

**Intro:** A bright little girl who began to take higher levels of Math in school became frustrated with her homework. She brought it to her dad, and unfortunately, the guy was a lot like me. Sort of, um, “math challenged.” So he sent her to her desk in her room to try and make sense of it, giving the excuse “**sweetheart, this is something you need to try and work through for yourself. Follow the teacher’s instructions carefully, and then if you get stuck, just ask God for help.**” She crinkled her little face and huffed off to her room. After 20 minutes she cried out, her voice carrying down the hall to the living room “Daddy. I don’t get it. I need help!” Her dad replied, “Keep trying honey—and Just ask God for help.” 20 minutes later the same cry came reverberating down the hall, “Daddy! I need some help.” Dad replied the same as before, “Just ask God for help!” She interrupted and said, “Daddy! It would be nice if I had a God with some skin on. I need help!”

**Segue:** Our task today is to explore why the God-man—Jesus came from heaven to earth, from eternity to time, from blissful radiance of glory with the Father to the slums and villages and the horror of a world lost in darkness.

Theme: “The Son of God became the son of man, so that the sons of men might become the sons of God.” C.S. Lewis

### Jn. 1:6-18

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup>He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>(John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’”) <sup>16</sup>Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, <sup>17</sup>for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.

## 1. The Word is our Life and the Light. (Jn. 1:4-5).

**Word:** *zoe*: “Life” This word can refer to both physical life, or a general principle of life, but as we mentioned last week it also refers to a transcendent spiritual life.

It can refer to:

- **Unending life:** Everlasting, blissful existence with God (what we mean usually).
- **Relational life:** This means that the created order is put back in its place. Everything in creation, starting with the rebels in God’s realm—everything is put back into alignment under God’s sovereign care, rule and order.
- **Communal Life:** The harmony that results in community is supposed to reflect the reign of God in heaven. That’s why Jesus told us to pray “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The Church is supposed to be a company of redeemed, reconciled people who exemplify God’s reign in our hearts, and God’s shalom (peace) in our relationships.

**He is also the Light:** This theme appears 35 times in this Gospel for “truth and glory”

### OT Background

- Is. 53:11 “After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”

Summary: Isaiah is divided into two parts: Servant 1: Sinful, Idolatrous Israel; Servant 2: Faithful, righteous “Israel”. The second Israel is in the singular.

### NT Usage

- Mt. 4:16 “the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” A quote from Isaiah. God says to the nations and to Israel, “First I will strike you. Then I will heal you.”

### John’s Gospel

- **Jn. 3:16** “For God loved the world **in this way** (Οὕτως: to this degree or “Thusly”): He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have **eternal life.**” **That is, unending, relational, and communal life.**
- **Jn. 5:39-40** “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me,<sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”
- **Jn. 8:12** “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” The light of His truth—*life in His One and Only Son.*

**2. The Witnesses to His glory (Jn. 1:6-8).** “<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.”

The Word “Witness” is the Greek word *marturia μαρτυρία* (Engl. martyr) and it means “Public testimony in a legal context.” A binding statement of eye-witness truth. The “witness” is the one who takes the stand and testifies to what he has witnessed.

**Illus.** Any light John has is purely derivative of God’s glory in the pre-incarnate son.

**Derivative and reflective.** That light is also superseded by the radiance of Son.

John uses this Word to describe how others affirmed who Jesus was:

- Samaritan Woman: 4:39
- Scriptures: 5:39-40
- Jesus’ Works 5:36; 10:25
- The Father 5:32, 37; 8:18
- The Crowd 12:17
- The Spirit and the Apostles 15:26-27
- Jesus himself bears witness and testifies to the truth—the light of the revelation of God’s glory revealed in God’s Son (18:37).

In his letter to early Christians, here’s how John put his and the Apostles’ testimony about Jesus.

**1 John 1:1-3** “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” The quality of this testimony is that it is firsthand, and through the senses.

The difference between John and Jesus is: He reflects the light but is not the source. His message, like all OT prophecy is superseded by the reality to which it points. **John is the last Spokesman, Jesus is God speaking.**

### 3. The World does not receive him. (1:9-11)

"The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.<sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."

The Word who made the world was unrecognizable by the people of the world and by Jesus' own people.

**The True Light that gives light to everyone** can be taken in two senses:

- **General Revelation:** The revelation of God's general attributes in the light of creation and human conscience. (This light is already, Johns says, in the world). Paul agrees: Rom. 1:20 "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse." Any reasonable, rational person ought to be able to behold general characteristics of God's glory in creation: God's unfathomable power; His eternal nature; His oneness. God as the maximally greatest possible being (there can't be two) should be discernable by the rational agent. We can look at the created order and extrapolate to ponder what a creator of this universe in all its grandeur must be like. ***But the starry hosts will not get you salvation truth. Which is why we need...***
- **Special Revelation:** The revelation of specific attributes and the way of salvation. This revelation which is specific to the Hebrew God and his plan of salvation is revealed in two sources: (1) The Inscripturation of the Living Word; (2) The incarnation of the eternal Word who is the Son.

And the world had two responses each with its own result:

**The World fails to recognize and thus they reject the Messiah:**

Result: Condemnation. This is what is at stake. People's eternal destinies are on the line. And we are called to preach the true light in God's one and only Son to all creation that they may recognize him for who he is and so be saved from the coming judgment.

#### **4. The Worshipers recognize and receive Him. (1:12-14)**

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. <sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

This is the second possible response:

#### **What do those "children" believe?**

The eternal Word was enfleshed in a human life. This is what we call the hypostatic union. The fusion of two natures: (1) divine and (2) human into one person—Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is truly God, and he is truly human. One person and two natures.

**"Dwelling" means to "Tabernacle":** This immediately surfaces the story of God's giving of Torah Law on Mt. Sinai. In essence, John has structured this as a New Sinai event based on Ex. 33-34.

**Exodus 33:18 "I will cause my goodness to pass before you."**

**Ex. 40:34-35 "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. <sup>35</sup>Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."**

**Two things we should know about the tabernacle and the temple:**

- **It's the place where God's manifest presence dwells.** God is everywhere. But the temple and tabernacle is where he manifests or reveals his presence. It's the place where heaven and earth meet. "Eden" for example is the first place in the world where we see this. That place was heaven on earth. It's the nexus between two worlds. After they are driven out of Eden, the garden of his presence, God reinstates a tabernacle system with Israel. The tabernacle is layed out in a striking pattern—just like the garden.

**Scholar GK Beale has observed:**

- Just like the garden, the tabernacle is oriented eastward.
- The cherubim only appear in the OT in the context of three meeting places: (1) Eden, (2) the Tabernacle, and (3) the Temple. They guard the way to Eden and they are placed above the ark of the covenant. They guard the tree of life and in the sanctuary they guard the tablets of Moses.

- Adam is told to “**work** the land and **keep** it” and these two verbs are the exact ones used of the Levitical priests who are to “work and keep” the tabernacle/temple.
- Ps. 52:10; 92:13-14 describe “the house of the LORD” as a lush garden.
- It’s the place where God’s glory and presence are manifest.

- **It’s the place where God puts his *tselem* “image”.**

John says that God has once again tabernacled among men—by being enfleshed in the human life of Jesus of Nazareth. God’s glorious presence is revealed there—and the fullness of God’s glory is revealed in the life and mission of Jesus.

Summary: **Eden is described like a tabernacle or temple of God’s manifest presence.** When we get to the end of the story, John will describe the New Heavens and the New Earth: a metropolitan center, bustling with the activity of our vocation; a lush and verdant garden—the landscape is full of rivers of life, and trees of life, and healing fruit—a dinner party in honor of the King!

Two things to know about the tabernacle—it’s the place where God’s omnipresence becomes an acute reality in our midst, and it’s a sacrosanct place where the life of heaven colonizes that real estate—heaven and earth meet there.

**Two things to know about his manifest presence—radiant and unapproachable light and holiness; weighty glory.** A heavy, transcendent and substantial presence. So substantial that this presence is impossible to bear for the unholy, for the unbeliever who is not a child of God, born again by the Spirit—fit for the full beams of his presence.

**And John says, that Jesus the rabbi from Podunk Nazareth is the living embodiment of that glory and that presence.** He is the tabernacling of God’s holy, radiant, “goodness” of presence.

Conclusion: The eternal Word, God the Son from eternity, through whom the world was created—took up residence and dwelled in human form. God’s glory does not descend upon him—God’s glory comes from within him.

We have two possible responses: (1) Fail to recognize him and reject him, (2) Recognize him and receive him by believing on his name—receiving eternal life.

To all who received him and believed on his name—he gave the right to fellowship in holy Communion and Holy Communion with God.

**Ushers: Prepare for communion.**

Rev. 21:1-4 “Then I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, prepared like a stunning bride for her groom. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a voice thundering from God’s throne, “What a view! To see God’s tabernacle now among the people, and he will tabernacle with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be among them as their God. <sup>4</sup>‘He will wash every tear from their eyes. Death, mourning, sorrow and pain will vanish from the earth, for the first order of things has passed away.’”

And whatever tears you came in with today—whatever heartache you carry in this life—John says in Revelation that he will wipe away all our tears.