

John 1-2-3
Lesson 2 – Light and Darkness
September 16, 2020

Setting the Stage

John's Letter employs a series of contrasts that we will explore in this study. The first of these is the contrast between light and darkness. John associates darkness with sin, while he associates light with God. Like light and darkness, God and sin cannot go together. That is why the forgiveness of sins is absolutely necessary if humanity is to live in fellowship with God.

1. Why does it feel like we are "in the dark" when we sin against God and His Word? What other feelings do we experience when we willingly and knowingly sin?

2. What are ways that people try to find relief from the guilt of sin?

God Is Light

Read 1 John 1:5

There are a handful of passages throughout the Bible that explicitly summarize the Christian message. For example, when Jesus summarizes the message of the Scriptures in Luke 24, He says, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations." (Luke 24:46-47) In 1 John 1:5, however, John summarizes the message he wants to communicate to his reader as "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

3. What do you think it means to call God "light"? Is this good news or bad news?

4. Do you think Luke 24:46-47 and 1 John 1:5 are summarizing the same basic message, or are they saying different things? In what way?

Walking in the Light

Read 1 John 1:6-10

"Walking in the light" is another way of saying "being a Christian." At this point in the text, John provides solid instruction about what a Christian life does and does not look like.

5. Which of these people are "walking in the light" as John describes it in verse 6-10?
 - a. Someone who does not sin.
 - b. Some who sins but confesses it.
 - c. Someone who sins but denies it.

6. According to 1 John 1:8, what is the consequence of refusing to confess sins?
 - a. What is the even more severe consequence mentioned in John 1:10?

 - b. If we make God out to be a liar, who are we saying He is like? See John 8:44.

7. There are many areas of life in which Christians confess their sins. In which of the following contexts is it easier for us to confess our sins, and in which is it harder? Why?
 - a. In prayer (as in the Lord's Prayer, for example).
 - b. At home to our family members or friends against whom we have sinned.
 - c. In church in the general confession.
 - d. In private confession with the pastor.

8. What would it take to overcome the barriers to confession that we feel in some of the above contexts?

9. Christ gave the authority to forgive sins to the Church, and that authority is delegated by the congregation to its called pastor. (Matthew 18; Acts 1 & 14; 2 Corinthians 8) Although we use various forms of absolution (forgiveness) in the worship services, the standard wording is this: "Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a servant of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore forgive you all yours sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
 - a. Why might such a claim be objectionable to some people? See Mark 2:7.
 - b. On what basis then can a pastor claim this authority? See John 20:21-23.
 - c. How is it comforting to have a pastor with this authority?

Reflecting on the Word

Most religions, and even nonreligious worldviews, have some idea of what people should and should not do, of what it means to walk in the light and to walk in darkness. John, however, gives us a uniquely Christian description of these things in the verses we have studied.

10. In what ways do you think Christians today are tempted to "walk in darkness"?

11. In light of the verses we have studied, offer your own description of what it means to "walk in the light." How is this different from what you may have thought before or from other common views of which you are aware?