

John (Part 2)

Jesus Christ as the Reality and the Manifestation of God in the Flesh

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If you will recall, one of the things that I mentioned regarding the book of John is that it is *different* from the others because of the audience to whom he was writing. He wanted to cover things that were not covered in the other three gospels. This caused the use of certain words, and it is these words which heighten the difference between John and the other books.

As we continue through the book of John, we are going to be focusing in on some of those words. We are going to go through a couple of them tonight, but before that I want to go into a few things that I brought up last week in order to provide a little bit of a foundation for today, and also to go over something to clarify. I had a couple of questions regarding one particular thing that I covered, and I will go over that once again so that you have that pretty well established in your mind.

I left you last week with a way of dividing up the book of John. I want to give these titles to you, and I want you to understand as I give them to you that this is not the last word on the book of John. It does not mean that there are not other ways to divide up the book because obviously John is divided into 21 chapters, and whomever those people were who divided it up that way felt that they were good places to break the story because of the presentation of the events or whatever it was that John was going into.

But I thought this particular way of dividing the book of John was good because it kind of crystallizes in a person's mind one of the main themes running through the book of John, and that is the idea of *believing*. This is one of the key words that set this book apart, so this particular commentator divided the book up in the following way. Perhaps this will help you to understand the next time you read through the book.

The first section goes from John 1:1 to John 1:18—only eighteen verses. It is entitled "The Proposal for Belief." If you were going to call these things anything, they would be chapter headings. "The Proposal"—in other words, the apostle John is *proposing* the idea, the concept. "This is the proposal that I am making to you."

The second one, which runs from John 1:19 to John 4:54, this author called "The Presentation for Belief." These are the beginnings of reasons why we should believe—put our trust, faith, confidence—in this particular Individual.

Just as a little bit of an aside here, there is one thing that John seems to spend a great deal of time emphasizing more than any of the others. This is not something that is missing in the others or exclusive to John—it is something that pervades every one of the gospels—but John emphasizes it to a far greater degree. That is, the omniscience of Jesus Christ. He seems to know everything. He is aware. He knows immediately when people have demons. He knows what is in people's hearts. He knew all about Nathanael—"I saw you sitting under a fig tree"—and on and on. He just seemed to know everything. There is a reason why that is presented in the way that it is, and it is part of this "Presentation for Belief." You can believe in somebody who knows everything.

Number three: "The Reactions of Belief and Unbelief." This begins in John 5:1 and runs through John 6:71.

Even if you just read through rapidly, you will see that this is generally correct. That section contains the reactions of Jesus' disciples, and also the reactions of the enemies.

Number Four: "The Crystallization of Belief and Unbelief." This runs from John 7:1 to John 11:53. This is the hardening of ideas. The hardening of the belief—the firming of the belief might be a better idea—of the apostles, as opposed to the firming of the unbelief, or the enmity, of the Sanhedrin, the scribes, and the Pharisees.

The next section is "The Crisis of Belief." This one has more to do with Christ than anyone else. It has to do with the crisis that went on in the mind of Christ. It finally ended with the resolution in His own mind, the resolve, that He was finally going to go through with this—that is, He was going to go through with the crucifixion. It was the setting of His will. So it was the crisis of belief. That comes up to the end of chapter 12.

Chapter 13 begins the "Last Supper" episode, and here is "The Assurance for Belief." This is something that is aimed at those who believe. Through chapters 13 through 17—all the way up to John 17:26—we have Christ giving *assurance* to those who have resolved to follow Him.

The seventh: "The Rejection by Unbelief." All through section four, the unbelief was crystallizing, but it did not spring into action until the seventh section, beginning in John 18:1 and running to John 19:42. Here the story is the reaction of those people who did not believe. So you see the things that were happening behind the scenes—in the Sanhedrin, between Judas and the Sanhedrin, and other things as well.

The eighth section is "The Vindication of Belief." This is chapter 20. It concerns itself with the resurrection. Those who believed were vindicated in their belief by the resurrection.

Section nine, the last section, is chapter 21, and this involves itself in the dedication (of those who believe) to the work of God. Jesus finds the disciples fishing and He asks Peter, the representative, "Do you love Me?" and so forth (He does it three different times). The chapter ends with them more or less vaguely intimating the dedication of their belief.

The thing that I had several questions about is in regard to John's relationship with Jesus. I went through that apparently very rapidly, so I will take you through it again. We will begin in Matthew 27. The subject of this chapter, at least at this point, is the crucifixion.

Matthew 27:55-56 And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

So we have three ladies mentioned there: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. Remember that one particularly—the mother of Zebedee's sons. The mother of Zebedee's sons was there at the crucifixion.

Mark 15:40 There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome.

This is Mark's account of the same thing. There were three ladies mentioned there, and we have a name we did not have before: Salome.

In John 19:25, you are going to see here that they all mention the same ladies. But in some cases they mention them by name, and in other cases they identified them by relating them to someone else.

John 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother [she was not mentioned in the others], and His mother's sister [woman number two], Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

A little bit of deducing: Mary Magdalene was mentioned in all three, so we can eliminate her. Jesus' mother is only mentioned here. She is not mentioned in the others, so we can forget about the other scriptures in relation to her. That leaves us with two ladies: His mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas. Mary the wife of Clopas is also mentioned in Matthew 27:56 as "Mary the mother of James and Joses." We have got a positive identification there. Mary was the wife of Clopas, and she was the mother of James and Joses. That leaves us with one lady, and one name: Salome. Salome was the mother of Zebedee's sons. Zebedee was James' and John's father. Therefore Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

It is just a process of elimination. You put the three scriptures together, and you just pick them off one by one and the first thing you know you come up with an answer—that Salome was the mother of James and John, she was the wife of Zebedee, and she was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. So just by comparing the three scriptures we can come up with that identification. That makes John Jesus' cousin—first cousin.

I ran into a bit of trivia today that I will pass on to you. It is one of those things that stick in my weird mind. But at any rate, this person was comparing all the events that are similar between Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This is what makes the book of John different. He said that there is a total of 179 separate incidents in the life of Jesus that are recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke share a very large number of them. But out of the whole 179, John only shares seven events with all the other three combined.

I will give you those seven. He talks about John the Baptist, the feeding the 5,000, the walking on the sea, the anointing by Mary at Bethany, the last supper, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. All the other material in 21 chapters is devoted to different things than those other men covered. That is why the book of John is different. He simply approached it from a different perspective. He was writing about different things because of a different audience, and there were different needs of the audience to which he was writing. Therefore, he had to present the gospel in a way which demanded that it be different from the other three. And that he did.

In order to do that, he used special words—because of his audience and the needs of his audience. One of these words is the word *alethinos*. We are going to get into this one probably a great deal more later on. Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not use it at all—but John used it eight times. Along with the word *logos*, it sets the tone for the book of John.

Alethinós is translated in the King James as "true." "Thy word is *true*," or "Thy word is *truth*." But that is really not the best way to translate it. *Alethinós* is closer to our word "real" or "genuine" than it is to the word "true." When I say the word "true" to you, and you think of an opposite, you are very likely to connect it to the word "false." "True" as opposed to "false." But "real"—*alethinós*—is opposed to the word "facsimile" or "representation."

If you understand what John is presenting here, you will understand why he used that word and why the word *alethinós* being translated "true" is somewhat misleading. John was presenting *reality* to these people. That was his approach, because his audience, which was primarily Greek-educated, thought in those parameters. It had a lot to do with the religious thinking that they had in their background, and that is why he approached them in the way he did.

You know what I gave you the last time, how that they separated the Creator God from His creation by coming up with this idea of all these emanations, because to them it was unreal—it was not logical, it did not compute—for the God of Creation, who they believed was so holy, so righteous, so pure—that He could not touch anything that was material because material was tainted. It was evil by nature. What John presented to these people was reality. Certainly it was true—it was truth. But it was *reality*. That is closer to the shade of meaning that he was getting across.

What is the overall subject of the book of John? If you want to put a title on the book of John, this is it: "Behold your God!" This is reality! This is the way that God would live if He became a man. I am going to show you reality in character, reality in mercy, reality in kindness, reality in purpose, reality in everything—everything that pertains to life. Jesus came that we might have *abundant* life. *This* is reality. *This* is what He intends. John is saying this of Jesus, as though Jesus were saying, "My life *is* the way life is to be lived."

This is reality. We are not dealing with a shadow. We are not dealing with an emanation. We are not dealing in vague terminology. We are not dealing with shadows. We are dealing with reality. It was unreal to them that God could become a man. They came up with ideas—the Greeks did—that because of their ideas, Jesus did not even leave footprints. Jesus was not really real. The *real* man was invisible within a shell. It was really warped and strange thinking.

That molded the approach that John had to take. He began with something the Jew and the Greek had in common, and that was the idea of the *logos*—the Word.

This word "word" just seems inspired to me. What is a word? Does not a word reveal invisible thought? When you think, you cannot see what you are thinking. But when you speak, then we can hear—then it becomes audible, and it reveals what has been going on invisibly in your mind. In the same way, the *logos*—the Man, the human being, the One who was God and became man—He revealed to man the invisible God. It was something that could be seen. He revealed truth. He revealed reality.

I have read a lot of books, but I have never read a book—unless it is Genesis—that begins like this book. He makes a series of assertions that are astounding. Maybe to those of us who live in Southern California and have seen *everything*, we have heard everything, we have been involved in everything—why, we have even been to Universal Studios(!)—maybe our minds are a bit jaded because we have experienced so much.

We have seen so much fantasy, so much make-believe. We have seen *Star Wars* and we have seen *Star Trek*. We have just seen so much that the motion picture industry is able to turn out. We have even seen Moses dividing the Red Sea. We have seen all kinds of things like that. Maybe for us to grasp the magnificence, or the extent, or the impact of what John asserts about this human being is something that is even a little bit beyond our minds.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

If somebody would say that about a neighbor of yours, the first thing that would come to your mind would be to pooh-pooh the idea. We are talking about a human being here. We are talking about a human being who was also divine. We recognize what John said as *truth*. We recognize it as being *real*. We recognize it as being big. But it is also indescribable.

It is something that is beyond us to verbally explain to somebody, that somebody is God—that somebody has a mind capable of the power of creating everything that we are able to see, that has the power to impart life to something that is seemingly inanimate, or to bring something back from the dead. But that is what he is talking about here.

We can have moments of awe when we are standing out on a dark night, contemplating the vast expanse of the heavens. There are times like that when we kind of get a little bit of the edge of the feeling of what is contained here in the first three verses. But even then, at our grandest moment, it is beyond us to really comprehend fully—even as much as a human being is able to do it—what he is saying.

This Jesus, who was born of a woman, who grew up in the town of Nazareth, who seemingly never got beyond the area of Galilee and Judea, this Being who walked and talked with men, who worked with His hands, who took care of a family, took care of a mother, who *died* just like anybody else would die, He was God. He was the Creator of everything.

One of the writers put it this way—I had to write it down because I thought it was great: "This was a peal of thunder from a Son of Thunder." BOOM! Hardly anybody opens books like that. But John did. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. . ." There is no doubt that he is making a relationship here with the Hebrew audience with Genesis 1:1. Immediately the Jew would make a comparison: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." You see immediately—remember "Behold your God"—in the *first verse* he is presenting Jesus of Nazareth as God the Creator.

Let us examine what he says here. There are three things that he states here. First of all, that this Jesus of Nazareth was pre-existent. That is, before there was time there was Jesus of Nazareth. Before there was time, there was God—and that God who created was Jesus of Nazareth. You can relate this to John 17:5, where Jesus asked God to restore to Him the glory that He had before, when He was with Him.

Not only was He pre-existing—that is, before there was a creation—the second thing is that whoever He was, He was in fellowship with God.

The third thing is that He was divine. Let us look at that. "In the beginning was the Word [His pre-existence], and the Word was with God [His fellowship with God], and the Word was God [He was of divine nature]."

He has made a statement there. Remember the audience. Remember these people thought that matter was evil. He is opening up his guns here, not by attacking Gnosticism directly, but he is stating his case. This is the proposal that he is making for your belief: "This is why you can believe in this Person, why you can put your trust and confidence in Him: that He was pre-existing, that He had fellowship with God, and that He was God."

He makes a distinction here, and that is that Jesus of Nazareth was equal with God but He was *distinct* from God. He was a different personality. He is God, He is one with God, He is not just *a* god—He *is* God. By stating that He would be *a* god would put Him on a lower level. But he is not stating it that way.

There is no article before this word "God," the last word in that sentence. He was not *a* god, He was simply God. He was equal with God, identical to God, but He was *distinct* from God. He is showing that He is on the same level as the One that anybody would ordinarily call "God." Here we have a personality distinct from another personality called God. Then later on in the book, this God He was with is identified as the Father.

"In the beginning" is made in reference to man and creation because—at least in the sense of man, anyway—time began whenever God set in motion the instruments by which we measure time. "Beginning" implies time—the starting of the clock. That is done for you and me to get a little bit of a grasp on something that is really beyond our thinking. We cannot think in terms of "no time," because time means a lot to us. We know that our time is running out—we are constrained by it, held within it. We know that every day we only have 24 hours, so we try to cram as much as we can within it.

It is difficult for us to grasp that there was a period when time did not mean the same thing. So he had to say "in the beginning" in order for us to be able to grasp a little bit of the sense of what he was trying to get across. Can we grasp what it must be like to live without a sense of time? That is something that is beyond me.

Apparently—I am thinking of this as a man—eternity has no parameters. It just goes in every direction—there are no parameters. But, you see, man does have parameters—"It is given to all men once to die"—and the parameters are roughly 70 years. Every day we are faced with the parameters of eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep, 24 hours in all. We have to squeeze in eating and drinking and driving and working and shopping and repairing and all kinds of things like that.

We are squeezed in by time. So he had to put something in the beginning there to give us something to latch onto. But at the same time, he is helping us to understand how *great* this Being is—this Jesus of Nazareth—because there was a time in His existence when time did not mean a thing. No constraint of time.

This is important because it is the foundation of the whole book. John is going to be reminding you and me through the entirety of the book that what we see in the life of Jesus Christ is what God has always been like. "I am God; I change not" (Malachi 3:6). "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

You know that the world of false Christianity out there has an idea that the Old Testament God was somebody different from Jesus Christ. It has the idea that the Old Testament God was harsh, critical, judgmental, condemnatory, always seeking to hurt and maim and kill people. That is just a general approach. So they distrust the Old Testament God.

The Greeks—do you know what their thinking was about the gods? Their ideas about the gods were that they had lives and minds and events occur to them that were very similar to what humanity was going through. So they created gods that had all kinds of weaknesses—sexual weaknesses; they got angry and upset; they were jealous of one another; they plotted here and there to get even with one another and to trick one another; they were sarcastic and cruel. All you have to do is read in mythology.

"We are dealing with someone here," John is saying, "Who is going to reveal to you what God is like yesterday, today, and forever." What you see in the book of John is intended to teach you and me those very things—that that God can be relied upon. You can have confidence in Him that what He did for others He will do for you. The only condition is that you have to believe in Him and obey Him, and if you believe in Him and obey Him—if you follow the way of life that He has set down—He is going to respond to you in exactly the same way as Jesus did in the book of John. "Behold your God"—this is the way He is.

What we have here are choice events that John picked out that are illustrative of a concept that he wants to get across because of the way God always is. He wants to heal. He wants to be your friend. He wants to be your guide. He wants to be your teacher. He wants to bring you into His Kingdom. He wants to give you His heart and mind. He wants to give you His Kingdom—and on and on.

Anything that you can think about the way that God has revealed Himself in the entirety of the Book, John is trying to reassure us in the book of John that He is always like that. There are some things that we might think are somewhat bad, such as He will not budge one inch with His law. The wages of sin is death. So He is always going to be like that, because He cannot compromise with anything that is as important as that which describes His own character.

John 1:2-3 He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

The Word—the *logos*—*is* Creator. You can compare this with Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2. This Jesus of Nazareth is the Creator. There is something interesting here as well. This word "made": to you and me, if we use the word "made"—like "Henry Ford made this automobile," "General Electric made this light bulb," "Sunbeam made this toaster"—you and I do not think in terms of things that are made occurring instantaneously. We think of a process. We think of an assembly line, where something is put together piece by piece. Or we think of a process by which somebody conceives an idea, puts it on a drawing board, and then eventually that product (or whatever it is) becomes something that is put together at the end of an assembly line.

This word "made" [*ginomai*] in the Greek does not imply that at all. I will read it to you exactly, literally, what it means: "All things became through Him." In other words, BOOM! It implies something instantaneous. It is not made as in human terms, but just suddenly—one moment it was not there, and the next moment there it was! The whole creation came into being all at once. What he is telling you about is an *event* rather than a *process*. It is something instantaneous.

I do not know exactly how the creation went. It may have been somewhat of a process. But that is not what the word implies here. It implies something that was just—bang!—like that; just an event that occurred. You and I, looking on the scene, would see the event. One moment it was not there, the next moment it was.

He does this because, again, he is trying to establish in your mind at least some kind of a sense of the infinite power of this God who became man. We are dealing with somebody here who is not ordinary in any sense of the word. He wants to establish that right off the bat.

Again, why did he put it this way? Again there is a reason. Remember the emanations that I told you about. The Greeks believed in a process of creation that is not too much different from evolution. They used the term "emanations," until they arrive at the end where the actual creator God is evil and hostile to the actual God. John makes very clear to the Greek-instructed person—right at the beginning of the book—that he is implying something that happened instantaneously, right out of the mouth, right out of the word, of the *logos*.

This implies something else as well. The Greeks had the idea that the world was a very terribly flawed place. John has very subtly gotten across—if you are thinking with him—yes, the world is flawed, but it *became* that way; it was not *created* that way. If you accept the Greek idea of the creation, you begin with a God who is already flawed.

How can you believe in a God who is flawed? You cannot trust a God like that, and that is why the Greeks would not trust their gods. Remember, John is laying the proposal down. This is why you can believe in this God. He created a world that was without flaw, but man has flawed it. It became that way. It is man, though sin, that created this flawed world. It was not the fault of the Creator God, this Jesus of Nazareth.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Here are two of the words that set the book of John apart: *life* and *light*. Let us first consider the word "life." You have got to get these or the book of John is going to escape you. There is much there contained in these words.

Just as a comparison, Matthew, Mark, and Luke use this word *life*—"zoe"—seventeen times. John uses it all by himself thirty-six times, and he uses it fifty-five times in all of its forms. All by himself, he uses it three times more than all the other gospels total. It is important to his presentation of ideas.

What is more important is the way that he uses it—the inferences that he draws from it, or that he puts on it. It is not merely the fact that the word itself is used, because all by itself all that it means is "vitality." It means "activity." It means the opposite of "death." But John puts connotations on the word that really increase the dimension of understanding.

Incidentally, the book of John almost begins and ends on this word. Here we are, using it already in John 1:4, and it is used again in John 20:31—he wrote the book so that we "[might] have life."

What does John mean by "life?" He uses it in two senses. These are, in a sense, divided up as well. He used it as the opposite of destruction, condemnation, and death. I will give you a couple of examples.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish [destruction] but have everlasting life.

John 5:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment [here we have the sense of destruction or condemnation], but has passed from death into life [he puts them together right here].

John 5:29 [A]nd come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

This then gives him the opportunity to present Jesus as the fountainhead—as the source—of life. Look what he has done in the first four verses. He has shown that He pre-existed ("before there was time"). He has shown that He had fellowship with God. He has shown that He was identical, and of the same divine nature as God. Now he is showing that He is the fountain—He is the source—of life as opposed to death. "In Him was life."

If a person wants life, he has to go to Christ, just like if you want water you have to go to the stream, or you have to go to the spring, or you have to go to the well, or you have to go to the water tap. You have to go to where you can get it. If you want life, you have to go to Christ to get it. He is the fountain of it.

This leads right into the second use that he made of the word "life." He uses life in the sense of *quality*. This is different from merely *existence*. What he is saying in a sense is that a person without Christ *exists*, but he does not *live*. He is putting a qualitative sense on the word "life."

In John 10:10, "life" as John uses it is **God-life**. You and I are existing. We are alive, but we do not have life—*unless* we have Christ. He has tacked an additional meaning on there. He has given depth to the word *life*. All by itself, its literal definition is simply "activity," in the sense of being the opposite of death. It is used throughout the Bible for even vegetable life, animal life, and human life. But John has attached a *quality* to it. Christ brings you more than existence. He brings you a **quality**.

If you want that **quality**—you are already alive—you have to go to Him to get it. So later on, He says, "Without Me, you can do nothing." If we want this life that comes from being attached to the tree, we have to come through Christ in order to get it. There has to be a very deep and abiding relationship there.

Life, then, as John uses it, is **God-life**. What is God-life like? If you want to know, he is going to tell you what it is in the book of John. Life as God lives it is the way Jesus of Nazareth lived it as a man. "Behold your God"—*this* is life. That is his point in the whole book. He is going to show you how to live, not by putting down a list of do's and don'ts; he is going to show you the example of the way

Christ lived. This is the *mind*, this is the heart, this is the way, this is the attitude, this is what you have to do in order to *live*—you have to have that same approach.

So what do we have then? We have a life that is filled with love, joy, peace, hope, faith, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control, faithfulness, and on and on. That is life. This is the only kind of life that is worth living for all eternity. God might be able to give us life that would last forever, but would it be good to live as we are now living? It would be a condemnation rather than a gift of great joy.

You can see why God demands that we change; why He demands that we get in harmony, because if the gift of eternal life is going to mean anything good to us, it is going to have to be accompanied with a *way of living* that will produce what God is—love, joy, peace, and so forth.

What does that mean? In practical terms, what it means is that before we can enter the Kingdom of God, we have already got to be living **the way**—or we will not be there. It is not merely that God does not want to give that to you. It would be a curse rather than a blessing.

The next word is the word *light*. Matthew, Mark, and Luke altogether use it fourteen times. John uses it twenty-one times. In John 8:12, again, he uses it—that He is "the light of the world." In John 11:10, he shows that this light can be in men. In John 12:36, he tells us that Christ was given to us so that we can become the children of light.

How does he use the word "light?" He uses it in two senses. He uses it in the sense of "that which reveals." Remember here what he is saying: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The life of Jesus Christ *reveals* to you and me.

John 3:19-20 And this is the condemnation, that the light [he is interchanging the word "light" with Jesus of Nazareth—He was the light] has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

The life of Jesus Christ *reveals* to men their character flaws. Here is the practical application of this is: when you are studying the book of John, and you understand now what John is getting across, he is showing you the life of Christ; he is showing you that this is the way that God would live if He became a man—and He *did* become a man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. If you are looking for the way to live, if you are looking to expose your own flaws, you look at the way John presented Jesus of Nazareth and He will show you your own character flaws.

You will see the way Jesus approached people. You will see the way that He approached government. You will see the way that He approached every aspect of life, whether it is healing, whether it is death, whether it is the crisis in His own life—that is, the approach of His own death, or somebody else's death.

How did Jesus approach death? Let us examine just that one thing. How did God approach death? How did He approach the death of Lazarus? He almost ignored it. I mean, it seems that way. He purposely stayed away in order to give Lazarus time to die. Then when he died, what did He do? He resurrected him.

What is your thinking about death? Is it in line with the way God approaches death? The Bible shows that we fear death. Death is an enemy, and we are afraid of it. Hebrews 2:15 says that all of our lives we have been held in the fear of death. We have been its slave. But now we see the way God looks at death. God looks at death as something that He can easily conquer. We get sick, and we get worried. Why? Because we are constrained by time, and we fear death because we know, carnally, that is going to be the end.

If our thinking is being straightened out, then death, we know, is something that God can easily conquer—so we can have a different approach toward death than we otherwise could. That liberates! When you are liberated from that fear—is that not life? Does that not give a quality to life that you did not have before? Certainly it does. This is the way to live—you can live freely because you do not have to fear death in the way that you had to fear it before, in the way that it twisted and turned your life. Time ceases to have the same meaning that it had before. You can be a lot more patient. You can be a lot more at peace, because we are not constrained, because Christ has given us life.

So it *reveals*. You can go into every aspect of life—of our thinking—and He reveals principles regarding this.

Let us think of it in a physical sense, as the opposite of darkness. I will tell you a little story—something that happened to a friend of ours. This is a true story. This fellow drank a little too much from time to time, and so one time—I am really going to cut a lot of material out here—while he was away drinking, his wife moved the furniture around in their bedroom. So he came home from his drinking bout, three sheets to the wind. He went into the bedroom, and it was pitch dark in there. He was considerate enough that he did not want to awaken his wife, so he went over to where he thought the bed was and he apparently was just going to flop right across it, and he fell right straight down on his face—because she had moved it!

He could not see any of the shape or the form. He could not see the bed. He could not see the dresser, especially in his drunken state—and I gave this for that very reason, because we are all somewhat drunk with "the wine of the wrath of her fornication," spiritually. A drunk person thinks that they have much better control than they actually do. They actually think that their powers are increased—that they have sharper reflexes, that their eyes are piercing the darkness better and everything. All the while, all they are doing is fooling themselves.

Spiritually, when Christ turns on the light, it begins to reveal to us for the very first time the true form and shape of everything around us. We begin to see everything in its reality, as opposed to the vague shadowiness that was actually there before, but what we thought was reality turned out to be not reality. That is what happens. When the light of God comes into our mind, it begins to reveal the true form and shape of everything—the true values, the right standards, the true day of worship.

John uses the word "light" in the sense of *revealing*. It can reveal either the truth about flaws, or it can reveal truth in the sense of what is the true form and shape—what are the right standards of morality, or ethics. What are the right ways we can have relationships with people.

The second way he uses it is in the sense of "that which guides." God's Word—He is the light of the world—does not just give shape to things, because giving shape to things of and by itself is not enough. It also has to guide, and that is what He does.

John 12:36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. . .

If you believe in it, you are going to follow it. If you believe in it, it is not just going to give shape or reality to things, but you are going to be motivated to be guided by it as well. If you are guided by it, then you can become a son of light. You can become like the true light actually is.

John 12:46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

Again, the light of God can come and reveal. Unfortunately, that happens in many cases out in the world. They hear the program. They hear the truth of God. They read *The Plain Truth*. They get *The Good News*. They read the booklets. God begins to reveal the true form and shape of things in life—but they turn them down. They are not guided out of the maze of their own darkness. They refuse to take the steps. It is too frightening to them. They lack the faith—whatever it might be. But, you see, if you follow the light, it will guide you. He uses it in that sense. You can see that he is presenting Christ not only as the source of light, the source of life, but also the guide. That shows you that you are going to have to have a part—you **will** have a part—in God's creative effort. He will lead, but He will not do everything for us. So that guidance is necessary.

John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Darkness is another word that he uses a great deal. Notice verse 5. He put the definite article "the" in front of "darkness." He does that because Christ is *the* light of men. It is almost as if he is personifying it by using the definite article.

What is *the* darkness? Darkness is the opposite of *the* light. *The light* is Jesus Christ. He is the representative of the Kingdom of God. He is going to show us how to live. He is the one who is going to reveal. He is the one who is going to guide. *The darkness* is just the opposite of that. If it personifies anything, in a general sense, it personifies the world and its ways. It personifies civilization, as man has built it. That would include all of its systems—all of its institutions. It would include governments. It would include educational systems, economic systems, religious systems—anything that is part of the world. It is the opposite of *the light*.

It is also used to imply ignorance. The world is in darkness, but God has concluded that all men are blind. It seems to imply ignorance as well—they do not comprehend. Darkness does not comprehend, ". . .and the darkness did not comprehend it." It does not understand.

There is really a better usage of that word, "comprehend," as well. That is a secondary usage of this word. That is not wrong. I want to assure you that it is not wrong. But it seems better to use the primary use, and that means that it did not *overtake* the light, or that it did not *extinguish* the light. He is implying here that Christ conquered the darkness. The light conquered the darkness. Certainly the darkness—the world—did not comprehend what they had in their midst. That is a given. That is true; that is not wrong.

But the sense of what he is talking about here is that men tried to extinguish the light, because it was revealing. It was revealing their flaws. It was revealing to them their bad attitudes, their character. It was undermining them (as they looked at it). So they tried to put it out of existence. They tried to extinguish it.

But no matter what men have attempted to do, they have not been able to extinguish the light of God. First of all, even when they killed Him, He was resurrected. No matter what men have tried to do to extinguish the Word of God—they have burned Bibles, tried to persecute the true church—and yet it is continually keeps coming back, and it is still in existence.

He is saying that to assure you and me. What he is trying to help you to understand is a building of your confidence, so that you will understand that what you have in you cannot be overcome! What you have in you is the seed of the creative power of this God. It cannot be overcome. If we will do our part—if we will fight back; if we will resist in the godly way—He tells you that even Satan has to flee from you. He cannot extinguish your spiritual life. What you have in you is more powerful than all of the forces that Satan can bring against you. He is trying to assure you that even as Christ could not be conquered, you cannot be conquered unless you allow it. That same light that was in Him is also in you and me.

John 1:6-8 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

(Just an interesting sidelight is that—I do not know why—John never calls John the Baptist "the Baptist." He just simply refers to him as "John.")

John makes very sure that we understand that John's mission and his inferiority to Christ are clearly stated. Make sure that is understood. He makes sure you understand that John was sent to bear witness to the Light, but he was not that Light himself.

That brings us to another word, and that is the word "witness." This word appears very frequently in the book of John. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke it is only used seven times. John himself uses it 47 times. John uses the word "witness" eight different ways. I am going to give you all eight, because they are essential to understanding this book.

First of all, he states that the Father bore witness:

John 5:37 And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me [He *witnessed*—that is what a testimony in court, a witness]. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.

The second way that he used the word *witness* is that "He bore witness of Himself." You will probably recall as you begin to read through this book that these people were always looking for proof—"show us who you are."

John 8:14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going.

John 8:18 I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

There are two of them in one sentence. What was it about Christ that bore witness? It is what He was. His life and His character bore witness of who He was. Where were these people supposed to look? We will get to that, because that was one of the witnesses.

The third one is the witness of His works:

John 5:36 But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

His works—you could include in that His life; you could include in that all of the miracles He performed, such as the healings; you could include in that His pity, His compassion, His mercy, His sermons; all the acts of service that He did—bore witness of what He was.

When you are getting testimony of something, are you not thinking, "Is this true?" That is exactly what Christ is doing here. Again, think of this book from John's perspective, and think of it from your perspective. What is he trying to do? He is trying to get you to believe. He is proposing this to you. Here is somebody that you can base your life on, and if you want to have a better life—if you want to have an abundant life, if you want to have a life that will lead to eternal life—*this* is the way to have it. Now you are going to ask for proof—"Prove it to me!" So here come the witnesses. There is the witness of God the Father. There is the witness of the Son Himself. There is the witness of His works—that these things can be relied upon.

Number four is the witness of the Scriptures:

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

God expects us to match the life of Jesus of Nazareth against what was prophesied in the Old Testament. That is one of the Bible studies I am going to give you. I am going to give you a Bible study that will show you that Jesus of Nazareth matched what it said in the Old Testament about Him.

You can believe what John says in the book of John—what Matthew says, what Mark says, what Luke says about Jesus of Nazareth—because He backed it up with His life. God backed it up with His witness, the Son backed it up with His words, John the Baptist witnessed of Him (that is number five; another prophet of God), the Scriptures back it up, and the works back it up, providing you and me with proof.

Number five was the witness of John the Baptist. He is an important witness: he was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He came and he preceded and cleared the way for Jesus Christ. When Jesus of Nazareth was revealed, who announced it? John the Baptist did. "Behold the Lamb of God." God gave him the sign so that John would know which, among all of the men around there, the Son of God was. That was an important witness.

The sixth one was the witness of those with whom He came in contact. These would be people like the woman at the well in Samaria. She was impressed by Jesus' omniscience. He knew that she had

five husbands, and the one she was now living with was not her husband. She said, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet." She had never met Him before, and He had never met her, but He knew all about her.

How would you like to live with a person like that? That would be frightening! You would either really be on your toes all the time, or else you would do what the Pharisees and Scribes did—they got rid of Him.

The seventh one was the witness of the disciples. This is important.

John 15:27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

They did not give us a second-hand account. They saw it with their *own* eyes. They heard it with their *own* ears. They experienced it for 3 ½ years at the very closest level. God says in His own word, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses let things be established." God gave us *four* witnesses. He went above and beyond what was required: four separate witnesses of the life of Jesus Christ.

John 19:35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

There is the point of all of the witnesses. It is as if God is saying, "You are the juror. I am presenting My evidence. Here are My witnesses. What are you going to do with it?" He wants you to be following—being led by—the Light.

John 21:24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

One more witness—the eighth one—is an important one to you and me. It is the witness of the Holy Spirit:

John 15:26-27 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

It is God's Holy Spirit working on our minds that enables us to comprehend and to acknowledge the other witnesses as truth. It is not until God begins to stir up our minds by His Spirit that we begin to put the right pieces together, the light dawns, and things begin to fall into place and we begin to see the true form and shape of things.

John 1:9-11 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

This is kind of sad. In verse 9 is that word *true*—*alethinos* again. He was the *real* light. I think what John means here is that other men have had partial truth. Others have had incomplete plans of

salvation. But nobody understood, or was able to present, God's purpose—God's gospel—until Christ came, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

You can find that Peter said the writers of old—in the Old Testament—did not fully understand what was given to them. Daniel, at the end of the book of Daniel, said that he did not understand it. He wrote it down, but he did not get it. It was the same way with the others as well. They understood partially what God gave them. They could see in application what God gave to Israel, in the time in which they were preaching—in which they were used. But they did not get the whole sense of it. It was not until Christ came, and He revealed the light in its fullness. He gave to men an understanding that God is reproducing Himself—that we can become born of God.

I said that this was sad, because it says that He came into the world. Here, *world* is used in the sense of the environment in which the *Logos* created. It is what He made. It was like it was His own baby—His own thing. In fact, it carries the sense that He came to His own home, His own things, His own property, and when He revealed Himself, they rejected Him.

His own creation—everything that He had made, so lovingly constructed, so lovingly brought into being, and gave life to; what He toiled over; what He was concerned about. When He came and said, "I am your God. I am your Creator. I am the one who gave you life," He was rejected. He went unrecognized. He came to His own. My Bible has a marginal reference: "His own things; His own place; and His *own*"—meaning His own people. It is as if He came to His own town, His home town, and He was rejected.

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name [there is that word again—believe]: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

He said a great deal there. Let us go back over that again. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right"—my margin has "the authority." Another commentator said it means "the power." I want you to see yourself in this, as to what God has given to you and me. He has given us a priceless privilege to become His children. But the priceless privilege carries more than just an invitation. He has **given** you and me the *power* to do it.

So often we feel so weak. I was telling my wife this week, "I feel so inadequate. The words just will not come at times"—the words that I feel would adequately illustrate something so that we could have the very best teaching. I feel so inadequate at times in counseling people because I cannot really grasp sometimes where they are coming from. I do not understand their background. Or sometimes the advice out of God's Word is just beyond me, beyond my grasp at this time, and so I feel inadequate.

At other times I know that I feel that I fall short in trying to overcome something—an attitude that might be in there, or a prejudice that might be there, a reaction to something that maybe should not be there; a quality of mind or character that I feel that I *should* have that is not there.

But when it gets right down to it, this verse tells me that the power to do those things *is* there. If it is in me, it is in you too. The power to control your mind, the power—with the help of God—to change

your attitudes, your approach to things, your relationships with other people—it is there. The power to be a son of God. That same creative energy that created, that brought everything into being—do you realize, brethren; do you believe it is in you?

We are not dealing with something that we can just lightly pass off. That is why God is so concerned that we get this—that there is awesome power residing in us. Of course it is in measure, because we do not know how to use it yet. But there is plenty that is sufficient to carry us through whatever difficulty that God might allow to come into our lives. The power to be a son of God—if you will just carry that out to its full—that power is there because it is given to those who believe in His name.

Verse 13 is intended to get us back on earth again. "Who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This falls right in harmony with John 6:44 that "no man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

Many of us sometimes get the idea that we found God. No, He found us. We may have sincerely been looking for God, but we did not know what to look for. We would have never found the God of the Bible. In all of our looking, we would have used our religious instincts, our religious training or whatever, but we would have never come up with the God of the Bible. We would just not look in the right places because we would not know what to look for.

Even though you set your will to do it, he is telling you there that you and I are not sitting in this room because of our own will. We are sitting here because God gave us the power to be here. Without that, we would not be here.

He not only gave you the right and the privilege, but He gave you the power to think it through, the power to set your will, the power to understand and comprehend, because now things are taking on their *real* shape. You are beginning to see this world and this civilization in its right parameters. That has come from God. We will see a little bit more of this in verses 17-18 where he starts talking about the glory of God and the gifts that have come through Jesus Christ.