

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1, 2, & 3 JOHN AND JUDE LESSON 1 (Chapters 1-2)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7). Welcome to our study of the wonderful Book of First John. This book uniquely divides into two thoughts and two ideas. In chapters 1 and 2 John stresses that God and Jesus are light. God is light. Jesus is light. Therefore the application is that if we are going to living with God, we, then, must walk in the light. In chapters 3 through 5 John illustrates for us that God is love. In 1 John 4:8 we find that God is the epitome of love. Therefore, if God is love, then we must walk our lives in the path of His love. In the Book of 1 John, then, we see in chapters 1 and 2 that God is light, and in chapters 3 through 5 we see that God is love.

When we think about the idea of light, we need to realize that God and Jesus are the real light of the world. We read in 1 John 1:7, “If we walk in the light as He is in the light...” There is the idea that God the Father and Jesus the Son are the source of light. In John 8:12 Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” In a world that was steeped in darkness of sin, and where unrighteousness was on every hand, Jesus came shining as a beacon of light. We know that God’s Word also is a source of light. Psalm 119:105 tells us, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Jesus is the light of the world. The Word that came from God is, we know from John 1:1-4, Jesus. And we also know that God is the source of light, and the fountain from which all light comes. Psalm 36:9 says, “With You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.” The only way that we can be a light in the world, and the only way that we can really walk in light, is to walk in the teaching of God and in the image of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Part of John’s purpose is to convince his readers that Jesus really did exist. John accomplishes this by showing us the tangible nature of “the light of the world.” John lived at a time when people were denying the existence of Jesus. They said that He had not really come in a bodily, human form, but was more like an apparition. Thus, one of John’s purposes was to counteract that false teaching, and show that Jesus really had come to the Earth and had lived as the light of the world. Notice what 1 John 1:1 teaches about the tangible nature of Jesus: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.” John’s point was that people could know that Jesus was real because He was heard. How did people hear Him? They heard His preaching. It was not just the disciples or apostles who heard Him. Rather, the common people heard Him, too. Mark 12:37 says that “the common people heard Him gladly.” They heard Jesus when He wept, as He did at the death of Lazarus (Jn. 11:35). They heard Him cast out demons in Mark 5 when He commanded a group of demons named Legion to come out of a man (and when those demons entered a group of swine and ran over a cliff into the sea). People heard Him pray to the Father. “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.” They heard Jesus rebuke the Pharisees by saying seven or eight times in Matthew 22 and 23, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees.” Jesus was heard by multitudes of people—some of whom did not even believe in Him.

Jesus, as John notes, also was seen and looked upon. The wise men saw Jesus in the manger at His birth. Multitudes of people in the land of Israel saw Jesus and looked upon Him. Jesus fed the 5,000. Multitudes saw Him. He was seen by His disciples as He preached. Governmental leaders like Pilate saw Him. And according to 1 Corinthians 15, He was seen by over 500 Christians after His resurrection. So Jesus was not only heard, but also was seen.

Jesus also was handled and touched. No doubt He was touched by His disciples. We are told that John, the "beloved disciple," reclined in Jesus' lap. We know that evil men bound the hands of Jesus (Mk. 15:1). They literally touched Him. Roman rulers beat Jesus (Mt. 27). They slapped Him. They bound Him. They whipped Him with cords. Jesus was handled by them. Jesus also was handled by Thomas (Jn. 20:28-30). Thomas said that he was not going to believe unless he could place his fingers in the hole in His sides and hands. Jesus allowed Him to do that, and Thomas said, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:28).

Jesus was heard by multitudes of people. He was seen and handled. He is truly the Word of Life and did exist. In 1 John 1:2 we read, "The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us." The Word of Life was made known to mankind. One of the most beautiful descriptions of Jesus is that He is life. He brought us the words of life. In John 6 Jesus made some pretty difficult statements. "Eat My flesh; drink My blood." Jesus was not talking about cannibalism, but rather about bringing His life and teaching into His disciples' lives. There were some difficult statements there. The Bible says that some of the disciples "walked with Him no more." Jesus turned to the rest and asked, "Will you go away also?" Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." When we think of Jesus being light, it means that we walk in the Word of Life (which Jesus Himself brought to us).

This not something we should begrudge or consider as something bad. Walking in Jesus' light, and following the Word of Life, ought to bring us great joy. This is one of the reasons that John wrote the epistle of 1 John. Being a Christian is not boring or something about which a person has to be sad. It is the best, happiest life that a person could ever imagine. Notice 1 John 1:4—"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." When we come to realize that Jesus did live, that He is the Word of Life, and that He offers everything we need to get to Heaven, that brings great joy to us and should thrill our souls. This is why Paul could say in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" This is why Paul and Barnabas, while in prison (Acts 16:25), were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Jesus and His message bring us great joy. Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to the people there. Acts 8:8 says that there was "great joy in that city." Why? It was because of Jesus, His message, and how those things changed their lives and gave them hope. In Acts 8:47-49 Philip was teaching the Ethiopian eunuch the Gospel. They had gone down into the water so that Philip could baptize the eunuch. When they came up out of the water, the Bible says, "Philip saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing." The message of Jesus brings us joy. It is not something about which we should be sad or disgruntled. Being a Christian is the happiest and best life a person could ever live.

Along this line, notice what John says in 1 John 1:5 about God being the light, and how light brings happiness to our lives. "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Light brings happiness and joy. It makes things grow. It is powerful. God is the source of that light. "In Him is light, and there is no darkness at all." In Psalm 36:9 we are told, "With You is the foun-

tain of life; in Your light we see light.” The only way that we can be a light in the world is to be a reflection of true light—God Himself. We must reflect the Word of God being lived in our lives (Ps. 119:105). What is really behind the idea of God being light? It suggests the purity, holiness, and righteous character of God. Leviticus 11:44 says, “You shall be holy; for I am holy.” God’s holiness is what demands that He separate Himself from sinners. Habakkuk 1:13 tells us that God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness.” We know that God does not lie (Tit. 1:2). We are living in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began. We know that it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). When we take all that the Bible has to say on these subjects, we can see that God is the true source of holiness, and that He is righteous. As we emulate His character, have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), and walk in the footsteps of Jesus, we can walk in the light. That, in fact, is John’s next point.

In 1 John 1:6-7 John says that since God is light, we must walk in the light. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” A person cannot have fellowship and oneness with God (Who is the light) while walking in darkness. It is impossible for a person to be a faithful child of God, yet walk in sin. We are to abhor sin. Ephesians 5:11 tells us that we are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather must expose them.” We are to “come out from among them and be separate” (2 Cor. 6:14-17). We are to realize that sin separates us from God (Is. 59:1-2) and brings spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). Therefore, if we are going to be in fellowship with God, then we must walk in the light. In 1 John 1:7 we are told, “If we walk in the light as He is in the light...” The “if” shows that there is a condition to being like God, to being in the light, and to having eternal life. “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” In 3 John 4 John said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” What does it mean to “walk in the light”? If Jesus is the light, if God is the light, and if the Word of God is the light (Ps. 119:105), then it means that we are to pattern ourselves after the character and nature of God as found in Scripture. It means that we must walk according to the teaching of the Bible. “Walking in the light” means that we strive every day to walk the way God wants us to. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

We are not saying that we must exhibit perfection. We do fall. We do sin. We do, at times, make mistakes. “There is none righteous; no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). But walking in the light is the mindset that says that we want to do the will of God, and that we want to try to walk in the teachings of Jesus to the best of our ability. And when we do get off the straight and narrow, we learn from 1 John 1:8-9 what we must do. Walking in the light does not mean that we are automatically forgiven of sins. There are things we must do to receive forgiveness. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Walking in the light means that we recognize that we do sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. We must realize that we are not perfect. God is perfect. Jesus did not sin, but lived a perfect life (Heb. 4:15). But we are not perfect. Part of walking in the light means that we realize that we are in sin. Romans 3:23 tells us that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:10 tells us, “There is none righteous; no, not one.” Ecclesiastes 7:20 tells us that “there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” Walking in the light means that we acknowledge that we are not perfect, and that we do sin and fall short of the glory of God. But it also means that we must be willing to forsake our sin and confess

it so that we can make things right with God. Notice 1 John 1:9—“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Part of walking in the light means that we acknowledge that we do fall short and sin. And when we sin, we must be willing to forsake the sin, repent of it, and confess it to God. That is what is involved in walking in the light. James 5:16-17 says that we should pray for one another and encourage one another so that we can be healed from sin. If that sin is public in its nature, then we need to make it right publicly. If the sin is of a private nature, then we need to make it right privately with God. Whatever the case, we must deal with sin in a God-approved manner.

One thing that we must understand from 1 John 1:9 is that the word “confess” does not mean that we will be telling God something that He does not already know. Sometimes I think that when we talk about confessing our sins, we think, “God, You may not know this, but I’m about to tell You...” The word “confess” means literally “to lay alongside of.” To lay alongside of what? It means to lay alongside of what God already knows. God knows our sins. When we confess those sins, we are simply owning up to our sins—which is what it means to “walk in the light.”

Why should we continue to confess our sins? It is because we do sin and we do fall short. But notice that 1 John 2:1 tells us that one of the reasons that God gave us the Bible is to help us avoid sin in our lives so that we can walk in the light. John says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The Bible was written to help us overcome our sin problem. Psalm 119:9,11 says, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.... Your word have I hidden in my heart so that I might not sin against you.” The Bible helps us understand what sin is, and it gives us the plan for overcoming sin. God said in Genesis 4:7, “Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” We must realize today that we can master sin. Yes, there will be times when we fall short. But there is a plan for dealing with that. The Bible gives us the way to overcome sin. James 1:22 tells us that we are to be doers of the Word, not hearers only, thereby deceiving ourselves. Revelation 12:11 tells us that Christians overcame the devil “by the word of their testimony,” which we have today as the Scriptures.

According to 1 John 2:1-2, walking in the light means that we do our best to avoid sin, and that we realize that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” But 1 John 2:2 tells us, “He Himself is the propitiation [substitutionary sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” To walk in the light, we must realize that Jesus paid the ultimate price. We must keep His commandments if we are going to be faithful to God. Walking in the light does not mean that we get to do whatever we want. It does not mean that we can live our lives however we want, so long as we claim to be following the teaching of Jesus. People need to understand that walking in the light means that we absolutely must obey Jesus. In 1 John 2:3-5 we read, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” Here’s how we can know that we are right with God. One of the key words in John’s writings is the word “know.” John wants people to know certain things—such as the fact that they can know they are saved (1 Jn. 5:13) and that they are in God. How? If we keep His commandments. We live in a day and age when many people say, “You don’t really have to worry about the commandments. It doesn’t really matter if you follow exactly what the Bible says. Just love God with all your heart, and everything will

be OK.” That is a false view. And such a false view will cost multiplied millions their immortal souls. John said that if we saw we know Him, then we better walk in His commandments. Matthew 7:21 tells us, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

In Luke 6:46 Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” What is implied in that question? We cannot call Jesus “Lord,” “Savior,” “Master,” or “Owner,” but not do what He says. Hebrews 5:9 tells us why. Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.” In Revelation 22:14 we are told, “Blessed are those who do His commandments.” Ecclesiastes 12:13 pretty much sums up the purpose of life: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” To walk in the light, we must walk as Jesus walked.

To walk in the light also means that we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ. Walking in the light means that we follow the teaching of Jesus. It means that we have the mind of Christ. But it also means that we must be willing to love my brethren in Christ. In 1 John 2 and 3, John spends a great deal of time talking about this idea. He mentions it in 1 John 2:7-11 when he says that if we say we love God, but we do not love our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we really do not love God. A proof of our love for God can be seen in how we treat our brethren. Mark 12:30-31 says that the greatest command is, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” That is proof of our love of God. “A new commandment I give you,” Jesus said, “that you love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another” (Jn. 13:34-35). The writer of the Book of Hebrews emphasized it this way: “Let brotherly love continue.” If we love God, and if we are going to walk in the light, then we must love others.

But there is something we must not love. To walk in the light, Christians must not love the world. Yes, we must love God. Yes, we must love His commandments and our brethren. But we must abhor the world. In 1 John 2:15-17 John says,

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

What is real love? It is loving God and loving our brethren. But it also is abhorring that which is worldly. We cannot have a close relationship with the world, ungodliness, sin, and unrighteousness—and expect to be pleasing to God. Sometimes Christians get so caught up in this old world that we cannot see what is important. James described it in what might be the most vivid language you could ever imagine when he said, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4). James shows us in very strong language that when we get caught up in the world, we have committed spiritual adultery against God. This is why we are to have no fellowship with the world (Eph. 5:11). This is why God said to Christians, “Come out from among them and be ye separate.” Who is the “them”? It is worldly people.

When it comes to walking in the light, John deals with a certain problem. Some people were following the wrong light. There are antichrists in the world today, just as there were antichrists in John’s day. Some would say that John was predicting in his day a single figure who would come, and that it was a certain person. The antichrist is not a single person. The antichrist was present in John’s day, is here in our time, has always been here, and

will always be here. Who is the antichrist? In 1 John 2:22 John presents a very simple teaching on this matter. "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son." Anyone who denies the deity, divinity, and humanity of Jesus, and who denies God the Father and the Son, is the antichrist. Are we looking for one person or figure who will one day arise as "the antichrist"? No. There are multitudes of antichrists living today. Anyone who denies that Jesus is God's Son, and anyone who denies that God the Father exists, is against Christ.

I ask you today: Are **you** walking in the light? Are you sure that your path is being illuminated by the teaching of Jesus, and that you are walking down the straight-and-narrow path? This is very important—and here's why. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. But narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Are you on the straight-and-narrow path? If not, you can get on that path today. Believe that Jesus is God's Son (Jn. 8:24). Be willing to repent of the things in your life that are not right (Lk. 13:1-3). Confess the name of Jesus before men (Rom.10:9-10). And be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). If you have done those things, then to make it to Heaven you must walk in the light as He is in the light, and the blood of Jesus will cleanse you of all sins. This means that if we as Christians have fallen by the wayside and have done things that are not right, we must acknowledge our sins, confess them, and turn from them. We must then strive every day—and this is the point John wants us to get—to walk in the light of God. May God help us to do just that.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1, 2, & 3 JOHN AND JUDE LESSON 1 (CHAPTERS 1-2)

1. According to this lesson, what are the two main themes discussed in the Book of First John?
2. In 1 John 1:7 we are told, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light." What does that mean?
3. According to John 8:12, what is Jesus?
4. According to John 14:6, what is Jesus?
5. What important information is contained in 1 John 1:1 that relates specifically to the historicity of Jesus?
6. Who, according to Mark 12:37, "heard Jesus gladly"?
7. Of whom is 1 John 1:2 speaking when it records, "We have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us"?
8. According to 1 John 1:4, what was one of John's purposes in writing his first epistle?
9. According to 1 John 1:5, something is conspicuously missing in the nature of God. What is it?
10. According to Psalm 119:105, what is God's Word?
11. What, according to Habakkuk 1:13, can God **not** do?
12. What, according to Titus 1:2, can God **not** do?
13. According to 1 John 1:6-7, if we say that we have fellowship with God, but we "walk in darkness," what are we doing?
14. What does Ephesians 5:11 command Christians **not** to do, and **to** do?
15. According to 1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins to God, what may we expect from Him?
16. What two important pieces of information are found in 1 John 2:1?
17. What important message is found in Genesis 4:7 that still applies to us today?
18. According to James 1:22, what are we **to** do, and what are we **not** to do?
19. What is the message of 1 John 2:9?
20. According to 1 John 2:2, Jesus is the "propitiation" for our sins. What is a propitiation?
21. What is the main message found in 1 John 2:15-17?