

Lesson 1 . . . Prologue

Gospel of John



Suggested responses to questions about John 1:1-18

Note: Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. *Responses to this question may vary.* Some parallels between Genesis 1:1-5 and John 1:1-5 include: God; his creative Word present with him in the beginning; light, life, the creation of all things; a divine plan bringing order out of chaos and foreseen from the beginning; darkness and sin; etc.
2. The Word that the apostle John writes about in the prologue to his Gospel is the second person of the Godhead, who became the Incarnate Word of God in the person of Jesus Christ. In John 1:3, the phrase “all things” means everything that exists, whether natural or supernatural. In 1 Corinthians 8:6, St. Paul teaches: “[Y]et for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” In Colossians 1:16, he writes: “[F]or in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”
3. In John 1:4 and elsewhere in the Gospel of John, life can refer to natural life and especially to the supernatural life of the Holy Spirit. John 3:16 teaches: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:36 teaches: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.” John 6:27 teaches: “Do not labor 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 has God the Father set his seal.” John 10:10b teaches: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” In John 14:6 Jesus tells Thomas: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.” Light is a biblical image for the goodness, truth, and love of God. In John 3:19-21, the Evangelist writes: “And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.” And in John 8:12 Jesus teaches: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
4. The darkness that the Evangelist writes about in the prologue of his Gospel and that’s found elsewhere in the Bible is an image of sin, death, ignorance, corruption and the devil. Psalm 82:4-5 teaches: “Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.’ They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.” Proverbs 4:19 teaches: “The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” In Acts 26:18, St. Paul speaks of

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opening the eyes of the Gentiles “that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.” In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he writes about those who are perishing: “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God.” And in Ephesians 5:8, he writes: “[F]or once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light.” In John 1:5: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,” the double meaning of the word “overcome” suggests that the power of evil doesn’t understand good and ultimately is no match for God.

5. John 1:7 explains that John the Baptist’s mission was to “bear witness to the light,” who is the Word made flesh. The Baptist was to do this so that “all might believe through him.” John 1:8 goes on to explain that John the Baptist’s mission was not to be the light himself, but to bear witness to the light. The Evangelist emphasizes that John the Baptist isn’t the light because, in all likelihood, some of his audience had an exaggerated view of the importance of John the Baptist and had not been exposed to the good news of Jesus Christ.
6. In John 1:12-13, the contrast between “all who received him” and “his own people” alludes to the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, a rejection that ultimately will lead to his acceptance by the world, including both Jews and Gentiles. For John, supernatural birth—or birth “of God”—is of the Holy Spirit. Natural birth—“of blood” or “of the will of the flesh” or “of the will of man”—is only a dim image of the true birth of Baptism by “water and the Holy Spirit.”
7. The phrase “the Word became flesh” in John 1:14 means the act of the Incarnation of the second person of the Godhead, and it refers to Jesus taking on human form.
8. The double meaning of the word “before” in John 1:15 suggests not only Jesus Christ’s pre-existence from all eternity but his superiority—as the Creator—to John the Baptist and to all of creation as well.
9. Paragraph 1996 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines grace as “*favor, the free and undeserved help* that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.” Paragraph 1997 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further states: “*Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life.*”
10. In John 1:17, the Evangelist recognizes Jesus’ superiority to Moses and writes that although the law was given through Moses, grace and truth come through Jesus. Paragraph 578 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “*Jesus, Israel’s Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfill the Law by keeping it in its all-embracing detail—according to his own words, down to ‘the least of the commandments.’ He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly.*”

Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.