

# THE WORD INCARNATE

LISTENING FOR GOD THROUGH JOHN 1:1-18



## SUMMARY

It had been 400 years since God had spoken to His people, the Israelites, through His prophets. Had He forgotten about them? Had His plan of redemption (salvation), created from the foundation of the world, ended?

He had promised a Messiah, a Redeemer, someone to free His people from oppression and to defeat Satan once and for all. Yet there was no sign of redemption in sight. The prophets had foretold it, but God was silent.

And then Jesus came, deity in human flesh. God himself entered His creation to show a lost people the way back to God, to free mankind from the penalty and power of sin.

God had spent a long time preparing His people for this event. The Law and the Prophets, the sacrifices and the feasts—all of Israel's history and tradition—had been pointing to His coming. Through this they would recognize it and grasp the fullness of its meaning.

But they missed it.

And many still do.

PREPARATION ✝ FOCUS YOUR THOUGHTS

When do you open your Christmas gifts?

Why is it so hard to wait until Christmas morning?

What kinds of secrets do you have difficulty keeping?

READING ✝ HEAR THE WORD

John's Gospel was written long after the others, possibly as late as A.D. 85. Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us the framework of Jesus' life and works, but John goes to a deeper level and shows us their meaning and purpose. Through his writing, John intends the reader to be drawn into a relationship with Christ. For example, John states, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 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" (John 20:30-31).

Because the events surrounding Jesus' birth had already been recorded, John shows us the deeper meaning and reality behind those events in 1:1-18. He shows us that Jesus didn't come into existence on that first Christmas. He was no ordinary baby.

In John you will see words repeated for emphasis: *believe* (99 times), *life* (36 times), *witness/testify* (47 times), and *world* (78 times). The theme of light versus darkness is also repeated throughout. All of them are introduced in the first chapter.

Read John 1:1-18 slowly out loud. Be sure to pause between sentences, allowing yourself time to soak in the meaning. If you're involved in a group study, have a different person read the entire passage aloud without pausing. As you listen, ask God to impress a word or phrase on your mind—His Word for you today.

MEDITATION  ENGAGE THE WORD

*Meditate on John 1:1-5, 14, and 18*

How does John 1:1 compare with Genesis 1:1? Why do you think John uses similar words? Why does John use “the Word” to describe Jesus? How else does he describe Jesus? In what ways was Jesus “light”? How is Jesus a “light” in your life?

John tells us Jesus *was* God and was *with* God at the same time. He also describes Jesus as “God the One and Only” in 1:18. How do you understand the concept of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)? What, if anything, confuses you about the Trinity? Do you feel you have to understand this concept in order to believe it?

Read the quote by George Washington Carver. Do you think it's even possible for human beings to fully understand the nature of God? If we could grasp His nature, what would that say about God? What are your own personal questions you have about God's nature?

*When I was young, I said to God, "God, tell me the mystery of the universe." But God answered, "That knowledge is for me alone." So I said, "God, tell me the mystery of the peanut." Then God said, "Well, George, that's more nearly your size."*

—George Washington Carver

In what ways did Jesus make God known (1:18)? What characteristics of God did Jesus reveal that weren't evident in the Old Testament?

What did Jesus have to give up in order to be born into this world? How would you respond if someone asked you to give up something important to you in order to benefit others? In what ways was Jesus limited? How does it make you feel to know that God went to great lengths so that you would know who He is and how much He cares for you?

*Meditate on John 1:10-13, 16-17*

Which type of Messiah were the first-century Jews looking for? If Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies concerning himself, why do you think so many people did not recognize Him? If you were living during that time, do you think you would have been able to recognize Him as the Messiah?

Do you agree with the quote from Pearl Bailey? What keeps people from recognizing God today? Do you find it hard to recognize God?

*People see God every day; they just don't recognize Him.* —Pearl Bailey

Do you think people “did not receive him” because they didn’t realize who He was or because they *did* realize who He was, but *chose* not to put their trust in Him? In other words, was it because of ignorance, willfulness, or both?

What does Jesus offer to those who believe and receive Him? What does it mean to be a child of God? Do you live your life as if God is your father? Why do you think someone might deliberately choose *not* to become a child of God?

*Meditate on John 1:6-9, 15*

What do you know about John the Baptist? How is he described by the apostle John? How would you describe his attitude? What was the reaction to John's ministry (see John 10:41 and Matt. 14:1-12)? Do you think he ever considered *not* telling others about Jesus?

Jesus came as light into the world, and He calls us to be the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). What would the world be like without physical light? What would it be like if Jesus had never come? What would it be like if we didn't reflect the light of Christ in our world? How would your life be impacted if Christ wasn't lighting your paths?

Do you think John 3:20 accurately describe people today? Think about when you were still living in darkness. How did you feel about the light before you encountered Jesus? Who was the "John the Baptist" in your life who pointed you to Christ?

*Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*  
—John 3:20

PRAYER  ASK AND LISTEN

Seek the face of God. Ask, "Lord, what are You saying to us today?"

Jesus came as light and life. He came to make God known. Spend some time in silent prayer and ask God to speak to your heart and make you aware of areas in your life that keep you from reflecting His light.

CONTEMPLATION ✝ REFLECT AND YIELD

Jesus had to give up all the splendor of heaven to come as a light to the world. What might God be asking you to sacrifice to be a light to your world? How willing are you to share the news of Christ with your friends and family?



GROUP STUDY

- What difference has Jesus coming to earth made? What if He had never been born?
- What does it mean that Jesus is “light”?
- How has Jesus been a light to your path, and given you direction when you needed it?

- Is it hard to be a light in our darkened world? What makes it so hard to share the good news?
- If your friends at school were asked if you had been reflecting the light of Jesus, how would they respond? Would you be satisfied with their answer?
- What are ways that you can make Jesus known?
- Make a list of four people who are part of your world. What can you say or do this week to show them Jesus?