

HOW TO USE everyWORD®

1 SUBJECT HEADING

John

B. Jesus the Light of the World:
The Special Witness of John the Baptist, 1:6–8

2 MAJOR POINTS

1. John was a man sent from God⁶
2. John was a man sent on a very special mission
 - a. To bear witness of the Light
 - b. That people might believe
3. John was a great man, but he was not the Light

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

3 SUBPOINTS & SCRIPTURE

Division I

The Witnesses to the Revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:1–51

B. Jesus the Light of the World: The Special Witness of John the Baptist, 1:6–8

1:6–8

Introduction

Of all the people who bore witness of Jesus, one individual stands out as unique. John the Baptist was a very special witness of Christ. In fact, John's sole purpose on earth was to witness and to bear testimony of the Light of the world. His purpose stands as a dynamic example for us. As believers, our purpose is to bear the same witness as John: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. This is, *Jesus the Light of the World: The Special Witness of John the Baptist*, 1:6–8.

1. John was a man sent from God (v.6).
2. John was a man sent on a very special mission (v.7).
3. John was a great man, but he was not the Light (v.8).

4 COMMENTARY

1 Glance at the **Subject Heading**. Think about it for a moment.

2 Glance at the **Subject Heading** again, and then the **Major Points** (1, 2, 3, etc.). Do this several times, reviewing them together while quickly grasping the overall subject.

3 Glance at **both the Major Points** and **Subpoints** together while reading the **Scripture**. Do this slower than Step 2. Note how these points sit directly beside the related verse and simply restate what the Scripture is saying—in Outline form.

4 Next read the **Commentary**. **Note** that the *Major Point Numbers* in the Outline match those in the Commentary. When applicable, a small raised number (**DS1**, **DS2**, etc.) at the end of a Subject Heading or Outline Point directs you to a related Deeper Study (shown on opposite page) in the Commentary.

5 and 6 Finally, read the **Thoughts** and **Support Scriptures** (shown on opposite page).

1:6

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

1 John was a man sent from God.

Scripture makes a strong contrast between what had been said about Christ and what is now being said about John. Christ “was in the beginning”; He was “with God,” and He “was God” (vv.1–2). On the other hand, John was “a man” who had come into existence at birth, just like every other human who has ever lived. John had a biological mother and

father, whereas Jesus Christ had no human father; He was the only begotten Son of God (v.14; Jn.3:16). John was not a divine being, not even an angel. He was a mere man.

This man, however, was sent from God; and he was sent on a very special mission. Two facts show this:

- > The meaning of the word *sent* (see DEEPER STUDY # 1).
- > The phrase *from God* (Gk. para Theou), which literally means “from beside God.” John was not only sent by God, he was sent from the very side and heart of God. John was only a man, but a man of high calling and mission, of enormous responsibility and accountability. He was a man sent uniquely by God, not by some other person.

Luke recorded a fascinating fact about this unusual man: his name was not chosen by his parents, but by God Himself. The angel whom God sent to Zacharias, instructed him to name his son

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The everyWORD® series and study system contains everything you need for sermon preparation and Bible study:

1. The **Subject Heading** describes the overall theme of the passage and is located directly above the Outline and Scripture (keyed *alphabetically*).
2. **Major Points** are keyed with an outline *number* guiding you to related commentary.
3. **Subpoints** explain and clarify the Scripture as needed.
4. **Commentary** is fully researched and developed for every point.

John (Lk.1:13). The name *John* means *gracious*. John was a man sent forth with a name to match his message: *God's grace* is now to enter upon the scene of world history.

John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven" (Jn.3:27)

What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him? (Jb.7:17)

What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (Ps.8:4)

Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he [God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in. (Is.40:21-22)

THOUGHT 1. Like John, we too, as believers, are sent by God to bear witness of Jesus Christ. Note three significant points about the servants and messengers of God:

- > First, the servants and messengers of God are not sent forth by another person, but by God. We are sent forth as the ambassadors of God.
- > Second, God's messengers are sent forth *from* God, from the very side and heart of God.
- > Third, as God's messengers, we have received the highest of all callings and missions, the calling of telling the world about Christ and the mission of bringing others into a saving relationship with Christ. This is an enormous responsibility, and we must never lose sight of the sobering fact that we are accountable to God Himself for our faithfulness to this holy task.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." (Jn.15:16)

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Co.3:5-6)

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Co.5:18-20)

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. (Ep.3:7)

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service. (1 Ti.1:12)

5 THOUGHTS

6 SUPPORT SCRIPTURE

DEEPER STUDY # 1

(1:6) **Sent—Apostle—Commission:** *Sent* (apostalmenos) means to send out; to commission as a representative, an ambassador, an envoy. Three things are true of the person sent from God.

1. He belongs to God, who has sent him out.
2. He is commissioned to be sent out.
3. He possesses all the authority and power of God, who has sent him out.

7 DEEPER STUDY

2 John was a man sent on a very special mission.

1:7

Two Old Testament prophets foretold John's special mission and purpose. Both Isaiah and Malachi prophesied that John would prepare the way of the Lord, who is the embodiment

⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

8 SCRIPTURE CALLOUTS

5. **Thoughts** help apply the Scripture to daily life.
6. **Support Scripture** provides one or more Bible verses that correspond to the Major Points and Subpoints.
7. **Deeper Studies** provide in-depth discussions of key words or phrases.
8. **Scripture Callouts** repeat segments of Scripture used in the Scripture and Outline sections below the Subject Headings



“Woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel!”
(1 Co.9:16)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR: John, the Apostle, the son of Zebedee (see note—Mk.3:17. Also see Introductory Notes—1 John; Revelation for more discussion.)

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in A.D. 177, summarizes the testimony of the early church: “John the disciple of the Lord who reclined on his breast and himself issued the Gospel at Ephesus.”¹ Tradition says that John spent the latter years in Ephesus preaching, teaching, and writing. At some point he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of the Roman emperor, Domitian.

1. John was one of the very first disciples of Jesus (Jn.1:35, 39).

2. John and James were either partners with their father or worked for their father in a large fishing business (Lu.5:10).

3. John and James left everything to follow Christ (Mt.4:21–22).

4. John, along with Peter and James, comprised the inner circle of disciples, a group that was with Christ on very special occasions. (See the Transfiguration, Mt.17:1f; Gethsemane, Mt.26:36f. See Mk.5:37–43.)

5. John is called the “beloved disciple” because he seems to have been especially close to Christ and because he stresses love so much in his writings. He was a close companion of Peter (see Lu.5:10; Jn.19:26; 21:20, 23; Ac.4:13).

6. John was the disciple to whom Jesus committed the care of his mother (Jn.19:26–27).

7. John is said by Paul to be one of the three “pillars” of the church (Ga.2:9).

DATE: uncertain. Probably A.D. 80–95.

John lived at least until the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan, according to Irenaeus. Trajan’s reign began in A.D. 98. Clement of Alexandria, who died in A.D. 212, said: “Last of all; John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospels, being urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.” Fragments of the Gospel were discovered in Egypt in 1925. These fragments were dated in the first half of the second century. This would mean John wrote the Gospel in the first century.

This much is known. John was a young man when called by Jesus, and the early church fathers say that John’s Gospel was the last Gospel written. All this points to a late date somewhere in the latter years of John’s life; however, John’s exact age would have had a bearing as to when it was written. He probably would have been unable to write beyond a certain age because of feebleness.

A moving picture is painted of John by Jerome’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*. “When he tarried at Ephesus to extreme old age, and could only with difficulty be carried to the church in the arms of his disciples, and was unable to give utterance to many words, he used to say no more at their several meetings than this, ‘Little children, love one another.’ At length the disciples and fathers who were there, wearied with hearing always the same words, said, ‘Master, why dost thou always say this?’ ‘It is the Lord’s command,’ was his worthy reply, ‘and if this alone be done, it is enough.’”²

TO WHOM WRITTEN: John writes to the lost (3:16), the unbelieving (20:31), the new believers (1:50–51; 15:11; 16:33), the philosopher (1:1), and the theologian (1:12–14).

PURPOSE: “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” (Jn.20:31). This is John’s clearly stated purpose for writing. However, there is a secondary purpose. The Gospel refutes almost any heresy that might arise in any generation.

1 RVG Tasker. *The Gospel According to St. John*. “Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.” (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p.17.

2 Tasker, p.18.

1. To those who deny Christ's deity, John argues: He is the Son of God, the very Word of God Himself (1:1-5; 7:1f; etc.)

2. To those who deny Jesus' humanity, John argues: He is the Word become flesh, the very flesh which must be experienced (1:14f; 6:31f; etc.)

3. To those who continue to look for a human messiah and an earthly utopia, John argues: He is the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the very One who had been promised by God from the beginning of time (1:1-51, etc.)

SPECIAL FEATURES:

1. *John is The Gospel of Simplicity.* John used the simplest language and the most pure Greek possible. The Gospel serves as a first reader for many Greek students.

2. *John is The Gospel of Revelation.* The stress and compulsion of John is to show that Jesus Christ is the very revelation of God Himself. A quick glance at the outline clearly shows this.

3. *John is The Gospel of the Messiah.* John shows time and again that the Old Testament prophecies find their fulfillment in Jesus. However, there is a unique point in this that differs somewhat from the Synoptic Gospels. John shows that the salvation brought by Jesus is the very climax of Jewish religion. Jesus Himself is the fulfillment of the blessings promised Israel, the substance and truth, the symbolic meaning of the great Jewish festivals.

Jesus claims the Messianic right to secure disciples (1:35-51); to cleanse the temple (2:13-22); to associate and converse with Samaritans (4:1f; esp. 25-26); to work on the Sabbath, overriding the religious prohibitions (5:1-47; esp. 17f; 7:1-53); to feed the people even as Moses, and to claim that He Himself is the very Bread of Life (6:1-14, 22-71; esp., 31f); to forgive sins (8:1-11); and many, many other claims. He dramatically pictures His Messianic claim with the triumphal entry (12:12f).

4. *John is The Gospel of Redemption.* This redemption is centered in the cross and death of Jesus Christ. He is "the (sacrificial) Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). His passion is the hour toward which His whole life is moving (2:4; 7:7, 8, 30; 12:23; 17:1). His own flesh and blood is to be *eaten*, that is, *partaken of*, if men are to have life (6:33-53). He compares His death to a grain of wheat that must fall into the ground before it bears fruit (12:24). He is to lay down His life for His sheep (10:11). He draws all men to Himself—but it is only by being lifted up on the cross (12:32-33). He is to sacrifice Himself that others might be set apart unto God (17:19).

5. *John is The Gospel of Jesus' Humanity.* John shows Jesus weary and thirsty (4:6-8, 31); spitting on the ground (9:6); weeping at the death of a dear friend, Lazarus (11:35); troubled because He is to die (12:27); disgusted with His betrayer (13:21); burning with thirst while dying (19:28); and having normal blood and water flowing through His body (19:34). John stresses this point by proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of Man (1:51; 5:27; 6:53; 12:23; 13:31).

6. *John is The Gospel of the Word.* John shows Jesus to be the very Word of God. By this he means that Jesus is everything God ever wanted to say to man. God has done more than speak what He wanted to say; God has pictured what He wanted to say in the very life of Jesus. Jesus is the expression, the thought, the idea, the picture of what God wanted to say to man. The Word of God has become flesh. (See note—Jn.1:1.)

7. *John is The Gospel of 'I Am,'* of God Himself, of Yahweh, Jehovah. The words "I Am" are extremely important to Jewish history. It is the great name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex.3:13-15). And John shows Jesus revealing Himself as the "I Am" at least ten times. (See note—Jn.6:20.)

8. *John is The Gospel of Signs.* John records eight miracles of Jesus, six of which are reported only in this Gospel. What John does is select representative examples that point and show that Jesus is the Son of God. The miracles, he says, were not done to amaze people. They were performed as signs of His deity and godly powers (see note—Jn.2:23). These signs are: the water turned into wine (2:1-11); the healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54); the healing of the man at the pool (5:1-9); the healing of the man born blind (9:1-7); the raising of Lazarus (11:1f); and the second netting of fish (21:1-6).

9. *John is The Gospel of the Holy Spirit.* John gives the fullest teaching of Jesus on the Holy Spirit among the Gospel writers (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7-8, 13-15).

OUTLINE OF JOHN

everyWORD[®] is *unique*. It differs from all other study Bibles and sermon resource materials in that every passage and subject is outlined right beside the Scripture. When you choose any subject below and turn to the reference, you have not only the Scripture, but also an outline of the Scripture and subject *already prepared for you—verse by verse*.

For a quick example, choose one of the subjects below and turn over to the Scripture. You should find this system to be a marvelous help for more organized and streamlined study.

In addition, every point of the Scripture and Outline is *fully developed in a Commentary* section with supporting Scripture at the end of each point. Again, this arrangement makes sermon or lesson preparation much simpler and more efficient.

Note something else: The subjects of *John* have titles that are both *biblical* and *practical*. The practical titles are often more appealing to people. This benefit is clearly seen for use on billboards, bulletins, church newsletters, and so forth.

A suggestion: For the *quickest* overview of *John*, first read all the Division titles (I, II, III, etc.), then come back and read all the individual outline titles.

OUTLINE OF JOHN

- I. THE WITNESSES TO THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, 1:1–51**
 - A. Jesus the Living Word: The First Witness of John the Apostle, 1:1–5
 - B. Jesus the Light of the World: The Special Witness of John the Baptist, 1:6–8
 - C. Jesus the Light of the Human Race: The Second Witness of John the Apostle, 1:9–13
 - D. Jesus the Word Made Flesh: The Third Witness of John the Apostle, 1:14–18
 - E. Jesus the Messiah, the Lord: The Second Witness of John the Baptist, 1:19–28
 - F. Jesus the Lamb of God, the Son of God: The Third Witness of John the Baptist, 1:29–34
 - G. Jesus the Messiah, the Christ: The Witness of Andrew, 1:35–42
 - H. Jesus the One Prophesied: The Witness of Philip, 1:43–45
 - I. Jesus the Son of God, the King of Israel: The Witness of Nathanael, 1:46–49
 - J. Jesus the Son of Man, God’s Mediator: The Witness of Jesus Himself, 1:50–51
- II. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE SON OF GOD, 2:1–3:21**
 - A. Revelation 1: Jesus’ Creative Power, 2:1–11
 - B. Revelation 2: Jesus Is Supremacy Over God’s House, 2:12–22
(Matthew 21:12–16; Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:34–46)
 - C. Revelation 3: Jesus Knows All People, 2:23–25
 - D. Revelation 4: The New Birth, 3:1–15
 - E. Revelation 5: God’s Great Love, 3:16–17
 - F. Revelation 6: Humanity’s Condemnation, 3:18–21
- III. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE NEW MASTER, 3:22–36**
- IV. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE LIVING WATER, 4:1–42**
 - A. The Offer of Living Water, 4:1–14
 - B. The Subject of Sin, 4:15–18
 - C. The Subject of Worship, 4:19–24
 - D. The Subject of the Messiah, 4:25–30
 - E. The Subject of Labor for God, 4:31–42
- V. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE OBJECT OF FAITH, 4:43–54**
 - A. The Evidence of Faith, 4:43–45
 - B. The Stages of Faith, 4:46–54
- VI. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OVER LIFE, 5:1–47**
 - A. The Essential Authority: Power to Meet the World’s Desperate Needs, 5:1–16
 - B. The Astounding Authority: Equality with God, 5:17–30

- C. The Five Witnesses to Jesus' Authority and Power, 5:31-39
- D. The Rejection of Jesus' Claim: Why People Reject Him, 5:40-47
- VII. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE, 6:1-71**
 - A. Jesus Feeds Five Thousand: The Kind of Faith Necessary to Meet Human Need, 6:1-15
 - B. Jesus Walks on Water: The Deliverance from Fear, 6:16-21
(Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52)
 - C. The Answer to People's Gnawing Hunger, Their Sense of Discontentment and Emptiness, 6:22-29
 - D. The Bread of Life: The Source of Lasting Fulfillment and Satisfaction, 6:30-36
 - E. The Assurance of the Believer, 6:37-40
 - F. The Way a Person Partakes of the Bread of Life, 6:41-51
 - G. The Results of Partaking of the Bread of Life, 6:52-58
 - H. The Reasons Some People Are Offended by Christ, the Bread of Life, 6:59-71
- VIII. THE RESPONSES TO THE REVELATION OF JESUS, 7:1-53**
 - A. The Response of Jesus' Brothers: Mockery and Unbelief, 7:1-9
 - B. The Response of the Jews: Seeking Yet Questioning, 7:10-19
 - C. The Response of the People: A Charge of Insanity Yet Still Questioning, 7:20-31
 - D. The Response of the Rulers and Authorities: A Charge of Being a Rabble-Rouser, 7:32-36
 - E. The Great Claim of Jesus and Divided Opinions About Him, 7:37-53
- IX. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE LIGHT OF LIFE, 8:1-9:41**
 - A. Humanity's Dark Sinfulness and God's Great Forgiveness, 8:1-11
 - B. Humanity's Need: The Light of the World, 8:12-20
 - C. Humanity's Futile Search for Messiah: The Pursuit of Utopia, the Perfect World, 8:21-24
 - D. Humanity's Tragic Failure to Understand the Light, 8:25-30
 - E. Humanity's Freedom from Sin Is Conditional, 8:31-32
 - F. Humanity's Enslavement to Sin: Four Proofs, 8:33-40
 - G. Humanity's Depravity—Corrupt Birth, 8:41-47
 - H. Humanity's Escape from Death, 8:48-59
 - I. Humanity's Eyes Opened (Part I): The Mission of Jesus, 9:1-7
 - J. Humanity's Eyes Opened (Part II): The Stages of Spiritual Sight, 9:8-41
- X. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE SHEPHERD OF LIFE, 10:1-42**
 - A. The Shepherd and His Sheep: False vs. True Teachers, 10:1-6
 - B. The Door of the Sheep: The Only Way to God, 10:7-10
 - C. The Good Shepherd: Jesus, the True Savior of the World, 10:11-21
 - D. The Great Shepherd's Claims, 10:22-42
- XI. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, 11:1-12:11**
 - A. The Death of Lazarus and Its Purposes, 11:1-16
 - B. Jesus and Martha: Growth in Faith, 11:17-27
 - C. Jesus and Mary: The People's Real Needs, 11:28-37
 - D. Jesus and Lazarus: Power Over Death, 11:38-46
 - E. Jesus and the Religious Leaders: Unbelief and Opposition, 11:47-57
 - F. Jesus and Reactions to His Revelation: He Is the Resurrection and Life, 12:1-11
(Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9)
- XII. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE GLORIFIED SON OF MAN, 12:12-50**
 - A. Jesus Proclaimed as King: The Triumphal Entry, 12:12-19
(Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40)
 - B. Jesus Approached as King: The Misunderstood Messiah, 12:20-36
 - C. Jesus Rejected and Accepted as King, 12:37-50
- XIII. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE GREAT MINISTER, AND HIS LEGACY, 13:1-16:33**
 - A. The Demonstration of Royal Service, 13:1-17
(Matthew 26:20-24; Mark 14:14-17; Luke 22:14, 21-23)
 - B. The Prediction of the Betrayer: A Picture of Apostasy, 13:18-30
 - C. The Departure of Jesus from This World, 13:31-38
(Matthew 26:30-35; Mark 14:26-31; Luke 22:31-34)

- D. Jesus' Death Delivers Troubled Hearts, 14:1-3
 - E. The Way to God Is Through Jesus Alone, 14:4-7
 - F. The Embodiment of God Is Jesus Himself, 14:8-14
 - G. The Holy Spirit: Who He Is, 14:15-26
 - H. The Source of Peace, Joy, and Security, 14:27-31
 - I. The Relationship of Jesus to the People of the World, 15:1-8
 - J. The Relationship of Jesus to Believers, 15:9-11
 - K. The Relationship of Believers to Believers, 15:12-17
 - L. The Relationship of Believers to the World: Persecution (Part I), 15:18-27
 - M. The Relationship of Believers to Religionists: Persecution (Part II), 16:1-6
 - N. The Work of the Holy Spirit, 16:7-15
 - O. The Resurrection and Its Effects Foretold, 16:16-33
- XIV. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE GREAT INTERCESSOR, 17:1-26**
- A. Jesus Prayed for Himself, 17:1-8
 - B. Jesus Prayed for His Disciples, 17:9-19
 - C. Jesus Prayed for Future Believers, 17:20-26
- XV. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE SUFFERING SAVIOR, 18:1-19:42**
- A. The Arrest of Jesus: Absolute Surrender, 18:1-11
(Matthew 26:36-56; Mark 14:32-52; Luke 22:39-53)
 - B. The Jews and Peter: The Cowardly Denial, 18:12-27
(Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-62)
 - C. The Trial Before Pilate: Indecisive Compromise, 18:28-19:15
(Matthew 27:11-25; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-5, 13-25)
 - D. The Crucifixion: The Major Events at the Cross, 19:16-37
(Matthew 27:26-56; Mark 15:16-41; Luke 23:26-49)
 - E. The Burial: The Conquest of Fear, 19:38-42
(Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56)
- XVI. THE REVELATION OF JESUS, THE RISEN LORD, 20:1-21:25**
- A. Event 1: The Great Discovery—the Empty Tomb, 20:1-10
 - B. Event 2: The Great Recognition—Jesus Appears to Mary, 20:11-18
(Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-49)
 - C. Event 3: The Great Charter of the Church—Jesus Appears to the Disciples, 20:19-23
(Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-49)
 - D. Event 4: The Great Conviction—Thomas' Confession, 20:24-29
 - E. Event 5: The Great Purpose of the Signs (Wonderful Works) of Jesus, 20:30-31
 - F. Event 6: The Great Reality of Jesus' Resurrection Body, 21:1-14
 - G. Event 7: The Great Question About a Disciple's Love and Devotion, 21:15-17
 - H. Event 8: The Great Call to Total Commitment, 21:18-25

CHAPTER 1

I. THE WITNESSES TO THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, 1:1–51

A. Jesus the Living Word: The First Witness of John the Apostle,^{DS1} 1:1–5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God.

³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

1. Christ is eternal

- a. Preexistent—always existed
- b. Coexistent—always with God
- c. Self-existent—is God, possessing God's very nature, but is a distinct person

2. Christ is the Creator

- a. He created all things
- b. Nothing was created apart from Christ

3. Christ is life^{DS2}

- a. He is the source of light
- b. He is the answer to darkness
 - 1) Shines in darkness^{DS3}
 - 2) Conquers darkness^{DS4}

Division I

The Witnesses to the Revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:1–51

A. Jesus the Living Word: The First Witness of John the Apostle, 1:1–5

1:1–5 Introduction

This marvelous passage is one of the summits of Scripture. In fact, it rises to the highest level of human thought. What is the most awe-inspiring thought that stands at the peak of human concepts? It is the life-giving declaration that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is . . .

- the Word of God
- the Creator of life
- the very being and essence of life

We have to think deeply about these three truths in order to understand their meaning. A quick reading of this passage perhaps leaves us disinterested and likely far removed from understanding what God is revealing to us. However, it is crucial that we put forth the effort to understand these truths, for they lie at the very foundation of life. They cannot be overstated, for they determine every person's destiny. If Jesus Christ is the Word of God, then each of us must hear and understand that Word or else be lost forever in ignorance of God Himself. This is, *Jesus the Living Word: The First Witness of John the Apostle, 1:1–5*.

1. Christ is eternal (vv.1–2).
2. Christ is the Creator (v.3).
3. Christ is life (vv.4–5).

1 Christ is eternal.

Guided by the supernatural direction of God's Spirit, John made three profound statements about Jesus, the Living Word (see DEEPER STUDY #1). These statements declare that Jesus was, and is, more than a mere man. He is God: the Son of God, and God the Son.

1:1-2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God.

a. Christ is preexistent—He always existed (v.1a).

Jesus Christ existed before creation. He has always existed. *In the beginning* (Gk. *en archei*) does not mean *from* the beginning. When the heavens and earth were created, Jesus Christ was already there. He did not *become*; He was not created; He never had a beginning. In the beginning, Jesus

existed along with God the Father (see Jn.17:5; 8:58).

Was (en) is the Greek imperfect tense of *eimi* which is the word so often used for God. It means *to be* or *I am*. *To be* means continuous existence, without beginning or origin (see DEEPER STUDY # 1—Jn.6:20 for discussion). The testimony of John was that Jesus Christ was the *Word*, the One who has always existed. He is the Son of the living God (see outline and notes—Ph.2:5–8 for more discussion).

And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (Jn.17:5)

[Christ Jesus] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Ph.2:6–8; see also 2Co. 8:9)

Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. (Pr.8:23)

b. Christ is coexistent—He was always with God (v.1b).

Jesus was and is face-to-face with God forever. *With* (pros) has the idea of both *being with* and *acting toward*. Jesus Christ (the Word) was both with God and acting with God. This means that He was by God's side, acting, living, and moving in the closest of relationships. Christ had the ideal and perfect relationship *with* God the Father. Their life together—their relationship, communion, fellowship, and connection—was a perfect eternal bond. This is what is meant by, "He was *in the beginning with God*" (v.2). The testimony of John was that Jesus Christ was the *Word*, the One who has always coexisted with God.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. (1 Jn.1:1–2)

c. Christ is self-existent—He is God, possessing God's very nature, but is a distinct person (v.1c–2).

John declared unmistakably that Jesus Christ is God. Note that he did not say that "the Word" was *the God* (ho Theos). He simply says "the Word" was *God* (Theos). He purposely omits the definite article *the*. By doing so, John was saying that "the Word," Jesus Christ . . .

- is of the very nature and character of God the Father, but He is not the identical person of God the Father
- is a distinct person from God the Father, but He is of the very being and essence (perfection) of God the Father

When a person sees Christ, a *distinct person* is seen. However, Christ is the *very substance and character* of God in all of His perfect being. Jesus Christ is God, but He is a unique, separate person from God the Father: He is the Son of the Living God.

To summarize, the inspired testimony of John was that Jesus Christ is the *Word*, self-existent and eternal, the Supreme Majesty of the universe who owes His existence to no one. Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.

THOUGHT 1. Jesus Christ is the living, eternal Word. Grasp what this critical truth means to us:

- First, Christ reveals to us the most important Person in all the universe: God. He reveals all that God is and wants to say to us. Therefore, we need to diligently study Christ, all that He is and everything He says. Furthermore, we must believe and obey everything He says (Jn.5:24).
- Second, Christ reveals God perfectly. He is just like God the Father, identical to God the Father; therefore, when people look at Christ they see God (see DEEPER STUDY # 1, 2, 3—Jn.14:9 for discussion).
- Third, Christ reveals that God is the most wonderful Person who has ever existed. God is far, far beyond anyone we could have ever imagined. He is loving and caring, full of goodness and truth. He will not tolerate injustices such as murder, stealing, lying, cheating, and abuse, whether it be the abuse of a husband, wife, child, neighbor, brother, sister, or stranger. God loves us and is working and moving toward a perfect universe that will be filled with people who choose to love and worship and live and work for Him (Jn.5:24–29).

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (Jn.14:9)

To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. (Ro.9:5)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Col.1:15)

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. (Col.2:9)

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. (1 Ti.3:16)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (He.1:3)

THOUGHT 2. God has made us—all genuine believers in Jesus Christ—a wonderful promise: we are going to be like Christ (1 Jn.3:2). As Scripture says, we do not know everything we will be, but we do know that the very nature of Christ will be conveyed to us (2 Pe.1:4). The very nature of Christ is . . .

- to exist eternally
- to exist in a perfect state of being, knowing nothing but eternal perfection
- to exist in perfect communion and fellowship eternally (see 1 Jn.1:3)

Because the very nature of Christ will be transferred to us as believers, all three of these qualities will become our personal experience—a glorious thought!

“In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” (Jn.14:20)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Ro.8:29)

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Co.3:18)

Who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Ph.3:21)

By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Pe.1:4)

Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 Jn.3:2)

DEEPER STUDY # 1

(1:1–5) **The Word—Jesus Christ, Son of God:** the *Word* (Gr. *logos*) is Jesus Christ. John faced a serious problem in writing to the Gentiles, that is, the non-Jewish world. Most Gentiles had never heard of the Messiah or Savior who was expected by the Jews. The idea was foreign to them. However, the Messiah was the very center of Christianity. How was John going to present Christ so that a Gentile could understand?

The answer lay in the idea of the *Word*, for the *Word* was understood by both Gentile and Jew.

1. The Jews saw a word as something more than a mere sound. A word was something active and existing. It was power—it possessed the power to express something, to do something. This is seen in the many Old Testament references where *The Word of God* was seen as the creative power of God, the power that made the world and gave light and life to every human being (Ge.1:3, 6, 11; Ps.33:6; 107:20; 147:15; Is.55:11).
2. The Gentiles or Greeks saw the *Word* more philosophically.
 - a. When they looked at the world of nature, they saw that things were not chaotic, but orderly. Everything had its place and moved or grew in an orderly fashion, including the stars above and the vegetation below. Therefore, the Greeks said that behind the world was a mind, a reason, a power that made and kept things in their proper place. This creative and sustaining mind, this supreme reason, this unlimited power was said to be the *Word*.
 - b. The *Word* was also seen as the power that enabled people to think and reason. It was the power that brought light and understanding to the human mind, enabling people to express their confused thoughts in an orderly fashion.
 - c. More importantly, the *Word* was the power by which people came into contact with God and expressed their feelings to God.
3. John utilized this common idea of the Jews and Gentiles to proclaim that Jesus Christ was the *Word*. John saw that a word is the expression of an idea, a thought, an image in the mind of a person. He saw that a word describes what is in the mind of a person. Thus, he proclaimed that in the life of Jesus Christ, God was speaking to the world, speaking and demonstrating just what He wanted to say to humanity. John said three things.
 - a. God has given us much more than mere words in the Holy Scriptures. God has given us Jesus Christ, *The Word*. As *The Word*, Jesus Christ was the picture, the expression, the pattern, the very image of what God wished to say to the human race. The very image within God's mind of the *Ideal Man* was demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the perfect expression of all that God wishes us to be. Jesus Christ was God's utterance, God's speech, *God's Word* to us. Jesus Christ was the *Word* of God who came down to earth in human flesh to bring us into a face-to-face relationship with God (see vv.1–2). Jesus was the *Word of God who came to earth to live out the written Word of God*.
 - b. Jesus Christ is the Mind, the Reason, the Power that both made and keeps things in their proper order. He is the creative and sustaining Mind, the Supreme Reason, the unlimited Power (see v.3).
 - c. Jesus Christ is the Light, the Illumination, the Power that penetrates the darkness of the world. He, the Life and Light of the world, is what makes sense of the world and enables us to understand the world (see vv.4–5).

2 Christ is the Creator.

John revealed a second profound truth about Jesus Christ: not only did He exist before all things were created, but He is the Creator of all things.

1:3

a. Christ created all things (v.3a).

All things (panta) means every detail of creation—not creation as a whole, but every single detail. Each element and thing, each being and person—whether material or spiritual, angelic or human—has been brought into being by Christ (Col.1:16).

The words *were made* (egeneto) mean *came into being* or *became*. Note what this is saying. Nothing was existing—no substance, no matter whatsoever. Matter is not eternal. God did not take something outside of Himself, something less than perfect (evil) and create the world. Christ, the Word, took nothing but His will and power; and He spoke *the Word* and created every single thing *out of nothing* (He.11:3).

Scripture clearly states that Christ was the One who created all things—one by one. Among the Godhead, He was the active Agent, the Person who made all things. Creation was His function and work (1 Co.8:6; Col.1:16; He.1:2).

³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

b. Nothing was created apart from Christ (v.3b).

Note that two statements of fact are made:

- The positive statement of fact: “All things were made through Him.”
- The absolute statement of fact: “Without Him was not any thing made that was made.”

Christ was actively involved in the creation of every single thing: “Without Him was not any thing made.” The words “not any thing” (oude hen) mean not even *one* thing, not a single thing. Not even a detail was made apart from Him.

THOUGHT 1. The world is God’s; He made it, every element of it, one by one. How does this fact apply to us?

- (1) God is not off in some distant place far removed from the world, unconcerned and disinterested in what happens to the world. God cares about the world. He cares deeply, even about the most minute detail and smallest person. He cares about everything and every person in the world.
- (2) The problems of the world are not due to God and His attitude. The problems of the world are due to sin, to the attitude and evil of the human heart.
- (3) The answer to the world’s problems is not human beings and their technical skills. The answer is Christ: for every one of us to turn to Christ, surrendering and giving our lives to know Christ in the most personal and intimate way possible. Then, and only then, can we set our lives and world in order as God intends.

Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Co.8:6)

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Col.1:16)

But in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (He.1:2)

3 Christ is life.

1:4-5

John concluded introducing Jesus to his readers by revealing that Christ is life (see DEEPER STUDY #2). The life that is in Jesus Christ sheds light on our sinful condition. Then, it points us to the abundant, eternal life that Christ came to bring us (Jn.10:10).

⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

a. Christ is the source of light (v.4).

Note the statement: “The life [Christ] was the light of men.” From the very beginning God intended for us to know *that life*, to know God personally and intimately. The knowledge of the life of Christ was to be the light of all people, the beam that gives real life to every person who believes, both abundant and eternal life. This light, the light we receive through the life of Christ, infuses energy and motivation into us so that we might walk and live as we should.

b. Christ is the answer to darkness (v.5).

Christ’s life did shine in the darkness (see DEEPER STUDY # 2—8:12 for discussion). Very simply, since humans had brought darkness into the world (by sin), the life of Christ was the light of humanity, the *beam* that showed us the way, the truth and the life (see DEEPER STUDY # 3, 4; DEEPER STUDY # 2—8:12; DEEPER STUDY # 1, 2, 3—14:6 for discussion).

- Christ showed us the *way* God intended us to live.
- Christ showed us the *truth* of life, that is, the truth about God and humanity and the truth about the world in which we live.
- Christ showed us the *life*, that is, how to save our lives and avoid the things that can cause us to stumble.

Not only did Christ’s life penetrate the darkness, but it also conquered darkness. The Greek word for *overcome* (katelaben) expresses the truth that the darkness of the world can neither overcome nor extinguish the light of Jesus Christ. But it also conveys another truth: the darkness of the world cannot understand or grasp that light, as expressed by the Bible versions which translate katelaben as *comprehend*.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (Jn.8:12)

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (Jn.10:10)

So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.” (Jn.12:35)

“I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.” (Jn. 12:46)

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Co.4:6)

At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. (1 Jn.2:8)

DEEPER STUDY # 2

(1:4) **Life—Jesus Christ, Life:** the simple statement “in him was life” means at least three things.

1. Life is the quality and essence, the energy and power, the force and principle of being. Christ is life; He is . . .

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • the very quality of life | • the very power of life |
| • the very essence of life | • the very force of life |
| • the very energy of life | • the very principle of life |

Without Christ, there would be no life whatsoever. Life is in Him, within His very being. All things exist and have their being (life) in Him.

2. Life is purpose, meaning, and significance of being. Christ is life; He is . . .

- the very purpose of life
- the very meaning of life
- the very significance of life

3. Life is perfection. Life is all that a person must be and possess in order to live perfectly. This is what is meant by life. Life is completeness of being, absolute satisfaction, the fullness of all good, and the possession of all good things. Life is perfect love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (see Ga.5:22-23).

Whatever life is and all that life is, it is all in Jesus Christ. Even the legitimate human cravings that are sometimes entangled with evil—such as power, fame and wealth—are all included in the life given by Jesus Christ. Those who partake of His life will reign forever as kings and priests (see outline and notes—Lu.16:10-12 for more discussion). This is the very thing that is distinctive about life—it is eternal. It lasts forever and it is rewarding. It will eventually exalt the believer to the highest life and place and position. (see Re.21:1f).

Jesus Christ is the source of life: He is the way to life, and He is the truth of life. He is the very substance of life, its very being and energy (Jn.5:26; 1 Jn.1:2) (see DEEPER STUDY # 1—Jn.10:10; DEEPER STUDY # 1—17:2-3).

DEEPER STUDY # 3

(1:5) **Light:** light reveals, strips away (Jn.3:19-20), subdues the chaos (see Ge.1:2-3), and guides (Jn.12:36, 46). It shows the way, the truth, and the life (Jn.14:6).

DEEPER STUDY # 4

(1:5) **Darkness:** darkness does not understand the light, does not overcome the light, does not extinguish the light (see note—Jn.8:12).

B. Jesus the Light of the World: The Special Witness of John the Baptist, 1:6–8

1. **John was a man sent from God^{DS1}**
2. **John was a man sent on a very special mission**
 - a. To bear witness of the Light
 - b. That people might believe
3. **John was a great man, but he was not the Light**

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

Division I

The Witnesses to the Revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:1–51

B. Jesus the Light of the World: The Special Witness of John the Baptist, 1:6–8

1:6–8 Introduction

Of all the people who bore witness of Jesus, one individual stands out as unique. John the Baptist was a very special witness of Christ. In fact, John’s sole purpose on earth was to witness and to bear testimony of the Light of the world. His purpose stands as a dynamic example for us. As believers, our purpose is to bear the same witness as John: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. This is, *Jesus the Light of the World: The Special Witness of John the Baptist, 1:6–8*.

1. John was a man sent from God (v.6).
2. John was a man sent on a very special mission (v.7).
3. John was a great man, but he was not the Light (v.8).

1:6

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

1 John was a man sent from God.

Scripture makes a strong contrast between what had been said about Christ and what is now being said about John. Christ “was in the beginning”; He was “with God,” and He “was God” (vv.1–2). On the other hand, John was “a man” who had come into existence at birth, just like every other human who has ever lived. John had a biological mother and

father, whereas Jesus Christ had no human father; He was the only begotten Son of God (v.14; Jn.3:16). John was not a divine being, not even an angel. He was a mere man.

This man, however, was *sent from God*; and he was sent on a very special mission. Two facts show this:

- The meaning of the word *sent* (see DEEPER STUDY # 1).
- The phrase *from God* (Gk. para Theou), which literally means “from beside God.” John was not only sent by God, he was sent from the very side and heart of God. John was only a man, but a man of high calling and mission, of enormous responsibility and accountability. He was a man sent uniquely by God, not by some other person.

Luke recorded a fascinating fact about this unusual man: his name was not chosen by his parents, but by God Himself. The angel whom God sent to Zacharias, instructed him to name his son

John (Lk.1:13). The name *John* means *gracious*. John was a man sent forth with a name to match his message: *God's grace* is now to enter upon the scene of world history.

John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven." (Jn.3:27)

What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him? (Jb.7:17)

What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (Ps.8:4)

Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he [God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in. (Is.40:21-22)

THOUGHT 1. Like John, we too, as believers, are sent by God to bear witness of Jesus Christ. Note three significant points about the servants and messengers of God:

- First, the servants and messengers of God are not sent forth by another person, but by God. We are sent forth as the ambassadors of God.
- Second, God's messengers are sent forth *from* God, from the very side and heart of God.
- Third, as God's messengers, we have received the highest of all callings and missions, the calling of telling the world about Christ and the mission of bringing others into a saving relationship with Christ. This is an enormous responsibility, and we must never lose sight of the sobering fact that we are accountable to God Himself for our faithfulness to this holy task.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." (Jn.15:16)

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Co.3:5-6)

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Co.5:18-20)

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. (Ep.3:7)

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service. (1 Ti.1:12)

DEEPER STUDY # 1

(1:6) **Sent—Apostle—Commission:** *Sent* (apestalmenos) means to send out; to commission as a representative, an ambassador, an envoy. Three things are true of the person sent from God.

1. He belongs to God, who has sent him out.
2. He is commissioned to be sent out.
3. He possesses all the authority and power of God, who has sent him out.

2 John was a man sent on a very special mission.

Two Old Testament prophets foretold John's special mission and purpose. Both Isaiah and Malachi prophesied that John would prepare the way of the Lord, who is the embodiment

1:7

⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

of God's glorious grace (Is.40:3; Mal.3:1; Mt.3:3). John was sent to this world for the greatest of all human missions:

a. To bear witness of the Light (v.7a).

John was sent with a very specific message: to proclaim the Light, Christ Himself (see DEEPER STUDY # 1—8:12; DEEPER STUDY # 5—12:35–36). This crucial message, the good news of salvation through Christ, must be declared to all people. In our natural state as unbelieving sinners, Satan has blinded our minds to the light of Christ. When we hear the message of Jesus, the light of Christ breaks through to us (1 Co.4:3–7). John was the first person sent to bear witness to the Light, Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT 1. Like John's message, our message is a *given* message. As God's servants, we are not left on our own to think up a message; we are not dependent upon our own reason, thoughts, and ideas. Our message is Christ, the Light of the world.

For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. (2 Co.2:17)

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Co.4:5)

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (1 Th.2:13)

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. (De.4:2)

b. That people might believe (v.7b).

The purpose of John's witness is clearly stated: that all people, through Christ, might believe. His purpose was not . . .

- to start a movement for God
- to organize and administer
- to minister (note that John never healed, nor performed a miracle, nor built a ministry around the synagogue or temple, Jn.10:41)

John's purpose was *not even to preach*. His purpose was *to lead people to believe* in the Light. He witnessed and proclaimed the Light *so that* all might believe. John was sent to focus on people and to lead them to believe in Christ Jesus (see DEEPER STUDY # 2—Jn.2:24 for discussion of this point).

THOUGHT 1. God's messengers have *one primary purpose*: to lead others to believe in Christ Jesus, the Light of the world. As witnesses, our *purpose* is not to organize, to administer, to oversee, to manage, to teach, or to preach. Our purpose is as stated: to lead people to believe in Christ Jesus. Everything else has to do with methods, not purpose. Many of God's servants have too often confused methods with purpose. The result has been that teeming millions are still unreached, and countless believers are being deceived by confusing the methods of religion with the purpose of God: the salvation of humanity through belief in His Son.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (Jn.3:16)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (Jn.5:24)

1:8

⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

3 John was a great man, but he was not the Light.

John the Baptist was extraordinarily great. Jesus Himself said, that John was the greatest person to ever be born (Mt.11:11). *But*, he was not the Light. John's humility is

striking. (Read Jn.1:19–23, 27 to see the example his humility sets for every servant of God along with its impact.) No matter how great a person’s ministry may be in the eyes of others, John’s greatness eclipses it. Yet John said that he was not worthy to untie the straps of Jesus’ sandals (Jn.1:27)!

THOUGHT 1. Like John, we need to humble ourselves before the Lord, steadfastly resisting every temptation to exalt or glorify ourselves. John’s humble spirit is summarized in his simple, yet utterly profound declaration, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn.3:30). We would do well to adopt this statement as our daily prayer, asking God to help us to become small that Christ might be magnified before others. Our goal should ever be to “become less and less” in order that Christ may “become greater and greater” (Jn.3:30, NLT). When we seek to promote ourselves, we make ourselves worthless servants whom God cannot use and bless. But when we humble ourselves in order to exalt Christ, not only will we be fruitful for the Lord, but He will also exalt us.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Mt.23:12)

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Ph.2:3–4; see Ro.12:3)

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (Js.4:10)

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Pe.5:5)