

GOD IS LIGHT; 1 JN. 1:5 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

HEAVY

▶▶ Two-week break

▶▶ Ascension

GOAL TODAY: ~~ TO COME TO A GREATER UNDERSTANDING ~ OF THE NATURE OF GOD.

▶▶ Important to do. ~~ Because all believers are to be growing in their understanding.

▶▶ Think through the benefits

▶▶ To help us ~ 77

▷▷ 1 Jn. 1:5.

↪↪ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: ~~ God is light, ~ and there is absolutely no darkness in him.

THE BIBLE ~ IS ENVELOPED BY THE IMAGERY OF LIGHT.

BOTH LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY.

▶▶ At the beginning of the biblical narrative, ~ God speaks physical light into existence.

▷▷ And God said, ~ "Let there be light," ~ and there was light." 11 1/14

▶▶ At the end of the biblical narrative, ~ a day which is still future but will arrive, ~ God will obliterate all traces of darkness.

▷▷ Near the end of Revelation we read, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ There will be no more night. ~ They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, ~ for the Lord God will give them light. (Rev. 22:5a)

▶▶ Between these two beacons ~ ¶¶

▷▷ the imagery of light makes nearly two hundred appearances, ~ with light emerging as one of the Bible's major and most complex symbols.

IN THE BIBLE, ~ LIGHT IS USED TO SYMBOLIZE MANY THINGS. ⇔⇔ A brief survey

LIGHT REPRESENTS ~ GOODNESS AND HOLINESS ~ AS OPPOSED TO EVIL.

▶▶ "For everyone who does evil," ~ Jesus explained, ~ "hates the light and avoids it, ~ so that ~ his deeds may not be exposed." (Jn. 3:20; CSB)

IN THE NT, ~ THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ~ IS REPEATEDLY ASSOCIATED WITH LIGHT.

▶▶ E.g., ~ in the passage on holy living that concludes the epistle to the Romans, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ believers are commanded ~ to "discard the deeds of darkness ~ and put on the armor of light."

▶▶ And in Eph., ~ Paul says to believers, ~ "For you were once darkness, ~ but now you are light in the Lord. ~ Live as children of light."

▷▷ To walk as children of light ~ means ~ to live holy lives, ~ being godly, ~ and living righteously in this fallen world. ¶¶ 2/14

THE BIBLE ITSELF ~ IS PICTURED AS LIGHT.

▶▶E.g., ~ the psalmist, ~ in [Ps. 119](#), ~

▷▷talks about how God's word ~ was a lamp to guide his feet ~ and a light to illumine his path.

▶▶And in his [2nd epistle](#), ~ Peter describes "the prophetic word" ~ as "a lamp ~ shining in a dark place."

AND THAT BRINGS US BACK TO 1 JN. 1:5.

OUR FOCUS TODAY ~ TO HELP US ~ COME TO A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD.

▶▶This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: ~ God is light, ~ and there is absolutely no darkness in him.

▶▶The "we" = John and the other apostles.

▶▶The "him" in view is Jesus. ~ Previous context, ~ [verses 1-4](#).

THIS IS THE MESSAGE JOHN SAYS, ~ GOD IS LIGHT, ~ AND THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO darkness in him.

▶▶There are two parts to this message.

▷▷Pt. 1: ~ God is light.

▷▷Pt. 2: ~ there is ~ absolutely ~ no darkness in him.

▶▶And both parts say the same thing in different ways. **↯ 3/14**

THE FIRST PART OF THE MESSAGE: ~ GOD IS LIGHT.

NOW, ~ A TECHNICAL NOTE. ~ AND THIS IS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ONE.

▶▶ The Greek grammatical structure ~ shows that the two nouns, ~ "God" and "light," ~ are not interchangeable.

▷▷ IOW, ~ you cannot say, ~ "light is God."

▶▶ The same thing is true, ~ by the way, ~ when John says in 4:8 of this epistle, ~ "God is love."

▷▷ You cannot say ~ "love is God."

▶▶ To make the nouns in each statement reversible ~ would open the door to the heresy of pantheism.

▷▷ A pantheist ~ is one who believes ~ that everything is God ~ and God is in everything.

▷▷ In pantheism, ~ God does not have an existence distinct from that of the universe.

↳↳ As an example, ~ Hinduism is a pantheistic religion.

▷▷ This heresy fails ~ to distinguish the Creator from the created, ~ a distinction taught ~ in the very first verse of the Bible.

↳↳ In the beginning, ~ God created the heavens and the earth. ⇨⇨ Apart from.

▷▷ Quick note: ~ Omnipresence. ~ Need to make distinction

↳↳ Omnipresence says God is everywhere present, ~ though separate from the world and the things in it.

→→ Pantheism says that God is in everything. ⇨⇨ Present in room ↯ 4/14

▶▶ The grammatical structure John used in both statements ~ ¶¶

▷▷ slams the door shut and locks it ~ against any heretical interpretations of these two statements.

GOD IS LIGHT. ~ THIS ASSERTION ~ STRESSES GOD'S NATURE.

▶▶ The phrase states not merely ~ that God "has light" ~ or gives light, ~ but that He Himself ~ is light.

▷▷ Although He created light, ~ He Himself ~ is uncreated light.

▶▶ Light underscores, ~ among other things, ~ God's glorious character, ~ his unsurpassed moral perfection, ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ his utter separateness from creation and sin, ~ and ~ his absolute truthfulness and righteousness.

▶▶ It also signifies God's self-revelation ~ and finds its highest expression in his Son ~ through whom truth is disclosed to the human race.

THROUGHOUT ITS PAGES, ~ THE BIBLE ASSOCIATES GOD WITH LIGHT.

▶▶ Speaking of our glorious eternal future, ~ Isaiah asserts that ~ the Lord will be our everlasting light.

▷▷ And speaking about the new Jerusalem, ~ John says, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, ~ for the glory of God gives it light, ~ and its lamp is the Lamb.

▶▶ Elsewhere, ~ God is simply associated with light as an image of divine glory.

▷▷ He "wraps himself in light as if it were a robe," ~ the psalmist says. ¶¶ 5/14

▶▶ James refers to God as "the Father of lights."

▷▷ "lights" refers to the heavenly luminaries that are the sources of light for our earth.

▷▷ As "the Father" of these lights, ~ God is their Creator and Sustainer.

▷▷ The sun, ~ moon, ~ & stars ~ declare the nature and essence of God, ~ that "God is light."

BY EXTENSION, ~ GOD WHO IS LIGHT ~ INHABITS A HEAVEN BATHED IN LIGHT.

▶▶ In 1 Timothy, ~ Paul speaks of God as the one ~ "who alone has immortality, ~ who dwells in unapproachable light."

AND NOT SURPRISINGLY, ~ LIGHT REPRESENTS THE MESSIAH, ~ JESUS, ~ WHO IS God.

▶▶ Isaiah prophesied, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; ~ a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness."

↪↪ Jesus applied this prophecy to himself. (Matt. 4)

▶▶ Simeon's prayer, ~ when he held the baby Jesus, ~ calls Jesus ~ "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel."

▶▶ Jesus declared himself to be ~ "the light of the world."

▶▶ Elsewhere he said, ~ "I have come as a light into the world, ~ in order that everyone who believes in me will not remain in the darkness." ¶¶ 6/14

SINCE GOD IS LIGHT, ~~ LIGHT BECOMES A NATURAL SYMBOL FOR SALVATION.

▶▶ **Yahweh is my light and my salvation**, ~ the psalmist testifies (Ps 27:1).

▶▶ In Jesus' discourse on himself as the light of the world, ~ those who follow him are defined ~ ¶¶

▷▷ as those ~ who **will never walk in the darkness ~ but will have the light of life.**

▶▶ According to Peter, ~ in his **1st epistle**, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ believers are those who have been called ~ out of darkness ~ into God's marvelous light.

GOD IS LIGHT JOHN SAYS.

▶▶ God is light by nature and character.

▷▷ Light is what He is within Himself, ~ within His being, ~ essence, ~ nature, ~ and character.

▶▶ God dwells ~ in the ~ splendor, ~ glory, ~ and brilliance of light.

▷▷ Wherever He is, ~ the splendor, ~ glory, ~ and brilliance of light shines out of His being.

▶▶ In fact, ~ there is not even a need for the sun or lamps when God's glory is present.

▷▷ The glory of His presence just beams forth the most brilliant light imaginable.

▷▷ This is why John tells us that, ~ in the new heaven and new earth and the new Jerusalem, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ there will be no more night ~ and no need of lamps or the sun. ¶¶ 7/14

OK, ~ LET'S NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE FOREST FOR THE TREES.

AS WE NOTED, ~ THERE ARE TWO PARTS TO THIS MESSAGE THAT THE APOSTLES received from Jesus and proclaimed to us.

▶▶Part 1, ~ *God is light.*

▶▶Part 2, ~ *There is absolutely no darkness in him.*

▶▶And both parts say the same thing in different ways.

▶▶In the second part of the message, ~ John affirms with the opposite ~ what he has just said positively about God.

BY THE USE OF CONTRAST, ~ HE IS BRINGING OUT HIS POINT MORE STRONGLY.

▶▶TPID, ~ the contrasting statements combine ~ to emphasize ~ *God's absolute holiness.*

NOW LET'S TAKE UP THE SECOND PART OF THE MESSAGE THAT THE APOSTLES received from Jesus and proclaimed to us.

THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO DARKNESS IN GOD.

▶▶Now, ~ I have talked on at least a few occasions about the double negative in Greek.

▷▷Do you recall that?

▶▶Not proper in English.

▶▶But, ~ as I've noted, ~ Greek has a double negative construction that is proper ~ and, ~ more to the point, ~ very emphatic. **↯↯ 8/14**

▶▶ In using it, ~ a NT author ~ is really driving a point home ~ and wants to greatly impress this point on us.

▶▶ Well, ~ John uses a double negative here.

▷▷ He's driving the point home ~ that there is absolutely no darkness in God.

▶▶ That's why I used this translation, ~ because it reflects the Greek text better.

▶▶ Translated very literally, ~ it reads, ~ "and darkness in Him not is, ~ not one bit."

SO IF I UNDERSTAND THIS CORRECTLY, ~ JOHN IS USING A DOUBLE EMPHASIS HERE.

▶▶ Not only ~ does John use contrast to bring out his point of God's absolute holiness more strongly.

▷▷ God is light, ~ and there is absolutely no darkness in him.

▶▶ He also uses a double negative ~ to further emphasize ~ the absolute holiness of God.

▷▷ Again, ~ the very literal trans.: ~~ and darkness in Him ~ not is, ~ not one bit.

WE SEE THIS GREAT EMPHASIS ON GOD'S ABSOLUTE HOLINESS elsewhere. Is. 6/Rev. 4.

▶▶ Isaiah said that the seraphim called to another and said: ~~ "Holy, ~ holy, ~ holy is the Lord of hosts; ~~ the whole earth is full of his glory!"

▶▶ And John tells us ~ that the four living creatures never cease to say, ~ "Holy, ~ holy, ~ holy, ~ is the Lord God Almighty, ~ who was and is and is to come!"

▶▶ "Holy, ~ holy, ~ holy," ~ calls attention to the infinite holiness of God. 📖 9/14

COMING BACK TO JOHN, ~ SO HE USES CONTRAST AND A DOUBLE NEGATIVE ~ TO emphasize the absolute holiness of God.

▶▶ Are we starting to grasp what John is trying to tell us?

▷▷ God is ~ completely, ~ totally, ~ absolutely, ~ holy.

▷▷ Holiness ~ is the essence of God's nature ~ and God himself is the supreme revelation of holiness.

▷▷ His holiness means ~

↳↳ that he is separate from everything that is sinful, ~ utterly removed from the profane world, ~ and glorious in majesty.

▶▶ Are we starting to grasp this?

▶▶ Are we beginning to see ~ that "God is light, ~ and darkness in Him not is, ~ not one bit"?

THIS DOUBLE EMPHASIS WAS NOT ~ AN ACCIDENT ON JOHN'S PART.

▶▶ He really wants us to take this in.

▶▶ He wants us to ponder it ~ and not just pass over it without giving it careful thought.

▶▶ The double emphasis, ~ i.e., ~ the contrasting statements and the double-negative, ~ show us ~ that we are not to take this lightly.

▶▶ We are not to just pass over this ~ without thinking through ~ ¶¶

▷▷ what God is truly like ~ and ~ the implications of this for our lives. ¶¶ 10/14

▶▶Peter and Paul get us started.

▷▷1 Pet. 1:14-16. ~ ~ ¹⁴ As obedient children, ~ do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ~ ~ ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, ~ you also be holy ~ in all your conduct, ~ ¹⁶ since it is written, ~ ~ "You shall be holy, ~ for I am holy."

▷▷1 Thess. 4:7. ~ ~ For God has not called us to impurity ~ but to live in holiness. (CSB)

IN ADDITION TO EMPHASIZING THE ABSOLUTE HOLINESS OF GOD, ~ JOHN'S DOUBLE emphasis here ~ may be designed to guard our minds from the following error.

▶▶I.e., ~ of charging God ~ with being the Author of the sin and misery which exist in this world.

▶▶John makes it clear ~ not in any sense ~ can this be charged to God.

▶▶In Rom., ~ Paul makes it very clear ~ that when Adam sinned, ~ ~ sin entered the world.

▷▷Adam's sin brought death, ~ so death spread to everyone, ~ for everyone sinned.

▶▶And from Gen. 3 and Rom. 8, ~ we see ~ that the whole creation was cursed

▶▶Not in any sense, ~ can God be charged with being the Author of the sin and misery and evil which exist in this world.

JOHN DECLARES, ~ GOD IS LIGHT, ~ AND DARKNESS IN HIM NOT IS, ~ NOT ONE BIT.

▶▶In God's being ~ there is not a single trace of darkness. ⇨⇨ Not even one speck of darkness.

▶▶Not even ~ one small shadow ~ that might dim his truth, ~ righteousness, ~ and holiness. ⇨⇨ 11/14

▶▶ Darkness is often used in Scripture as a symbol of evil and sin.

▷▷ John uses "darkness" seven times ~ to refer to sin in his first epistle.

▷▷ As a symbol, ~ "darkness" conveys ~ moral evil, ~ unrighteousness, ~ falsehood, ~ error, ~ willful ignorance, ~ deceitfulness, ~ and self-deception.

▷▷ In brief, ~ darkness represents all that is not of God.

▶▶ What John is saying ~ is that none of this is in God, ~ not sin, ~ not moral evil, ~ not unrighteousness, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ not falsehood, ~ not error, ~ not willful ignorance, ~ not deceitfulness, ~ not self-deception.

▶▶ God is ~ totally ~ and absolutely ~ untainted by any evil or sin.

▶▶ There is no defect ~ in the character of God.

▷▷ His holiness ~ and purity ~ and righteousness ~ are perfect.

▶▶ He is eternally ~ and mercilessly ~ opposed to sin.

▷▷ The psalmist declares, ~ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; ~ evil may not dwell with you. Ps. 5:4

LET'S NOW TAKE SOME TIME ~ & CONSIDER GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN.

ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, ~ GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN ~ IS WRATH.

▶▶ Rom. 1:18a (CSB). ~ For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people, ~ Paul writes in Romans. ¶¶ 12/14

▶▶ In Eph. 5:5-6, ~ Paul writes, ~ For you may be sure of this, ~ that everyone ~ who is sexually immoral or impure, ~ or who is covetous ~ (that is, ~ an idolater), ~ has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ~ ~ ¶¶

▷▷ Let no one deceive you with empty words ~ [such as, ~ no hell . . .], ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Let no one deceive you with empty words, ~ for because of these things ~ the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience ~ [i.e., ~ unbelievers].

▶▶ Everyone needs to understand. ~ An absolutely holy God ~ must judge sin.

▷▷ If not, ~ John's statement in 1 Jn. 1:5 ~ would be an outright lie.

▷▷ If not, ~ no one could say, ~ God is light, ~ and there is ~ absolutely no darkness in him.

▷▷ On the contrary, ~ "God is light ~ and darkness in Him ~ not is, ~ not one bit."

↳↳ He is not a God who delights in wickedness; ~ evil may not dwell with him.

→→ And therefore, ~ he must and will judge sin.

BUT ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, ~ PRAISE GOD, ~ GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN ~ IS ~ one of redemption.

▶▶ I.e., ~ for all who will confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord ~ and believe in their heart that God raised him from the dead.

▶▶ Later in his first epistle John writes, (1 Jn. 4:9-10) (CSB) ~ ¶¶

▷▷ "God's love was revealed among us in this way: ~ God sent his one and only Son into the world ~ so that we might live through him. ~ Love consists in this: ~ not that we loved God, ~ but that he loved us ~ and sent his Son ~ to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¶¶ 13/14

▶▶ So believers can sing: ~ Till on that cross as Jesus died, ~ the wrath of God was satisfied; ~ For every sin on Him was laid — Here in the death of Christ I live.

▶▶ Paul writes to believers, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ But God, ~ being rich in mercy ~ [pause and give context], ~

→→ because of the great love with which he loved us, ~ even when we were dead in our trespasses, ~ made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him ~ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
~~ Eph. 2:4-6

▶▶ Also to believers, ~ Paul declares, ~ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, ~ Christ died for us. ~ Since, ~ therefore, ~ we have now been justified by his blood, ~ much more ~ shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. ~ Rom. 5:8-9

▶▶ And Paul reiterates that in his first letter to the church in Thessalonica. ~ He points out that Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath.

THE NEGATIVE SIDE ~ AND THE POSITIVE SIDE ~ OF GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN.

▶▶ The negative side: ~ For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people.

▶▶ The positive side: ~ ¶¶

▷▷¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, ~ that he gave his only Son, ~ that whoever believes in him ~ should not perish ~ but have eternal life. ~ ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world ~ to condemn the world, ~ but in order ~ that the world might be saved through him.

▶▶ Don't know ~ So, ~ as a minister of the gospel, ~ I must ask this question.

▷▷ On which side of God's attitude toward sin ~ do you find yourself?