included—there at last He was 'in the world' He Himself had made, apparent to the eyes of men, and intelligible through their understanding; a real person whom they could know as an individual, whom they could love, who could receive and return their expressions of affection and trust. He was in the world, and the world knew Him not (Dods, p. 25).

In verse 11, the first appearance of the word **own** appears in the neuter gender and the second masculine. What significance could such a distinction have for interpretation? One possibility is that Jesus came to earth, the place he had created, and the second tells us that the people who lived there turned him away. He was not welcomed or accepted.

**1:12–13.** Early in his book, John established the heart of the gospel, still two chapters away from the famous John 3:16. From the announcement of regeneration followed by apathy the apostle introduces the acceptance of regeneration.

Like most things in life, there is a right way and a wrong way to respond to God. The right way (and the only meaningful way) is to believe the gospel, receive the Savior and accept new birth as a result. The wrong way somehow links a relationship to God with human qualities such as physical birth, self-determination, or the choice of another person. In John's theological vocabulary, **believe** and **received** are synonymous when it comes to the gospel. Patrick Henry once said, "The most cherished possession I wish I could leave you is my faith in Jesus Christ, for with Him and nothing else you can be happy, but without Him and with all else, you'll never be happy" (cited in Detzler, p. 39).

## **Incarnation of the Lamb (1:14–18)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Incarnation is an important doctrinal term meaning that a spirit God took on human flesh in the form of Jesus.*

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**1:14.** This may be the most important verse in the Bible on the doctrine of the incarnation. John went back to verse 1 to pick up one of his favorite themes, **the Word**. God became human; God showed us his glory; God offered us grace and truth; God literally “tabernacled” among us. Remember the tabernacle in the center of the camp? It represented the place of the law, the abode of God, the source of revelation, the site of sacrifice, and the focus of worship. Now in the new covenant, Jesus provides all these.

And not only was Jesus here, but he demonstrated **the glory of the One and Only**. Other prophets including John the Baptist, were sent from God, but the Word came directly from the Father's presence. Borchert reminds us of some important implications: “This text makes it absolutely clear that the mission of the Logos was unique in the history of the world. *This uniqueness of the Son makes it impossible for Christianity to be a syncretistic religion.* In our mission to the world we cannot say ‘Jesus and Caesar’ or ‘Jesus and Buddha,’ and so forth. Our confession is Jesus, the one and only! The early Christians suffered and died because they refused to recognize any other pattern than that which was revealed in Jesus Christ” (Borchert, p. 121).

Finally, we cannot pass lightly over the wonderful phrase, **full of grace and truth**. John used the word **grace** again in verses 16 and 17, then never mentioned it for the rest of his Gospel! He used **truth** many times, but here the combination grabs us. Jesus perfectly blended two of the most important qualities of the divine nature and displayed them in human personality.

**1:15–16.** The full expression of John the Baptist's comparison between himself and his Lord does not appear until chapter 3, but the phraseology of verse 15 answers the question, “When did the incarnation occur?” Historically, many conservative Bible scholars place the date at 4 B.C., but that is hardly the point of this passage. The incarnation occurred at a specific point in God's plan for the world. Paul spelled it out clearly in his letter to the churches of Galatia: “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Gal. 4:4–5). In time Jesus followed John the Baptist, but in importance he holds the preeminence.

At this point in his narrative theology, John the apostle could not hold back a testimony to God's grace: **We have all received one blessing after another**. Various Bible translations and paraphrases render this phrase differently:

- *NIV*: “one blessing after another”
- *KJV*: “grace for grace”
- *LB*: “blessing upon blessing heaped upon us”
- *NLT*: “one gracious blessing after another”

**1:17.** The contrast between law and grace forms a major portion of Pauline theology, but we get a thumbnail sketch here from John. Moses provided a standard of righteousness—that no one could meet. Then the Prophet whom Moses promised (1:25) came, and he brought a standard of righteousness centered in grace and truth. Like John the Baptist and John the apostle, Moses was a servant. But Jesus is the Son. This verse drives the dividing spike between the old and new covenants, introducing a new way of God's dealing with humankind.

**1:18.** This verse takes its place beside verse 14 as key passages on the incarnation, telling us the



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