

John 1:1-18 is the prologue to the Gospel in which we are introduced to the Word, the central theme, and to believing, the main purpose of the Gospel (John 20:31). Verses 4-13 help us understand the Word, Jesus Christ, as life and light to mankind.

1. Life is in the Word (1:4a).

Life in this context should be understood as every aspect of life.

- a. Life pertains to the physical world around us, including plants and especially animals which have the breath of life.
- b. Life pertains to the unique life of man, who was created in the image of God.
- c. Life pertains to eternal life, life in perfect fellowship with God. Eternal life is an emphasis in the Gospel of John and appears in many descriptions of Jesus (e.g., 11:25-26; 14:6; 6:35, 47-48).
The Word has life in Himself (John 5:26).

2. The Life was the light of men (1:4b).

- a. Light is needed to dispel darkness. We are in the dark for two primary reasons: our finiteness and our sinfulness. Sin separated man from God and put him into spiritual darkness. Man continues on a course that leads us ever deeper into darkness.
- b. But God did not leave man without light. Every aspect of the life which was in the Word is light to man.
 - 1) The existence of living creatures is light to man revealing the existence of God.
 - 2) Being made in the image of God gives us moral reasoning. God has put within us a conscience, a light to something greater than our material existence.
 - 3) When Jesus came, the light intensified, giving health to the dying, raising the dead from life, and rising Himself from the dead in order to give life to all who believe.

3. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not grasped it (1:5).

- a. The light is around us, shining, testifying to the existence of God.
- b. Darkness has not grasped it, neither understanding it nor overcoming it. Though men try to suppress it through unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), they cannot eliminate the testimony of the light.

4. The genuine and ultimate light was witnessed to by John (1:6-9).

- a. John the Baptist was sent by God specifically to witness to the One who came as light and life for mankind (v 6). The ultimate purpose of John's ministry was that all men might believe, the core purpose also of this Gospel.
- b. John was not the light, although even Jesus called him "a lamp that burned and gave light" which people could enjoy for awhile (John 5:35 NIV). Unlike John, the true light gives light to every man.
The word "true" is used in this Gospel to mean genuine and often has the sense of ultimate. The Word, Jesus Christ, is the true light, the genuine and ultimate revelation of God.

Although it is grammatically possible to associate "coming into the world" with every man, the NIV is probably correct to associate it with the true light. "World" most likely refers to mankind, and especially rebellious, hostile mankind (cf. John 17). Light – genuine, ultimate light – entered into the realm of hostile mankind to shed light upon every man, revealing man for what he is and dividing mankind into those who flee from the light and those who are drawn to the light. No person will escape this.

5. The true light was in general rejected (1:10-11).

- a. Sinful, hostile mankind did not recognize the Light.
- b. God's chosen people, with whom He had a special relation, did not receive the Light.

6. Some did receive the light and became children of God (1:12-13).

- a. The proper response to the light is receiving Jesus, which is explained as believing in who Jesus is. He is Creator God with authority over us. Will we submit to that? As light He reveals who and what we are, will we trust that evaluation? Will we entrust ourselves to Jesus, because of who He is?
- b. The proper response to the light authorizes the believer to become a child of God. The believer is not naturally a child but is authorized to become a child, like the Pauline concept of adoption. Yet children of God share in the life of God and gain godly characteristics.

This introduction into His family is solely based upon our believing in Him and is not accomplished by human relationship or efforts, neither ancestry ("natural descent"), nor out of sexual desire ("human decision" or "will of the flesh"), nor the decision of a man to have offspring ("a husband's will"). Children of God are born of God.

This truth is important for both children to understand – they are not children of God because there parents are – and for parents – we do not produce naturally children who belong to God, they must hear and respond to the gospel.

This is everyone's own choice. Will we receive or reject Jesus as light and life? He is both light and life. Our choice will not change that. It will only affect our future. To reject is to remain in darkness and be eternally separated from God. To accept is to receive eternal life and to live in the light of God.