

Jesus, the Light of Men

The VISION Newsletter / December 2018
Pastor E. Keith Hassell

John 1:1–14 (NKJV) “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 nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹ That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Many are preparing to celebrate Christmas. It is important to remember that Christmas is not Christmas without the Christ of Christmas. If we remove Christ from Christmas, we remove the Light of God from the darkness of this world. The New Testament reveals that the Christ of Christmas is Jesus of Nazareth who was born of the virgin Mary. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke record details surrounding the physical birth of Jesus. John’s Gospel, however, is unique in that it introduces Jesus as “the Word”.

Almost everyone has an opinion about Jesus. Some say He was simply a good man. Some say He was just another religious teacher. Some say He was an angel. Some say He was the first being God created. Some say He was a spirit being who looked human but did not have a physical body. Some say He was simply a prophet. Some say He was an anointed servant of God like others who came before Him. Opinions about Jesus abound. However, what does John say about “the Word”?

As “the Word”, Jesus is the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His Person.¹ Jesus came to reveal the Father in all that He said and did.² When we look at Jesus, we see the Father exactly expressed through Him.³

John reveals that the Word pre-existed from eternity past: “*In the beginning was the Word.*” Unlike us, Jesus pre-existed before He was born.⁴ What does John mean by “in the beginning”? He does not mean beginning in the sense of time and creation. The Word did not come into being. The Word existed before time and creation.

¹ Hebrews 1:3

² Matthew 11:27

³ John 14:9

⁴ John 1:15

John also reveals that the Word was in the beginning “with God”. Since God is eternal, with no beginning or end, the Word existed in the eternal past.⁵ He is the pre-existent Living Word whom the Father loved from before the foundation of the world: “*Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*”⁶ Jesus existed in the presence of God and in relationship with God from eternity past. This oneness in relationship is a mystery within the Godhead.

The Word is a Person. Jesus is the Living Word. The Word is alive. As the Living Word, Jesus is revealed within the pages of the Written Word (Scripture). Although the Written Word reveals the Living Word, it cannot contain everything about Him.

John also reveals that the Word “was God”. The Word is not “a god” but GOD. He is both equal with God and distinguished from God.⁷ John does not say that God was the Word, but that the Word was God. The Word is also revealed within Scripture to be the only begotten Son of God.⁸ If Jesus is the Son of God, the nature of this relationship demands the existence of God the Father. His distinction as God the Son does not diminish the distinction of God the Father or God the Holy Spirit within the Godhead (Trinity).⁹

The Word is eternal God—past, present, and future. He is the I AM who was, who is, and who is to come!¹⁰ The Word is Co-Creator with God the Father and with God the Spirit: “*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*”¹¹ As Creator, the Word is distinct from His creation. He was not made. Through Him all things were made. Without Him nothing was made that was made. The Word is the uncaused cause of creation.

John reveals that the Word—Who was in the beginning, Who was with God, and Who, in the beginning, was God—laid aside His heavenly robe of glory and put on a robe of human flesh through the womb of the virgin Mary.¹² Because He was supernaturally conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word is called the Son of God.¹³ The Son of God was given the name Jesus.¹⁴ Through this “Incarnation”, God became flesh. His name “Immanuel” means, “God with us”.¹⁵

John states that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Greek word for “dwelt” means to dwell in a tent or tabernacle. Ancient tents were made of skin—animal skin. Through His Incarnation, the Word became God with skin on.

Jesus’ heavenly glory was veiled in human flesh. At times, God allowed the disciples to have a glimpse of His glory. John said, “We beheld His glory”. The glory they saw in Jesus was that of

⁵ Psalm 93:2

⁶ John 14:24 (NKJV)

⁷ Philippians 1:6

⁸ John 1:14; 3:16

⁹ The “Trinity” is the Christian doctrine of the Godhead which is one God in three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰ John 8:58

¹¹ John 1:3 (NKJV); See Genesis 1:1, 2

¹² Luke 1:34-35

¹³ Luke 1:35

¹⁴ Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31

¹⁵ Matthew 1:23

the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Peter, James, and John saw His glory in His Transfiguration.¹⁶

The Word is the Source of life.¹⁷ He is the Light of the world.¹⁸ His life revealed the light of God in the darkness of this world. Darkness represents the spiritual blindness and ignorance caused Satan, the god of this world.¹⁹ The light that John spoke of was the truth of God. He came to bring the life to the spiritually dead and light to the spiritually blind. In the first creation, the Word was the Source of physical life. In the new creation, He is the Source of eternal life.

Through His Incarnation, Jesus brought the light of God's truth into the darkness of the human heart. Thus, He is the light of men. His light is shining today through the lives of those who receive and reflect His light and through the light of the gospel. The apostle Paul said, *"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*²⁰ Jesus came that we might see, believe, and receive His offer of eternal life: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*²¹

Tragically, not all are willing to embrace His light. They love darkness rather than light. Thus, they will perish in the darkness of their sin: *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* Jesus came to bring light of life. We must choose to receive His light if we are to receive His gift of eternal life.

In summary, Jesus is the pre-incarnate Word made flesh. He is God in the flesh. He is the Light of the world. He is the Light of men. He came to give light to the spiritually blind. He came to give life to the spiritually dead. This is why He came. This is why we celebrate Christmas: *"For there is born to you this day I the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."*²² May we celebrate His light. May we shine His light to all men by sharing His gospel with those still lost in darkness.

¹⁶ Matthew 17:1-13

¹⁷ John 14:6

¹⁸ John 8:12; 9:5

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:4

²⁰ 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 (NKJV)

²¹ John 3:16 (NKJV)

²² Luke 1:11 (NKJV)