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THE LIFE AND THE LIGHT – Part 1 (John 1:1 – 18)

I miss the time all of us are in Annapolis during the session at the beginning of the year, but hope to stay in touch with you through these Bible studies in the interim. I trust these thoughts from the book of John will give us all great hope and encouragement.

THE AUTHOR OF OUR BOOK

He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, an uneducated fisherman turned author who penned a Gospel, three epistles and Revelation. His name was John, and along with Peter and James, no one knew Jesus as well. These three formed our Lord's inner band of disciples. They had seen Jesus with their own eyes, heard Him speak, touched Him and lived with Him for more than three years. He began his first epistle with the proof.

*1 John 1:1-3 - That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.***

John, however, did not write a biography on Jesus including his every remembrance. Rather, his thoughts were wound around the spindle of a **specific purpose:**

*John 20:30-31 - Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so **that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

Each chapter and verse weaves itself into a fabric that shows Jesus as the Christ. This Gospel is evangelistic in nature, wanting its readers to realize Jesus' identity and then place their faith in Him for salvation.

Who is Jesus? According to John, Jesus is the incarnate God who came bringing light and life to all who would believe. Out of this central truth flows the many rivulets that form John's Gospel.

THE PROLOGUE

*John 1:1-5—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***

John opens with the assertion that Jesus is the divine “**word**” or *logos*, which is no small claim. Words give expression to thought. The Jewish mind would have remembered verses such as Psalm 33:6, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.” The heavens were the result of the Lord speaking them forth; creation is an expression of divine thought. The word of the Lord had creative power throughout the Old Testament, and Jewish readers understood it as God's self-assertion.

The Greeks had their own ideas about the *logos*. Though the world is ever-changing, Heraclitus (525-475 B.C.) reasoned that something greater must hold it together and provide stability, called the *logos*. Other philosophers, such as Anaxagoras and Aristotle, followed with their ideas of an impersonal “something” that governed the world.

The Greeks pursued an unending quest to understand the nature of the universe; John asserts that their quest has come to an end. The Jews knew the word which called the universe into being; John declares that this word became a man later in this opening chapter.

*John 1:14 - **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

If you want to know the Word which is the source of all things, holds them together and directs, look at Jesus. He is the embodiment of God Himself.

*Colossians 1:15-17 - **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.***

The Word, Jesus Christ, was not created but eternally existed as God and with God. John makes a distinction—Jesus is God and also with God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three unique persons, each fully God and yet there is one God. This is why our Lord could have this exchange later with Philip:

*John 14:8, 9 - Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”*

JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE WITNESS

*John 1:6-8, 15 - There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. **He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.** (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”)*

John the Baptist (not the author of this Gospel) was the last prophet who foretold the coming of Messiah. Like all prophets, He was commissioned to speak on behalf of God. John the Baptist did not come to make a name for himself, but recognized his place. Though the crowds increased to see him preach, the prestige never intoxicated him. At the high point of his ministry, John

made this famous statement which showed his reason for pointing others to Christ:

*John 3:28-30 – “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.’ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. **He must increase, but I must decrease.**”*

John the Baptist’s disciples followed Jesus, his life ended tragically, but the Lord recognized John’s faithfulness. He truly fulfilled the purpose for his ministry.

Matthew 11:11a - Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.

This is just the first half of this study. As tremendous as the truths are in the prologue and description of John the Baptist’s role, the rest of this passage focuses us back to the true Life and Light, Jesus. I look forward to sharing that with you next time.

My contact info is on the heading of these notes if you have a question, thought, or prayer request. God bless.