



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 1:1-14 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

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

John began his gospel in a way similar to Genesis 1 — God created by speaking the Word. “Word” can be translated as “speech, reason, logic, science.” From the classical Greek language, “logos” (word) is used to create words such as “biology” [science of life “bios” = “life” or study of life (“bios” + “logos”)] and “theology” [science of God “God” = “theos” or study of God (“theos” + “logos”)]. A Bible student might think of God using reason, rationality, logic, and “scientific” thinking when God created. God’s creation

reveals the reason and logic of God. God created people in His image with reason and logic, and we too should use reason and logic when we create and make choices. In Isaiah 1:18, the LORD says to us, “Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.’” The Gospel of John calls us to come to God and think and reason with God and about God. John calls us to read his Gospel to learn the truth about God and to live according to the truth. In addition, John declared that the Word is a Person, this Person was God and was with God; therefore, John begins his Gospel teaching about the Father and the Son, Who thought together when they created.

(John 1:2) He was in the beginning with God.

Very early in his Gospel, John identified the Word as Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. The Person Who was with God the Father in the beginning was the Son of God, The Word was Jesus the Messiah before He was born in human flesh. In the Hebrew language, the title “Messiah” means “Anointed One” or “King” which translated into the Greek language is “Christ.” Jesus the King was God and was with God in the beginning, in the absolute beginning before anything else was. Jesus, the Son of God, was not created. When Jesus came to Earth in human flesh, He remained God, and when Jesus ascended into heaven after His death and resurrection He took His rightful place at the right hand of His Father on His throne.

(John 1:3) All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being

God the Father and God the Son worked together in creating all things. The Father and the Son always worked and still work together in perfect agreement, and the Son continued to do so when He came to Earth in human flesh. They always had and have unity of thought and purpose. Neither the Father nor the Son created anything independently from the other. Only God can create from nothing into something, and God does so with good reasons, with and through the Word. In Colossians 1:16, the Apostle Paul wrote, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” Throughout the New Testament, we see Jesus revealing Himself as (and revealed as) the King of the universe, Lord over all.

(John 1:4) in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The Word of God is alive and active, and the Word of God gives life and light. Nothing can exist or live apart from Jesus Christ, the Word of God, for all things and all beings depend totally on Him for their existence moment-by-moment. Jesus Christ gives us light, truth, and understanding. All the truth and understanding that

anyone possesses originated in Jesus Christ, though some may choose to distort, misinterpret, and misrepresent the truth of God and Jesus Christ that the light of understanding gives them. Those who persist in distorting the truth of God and reality eventually develop depraved minds (see Romans 1:18ff). Those with depraved minds live in darkness, but Jesus came to shine the light of God in the darkness that many might come to the light and be saved.

(John 1:5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

The rational and spiritual reality is this: “darkness is the opposite of the light; therefore, darkness is unreasonable, irrational, opposed to true science; darkness is the realm of evil lies.” No matter how evil and dark a situation, the light of God still shines in that darkness and the people of the light see the light shining into their lives and transforming their thinking. The evil realm in which the people of the light live cannot overcome the Light and the Truth, the Word of God, the Reason of God, the Truth of God in Jesus Christ, the Truth of the Bible.

(John 1:6) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

John, the writer of this gospel, now draws the reader’s attention to a different John, John the Baptist, who was a man sent from God. John was born about six months prior to the birth of Jesus the Messiah. John’s mother,

Elizabeth, and the mother of Jesus, Mary, were related. John was a Levite, the son of a priest who served in the Temple. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of King David. More importantly, John was filled with the Holy Spirit while in his mother's womb; whereas, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in His mother's womb. John tries to clarify the distinction between John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah.

(John 1:7) He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

Even after Jesus' death and resurrection, some held John the Baptist in such high esteem that they did not distinguish clearly between John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah. God sent John for the specific reason of pointing people beyond himself to Jesus. John used the legal terms of "witness" and "testify." What John did was give evidence suitable for a court of law; in the sense that John gave good and sufficient evidence or reasons for someone to believe in Jesus as the One who was the Light.

(John 1:8) He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

John now writes in a negative way what he wrote in a positive way in the previous verse so he can be perfectly clear and avoid misunderstanding. John the Baptist was not "the light of all people," but he came to point people to the One who was and remains "the light of all people." John testified with the power of the Holy Spirit, Who

indwelt John from the beginning; thus, John convinced and baptized many to prepare them for the coming ministry of Jesus the Messiah, the Word and Light of God.

(John 1:9) The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Jesus Christ is the One Who gives true enlightenment, logical thinking ability, understanding, and rationality to people. He is the One Who explains the reason of creation and the plans and purposes of God. Jesus wanted to do this for everyone, and so He came into the world as the “True Light,” as the One Who opposed the artificial or false light that pretended to be the true light but was darkness. False lights may mislead many, but when anyone comes to Jesus, they will become enlightened by the “True Light” and can come into the Light of Life.

(John 1:10) He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

Before Jesus was born in human flesh, He was in the world as the Son of God spiritually, but the world did not know Him. After He was born in human flesh, and as He grew in wisdom and in favor with God and those around Him, they did not know He was the Son of God and the Light of the world. Though the world came into being through Him, the world did not conclude rightly about the nature and character of God in Him.

(John 1:11) He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and born of the tribe of Judah; therefore, He was a Jew. He was in the line of David; therefore, He was qualified to serve His people as the foretold Messiah. However, John now points toward the life of Jesus and the people's response to Him. The Jewish religious leadership rejected Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God; for Jesus claimed to be both Messiah and Son of God. They rejected Him because He made himself equal to God. They tried to mislead people away from Jesus and finally used the Romans to crucify Jesus.

(John 1:12) But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,

However, some among "His people" received Jesus. Some Jews and Gentiles (Roman officers and Samaritans, for examples) received Jesus. When they received Jesus as the Son of God and believed in His name (the name "Jesus," means, "Savior") He gave them the "power to become children of God" in the sense of becoming "adopted children," as Paul described in Ephesians 1:5, "He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will." We must receive the power of God from Jesus to become the adopted children of God.

(John 1:13) who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

A person receives the power to become a child of God directly from Jesus by adoption, by Jesus' choice. Similarly, a human child may be adopted by parents for good reasons known to them and perhaps told to their child. A person does not become a child of God because of their bloodline (because they are Jews or Gentiles or of royal blood). A person does not become a child of God because they do something in the flesh (some great human achievement that earns them the status). A person does not become a child of God because some priest or preacher declares them to be so. Only God through Jesus Christ gives a person the power to become a child of God.

(John 1:14) And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Here, John refers to the miracle of Jesus' birth (described in greater detail in the gospels of Matthew and Luke and Mark 1:1). Jesus, the Son of God, became a human being in human flesh, blood, bone, mind and soul. He did not "just appear" to be a human being (as an angel might appear to be a human being.) Consider the meaning of Hebrews 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Jesus was the Son of God in human flesh, not an angel who appeared to be human. John and the other

Apostles saw Jesus for Who He was and is, in His ministry, in His signs, and in His death and resurrection. In Jesus, they saw God the Father's only Son. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16). They saw truth, justice, merciful love, and grace in Jesus' actions and words. They saw how the truth of God expressed itself in word and deed. They saw people transformed and become children of the light as they were transformed.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What does John say about the Word?
2. Of what value is light? Compare the Son of God to the sun of our Earth.
3. What important truths does John tell about John the Baptist?
4. What does Jesus do for those who receive Him?
5. Why do you think John insisted "the Word became flesh."

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