

INTRODUCTION

I asked the question last week: "How many Gospels are there?" There's ONE but we have four Gospel accounts: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I knew a pastor years ago in Alabama who named his first three sons Matthew, Mark, and Luke. You can see the trend. He was expecting another boy. But after three daughters were born, he named the last one Johnna.

Matthew wrote primarily for a Jewish audience, and quotes the Old Testament more than the others. Mark wrote primarily for a Roman audience and has more miracle stories per page. Luke wrote a scholarly treatise aimed at the intellectually advanced Greeks. John actually used a very simple Greek vocabulary to write to the church, to us. Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote primarily about what Jesus DID. John tells us who Jesus IS.

The first nine verses of John 1 comprise the prologue to the story of Jesus. I borrowed the title of this message from one of my favorite Christmas hymns. Charles Wesley was the brother of John Wesley. I believe "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" is one of the most theologically rich Christmas carols. I've always thought it was sad that we only sing these songs at Christmas time. In one verse he has us singing: "Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace! (Isaiah 9:6) Hail the Sun of Righteousness! (Malachi 4:2) Light and life to all He brings, (John 1:4) Ris'n with healing in His wings. (Malachi 4:2)"

In this passage we will see that Jesus is light and He is life.

John 1:1-9. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world."

We learned four truths about Jesus in the last message. Jesus is the Word; Jesus exists eternally with God; and Jesus is the Creator. In this message, we will learn three more truths about Jesus and then I want to give you a personal challenge.

I. JESUS IS THE LIFE.

The Bible says, "In him was life." The word "life" appears over 200 times in the New Testament. We are going to see in John 14:6 that Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In John 10, Jesus contrasted His ministry with that of the enemy. Jesus said, "A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." (John 10:10 CSB)

Satan's job description in this world is to steal, kill, and destroy. Anytime you see people killing, stealing, and destroying, they are just carrying out the acts of their father the devil. Our hearts break whenever we hear of the latest terrorist attack or mass shooting. People want to blame things like gun control or mental illness. But two thousand years ago Jesus said this about violent people, "You are of your father the devil and the works of your father you carry out. He was a murderer from the beginning."

But then in the second part of John 10:10b (CSB) Jesus reveals one of the main reasons He came to planet earth. He said, "I have come so that they might have life and have it in abundance."

In the New Testament, there were two different Greek words for life.

A. Everyone has physical life (*bios*)

We get our word biology from this. So, today if your heart is beating and your lungs are sending oxygen to your body, and your brain is processing what I'm saying, then you have LIFE. You have biological life. Everyone has that. But when Jesus promised life and life in abundance, He didn't use the word *bios*.

B. Only Jesus gives eternal life (*zoé*)

We get our word "zoology" from this word. It speaks not of biological life, but a quality of life. It's life on a higher plane. It's more than merely existing; it is really living. And sometimes when we see a picture of a couple enjoying a vacation on a beautiful beach somewhere, we say something like, "Wow, that's the life!"

I don't know if it's true or not, but I read the story once of a West Texas Oil Man who died and wanted to be buried in his Cadillac. He wanted to be wearing a ten-gallon hat, with a cigar in his mouth, and his car full of his most prized possessions. According to the story, they dug a huge hole and used a crane to lower the Cadillac into the ground. There were two cemetery workers standing there watching as the Cadillac descended into the hole. One of them said, "Man, that's what I call really living." No, that's really dying. Jesus said, "A man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions." Real life is knowing Jesus.

If I asked you to define "eternal life" what you would say? If you said, "Living forever" you're only partially correct. Jesus gives us the perfect definition of eternal life. "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ." (John 17:3 CSB)

John wrote in his first epistle, "The one who has the son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12 CSB) I named this message after a Christmas carol; so let me ask you a Christmas question. How many of you put up an artificial Christmas tree? So how many of you decorate a live tree? If you raised your hand for a live tree, think again. Unless you have that tree growing in dirt, it's not a live tree. It's a dead tree. It has been

cut off from the source of life. Oh, you can decorate it and make it look better than it ever did in the forest but it's dead. And there are thousands of people around us who are like that tree. They look great. They decorate their lives with all kinds of lights and shiny things, but if they don't know Jesus Christ, they are cut off from the source of life.

II. JESUS IS THE LIGHT.

The Bible continues in verses four and five, "That life is the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it." In this book John often writes about the battle between light and darkness. Let's notice two things that Jesus, the light of world, does for us.

A. His light reveals my sin.

In the Bible darkness represents evil and light represents goodness. Satan is called the Prince of Darkness. Jesus described hell as a place of outer darkness. Jesus said men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

We think our deeds in darkness are hidden to everyone else, but God sees and knows. And His light shines into our hearts to reveal our sin.

The Bible compares God's Word to a mirror and if you are really going to see yourself, as you really are you need a lighted mirror. I'll never forget the first time I sat down in front of my wife's lighted make-up mirror. Wow! I couldn't believe how bad I looked. You know when guys look in a mirror, they just look at the big picture—shirt, pants, shoes...good to go. But those make-up mirrors are brutal. And then I made the mistake of flipping the mirror around—and there was a magnifying mirror! And every single pore, blemish, and flaw was magnified ten times. I don't think I've looked into it since; I don't want to know the truth about how bad I look. Ladies, I commend you for your desire to look so good that you endure that kind of scrutiny every day.

But that's the scrutiny we all receive from Jesus. He said, "There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light." (Mark 4:22 CSB) That's what the light of the Holy Spirit does to our souls. He turns up the light to brightest setting and to the highest magnification. It may be painful, but it is necessary.

The Christian author Selwyn Hughes wrote: "We don't always want God to shine His light on our sin...it's too revealing, too strong. But remember, it is only exposed problems than can be resolved." Once you have asked the Holy Spirit to shine the spotlight of His conviction into the depths of your soul, you won't be strutting around bragging about how good you are. You will fall down before Him like Isaiah and say, "Woe is me, for I am a person of unclean lips." (Isaiah 6:5 CSB) Once you come under the convicting searchlight of the Holy Spirit, confess that sin and repent of it, so you can walk in fellowship with God.

B. His light reveals His way.

Have you ever asked God to give you guidance as to the direction you should go? We all have. I have always enjoying the singing of Celine Dion. There's one song she sings named, "Call the Man." She talks about a world that is in a mess and in that it's time to call the man. As I listening to the song many times, I think the Man is Jesus. The chorus says, "Call the Man who deals in love beyond repair; He can heal the world of hearts in need of care; Shine the light ahead; when the next step isn't clear. Call the Man He's needed here." Whether or not she was singing about Jesus, it sounds like Him. He offers love that is beyond repair and only He can heal the world of hearts in need of care. And He does shine a light ahead when the future is unclear.

God has promised to give us light to show His way. I love that promise in Isaiah 30:21 (CSB) that says, "And whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you saying, 'This is the way. Walk in it.'" Have you ever wished it were that easy? Don't you wish God's directions were like your GPS?" "In a quarter mile turn right. Turn right onto Loop 323, and proceed two miles to your destination." Have you ever stopped to listen to that voice? Left or right?

Or as we read through Numbers, and the children of Israel were camped in the Wilderness. Do you remember how they got directions? There was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. As long as the pillar remained over the tabernacle, they stayed put. But when the pillar of cloud and fire moved, they just followed it. Wouldn't it be easy if God gave us something as reliable as that?

He has given us something more reliable than a GPS or a pillar of fire. He has given us His word to guide us. Our first scripture memory song for 2018 was Psalm 119:105 (CSB): "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path."

God will guide you as He enlightens your mind through His Word. You can't just pick up your Bible and open it to a random passage to find direction. But if you will constantly, regularly walk through His Word, the light of His Word will reveal His ways.

The Bible says, "If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7 CSB)

III. JESUS FULFILLS ALL THE PROPHECIES.

In these verses we are introduced to another John, the one we call John the Baptizer. He was a Nazarite who lived in the wilderness. He wore rough clothing, never cut his hair, and ate locusts and honey. When people asked him who He was John said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said." (John 1:23 CSB)

By referencing Isaiah, John was giving notice that the prophets predicted the Messiah would come. Notice two ways in which Jesus fulfills prophecy.

A. He fulfilled the prophecies that are history.

There are hundreds of passages of prophecy in the Old and New Testament. These prophecies predicted the future. As we stand now in the 21st Century, some of these Bible prophecies are history and some of them are future.

We can look back into history and see that Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies that predicted the first coming of the Messiah.

For instance we read, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness." (Isaiah 9:2 CSB) Isaiah predicted that a light would come shining into a time of spiritual darkness—Jesus was and is that light.

If you are still somewhat of a skeptic about the Bible I challenge you to seriously study the dozens of specific predictions about Jesus that were made centuries before He was born in Bethlehem. These prophecies predicted where and when Jesus would be born, where he would grow up, the miracles he would perform, the way he would die, and even his crucifixion. These prophecies predicted many more details of Jesus' life—and He fulfilled them all.

Imagine archaeologists uncovered scrolls written 700 years ago from a previously unknown Native American tribe. One of the scrolls made a prediction about a particular man. It said that he would be born in Ruston, Louisiana in 1953. That he would grow up near the territory of the Alabama Indians. That he would have a grandfather and a father named Orlo; that he would get married and be the father of two daughters, and would one day be the pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church.

There are over 7 billion people living on planet earth, but there is only ONE person who could fulfill all seven of those predictions. Me. But those prophecies don't exist.

There are dozens of prophecies about the Jewish Messiah, and only one individual has ever lived who has fulfilled all of them—Jesus of Nazareth. This is convincing proof.

B. He will fulfill the prophecies that are future!

Dr. George Sweeting was the long-time President of Moody Bible Institute. He was an expert on Bible prophecy. He wrote that for every one prophecy Jesus fulfilled in the past, there are eight prophecies He has yet to fulfill in the future.

For instance, Isaiah there are two prophecies about Jesus that have been fulfilled in history, but there are ten predictions that will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom on earth. "For a child will be born for us, [done] a son will be given to us [done], and the

government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever." (Isaiah 9:6-7 CSB)

CONCLUSION

So what is our take-away? John's main job was to bear witness to the light. That's our job, also. We can't just be content to have the light and life that Jesus gives us; we must always be pointing people to the light and life that Jesus can give them.

There is a powerful truth in this passage many people miss. It's found in the last part of verse nine. The Bible says, "The true light that gives light to EVERYONE, was coming into the world." Notice that the God gives light to everyone, not just Christians, Jews, or religious people, He gives it to everyone.

This week on television I heard Nancy Pelosi, House of Representatives Minority Leader, challenge the President for not believing that everyone is a child of God and we all have a "Divine Spark." I've said many times that everyone was created by God, but only those who follow the light to Jesus become God's children. And this so-called Divine Spark isn't light that means you automatically go to heaven, that's Universalism. This Divine Spark is the light God gives everyone to lead them to place their faith in Jesus. The Divine Spark won't get you heaven, only Jesus will.

This light, which represents the knowledge of God, has been revealed to every person who has ever breathed a breath of air on planet earth. So even if a person has never read a Bible or heard a gospel presentation, God has given them enough light to lead them to the truth about Jesus.

But the sad truth is that some people take this light and they deny it—and when you turn you back on the light, your life gets darker.

Imagine I get up one morning before dawn and I see a little light on the eastern horizon. If I start walking toward that light, that light is going to keep getting brighter and brighter. Some people take the light God gives them and keep following it and the light gets brighter until they meet the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus.

But imagine that it's late afternoon and the sun is setting in the West. If I turn away from the western sky and start walking East, the light gets dimmer and dimmer until there is only darkness. Sadly, millions of people walk away from the light until their hearts are darkened.

Like John the Baptist, our job is to point people to the light and truth about Jesus Christ.

Suliasi Kurulo has spoken at our church before. He pastors a church in Fiji that has planted 1,000 churches around the globe. Years ago, he was on the island of Madagascar and his translator told him about an old man who lived up in the mountains who was considered

somewhat of a holy man. Suli said they climbed up to find this man who had lived there all his life. There was no electricity or running water, and he had no contact with the outside world. The translator introduced Suli and a pastor who had traveled a long way to tell him the good news. The old man said, "Did you bring me a Coca-Cola?" Suli laughed and said, "No. Have you ever had a Coca-Cola?" The old man said, "No, but I have heard that it is delicious."

Suli said, "I have something better than Coca-Cola for you. I'm here to tell you about the one true God and His only son Jesus." Then Suli shared the Gospel with this old, wise man.

Suli said as he spoke, tears trickled down the cheeks of the old man. When Suli finished the old man said, "I have always known deep in my heart that there is one great God who created everything. I have always resisted the witchcraft and tribal magic of my people. There always seemed to be a flicker of light that I couldn't reach. I have asked the Creator many times to send someone to teach me about this light. And today, the torch is burning brighter than ever before!" As a result many other people of that tribe have come to Christ, and Suli says there are many churches that have been planted on that island because of this man's faith. He saw the light and kept walking toward it.

Everyone you meet this week is in one of three positions regarding the light. Some are walking in the light as He is in the light. Those folks know the Lord. Some you meet aren't walking IN the light, but they are walking TOWARD the light. They are interested in knowing the truth about Jesus. Your job is to lovingly point them to Jesus. But then you are going to meet some people who have turned their backs and are walking away from the light. And they are at risk of dying without ever finding the truth about salvation. Are you thinking of someone in your circle of relationships that if they died today would be separated from God for eternity? They need your help. The Bible says, "How can they hear unless nobody tells them?" (Romans 10:14 MSG) There are a lot of people living in spiritual darkness and they are cut off from the source of life. Let's share the glorious truth about Jesus—that light and life to ALL He brings.

OUTLINE

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- A. Everyone has physical life (*bios*)
- B. Only Jesus gives eternal life (*zoé*)

"This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ." *John 17:3 CSB*

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- A. His light reveals my sin.
- B. His light reveals His way.

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"For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever." *Isaiah 9:6-7 CSB*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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