

REVIEW: JOHN 1-8

As I look back over my life, as I sometimes do, I wonder how I managed to make so many bad choices. The one thing I wanted more than anything in life while growing up was to go to the Air Force Academy, become a flier, and maybe one day work as a pilot for a major airline.

That dream was never realized because I found out in high school that my eyesight was not 20/20 which was a requirement at the time for admission to the academy. I was quite discouraged after that and I just could not come up with anything that could fill that void in my life. I entered college in a business administration program at the University of Illinois and played football. I had been active in sports all through high school and although I enjoyed it very much, it seemed as if I had lost direction in my life, and after my first year of college I dropped out and went to work. I worked for a year-and-a-half and discovered I was not going anywhere without a college education, so I went back to school at Elmhurst College. After graduation I took a job as a management trainee and immediately became locked into the kind of work and lifestyle that I would always regret.

Although I had gone to Sunday School and church as a small boy, I became a confirmed atheist in high school and college and remained an atheist until my mid-forties. In all the time I had gone to church and Sunday school I never once heard the message of the Gospel preached and I never heard it for twenty-five years after I got out of college.

I plunged into my work after college because I was driven to be a success in whatever I was doing. I often worked 12-hour days. I did spend time with my family but my primary focus was on me and my success. I very much regret that to this day. The success in business came but success in a marriage did not. After fifteen years there was a divorce and then a lot of emptiness. I was miserable and yet the business success continued and the money was pouring in. I continued making poor choices until one day God finally got my attention by taking away everything I had accumulated in material wealth. Because of a failed business venture I had to liquidate everything I owned to avoid bankruptcy. I was broke.

This brought on a need I had never felt before, a need for help from someone much more powerful than any human source I was aware of. One night I got down on my knees, if you can imagine an atheist down on his knees, and I asked God for help if He was there. That began a journey that one day would lead me into the Kingdom of God by accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

In a couple of weeks I walked into a church where I heard the message of salvation for the first time. I spoke with the pastor after the service to let him know how eager I was to find out if God was truly real. He personally mentored me for the next couple of years

until I finally made that commitment of faith.

A few years after that I met Betty and that was truly an unexpected and undeserved gift from God. I regret many of the things I have done even in our marriage, but it is a whole different ballgame when your relationship is grounded in Jesus Christ and His saving grace. When I have decisions to make today Betty and I pray about them first and also seek the counsel and prayer of others. I still struggle with feelings of guilt and regret but I am making a serious effort to get the help I need to make positive changes. Life is tough and it can be very tough for those who are deeply committed to God.

Betty and I have forgiven each other for those things we have needed to ask forgiveness for. Actually I have done most of the asking. This is the way God meant relationships to be between Christians and He set a wonderful example by forgiving all of our sins. That is why He sent His Son to die for us. If He was willing to do that, should we not be willing to forgive others as well as ourselves for our own sins, if we have repented and live in a way as to not repeat those sins? The answer is that we should, but for whatever reason many of us continue to beat ourselves up for things that we did 10, 20, 40, or more years ago. We spend a lot of unnecessary time in a state of depression if we cannot let go of guilt and that minimizes our effectiveness for Christ when we exist in such an emotional state.

What caused me to enter a life of hopelessness when I was a teenager? It was not because I did not get an appointment to the Air Force Academy. It was because I did not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. I did not have an understanding of what life was really all about, or what was necessary in a time of desperate need. And you know that is probably the condition of most of the people in our country and our world who have not heard and accepted the Gospel message of salvation. This is not just a recent development in the emotional condition of mankind. In fact this was the same condition that mankind was in when Jesus came upon the scene in the first century. They were lost. They were living in darkness and thought they were living in the light. They thought they had attained a special knowledge through their own wisdom. They sought pleasure in many different ways, many of which were self-destructive and also destructive to those around them. So what was it that Jesus had to offer people in such a condition? He offered **light** to show them the way to happiness and eternal life. He offered them a new way of living so they would know what it meant to be forgiven.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus shows us what the Jews back then needed and what all of us need as well today. And then He shows us how to go about getting it.

Before we begin our study in John chapter nine we might want to take a quick review of the focus of attention in this gospel and make sure we understand clearly what it is Jesus wants us to know, and in so doing be capable of establishing an even more personal relationship with Him. So let us go back to chapter 1 of John and try to highlight the points of emphasis.

Chapter 1

Jesus is the **light of the world**. He brings light into the darkness that so many people have been living in for so long.

John 1:4-5 NAS:

*4 In Him was life, and the life was the **Light** of men.*

*5 The **Light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

John 1:9 NAS:

*9 There was the **true Light** which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.*

This light will bring **grace and truth** in order to understand how to live life to its fullest. No one in this world has ever seen God other than **Jesus**. He, therefore, **is the only One that can explain God to us**, and that is why God sent Him.

John 1:14 NAS:

*14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, **glory as of the only begotten from the Father**, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:17 NAS:

*17 For the Law was given through Moses; **grace and truth** were realized through Jesus Christ.*

It was John the Baptist who was given the responsibility of bearing witness for Jesus. He verified to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. John the Baptist was a prophet who had been commissioned by God to introduce Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews.

John 1:23 NAS:

23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

John 1:32-34 NAS:

32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' 34 "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

Chapter 2

In order to help His listeners understand that He was the Messiah, **Jesus also performed a number of miracles**. The first of these took place at the wedding feast at Cana where Jesus turned water into wine.

John 2:11 NAS:

*11 **This beginning of His signs** Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.*

Chapter 3

Jesus advised Nicodemus, one of the Jewish rulers, of the need for a **new birth in order to receive salvation and eternal life**. This was new news that all people everywhere needed to hear. This was the way to the salvation that God was offering the world and it could only come when a person was reborn through the life-giving cleansing blood of a perfect Savior.

John 3:3,5 NAS:

*3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

*5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of **water and the Spirit** he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

John 3:19-21 NAS:

*19 "This is the judgment, that the **Light** has come into the world, and men loved the **darkness** rather than the **Light**, for their deeds were evil.*

*20 "For everyone who does evil hates the **Light**, and does not come to the **Light** for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the **truth** comes to the **Light**, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."*

John 3:31-36 NAS:

31 "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

32 "What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. 33 "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. 34 "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. 35 "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. 36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Chapter 4

Jesus then left Judea and returned to Galilee by going through **Samaria**, where He meets

a Samaritan woman at a well. Here we first see Jesus presenting the message of salvation to someone who is not Jewish. He tells her He has the power to give her "**living water**," which is the gift of the **Holy Spirit** as a confirmation of salvation.

John 4:10, 11, 14 NAS:

*10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you **living water**."*

*11 She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that **living water**?"*

*14 [Jesus said] whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; **but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.**"*

Jesus then makes another reference to **spirit and truth**.

John 4:23,24 NAS:

*23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in **spirit and truth.**"*

When we accept Jesus as our Savior we are joined with Him in spirit. In other words our spirit and Jesus' spirit become one when we accept the truth that He brings in His message. We belong to Him and He belongs to us and we are now inseparable. And then there is another reference revealing that **He comes as a servant of God to accomplish God's will and not His own**.

John 4:34 NAS:

34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."

Then many of the people from the city came to believe in Jesus when they heard Him teach.

John 4:41-42 NAS:

*41 Many more believed because of His word; 42 and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and **know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.**"*

So Jesus makes it clear that **His message is available to all the people of the world, not just the Jews**. Anyone who believes and trusts in the promises of God and the work of Christ can be saved by faith alone.

Then another miracle was performed as Jesus entered Cana. Because of the **faith** of the **royal official**, Jesus healed his son from a terminal disease.

John 4:47,53 NAS:

*47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him to come down and heal **his son**; for he **was at the point of death**.*

*53 So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and **he himself believed and his whole household**.*

Chapter 5

After this Jesus headed to the festival in Jerusalem. He would continue performing miracles and this time it would be for a man who had been a **paralytic** for 38 years. Jesus healed the man instantly. What a reason for joy and celebration. But that is not the way the Jews reacted to this miracle. They were outraged that Jesus would perform such an act on the **Sabbath**. Again they made it obvious that they did not know God or the purpose of His Law. They were even more outraged when Jesus compared Himself with God and they wanted to kill Him. But once again Jesus lends proof to His claims.

John 5:19,24,30,46,47 NAS:

*19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing**; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.*

24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

*30 "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because **I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me**.*

46 "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.

47 "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

Chapter 6

Another miracle. **The feeding of the 5,000** with five barley loaves and two fish took place during Passover.

John 6:11,14 NAS:

11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.

*14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "**This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.**"*

But Christ admonished them, John 6:27, 29

*27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, **but for the food which endures to eternal life**, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."*

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

Jesus performed yet another miracle while at Capernaum.

John 6:19 NAS:

*19 Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw **Jesus walking on the sea** and drawing near to the boat.*

Jesus then repeats that He is the bread of life; He alone is the source of eternal life and those who internalize the message that He brings (**the bread of life**), will be freely given that gift of eternal life.

John 6:35-40 NAS:

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. 36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. 37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Next Jesus makes it clear that a person must know and love God before he or she will be willing to accept the message of Jesus.

John 6:44-45 NAS:

44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. 45 "It is written in the prophets, 'and they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.

Everyone who comes to Jesus and believes what He teaches will be saved.

John 6:47-51,54 NAS:

47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who believes has eternal life.** 48 "I am the bread of life. 49 "Your fathers ate the **manna in the wilderness**, and they died. 50 "This is the **bread which comes down out of heaven**, so that one may **eat of it and not die.** 51 "I am the **living bread** that came down out of heaven; **if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.**"

54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

Anyone who accepts Jesus message and internalizes it will be given salvation and eternal life.

Chapter 7

Jesus then goes to the **Feast of Booths** and reaffirms that **He only does what He has been sent by God to do** and that alone should prove that He is the Messiah.

John 7:15-18 NAS:

15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" 16 So Jesus answered them and said, "**My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.** 17 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

18 "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Then there is another reference to Jesus being the source of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

John 7:37-38 NAS:

37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, '**From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.**' "

Chapter 8

In this chapter Jesus forgives the **adulterous woman** and then makes another reference to **His being the light of the world.**

John 8:12 NAS:

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the **Light** of the world;

*he who follows Me will not walk in the **darkness**, but will have the **Light** of life."*

The Pharisees refused to believe Him even after all of this evidence to support His claims. Jesus simply told them the consequences for those who refuse to listen to Him.

John 8:24 NAS:

*24 "Therefore I said to you that **you will die in your sins**; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

And then the promise that the truth will set them free.

John 8:31,32,46,47 NAS:

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

*32 and **you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**"*

46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?"

*47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason **you do not hear them, because you are not of God.**"*

Now let us pull all this together and we can see that it is something that is easily understood by everyone.

The verses we have just read make it very clear that Jesus came to mankind on the earth in order that He could be light to a world in darkness. Now He did not mean they did not have any lights on. He meant they were in spiritual darkness and in order to help them understand the importance of the message, He put it in terms comparing light to dark. What happens when you turn a light on in a dark room? Everything in the room is clearly seen. So for the sake of mankind it was necessary for Jesus to come to the earth and teach the people who were living in spiritual darkness that they actually were in darkness. You see they thought they were very intelligent and had ascended to a level of knowledge even beyond that of God. So over and over and over again, Jesus refers to Himself and is referred to by others as the "*light of the world.*"

This light comes from Heaven and Jesus therefore is the only person who knows God intimately because He has lived with Him in Heaven through all of eternity past. Who then would know God and His will better than Jesus? But God knew that sending such a messenger to earth would be a shock to the people and because of their sinful nature they would struggle with believing He was sent from God. So God made it abundantly clear through **prophecy in the Old Testament**, the **witness** of John the Baptist, Jesus' **demeanor and behavior**, and **miracles** that Jesus was the Savior sent from Heaven by God. So thus far we have a special messenger sent by God to the people of the earth to reveal something brand new that is of the highest priority in people's lives. Further, God makes it clear that Jesus is that messenger. There can be no doubt that anyone who knew

God would know that they should listen to what Jesus had to say for their own good.

So this Man Jesus, who represents God, comes to earth as a human being to reflect God's glory. He was to show people what God was like and deliver the message of salvation. Nothing that He ever did or said was for His own glory, but He always stressed that the message and the glory belong to God and He was only the messenger. Anyone who listened to Jesus' message, therefore, would know it came directly from God. The message was basically very simple. You could accept it and have salvation and eternal life in Heaven, or you could reject it and spend eternity in Hell with no second chances. The message has not changed in the last 2000 years and, as a matter of fact, it will never change. We have the same choice today. I hope you clearly understand that, and if you do not, please talk to one of us ASAP.

Accepting this message means we are being reborn spiritually (not physically). Our spirit and Christ's spirit are joined together and are inseparable. It would be like taking two glasses of water, one being Christ's spirit and the other being yours, and pouring each into a new glass container. You and Christ are blended together as one.

Jesus also shows us that the message is for all people, both Jews and Gentiles, by the conversions that are made of many Samaritans. So no matter who you are or what nationality you belong to, you can be saved. Furthermore, we see that if anyone listens to the message and opens their heart to what it says, they will accept it. If they refuse to even listen to it, they will come up with all kinds of foolish excuses, which in effect show that they have no understanding of the God of the Old Testament and desire to continue living in darkness.

Finally, Jesus explains that God is a forgiving God and He will forgive whatever sins you have committed. There is nothing you have done in the past that will exclude you from eligibility to receive salvation. Therefore, this message of truth that Christ brings from God will set anyone free. The only thing you have to do is to reach out and accept it.

If you, like I, look back over your life and reflect on it and on what you are going to do with your remaining years, I trust you will give spiritual issues highest priority. Give your heart to Christ if you have not already done so. And if you are a Christian, purpose to make obedience to Christ and living the Christian life your highest priority. Then when it is time for you to depart this world, you will have no regrets. Remember the old saying, which we do not hear much any more, "*Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.*"