

Bi123 The Gospels 2

Lesson Bi123-5 The True Light

Throughout their lives people experience a need for light. Light removes fear and gives direction. It helps people avoid things in the darkness. Often children fear darkness, running from it to a place that is light. In the Bible, God's presence is often associated with light. Both the tabernacle and temple were locations where God's presence was felt by his people. In these places the light of God's glory shone. Jesus referred to himself as the light of the world. In this lesson light becomes a key word to understanding what Jesus has done for us.

Now some Greeks also attended the Passover festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew. He and Philip in turn told Jesus.

These Greeks were not Jews; they were uncircumcised. They were most likely 'God-fearers' who observed the moral code and the festivals of the law of Moses. Many Gentiles were outraged by the immorality of their religions and were attracted by the light of Judaism. They had heard about Jesus, perhaps after his entry into the city or his miracles. The story of the raising of Lazarus was still fresh news among the people. These visitors approached Philip for he had a Greek name. Philip got Andrew involved and together they told Jesus about these men. The response of Jesus that follows sounds like it was directed to the disciples, with the Greeks allowed to listen. The coming of these Gentiles indicates the scope of the impact of Jesus' approaching crucifixion.

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me" (John 12:20-26).

Jesus began to speak of his coming death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. These three events together would make it possible for all people to receive the light of God. The first two events would be accomplished in just a few days. From that point Gentiles could enter God's family without becoming Jews first.

Jesus compared his life to a single kernel of wheat. As with nature, so it would be in his life. One seed of wheat dies and produces many more by its death. Jesus would die to bring life to many. Jesus continued by saying the same process would work for his disciples. They must give up their lives to gain heaven. Those who serve themselves will lose all; those who lose all for Christ will win eternally.

Jesus continued to speak. "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

Perhaps Jesus was seeing his struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was fully aware of his coming death. His resolve was that God would gain glory by his obedience to God's plan. The plan was to bring true light to all people.

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered. Others said an angel had spoken to him.

Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:27-33). The words, "when I am lifted up" referred back to the incident when Moses had lifted the brass serpent on a pole. During a plague of snakes, many Israelites had died from their poison. Anyone who had looked up at the brass image was healed. Now anyone dying in sin could look to Jesus on the cross and live. This light, this truth, would draw people everywhere to Jesus.

The voice from heaven answered his request. The message was not for Jesus, but for his disciples. Why then did some hear it clearly and others thought they heard thunder? Those most committed to Jesus probably heard the words clearly. Those who had received God's light were given even more. To the others God's voice was just so much noise!

God is glorified when Jesus is revealed to the lost. This was the purpose of his death. God spoke three times from heaven during Jesus' life. The voice came at his baptism, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and here before his death. The first glorification of Jesus referred to his work on earth. The second glorification referred to his coming resurrection from the dead.

The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

Jesus did not answer the question about the identity of the Son of Man. The crowd reasoned the Messiah could not be lifted up on the cross- he could not die. The disciples knew that by using this name Jesus spoke about himself. He, who was the light of God, would soon leave them. Those in the crowd needed to come to Jesus before their light was gone and it was too late.

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still chose not to believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them." Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

Yet at the same time many, even among the leaders, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue. They loved human praise more than praise from God (John 12:34-43).

John ended this story by recalling Isaiah's prophecy. People who refused God's light eventually went blind to the things of God. Even so some still believed, but out of fear they would not publicly confess Jesus as Messiah. Why? Because they desired the approval of people more than the approval they could receive from God.

This story is **important** because it shows the intent of Jesus that people receive true spiritual light. He was explaining the truth about who he was and about his coming death for human sin.

The **main truth** of this story is that the glory of God can be found only in the person of Jesus. By his death and resurrection Jesus defeated the power of Satan who brought sin and darkness.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What was the request of the Greek men who came to Philip asking about Jesus?
A. [Pause] If you answered that the Greek men said, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus," you are correct.
2. What was the purpose of the voice from heaven which came after Jesus said he would glorify the Father's name?
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine," you are correct.
3. To what two common things did Jesus compare both himself and his message?
A. [Pause] If you answered that Jesus compared himself and his message to a kernel of wheat and to light," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can repeat it from memory. Then prepare a sermon that explains what Jesus teaches about light and the glory of God. At the end invite the people to come to faith in Jesus who is the "light of the world."