

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

SEPTEMBER 2 - 6, 2019



# MONDAY

**1 John 1:1-5; John 20:19-31**

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***In this week's devotionals, imagine the Apostle John speaking to you directly***

You know me as the Apostle John, though I prefer to be known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23). Glenkirk’s next twelve weeks of devotionals explore what you call 1 John, which I penned under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. Herein I confront Gnosticism, beliefs stemming from Greek philosophy emphasizing matter’s corruption and spirit’s goodness. Gnosticism maintains that Jesus couldn’t be physical—as “everything material is evil”—falsely denying Jesus’ humanity. This includes bizarre theories that Christ was either a ghost or alternately human or divine. Jesus anticipated and debunked such error, describing Himself as the “Son of Man” (Mark 2:10).

I knew Christ well, having been close with Him for over three years during His earthly ministry. I witnessed His crucifixion and was with Him after His resurrection. I was enlightened even more at Pentecost (Acts 2). When I was later taken up to heaven, I received greater insight into our Savior and King—you can read about this in Revelation. Now that I am with Him eternally, I know Jesus in ways you will one day know Him.

I’m the only Apostle who died naturally. The others were executed for their faith—a powerful witness to the truth of Jesus’ life and claims—although each had fled earlier as Jesus went to Calvary’s cross. No one dies willingly for something they know is untrue; these former cowards

became martyrs emboldened by experiencing the risen Christ. We lived with Jesus, witnessing His works, miracles, teaching, resurrection, and heavenly ascension.

Lest you think us delusional, know that there are many credible, ancient non-Christian sources regarding Jesus. Tacitus wrote of Christians suffering under Pontius Pilate. Suetonius, who lived during the first century, chronicled “Christus” [Christ] (*Annals* 15.44). Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote of James, “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ,” and other details about Jesus (*Antiquities*). *The Babylonian Talmud*, Julius Africanus (*Extant Writings*), Pliny the Younger (*Letters*), and other secular historians also reinforce biblical accounts of Jesus’ life and deeds.

God the Son came as Jesus of Nazareth to redeem us, manifesting grace, mercy, love and acceptance. He’s with us in the simple and mundane, as well as in life’s complex, soul-wrenching trials. Embrace this throughout this week and in those weeks ahead!

## QUESTIONS

What’s the significance of ten of Jesus’ Apostles dying willingly as martyrs? Why is it helpful to know that many credible non-Christian historians feature accounts about Jesus’ life and ministry?

## PRAYERS FOR GLAD TIDINGS INDIA

Pray for Glad Tidings India (GTI), an organization that Glenkirk sponsors that works with the families in India who desperately need clean living resources (i.e., water) and the Truth of the Gospel presented. Pray that God will bring forth partners to sponsor three unreached people groups that are partially funded.

# TUESDAY

**1 John 1:1-2; John 1:1-5; Matthew 2:6-11**

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***Continue to imagine John speaking to us from heaven***

As 1 John's penman and an Apostle, I'm passionate about something fundamental to knowing Jesus Christ: *"That which was from the beginning ... The life ... which was with the Father ... has appeared to us"* (vv. 1-2). Jesus is the Creator God (Colossians 1:16), the Son collaborating with Father and Holy Spirit in fashioning all created things and redeeming fallen creation.

However, as per yesterday, a key theme of my 1 John epistle is refuting Gnosticism's false doctrine. Jesus is "fully God" (John 1:1) and "fully Man" (Galatians 4:4), counter to corrupted "God only" claims of the Gnostics. Why is Christ's humanity fundamental to His mission as well as to our salvation?

God created us for intimacy and fellowship, even giving Adam and Eve dominion over the Garden of Eden and earth as His junior partners (Genesis 1:28-30). However, sin alienated them from God, essentially surrendering earth's "title deed" to the enemy. As "man's" (Adam's and Eve's) rebellion drove creation's fall, a Man was required to pay the price and restore that which was lost. God the Son came here on a rescue mission, entering into humankind's plight to reconcile us to God and usher in His kingdom.

As a real Man, Jesus was born into the humblest circumstances (Luke 2:7), learned obedience (Hebrews 5:8), faced temptations (Hebrews 4:15), and also felt hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), and fatigue (John 4:6). The Magi who worshiped the infant Messiah understood His mission, evidenced by their gifts: gold for the newborn King of kings; frankincense (incense) represented prayer, illustrating Jesus as our Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14) and Intercessor (Romans 8:34); and myrrh, an embalming spice used to prepare corpses, signifying His sacrificial death as our Substitute. Our desperate dilemma had to be handled; it was, fully and completely by the perfect Man.

As close as I was to our Lord while I was with Him in Palestine, knowing what I now know, I regret my many missed opportunities. There's one thing unnecessary here in eternity, though fully available while on earth: the opportunity to witness for Christ. Don't miss these blessings! Whom do you know living apart from the Savior? Share Jesus with them!

## QUESTIONS

What was a principal error of Gnosticism? Why is it important that Jesus was fully Man while also fully God? What is one godly thing we can do while on earth that we won't do in heaven?

## PRAYERS FOR GLAD TIDINGS INDIA

Pray that during the month of August, literary projects for 1500 women will begin. As of now, about 350 have been sponsored, so please pray that the other 1150 will be sponsored before the end of 2019.

# WEDNESDAY

**1 John 1:3-4; Ephesians 2:11-22**

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***Continue to imagine John speaking to us from heaven***

One of the most exciting elements of following Christ is the associated adoption into God's own family! Now, my earthly kin eventually became pretty famous. Mother Salome was a sister to Mary, whom you know as "the Virgin"—so, Jesus is my cousin (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25). John, whom you call "the Baptist," is also a relative; he's Jesus' second cousin. Brother James was likewise Jesus' disciple; sadly, James was also the first martyr among we Apostles, executed by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-2).

Father Zebedee had a prominent fishing business with clients throughout Israel. Had Jesus not called us, James and I would have likely inherited it and made a quite prosperous living (Matthew 4:21). However, joining God's family offered adventure and blessings far surpassing earthly alternatives—and that's not even considering its eternal rewards!

The teaching we received from the Master and the miracles we experienced—demons cast out and the blind and lame healed not just by Jesus, but by us also by His authority! Three of us witnessed Him in a glorified state, along with Moses and Elijah, at what you call "the Mount of the Transfiguration." The majesty of the "Sermon on the Mount" and drama of "the Last Supper,"

having our feet washed by the Creator, Yahweh Himself! The pathos of Jesus' brutal crucifixion, coupled with the honor He bestowed in asking me to care for Aunt Mary (John 19:26-27). And the awe and joy of finding the empty tomb and then seeing Him again, risen indeed! Oh, the wonders of following Christ!

Life in Christ also provides sweet fellowship with other believers and intimacy with our God and loving Creator. Consider my famous "God is love" (1 John 4:8) declaration more deeply. It makes sense only when you grasp that the true and living God is eternally relational fully within Himself (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and devotedly active in His creation.

Why would anyone choose a life outside of God's family, one of self-absorption, fear and futility? Don't unbelievers understand that living this way is simply practicing for eternity? I know what hell offers: utter, inescapable, enduring, bitter aloneness that is absent of love and goodness. Choose life, and help others to choose wisely!

## QUESTIONS

How did the Apostle John's family tree overlap with Jesus' family tree? Why does the declaration "God is love" make sense only in light of God's triune nature?

## PRAYERS FOR GLAD TIDINGS INDIA

Please pray for the ongoing planning and preparations needed for our "Magic for Ministry" night to be held in Chino Hills in November. Keep in prayer our upcoming trips to North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Boston, Massachusetts, in October.

# THURSDAY

1 John 1:4; Luke 1:46-55

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***Continue to imagine John speaking to us from heaven***

As a dweller in heaven, I now have insights on God transcending my former, earthly reflections. One thing I can share firsthand about God: whatever you think about Him falls infinitely short of His majesty, love and goodness. God's own joy and the delight of dwelling with Him eternally surpass the limits of language. When I penned "*we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete*" (1 John 1:4), I had such a confined view of joy that I now see this statement as laughably inadequate from my current, heavenly perspective.

Contemporary people like you see God as so much less than He is; likewise, you often seek far less than God's best. You willingly settle for mud pies while God has a banquet prepared for you. Many of you view God as the "big traffic cop in the sky, eager to write tickets." The true and living God couldn't be further from this misperception! Jesus' mother, Mary, expressed a fleeting sense of Yahweh's joy and majesty when singing the "Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-55) in response to the honor of her calling.

Though a "Man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3), given humankind's self-destructiveness, Jesus was also exceedingly joyful. Accordingly, enemies slanderously labeled Him a "glutton and drunkard"



(Matthew 11:19). Remember: Christ's first public miracle was at a wedding celebration (John 2)!

As words fail me in conveying my joy in the Lord, let me defer here to others. "We will never understand the significance of joy in human life until we understand its importance to God. ... Most of us seriously underestimate God's capacity for joy. ... We will not understand God until we understand this about Him: God is the happiest Person in the universe. Joy is God's basic character. Joy is His eternal destiny. C.S. Lewis said, 'Joy is the serious business of heaven.'" (John Ortberg)

John Piper writes: "Joy is the fruit of faith. ... Confidence in ... God overcomes anxiety and fills us with peace and joy. ... We should not count any private comfort a greater joy than the joy of seeing our labor lead to another's salvation." Is your joy complete? If not, why not?

## QUESTIONS

How have you "settled for mud pies while God had a banquet prepared for you"? What did John Piper mean when he wrote, "God is the happiest Person in the universe"?

## PRAYERS FOR GLAD TIDINGS INDIA

At this time, GTI is submitting its first grant proposal which includes a request for 35 borewells over the next two years. Please pray that the processing goes smoothly and that the request is funded as the Lord desires.

# FRIDAY

1 John 1:5-7; John 3:19-21; John 12:35-36, 46

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## ***Continue to imagine John speaking to us from heaven***

God's first biblically spoken words were, "*Let there be light*"; He deemed light "good" as He separated it from the darkness during the creation (Genesis 1:3). Within my Gospel, my epistles and Revelation, I refer to "light" thirty-six different times—I even declare, "*God is light*" (1 John 1:5). Jesus called Himself "*the Light of the world*" (John 8:12), and I characterized Him as "*the Life [which is] the light of men*" (John 1:4).

Defining light has stymied scientists and philosophers throughout the ages. It has been depicted as both a particle and a wave, while also a phenomenon that is neither particle nor wave, even "something which cannot be imagined." (Wikipedia) Light reveals things, enables life itself, and brings color and vibrancy to the world and all of creation. It is real and knowable, yet transcendent. Can you see why light is such an important biblical symbol, why I and other writers used light to characterize the Divine?

C.S. Lewis said, "Evil is not original nor creative; it is corrupted goodness." Similarly, darkness, the absence of light, is used throughout the Bible to exemplify evil, fallenness and judgment. During Jesus' crucifixion, as the fullness of the Father's judgment for all of humankind's sins came upon the Savior, "*there was*

*darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour (3 p.m.), while the sun's light failed” (Luke 23:44-45).*

Nicolas Batzig said, “The second-to-most severe plague that God sent on Egypt (preceding Israel’s Exodus) was ‘thick darkness.’... Darkness and death are synonymous symbols of the curse [of fallenness]. Without light we would not be able to see the glory and beauty of the world that God created ... [nor] would [anything] be able to grow on the earth to sustain man. ... When the Light of the world came into the world, He came to spread His redemptive light across the face of a world darkened by sin and Satan.”

C.S. Lewis also said, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” How will you shine the light of Christ in this darkened world?

## QUESTIONS

Why does the Bible so often reference “light”? How do light’s properties and benefits in some ways help us think about God? What does the Bible often use darkness to represent?

## PRAYERS FOR GLAD TIDINGS INDIA

Pray for the campers at Forest Home who are praying for and helping to sponsor children in India for Children’s Bible School (CBS) and for the home school families who are receiving follow-up emails about CBS as the mission component for their home school curriculum.

## Sources

- Monday's non-Christian historical references regarding Jesus and His life, along with other insights, were paraphrased from [www.gotquestions.org/did-Jesus-exist](http://www.gotquestions.org/did-Jesus-exist) and [www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-1-John](http://www.gotquestions.org/Book-of-1-John)
- Jay Rogers' article, "Jesus' Cousins Were the Apostles James and John" from <http://forerunner.com/blog/jesus-cousins-were-the-apostles-james-and-john>
- John Ortberg's quotes are from his book, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reprint Edition, 2015).
- John Piper's quotes are from his book, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, Revised, Expanded Edition, 2011).
- The Wikipedia quote is from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light>
- C.S. Lewis' quotes can be found at [www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/cs-lewis](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/cs-lewis)
- Nicolas Batzig's quotes are from "A Biblical Theology of Darkness and Light," <http://feedingonchrist.com/a-biblical-theology-of-light-and-darkness/>

