

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF LIFE

John 1:1-13

Key Verse: 1:4

“In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”

Today we begin the study of John’s gospel. It is unique among the gospel books. While the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) portray Jesus in his humanity and gradually reveal his divinity, John takes a different approach. John begins by stating that Jesus is God. John’s gospel proclaims from beginning to end: “Jesus is God.” John’s purpose of writing is stated in his key verse, John 20:31: “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.” As we study John’s gospel, let’s pray that we may meet Jesus personally and confess from our hearts that Jesus is God. This is the way to eternal life.

Today’s passage is part of the prologue of John’s gospel. In verses 1-13, we learn very clearly who Jesus is. May God bless our study.

First, Jesus is the eternal God (12).

Look at verses 1-12. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” These verses are very similar to Genesis 1:1, which says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” They harken back to eternity, before the beginning of time, space, matter, and all that is visible and tangible. The “Word” refers to Jesus. Before the beginning of all things, Jesus was there. Jesus is God; Jesus is the eternal God.

The eternal God made man in his own image. So man is aware of eternity and he longs for eternity in his heart (Ecc 3:11). Nothing that belongs to the realm of time and space, which are fleeting and perishing, can satisfy man’s soul. Alexander the Great conquered the world of his time. After defeating the Persians, who seemed to be the last formidable opponent, he did not have a great celebration. Rather, he is reported to have wept, saying, “Alas, I have no more worlds to conquer.” Leonardo Da Vinci mastered many fields of study and produced exquisite art and amazing inventions. Yet, according to one of his biographers, he died of despair because he could not find the unifying principle that would bring all his scattered knowledge together. St. Augustine said that God made man with an empty place in his heart that only God can fill and until man finds God he is merely a restless wanderer.

In general, this generation can be called a “visual generation.” Young people especially want to see something stimulating or experience it vicariously through action movies, the newest video games, or the virtual reality of sophisticated computers. But their souls are never satisfied by such things. After seeing Spiderman I, they want to see Spiderman II, then Spiderman III. Again, after using a pentium III computer, they want a pentium IV, and so on. So Hollywood and Microsoft make a lot of money. However, these things can never satisfy one’s soul. Only Jesus can satisfy our souls. Jesus is the eternal God.

Second, Jesus is the Word of God (12).

In verses 1-12, the “Word” is mentioned three times. This declares that Jesus is the Word of God. Words are invisible. Words are the expression of thoughts and feelings. Words imply personality. God is a personal God and he wants to have a personal relationship with his people. Through Jesus, God reveals himself to us. While on earth, Jesus had many conversations with various people. For example, Jesus talked with his disciples, the Samaritan woman, a man born blind. Through conversation with Jesus these people met God. They received eternal life in their souls. This life is given to those who accept his word. Jesus said in John 6:63b, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” Jesus said in John 5:24, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” Shepherd Ian Kaier once wanted to be known as a cool, sensitive, artistic intellectual, especially by British girls. But he was not happy because the darkness of sin was dwelling in his soul. Through more than three years of onetoone Bible study with Missionary

Moses Yoon, the word of Jesus came into his heart. Now he has eternal life in God's kingdom. As we study John's gospel, may one word of Jesus come into each of our hearts.

Third, Jesus is the Creator God (3).

Look at verse 3. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." Jesus is the Creator God. Psalm 33:6 says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth." Jesus is the Creator of all things, including the heavens and the earth and each human being. Consider the greatness of his creation and how wonderfully it sustains life. Our planet earth is situated in just the right place in our solar system. It is set at just the right angle, rotating and revolving at just the right speeds, to sustain life and even give us seasons and days and years. Scientists say that if we slightly altered the physics of our solar system, life as we know it could not be maintained.

Think about the force of gravity. It is just right to keep us on the face of the earth. If it was stronger, we would all be short, antlike creatures who spoke in deep gravelly voices. If the force of gravity was weaker, we might be floating off to space and talking like those who inhaled helium. By the wisdom and power of Jesus, the Creator God, we can live in this beautiful world. We must praise and thank Jesus, the Creator God. Revelation 4:11 describes the elders in the presence of God laying their crowns before him and saying, "You are worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

However, these days, there are many who do not thank Jesus for his wonderful work of creation. Some people, in their anxiety about money, only worry day and night. Some people, driven by ambition, only plot day and night to achieve their own goals. Some people, who are sick with despair, wallow in selfpity constantly. But no matter who we are, we have a great thanksgiving topic to Jesus for making this beautiful world for us to live in by his grace. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Let's say, "Thank you, Jesus."

Fourth, Jesus is the true light (49).

Look at verse 4. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." Jesus has life in himself and he can give that life to men. That life of Jesus is the light of men. Those who accept Jesus come out of the darkness and into his wonderful light. Jesus' disciples may be the best example. They were ordinary men, struggling hard to eat three meals a day. They tried to enjoy a pleasant life on earth with their loved ones in their own communities. But in their hearts, they were suffering from the power of sin and death. They could not find any absolute meaning of life or direction. Then they met Jesus and accepted his word. Eternal life came into their souls. They began to see God in Jesus and his glorious love for all people. They found true life direction to preach the gospel to the whole world. Then these men turned the world rightsideup with the gospel. Now, 20 centuries later, there are more Christians in the world than any other religion. (Recent statistics show the world is 33% Christian, 22% Muslim, 15% Hindu, 14% secular, etc.)

Whoever accepts Jesus has eternal life. That life illuminates our hearts and minds to see God and his love and to find the meaning and direction of our lives. Without Jesus, even young people suffer in the darkness. Just a few days ago, in Fayetteville, Georgia, a fifteen year old girl, with the help of her sixteen year old lesbian girlfriend, stabbed her grandparents to death and took their valuables. Their motive was to gain freedom to stay together as lovers, which the grandparents had opposed. When we hear such stories, they make chills go down our backs. Yet, this is a true event. It is a deed of darkness urged on by the devil. Of course, not all young people are like that. Still, without Christ, they all suffer in the darkness. Every year at the best universities in Chicago and in America, we hear of young people who commit suicide for one reason or another. It is because they live in the darkness without Christ. Let's pray for young college students and teenagers to meet Jesus who is the light of life. Let's pray that God may raise 1,000 Ph.D. shepherds who will teach the Bible on all American campuses.

Look at verse 5. "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." Those in the darkness misunderstand everything. They cannot believe the unconditional love of God in Christ. Instead, they think

everything is crooked and dark like they are. They misunderstand sincere love as clever manipulation. But God does not abandon them. God sends his witnesses to help them.

Verses 68 describe the ministry of John the Baptist in relation to Jesus. John came as a witness to Jesus. His popularity caused some to wonder if he were the Christ. But he clearly explained that he was not the Christ. He testified that Jesus is the eternal God, the Lamb of God and the giver of the Holy Spirit. John pointed people toward Jesus, who alone can give life. Witnesses are necessary in God's work and history. UBF onetoone Bible teachers should be like John in pointing others toward Jesus until they have a personal relationship with him.

Look at verse 9. "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." Jesus is the true light. There have been many small lamps. But only Jesus is the true light. Only Jesus can give eternal life and show us the way to God in heaven. Our brother, Shepherd Abraham Nial of India, was formerly a Hindu. He worshiped a god that had an elephant's head and a human body. He prayed sincerely to this god, but there was no answer. Then he accepted Jesus through onetoone Bible study. He received the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in his soul. When he prays to Jesus, Jesus hears and answers his prayers. Jesus is the true light for Hindu people, and for "every man." Jesus' truth is universal. Jesus speaks to human souls on the level of life and love. Jesus has no language barrier or any other cultural barrier. During the ISBC we heard testimonies from Artha, an Indonesian lady and Lyazzat, a Kazak lady. Both grew up in Muslim cultures. Both were suffering under the power of sin and death. Yet, both found in Jesus the light of life, the true light, who gave life to their souls. Jesus is the true light for every man, woman and child on the face of the earth.

Fifth, Jesus gives the right to become children of God (1013).

Look at verses 1011. "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." Jesus is God. He is the Creator God who made the heavens and the earth. He humbled himself and came to this world as a man. Yet, he was not recognized or received by the world. Even the Jews, his own people, did not receive him. How painful Jesus was! They rejected him simply because they wanted to live in their own way. They rejected him because they loved the darkness more than the marvelous light that Jesus gave (Jn 3:19).

Look at verses 1213. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." Although Jesus was rejected by the world and by his nation, there were some people who received Jesus. Receiving Jesus is a personal matter for each human being. When we receive Jesus, we receive Jesus as God. This is what it means to believe in his name. To those who received him, Jesus gave the right to become children of God. Here "right" has the same meaning as "power." The only way to become a child of God is to receive Jesus in our hearts personally. Being born in a Christian family does not make one a child of God. One's own effort by his great willpower does not make one a child of God. Domineering husbands cannot make their wives Christians, and viceversa. However, when we receive Jesus in our hearts as God, Jesus gives us the power to change from the inside. Jesus works through the Holy Spirit to burn away all the power of sin and death and to restore the holy image of God in us. Jesus makes us as beautiful and holy as he is.

In today's passage we learned that Jesus is God. Jesus is the source of life and the true light for all people. Let's read verse 4 again. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." May Jesus' light shine in all the college campuses in the Chicago area this fall semester through onetoone Bible study. May young people who are walking in darkness see the true light and have God's direction and eternal life.