

# John 1:7 Commentary

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

## JESUS' RISE FROM OBSCURITY FOLLOWED BY OPPOSITION IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

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## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY GOSPEL OF JOHN (shaded area)

Click chart to enlarge

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John 1:7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him: houtos elthen (3SAAI) eis marturian hina martureon (3SAAS) peri tou photos, [hina](#) (term of purpose) pantes pisteusosin (3PAAS) di autou. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

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- **a witness:** John 1:19,26,27,32-34,36 Jn 3:26-36 Jn 5:33-35 Acts 19:4
- **that:** John 1:9 Jn 3:26 Eph 3:9 1Ti 2:4 Titus 2:11 2Pe 3:9

**Barclay** - He came as a witness, in order to bear witness to the light, that through him all might believe.

**KJV** The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

**NET** He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him.

**CSB** He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.

**ESV** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

**NAS77** He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.

**NIV** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.

**NLT** to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony.

**GWN** John came to declare the truth about the light so that everyone would become believers through his message.

**NAB** He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

**NJB** He came as a witness, to bear witness to the light, so that everyone might believe through him.

**NKJ** This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

**RSV** He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him.

**YLT** this one came for testimony, that he might testify about the Light, that all might believe through him

### JOHN'S MISSION: A BURNING & SHINING WITNESS

**He came as a witness to testify about the Light** - He was a messenger sent on a mission with a commission! John's mission was not mission impossible, but mission possible, because he came with (commission) of the power and authority of the Lord. His purpose was to be a witness who would testify about Jesus the Light of the world so that all might believe through him. It is notable

that John never calls him John the Baptist, but John the witness! That is the the focus of John's Gospel, that through witnesses, men and women would believe (Jn 20:31).

**John Piper** writes that "the way God uses people to promote the light is by their testimony. John was a witness. A witness is a person with some experience and knowledge that can help establish the truth of some fact that is in dispute. God had spoken to John in the wilderness about the coming Messiah, and his meeting with Jesus at the baptism gave him the experience he needed to be a bona fide witness. John 1:33-34: *"I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."* So God had spoken to John earlier about the One who was coming. And then he gave him a sign to let him know that Jesus was this One. From then on John bore his testimony to Jesus faithfully until he was put to death for his witness. On August 30, 1744, Jonathan Edwards preached an ordination sermon for Robert Abercrombie, and took as his text John 5:35 where Jesus says of John's witness, "He was a **burning and shining lamp**, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." Edwards developed the point that a **faithful witness to the gospel burns and shines**. That is, there is the warmth of zeal and the light of truth. John the Baptist had both of them, and in this he is a great example for us. ([A Burning Witness to the Light](#))

In another sermon on John 1:6-8 **Dr Piper** writes ""There was a man." There was a person. There will always be a person. A person like you. John is pressing into his Gospel from the very beginning the truth that human witnesses to Christ are always necessary. Our witness is a great necessity. This is my first point. Our human witness is a great necessity. Keep going in verse 6: "There was a man sent from God." The point of this is that the necessity of human witness does not mean God is dependent on the initiative of human will. God was involved not just in sending Jesus; he is involved in sending witnesses to Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 9:38, "Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." God sees to it that we pray. And he sees to it that he answers and sends. He said to his disciples in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And he said to Paul in Acts 22:21, "Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles." God makes human witnesses necessary, but he does not leave his mission to the initiative of man. He sends. We serve a saving and sending God. He provides the foundation of our salvation in Jesus Christ, and he provides the means of our salvation in those whom he sends. Let this have an enlivening effect on you. God is at work now—today—moving his witnesses through the world, making them the means of his saving work. I hope this makes you want to look Jesus square in the face and say with Isaiah, "Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8)." ([John Was Not the Light, but a Witness to the Light](#))

**POSB - John 1:7 Mission— Witnessing: a man with a mission.** Note two points.

**1. The man came to bear witness of the Light. He was sent with a very specific message, and that message was to proclaim the Light, Christ Himself.**

Thought 1. **The message is a given message.** The servant of God is not left on his own to think up a message; he is not dependent upon his own reason, thoughts, and ideas. His message is Christ, the Light of the world. (2 Cor. 2:17, 2 Cor. 4:1-2, 1 Thes. 2:13, Deut. 4:2, Deut. 12:32, Pr 30:6, Rev. 22:19).

**2. The purpose of the man's witness is clearly stated: that all men, through Christ, might believe** His purpose was not...

- to start a movement for God.
- to organize and administer.
- to minister (note that John never healed or performed a miracle nor built a program around the synagogue or temple, John 10:41).

**His purpose was not even to preach.** His **purpose** was to lead men to **believe** in the Light. He witnessed and proclaimed the Light so that all men might believe. The man was sent to focus on people and to lead them to **believe** in Christ Jesus. (**See Study of verb for believe pisteuo**)

Thought 1. **The servant of God has one primary purpose: to lead men to believe in Christ Jesus, the Light of the world.** The servant's purpose is not to organize, to administer, to oversee, to manage, to teach, or to preach. His purpose is as stated: to lead men to believe in Christ Jesus. **Everything else is method, not purpose.** Men have too often confused methods with purpose. The result has been that teeming millions are still unreached and teeming thousands are being deceived by confusing the **methods of religion** with the **purpose of God:** the salvation of men through belief in His Son. (John 3:16, John 5:24). ([BORROW The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible : New Testament, King James Version](#) )

**He came** ([2064 - Thayer's definition](#)) (**erchomai**) means simply to come and the **orist tense** (past completed action - historical fact) marks John's appearance on the scene of human history in fulfillment of divine prophecy (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1-note, Malachi 4:5-note). Some say why study prophecy for it only causes confusion and incites arguments. I would respond that fulfilled prophecy

is one of the great faith builders in God's Word and to ignore it is to miss or minimize that positive effect (cp Ro 10:17+).

Jesus described **John the Baptist** as "the lamp (luchnos/lychnos) that was **burning** and was **shining** and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." (Jn 5:35+) Jesus then contrasted His ministry with that of John the Baptist declaring "the **witness** (marturia/martyria) which I have is **greater than that of John**; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, **bear witness** (martureo) of Me, that the Father has sent (apostello) Me." (Jn 5:36+)

The apostle John presents a striking contrast - John the Baptist was a temporary **lamp** (luchnos/lychnos) shining in the darkness, whereas Jesus is eternally the true **Light** (phos), the essence of Light (Jn 1:4+, Jn 1:5+), the Source of light to all in spiritual darkness. John writes "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." (1Jn 1:5+).

In Mt 5:15+ (Mk 4:21+, Lk 8:16+, Lk 11:33+) the light of the **lamp** is compared to the **light** of one's life, which is to shine forth so that the spiritually dark world can see the Light of the world in us, "Christ in (us) the hope of glory" (Col 1:27+). In the same way believers today are to be "lamps" reflecting the glory of the Son, even as the moon reflects the glory of the sun! Are you obeying Jesus' command to "**Let** your light **shine** before men in such a way (key qualifier - do men laud you or laud the Lord?) that they may see your good works (we have the incredible privilege of bearing good [supernatural] fruit that functions like light for the lost to see spiritual truth), and glorify (doxazo = to give a proper opinion of) our Father Who is in heaven (You are on earth. The Father is in heaven. No one has seen or can see the Father, but you have the privilege of living a supernatural quality of life so that it points or directs the lost to see the certainty that there is an invisible God). (Mt 5:16+), of a parallel command in Lk 12:35+ from the Captain of the hosts to "**Be** [present imperative = make it your habitual practice to be] dressed in readiness and keep your lamps lit."

**Wiersbe** - The word **witness** is a **key word** in this book; John uses the noun fourteen times and the verb thirty-three times. John the Baptist was one of many people who bore witness to Jesus, "This is the Son of God!" Alas, John the Baptist was martyred and the Jewish leaders did nothing to prevent it. (See [Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Leon Morris** on as a **witness** says the Greek is "*eis marturian* signifies "for witness," not "to be a witness." It is the activity rather than the man that receives the emphasis. Witness is one of the key concepts of this Gospel, and it is quite in accordance with this that right on the threshold John the Baptist is characterized in terms of witness. The noun *marturia* is found 14 times in John (it does not occur in Matthew, but is found three times in Mark and once in Luke), and the verb *martureo* 33 times (once each in Matthew and Luke, not in Mark). In both cases John uses the word more often than anyone else in the New Testament."

**Westcott** on as (for) a **witness** - The office of the prophet in the fullest sense is to make known Another. This office had been fulfilled "in many parts and in many fashions" (Heb 1:1) by all God's messengers in earlier times, and at last eminently by the Baptist (comp. Jn 3:30). He came, as his predecessors, but with a clearer charge, to bear witness concerning the Light, to interpret to men the signs of a divine will and guidance without them and within them, and then to point to Him who was Himself the Life and the Light. In this way provision was made for leading men in human ways to recognize the divine. ([The Gospel According to St John](#))

## WITNESSES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**John** is the first of a number of witnesses (some say 7, some say 8, but there are actually more than 8) that appear in John's Gospel. And so in addition to John the Baptist's witness we see...

- (1) The Father (Jn 5:32, 36-37, 8:18)
- (2) Jesus' words (Jn 8:14, 18, 3:11, 32, 8:37 cp His witness before Pilate - Jn 18:37)
- (3) Jesus' works (Jn 5:36; 10:25, cf Jn 14:11, 15:24)
- (4) Moses and the Old Testament Scriptures (Jn 5:39, 45-46)
- (5) some of those who met Him (Jn 4:29)
- (6) The disciples/apostles (Jn 15:27; 19:35; 21:24)
- (7) The Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26, cf Jn 16:14).
- (8) A certain royal official (Jn 4:46-54)
- (9) A lame man (Jn 5:15)
- (10) The Samaritan woman (Jn 4:28-29)
- (11) The Samaritan multitude (Jn 4:40-44)
- (12) The blind man (John 9:24-34)

(13) The crowd (Jn 12:17)

(14) The Fourth Evangelist himself (Jn 19:35, Jn 21:24).

Keep in mind the terms **witness** (*marturia*) and **testify** (*martureō*) are legal terms and are related to fact, not opinion, as in a courtroom setting. (see **Cosmic Trial**) While the purpose of this Gospel is give testimony that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (Jn 20:31), it is every reader who must render a verdict as to who they say Jesus is. After reading do you believe He is the Messiah, the Son of God?

**Kostenberger** adds that "With regard to these witnesses, John's Gospel places particular emphasis on eyewitnesses, such as the Baptist (e.g., Jn 1:32–34) and Jesus' first followers, including the evangelist (Jn 15:27; 19:35; 21:24). This role of eyewitness is both vital and humble. It is vital because eyewitnesses are required to establish the truthfulness of certain facts. Yet it is humble because the eyewitness is not the center of attention. Rather, eyewitnesses must testify truthfully to what they have seen and heard—no more and no less. The Baptist fulfilled this task with distinction. The last time he is mentioned in this Gospel, it is said of him that "all that John said about this man [Jesus] was true" (Jn 10:41).

**Witness (testimony)** (3141)(*marturia/martyria* related to *martureo* = to witness <> *martus ir martys* = a witness) is that which furnishes evidence or proof. *Marturia* can be the witness per se. A witness is one who has first hand knowledge and so the purpose of John the Baptist was to bear witness of Messiah (the Light) so that all might believe through Him (Jn 1:7). John's repeated use of serves to emphasize the "courtroom atmosphere" (see **Cosmic Trial**) of this Gospel in which at least seven witnesses "take the stand" to witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God so that all might believe this truth and in believing they might gain eternal life in His great Name (Jn 20:31, cf Acts 4:12). The **NAB Note** says that "the testimony theme of John is introduced, which portrays Jesus as if on trial (see **The Cosmic Trial**) throughout His ministry." I would add that in the final analysis, it is not really Jesus Who is on trial, but every man ever born who is on trial awaiting the just decree of their second death (Rev 20:11-15, Rev 21:8, Rev 22:15, Ro 6:23) and eternal banishment away into the darkness (cf Mt 8:12, Mt 13:42,50, 22:12,13, 24:51, 25:30, Lu 13:28) away from the presence of the Light of the world (2Thes 1:7).

As noted above, *marturia/martyria* is a **key word** in John's Gospel occurring 14 times out of a total of 37 NT uses, not to mention John's other uses in the epistles (4x) and the Revelation (8x), making *marturia/martyria* essentially a *Johannine word!* - Mark 14:55f, 59; Luke 22:71; John 1:7, 19; 3:11, 32-33; 5:31-32, 34, 36; 8:13-14, 17; 19:35; 21:24; Acts 22:18; 1Ti 3:7; Titus 1:13; 1 John 5:9-11; 3 John 1:12; Rev 1:2, 9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4.

A **testimony** is a solemn declaration or affirmation made for the purpose of establishing or proving some fact. It is interesting that the first use in the NT was in the context of false testimony against Jesus the Truth (Mk 14:55-56, 59). The first use of *marturia/martyria* in the OT (Septuagint = Lxx) is in the context of cutting a covenant between Jacob and Laban (Ge 31:47). It is notable that the uses of *marturia/martyria* in the last book written, the Revelation (most think it was written around 90AD), clearly link *marturia/martyria* with literal **martyrdom!** (Rev 6:9-note, Rev 11:7-note, Rev 20:4-note).

#### Related Resources:

- [Testimony - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Witness - American Tract Society Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Witness - Bridgeway Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Witness - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Witness - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Witness - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)
- [Witness - 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica](#)

**To testify (bear witness)** (3140)(*martureo* from *martus* = witness = one who has information or knowledge of something and can bring to light or confirm something) in its most basic sense refers to a legal witness. (see **Cosmic Trial**) Thus the verb *martureo* means to be a witness, to testify, to give evidence, to give a testimony, to bear record, to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something. The words testified relate to fact, not opinion, even as they would in a courtroom setting. Testify (bear witness) is in the **aorist tense** which **Morris** explains does not mean "that John continually witnessed (though that, too, was true), but that he accomplished a finished work. He bore his witness to the Word, and there was nothing more that he could do."

We repeatedly see John the Baptist fulfilling his purpose of bearing witness of the Light - John 1:15, 1:19, 1:23, 1:29, 1:32-34, 1:36; 3:26, 5:33-36. John 1:15 nicely summarizes the content of John's testimony - "John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

**D A Carson** - John 1:35–37 provides an instance where John's witness was not only effective but particularly fruitful in its result.

Derivatively, because the Baptist's witness has been bound up in all four canonical Gospels with the beginning of Jesus' ministry, like Abel 'he still speaks, even though he is dead' (Heb. 11:4). All who have ever come to faith are indirectly dependent on his opening proclamation of the identity and saving purpose of Jesus Messiah. ([The Gospel according to John The Pillar New Testament Commentary](#))

## **SUMMUM PROPOSITUM: THAT ALL MIGHT BELIEVE**

John's bearing witness of the Light was not an end in itself but it had a higher purpose, a "supreme purpose" or we might say in Latin a *summum propositum*!

**He came...to testify** - This translation does not recognize the Greek conjunction [hina](#) which normally introduces a purpose clause and is often translated "so that." The Greek sentence is more literally "**He came....in order to testify**" which clearly reveals John the Baptist's **purpose** - his purpose was to prove Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God (Jn 20:31) and point men to Him and not to himself. See related discussion on the importance of observing and interrogating terms of purpose or result.

**Bob Utley** agrees that "This is a **purpose clause**. John's Gospel, like all the Gospels ( a uniquely Christian genre), is an *evangelistic tract*." Indeed, in the Synoptic Gospels we see John preaching repentance but in the Fourth Gospel the emphasis is only on his role as a witness. And so we see the verb (**martureo**) and the noun (**marturia**) used repeatedly referring to his primary purpose -- to bear witness of Jesus (Jn 1:7 [2x], Jn 1:8, 15, 19, 32, 34; 3:26; 5:33).

**THOUGHT** - This word group (**martus, martureo, marturia**, derivative verb = **diamarturomai** = to solemnly testify - 15x = Acts 2:40, 8:25, 10:42, 18:5, 20:21, 20:23, 20:24, 23:11, 28:23, 1Th 4:6 1Ti 5:21 2Ti 2:14, 4:1, Heb 2:6) gives us our English word **martyr** which in the Christian context is defined as one who witnesses or bears testimony especially by his or her death because of their faith in Christ. In other words, when commanded to recant (withdraw or repudiate a belief formally and publicly) Christ or die, these individuals choose instead to die, giving the ultimate testimony that Jesus is Who He said He is! (See [Fox's Book of Martyrs](#)) A man named Saul was a firsthand **witness** to the testimony of Stephen, a martyrdom (see Acts 7:57, 58, 59, 60 and compare Acts 8:1) which undoubtedly impacted Saul, who in turn became the greatest **witness** for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, ultimately laying down his own life as a martyr (2Ti 4:6note). Beloved follower of Christ, you may not become a literal martyr, but you can rest assured that when you stand for Christ, the world will stand (come) against you and vilify you (Jn 15:18-20). However you can also be assured that your witness for Jesus will have the effect God intended, either an aroma of death or an aroma of life (2Cor 2:14, 15, 16). Let your life be a visible representation (and fragrance) of Christ! In light of that truth don't compromise your witness but remain "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1Cor 15:58-note.,cp 1Cor 15:10-note)

## **OUR PURPOSE - BOLDLY PROCLAIM THE LIGHT TO THE DARKNESS**

**Spurgeon** - Dear friends, if you and I know our real destiny, and are the servants of God, we are sent that men might, through us, believe in Jesus. John was a special witness; but we ought all to be witnesses to complete the chain of testimony. Every Christian man should reckon that he is sent from God to bear witness to the great Light, that, through him, men might believe.

**THOUGHT** - John's life purpose was to be a witness of the Light, Jesus Christ. Our purpose is no different. Why do the **Jehovah's Witnesses** bear witness of a lie, and the majority of believers fail to bear witness of the Light which is the Truth (Jn 14:6)? Why do they do for a lie what we won't do for the truth? Because they believe the lie and are deceived. Should not we who believe the truth be even more motivated than they? Why are we not more motivated? While the answer is multi-faceted, I personally believe it boils down to lack of supernatural boldness (see Acts 4:31+). How can this problem be corrected? Not by just gutting it out and saying I'm going to "Just do it!" That's my power, not the Spirit's power (cf Acts 1:8+)! Jesus said truth would set us free and in the area of being a witness we have several truths that should liberate us to boldly bear witness of the Light.

(1) **Light wins** - The darkness did not and cannot overpower the light (Jn 1:5-note). We, like John, are not called to convince but to bear witness of the Light (Jn 1:7-note) which shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot ever overpower it. That's the Gospel we possess and should proclaim with confidence and boldness.

(2) **We possess the Gospel** - Simply put it is "Good News" not bad news! It's the good news that dead men can live forever. Even if it is rejected, as it often will be, it is still Good News that we can proclaim with

confidence!

**(3) The Gospel we possess has the inherent supernatural power (dunamis)** to convict and convert! (Ro 1:16) Jesus the Creator (Jn 1:3-note) is the Redeemer and as such is the "Re-Creator", His Spirit causing dead men to be born again (Jn 3:3-8). That should take the pressure off of us to feel like we need to answer every objection or give a perfect, eloquent proclamation of the Gospel - Jesus died on Cross for us individually, in our place, was buried in a tomb, rose from the dead on the third day, ascended to Heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and He is coming again to judge the living and the dead. In nutshell, that's the Gospel we possess and have the privilege to powerfully (supernaturally) proclaim.

**(4) We possess the Spirit**, Who gives us the supernatural power (**dunamis**) to be witnesses (Acts 1:8-note) and in the book of Acts their condition of being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-note) was repeatedly manifest in bold, confident speech, even in the face of possible physical punishment (which is generally unlikely in America in 2015) (cf Acts 2:29, Acts 4:13, Acts 4:29, **see especially** Acts 4:31, Acts 9:27, Acts 9:28, Acts 13:46, **see their power in** Acts 14:3, Acts 18:26, Acts 19:8, Acts 26:26 - see also **parrhesiazomai** and **parrhesia**)

**(5) We possess the privilege of prayer.** What did Paul pray for in prison in Eph 6:19-20-note? He asked the church at Ephesus to pray that he might have boldness to speak the Gospel! If Paul felt the need to pray that prayer, then beloved, so should we! And I would add that we should pray for our "Jerusalem," those people nearest to us including our relatives and next door neighbors (There are 5 houses surrounding mine and 3 are believers, but I have never shared the Gospel with the other 2 houses!)

In sum, we share the Gospel boldly motivated by love, not by legalism or a sense of guilt, and we do so not in our adequacy but His supernatural sufficiency, speaking boldly and confidently of the truth that Jesus is the Light. Indeed, we are the TRUE WITNESSES OF JEHOVAH! You pray for me. I am praying for all who read this note that they will continually seek to walk in the Spirit's filling and power that they might boldly bear witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are still dead in their trespasses and sins. Amen!

John repeatedly describes John the Baptist's witness in chapter 1...

(John 1:19-20) And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent (apostello) to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed, "**I am not the Christ.**"

(John 1:26) John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but **among you stands One whom you do not know.**

(John 1:27) "It is **He who comes after me**, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

(John 1:29) The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him, and \*said, **Behold, the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!

(John 1:32-34) And John bore witness saying, "**I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.**" "And 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.' "And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

(John 1:36) and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and \*said, '**Behold, the Lamb of God!**'"

## **GOD IS LIGHT**

**The Light** - This is the Logos (Jn 1:1), the Light of the world, Jesus (Jn 8:12+). Note that the inspired text does not say Jesus *emits* light, is *a* light, is *like* light but that He *is* the light.

**Kistemaker** adds that "God is not a light among many other lights; He is not a light-bearer; God does not have light as one of His characteristics, but He is light; and although He created light (Ge 1:3), He Himself is uncreated light. Moreover, the light of God is visible in Jesus, Who said, "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12+). In the Nicene Creed, the church confesses Jesus Christ as "**God of God, Light of Light.**" In Jesus we see God's eternal light. From the moment of His birth to the time of His resurrection, the life of Jesus was filled with God's light. "Jesus was completely and absolutely transparent with the Light of God." And whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9). ([Simon J. Kistemaker: New Testament Commentary - James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude](#))

**Light** ([5457](#))(**phos** from **pháo** = to shine) is defined by many lexicons as that which contrasts with darkness. Light is the medium of illumination that makes sight possible or makes things visible. In Scripture **phos** can refer to literal, physical light (Ge 1:3), but often is used metaphorically or symbolically, the greatest metaphorical use being used to symbolize Jesus as "the Light of the world." (Jn 8:12+).

This is John's third reference to **Light** - "In Him was life, and the life was the **light** of men. And the **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (Jn 1:4+, Jn 1:5+)

**Zodhiates** says figuratively **phos** often refers to "moral and spiritual light and knowledge which enlightens the mind, soul or conscience; including also the idea of moral goodness, purity and holiness, and of consequent reward and happiness." ([BORROW The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament](#))

**Light** is a subject so profound that it saturates (pun intended) the Scriptures with some 200 appearances from beginning to end, from Genesis (Ge 1:3,4) to Revelation (Rev 22:5-[note](#))! Clearly **light** is one of the major Biblical physical and metaphorical motifs. Pastor Ray Stedman has a sermon with a very interesting analysis of light. (See [God Is Light](#))

**Marvin Vincent** commenting on **Light** in 1Jn 1:5-note - This is a statement of the absolute nature of God. Not a light, nor the light, with reference to created beings, as the light of men, the light of the world, but simply and absolutely God is light, in His very nature. Compare God is spirit, and see on John 4:24: God is love, 1 John 4:8, 16. The expression is not a metaphor...**Light** is immaterial, diffusive, pure, and glorious. It is the condition of life. Physically, it represents glory; intellectually, truth; morally, holiness. As immaterial it corresponds to God as spirit; as diffusive, to God as love; as the condition of life, to God as life; as pure and illuminating, to God as holiness and truth. In the Old Testament, light is often the medium of God's visible revelations to men. It was the first manifestation of God in creation. The burning lamp passed between the pieces of the parted victim in God's covenant with Abraham. God went before Israel in a pillar of fire, descended in fire at Sinai, and appeared in a luminous cloud which rested on the mercy-seat in the most holy place.

**POSB** - Light: light reveals, strips away (John 3:19-20), routs the chaos (cp. Genesis 1:2-3), and guides (John 12:36, 46). It shows the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Jesus is said to be the **Light of men** (John 1:4-note) and the **Light of the world** (John 8:12; John 9:5; John 12:46). It is possible for the **Light**, Jesus Himself, to be **in men** (John 11:10; cp. Col. 1:27-note), and for men to become **children of Light** (John 12:34-36+). Apparently, Jesus used the word light often. John uses the word about twenty-one times. What is meant by calling Jesus the Light?

**1. Jesus, the Light, is light by nature.** Light is what He is within Himself, within His being, His nature, His essence, His character. Scripture says...

- that "God is Light" (1 John 1:5-note);
- that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15-note);
- therefore, "Jesus is Light." He is "the Light of the world."

**2. Jesus, the Light, tells us that He is holy, righteous, and pure** Light is the symbol of purity and holiness. Light means the absence of darkness and blindness; it has no spots of darkness or blackness, nor of sin and shame.

**3. Jesus, the Light, reveals.** His light shows clearly the nature, the meaning, and the destiny of all things. His light shines in, spots, opens up, identifies, illuminates, and shows things as they really are. The light of Jesus Christ shows the truth about the world and man and God. The light of Jesus Christ reveals that He loves and cares for man and wants man to love and care for Him.

**4. Jesus, the Light, guides.** His light allows a man to walk out of darkness. Man no longer has to grope, grasp, and stumble about trying to find his way through life. The path of life can now be clearly seen.

**5. Jesus, the Light, does away with darkness and with chaos.** His light routs, wipes out, strips away and erases the darkness. The empty chaos of creation was routed by the light given by God (Genesis 1:3). Jesus Christ is the Light that can save man from chaos (John 14:1, 17; John 12:46; John 16:33).

Jesus proclaimed Himself to be **the Light of the world** at the great Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2). The very first ceremony of the Feast holds great significance for Jesus' claim. It was called "The Illumination of the Temple" and was held in the Court of the Women. The center of the Court was surrounded by large sections of stadium-like seats. In the open space of the Court sat four huge candelabra. When darkness fell the candelabra were lit, and the elders danced and led the people in singing psalms before the Lord all night. The brilliance and glow from the burning flames of the huge candelabra were said to be so bright that the light could be seen throughout the whole city. It was against this background that Jesus cried out, **"I am the Light of the world."**



(POSB)

THOUGHT - In **And Can It Be That I Should Gain** one of my favorite hymns by Charles Wesley (1707-88), Wesley portrays the power of Light to dissolve the deep darkness in the heart of a lost soul (A miracle which He graciously accomplished in my life at the relatively late age of 39 - Thank You Jesus the Light of the world for shedding Your perfect blood on Calvary and then diffusing Your pure Light into the darkness of our sinful hearts via the work of Your Spirit. Amen - See my Personal Testimony when "I woke, the dungeon flamed with light")...

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
*(This depicts light coming from the Light)*  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

Play vocal version of [And Can It Be That I Should Gain](#)

### JOHN'S PURPOSE & OUR PURPOSE: THAT ALL MIGHT BELIEVE!

So that (2443)([hina](#)) is John's second use of [hina](#) and as noted should always prompt a pause to ponder the purpose of this conjunction (**term of purpose or result**). The purpose may be obvious, but it is never a waste of time to ask "What is the purpose or result," for it will force you to stop and think about the passage instead of reading over it quickly. In a very real sense you are practicing **meditation**, even if only a "mini" meditation. In this context the purpose is clear -- that all might believe through Him." As **John Piper** says "Believing in the light happens through a witness to the light. There is no other way. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word" (Romans 10:17)...Without a witness no one believes." ([John Was Not the Light, but a Witness to the Light](#))

**Westcott** commenting on John's two uses of [hina](#) in one verse says "This combination of successive and related ends under one form of construction, is characteristic of St John's style: comp. Jn 20:31, Jn 15:16, Jn 17:21, Jn 17:23." ([The Gospel According to St John](#))

**Westcott** on **all** - The prophets had prepared the way for the extension of the divine call beyond Israel (comp. Isa 49:6). The Baptist at last delivered a message which in its essence was **universal**. As the last prophet, the last interpreter of the Law, he carried the preparatory discipline to its final application. He spoke to men as men; outward descent, national privileges, disappeared from their place in the divine order from the time of his preaching. The basis of his preaching was repentance (Mt 3:2, 4:17)—inner self-renunciation—the end was faith (Mk 1:14). In this connection it is to be noticed that the conception of faith is sharpened by being left in an absolute form: **that all men might believe** (contrast Jn 1:12) through him (John). There can be but one adequate object of faith, even God made known in the Son. **Believe** is used similarly Jn 1:51, 5:44, 11:15, 14:29, etc., Jn 4:41-42, 4:53, 19:35, 20:29, 20:31. ([The Gospel According to St John](#))

**All might believe through him** - In a cursory reading this might sound like John is teaching "**Universalism**" (all will be saved regardless of their belief). Clearly that is a heretical interpretation refuted by many other passages including the clear warning of Jesus calling for every reader to "**Enter (aorist imperative = command to do this now! It is urgent! Don't delay!)** by the narrow gate; for (**term of explanation**) the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to **destruction (apoleia = not annihilation or end of existence but total ruin of everything that makes human existence worthwhile. So not loss of being, but of well-being and that eternally! Tragedy upon tragedy!)** , and **many** are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and **few are those who find it** (Mt 7:13-14) Note the qualifying adjectives, respectively, **many** and **few**! Jesus could not have more clearly refuted the false doctrine of universalism.

**Kostenberger** quoting R. Brown - Through the Word, "all things" were created; now it is God's purpose that "all people" might believe through John's testimony.

**That ALL might believe** - This is God's heart! **ALL**! John is not saying that **ALL** will believe, but that **ALL** might believe or might be saved! Our great, gracious God "desires **ALL** men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:4) Peter adds that God is patient "not wishing for **ANY** to perish but for **ALL** to come to repentance." (2Pe 3:9-note). Notice that Peter clearly associates with repentance with salvation, a vital, dynamic doctrine that the modern church seems to have largely forgotten.

**BELIEVE - A KEY WORD  
IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**Believe** ([4100](#))(**pisteuo** [[click detailed discussion of what it means to genuinely believe in Jesus](#)] from **pistis**; **pistos**; related studies **the faith**, the **obedience of faith**) means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust. To accept as true, genuine, or real. To have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something or someone. **Pisteuo** means to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence. To believe in with the implication of total commitment to the one who is trusted. While obviously belief must first have some intellectual apprehension of the truth, "intellectual belief" is absolutely not genuine, soul saving belief!

**Leon Morris** observes that "**Believe**" is not in the continuous tense (**Ed: It is aorist tense**), and this is perhaps significant. John came to bring people to decide, to make the definitive act of faith."

**Kostenberger** points out that "**Pisteuo** is found frequently in the Greek OT to describe the trust that God desires from his people. Abraham "believed the Lord" and thus became the father of all believers (Gen. 15:6; cf. Ro 4:3, 20-24; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:8-12; James 2:23). Israel as a nation, however, is known in the OT primarily for unbelief (John 12:38; cf. Isa. 53:1)."

The respected Greek lexicon author **W E Vine** adds that **belief** that saves a soul consists of

"(1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2Thes 2:12 -"in order that they all may be judged who did not believe [**pisteuo**] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.")

(2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe [**pisteuo**] in His name") and

(3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender." ([Faith - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

Note that John the evangelist has **believe** in the **subjunctive mood** which is the mood of possibility not reality. It is possible for men to **believe** and be saved but it is not the reality! (cf the adjectives Jesus uses in Mt 7:13-14-note = "**many...few**").

**Bob Utley** rightly says "**Belief** is not primarily an **intellectual** or **emotional** response, but basically a **volitional** response."

**Faith**, like grace, is not static. Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender, and a supernatural instilled longing to obey (out of love, not legalistic motivation). None of those responses can be classified exclusively as a human work, any more than believing itself is solely a human effort.

**Kenneth Wuest** adds that when **pisteuo** refers "to the faith which a lost sinner must place in the Lord Jesus in order to be saved, and includes the following ideas -- the act of considering the Lord Jesus worthy of trust as to His character and motives, the act of placing confidence in His ability to do just what He says He will do, the act of entrusting the salvation of one's soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus, the act of committing the work of saving one's soul to the care of the Lord. This means a definite taking of one's self out of one's own keeping and entrusting one's self into the keeping of the Lord Jesus. (Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament)

This is **John's first use** of the verb **pisteuo** which is a major **key word** in his Gospel and his epistles as it is used 78x in the Gospel and 24x in his letters (out of a total of 241 uses in the NT, compared to only 34 times in Matthew, Mark and Luke combined). In fact as noted elsewhere fully one third of all the occurrences of the English word believe (or believes) are found in the writings of John, especially in the Gospel of John. It follows that if you want someone to understand what it means to believe then direct them to read and study John. It is not surprisingly either that we often here the statement that more souls have come to believe in Jesus through reading the Gospel of John than any other source. It would certainly make sense. I wonder if God will reveal the "supernatural stats" to us when we are all together in heaven? -

John 1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22-24; 3:12 (2x), Jn 3:15-16, 18 (3x), Jn 3:36; 4:21, 39, 41-42, 48, 50, 53; 5:24, 38, 44, 46-47 (2x in each verse), Jn 6:29-30, 35-36, 40, 47, 64 (2x), Jn 6:69; 7:5, 31, 38-39, 48; 8:24, 30-31, 45-46; 9:18, 35-36, 38; 10:25-26, 37, 38 (2x), Jn 10:42; 11:15, 25, 26 (2x), Jn 11:27, 40, 42, 45, 48; 12:11, 36-38, 42, 44 (2x), Jn 12:46; 13:19; 14:1, 10, 11 (2x), Jn 14:12, 29; 16:9, 27, 30-31; 17:8, 20-21; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29 (2x), Jn 20:31 (2x).

As an aside it is interesting and somewhat surprising that John's Gospel and his 3 epistles (with one exception = 1Jn 5:4-note) **never** use the noun **pistis** (**faith**) which is found over 243 times in the NT.

**Hendricksen** writes that "Synonymous expressions (for "believe") are used at times; such as, to **come to** Jesus, **to receive** or **to confess** Him (Mt. 10:32, 40; 11:28). Moreover, how is it ever possible to give meaning to passages like Mt. 7:22, 23; 25:31ff. without accepting the fact that Christ viewed himself as the legitimate object of faith and trust, so that unwillingness to accept him meant everlasting punishment? Paul, too, proclaims the necessity of faith in the Person of Christ and in his atonement (Ro. 3:22, 25; Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22, 26; Eph. 1:5; Phil. 3:9; Col. 1:4; 2:5; etc.). (Ed: I would add another synonym - "**come to know Him**" - 1Jn 2:3-4).

## THROUGH HIM: JESUS OR JOHN?

**Through him** - Earlier John had used the same phrase "**through Him**" (same exact Greek - *di' autou*) in John 1:3-note referring to "all things came into being **through Him**." The preposition **dia** primarily denotes the channel of an act. Stated another way **dia** is a marker of instrumentality whereby something is accomplished or effected and in John 1:3-note the "accomplishment" is the creation of the world and in John 1:7 it is the redemption of a soul, John serving as the conduit (so to speak) of the Gospel of salvation (Eph 1:13-note).

While some might interpret "**through him**" as referring to Jesus rather than John (e.g., Peter says "who *through Him* do believe in God" - 1Pe 1:21YLT), the context favors this a reference to John who has just been described as a witness. When a jury hears a credible witness, they come to believe a certain fact through what the witness has stated. That is the immediate context. Clearly all come to faith only through Jesus, but that is not the primary emphasis in this verse. In support of this interpretation note that John never uses the phrase "through Him" to refer to believing through Him.

And beloved, **ALL** God's children can share in this same incredible privilege, but it does require that we be **witnesses** of Jesus. Luke records the exhortation of our Lord to His early disciples (and by "default" to us His later disciples) "you shall receive **power** (**dunamis** = supernatural power to accomplish a task) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be **My witnesses** (**martus/martys**) both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8-note) There was a popular song entitled "People Need People" and although it was secular, it has a spiritual counterpart. For people to believe in Jesus, there must be people who tell about Jesus. As witnesses we are **agents** of belief but Christ is the **object** of belief.

## THE COSMIC TRIAL

**Bennema on witness** - The concept of **witness** in the Fourth Gospel has a forensic dimension in that the author narrates his story of Jesus within the framework of a cosmic trial or lawsuit. In this trial, "the Jews" prosecute Jesus for His divine claims to provide eternal life, to work on God's behalf, and to have a unique relationship with Him (e.g. Jn 5:16-18, 40; 9:16; 10:30-39; 19:7). As in any trial, it is crucial to have credible witnesses and to sustain their testimony lest the case be lost. In this context, Jesus calls up various witnesses, including John (Jn 5:31-38). The Fourth Gospel gives special attention to **eyewitnesses**—those who have seen and heard Jesus and can give a first-hand testimony. **John** is one such eyewitness but there are others: the **Samaritan woman** testifies to her kinfolk (Jn 4:28-29); the **man born blind** testifies before the hostile Jewish authorities (Jn 9:13-17, 24-34); **Mary Magdalene**, the first eyewitness to Jesus' resurrection, testifies to the disciples (Jn 20:11-18); **the disciples** are appointed to testify before the hostile world because they have been eyewitnesses from the beginning (Jn 15:18-27); finally, the Fourth Gospel is commended to the reader as a trustworthy account of Jesus' life since it is based on **the eyewitness testimony of the beloved disciple** (Jn 19:35; 21:24, cf 1Jn 1:1-2). **It is important that a witness testifies about Jesus and does not remain silent.** The Fourth Gospel mentions the "**fear of the Jews**" as a major factor that prevents people from testifying (Jn 7:13; 9:22; 12:42; 19:38; 20:19). How does John fare? John 1:19-28 contains John's testimony before the religious authorities. We read that "the Jews"/Pharisees from Jerusalem sent a delegation to John to find out who he was (Jn 1:19-24). Behind their questions were the suspicions: Was he going to be a threat to them? Was he going to start a revolutionary movement? As a true witness, John testifies openly, denying that he is an important end-time figure like the Messiah, Elijah (cf. Mal 4:5-note), or the Prophet-like-Moses (Jn 1:20-21; cf. Deut 18:15-18). When the delegation pushes him, John describes himself as a **herald** (Ed: an officer sent by a king or other high official to proclaim a message or announce good news - Da 3:4) but this does not satisfy them and they want to know why, and by what authority, John is baptizing if he is not a major eschatological figure (Jn 1:22-25). Instead of answering their question (Jn 1:33 shows that John is well aware of his authority—God had sent him to baptize), John points to the importance of Jesus (Jn 1:26-27). Thus, even when John is *not* asked to testify about Jesus, he essentially does. We make two further observations. **First, John's role as a witness has a cosmic scope.** Besides his participation in Jesus' cosmic trial, John's testimony before the Judean religious authorities also has cosmic dimensions since "the Jews" are the primary representatives of the hostile world. **Second, John's role of a witness occurs in the context of his baptizing activity** (Jn 1:28), implying that John is not a witness apart from his role as baptizer but precisely as baptizer. **The purpose of John's testimony is to elicit belief** (Jn 1:7)—a life-giving belief in Jesus as the immediate and wider context indicates (Jn 1:12; 3:36; 20:31). Two passages demonstrate that John's testimony indeed causes people to believe in Jesus. First, John directs his own disciples to Jesus, with the result that they leave their master, start to follow Jesus (Jn 1:35-39), and soon express their belief in him (Jn 2:11). Second, when Jesus comes to John's former baptismal site to escape from "the Jews," many people believe in him as a result of John's earlier testimony (Jn 10:40-42). This salvific intention of testimony—testimony regarding Jesus aims at evoking a saving belief in him—is an important Johannine theme: based on the Samaritan woman's testimony, many fellow-villagers believe in Jesus (Jn 4:28-29, 39); the disciples' future testimony is expected to elicit belief (Jn 17:20); and indeed the entire gospel (as a written testimony) intends to produce a life-giving belief among its readers (Jn 19:35; 20:31). We shall now examine John's other roles and elucidate that these roles characterize him as a witness. ([The Character of John in the Fourth Gospel - JETS 52/2, 6/2009, 271-284](#))

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**Digital Transmission** - A motel chain once had a series of radio commercials that ended with the reassuring words, "We'll leave the light on for you." My mother used to say the same thing to me.

Sometimes I worked the late shift at the factory, or I would come home late from college. No matter what the reason or the time, the porch light was burning. Its warm beams seemed to say, "This is where you belong. Someone loves you here. You are home."

Jesus said that we who know Him as Savior and Lord are lights in this sin-darkened world (Matthew 5:14-16). We are reflections of Christ, who is "the true Light" (John 1:9).

As John the Baptist was a "witness of the Light" and pointed people to Jesus (v.7), so can we. Our faithful walk of obedience to Him is a beacon of God's love and truth. Our lives and words are beams of warm light piercing the cold darkness of this world. We are like a porch light late at night, drawing unbelievers to Jesus, assuring them that Someone loves them and waits to welcome them home.

Perhaps a member of your family is still in the darkness. Maybe you're concerned about a friend or co-worker. Don't stop praying for them. Keep finding ways to draw their attention to the Lord. Be sure to leave the light on.

If we should hide our shining light  
And not reflect God's Son,  
Then how will people in sin's night  
Be guided, helped, and won?  
—Branon

**You can attract people to Christ  
when you have His light in your life.**

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**Sun Reflector** - The cozy little village of Rjukan, Norway, is a delightful place to live—except during the dark days of winter. Located in a valley at the foot of the towering Gaustatoppen Mountain, the town receives no direct sunlight for nearly half of the year. Residents had long considered the idea of placing mirrors at the top of the mountain to reflect the sun. But the concept was not feasible until recently. In 2005, a local artist began "The Mirror Project" to bring together people who could turn the idea into reality. Eight years later, in October 2013, the mirrors went into action. Residents crowded into the town square to soak up the reflected sunlight.

In a spiritual sense, much of the world is like the village of Rjukan—mountains of troubles keep the light of Jesus from getting through. But God strategically places His children to act as reflectors. One such person was John the Baptist, who came "to bear witness of the Light"—Jesus—who gives light "to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (John 1:7; Luke 1:79).

Just as sunlight is essential for emotional and physical health, so exposure to the light of Jesus is essential for spiritual health. Thankfully, every believer is in a position to reflect His light into the world's dark places.

Dear Father, help me to reflect Your light into the world around me today. May all that I say and do bear witness of Your light and truth. May others see how wonderful You are.

**A world in darkness needs the light of Jesus.**