

Jesus: The Divine Light

John 1:6-13

Series #3

Introduction: Take your Bible and join me in John chapter 1, the Gospel of John, chapter 1.

John's clearly stated purpose in writing his gospel is so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we might have life in his name. Every word written, every account shared, every interaction of Jesus given, every theological insight in this book is to that end – that we would believe the truth about Jesus Christ. These first 18 verses of the book are known as the prologue. They are more than a mere introduction of the subject. These 18 verses are the deep well out of which John will draw water for the rest of the book. He introduces truths about Christ, about man, about eternal life, about the world, about God, and about salvation that will be unpacked and laid before us over the next 21 chapters. And all of these glorious truths shared are for the purpose of calling us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Archibald Alexander was one of the first professors of Princeton Theological Seminary when it was established in 1812. After a lifetime of ministry, on his deathbed, he said to a friend, "All my theology is reduced to this narrow compass - Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."¹

There is no higher subject, no deeper theological well, no grander topic, no more needful truth than the truth about Jesus Christ. John has taught us that this Jesus is the Divine Word and the Divine Life. He was co-eternal, co-equal, and co-existent with God because He is God. And now, in John 1:6-13 we will learn the truth about Jesus as the Divine Light! Let's read John 1:1-14 this morning.

In the first 5 verses John has taught us in no uncertain terms that the Preincarnate Word was Divine – He is God. He is co-eternal with God. He is co-equal with God, and he is co-existent with God. This Word was also the Creator of all things, and all life finds its source and sustenance in Him. As the life he is also the light. And this light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it. In verses 6-13, Jesus as the true light is going to be clearly put before us. We have seen that he is the true Word and the true life and now, he is the true light. He is the Word of God because God has chosen to speak through Him. He is the true life because all of that which lives, both now and for eternity, is given life through and in him. And now, he is the true light because by Him all things are clearly seen and illuminated.

I. The True Light is Validated – 1:6-8

- a. We are introduced to this Divine light through the ministry of John in verses 6-8. Now, which John is being talked about here? Is this John the apostle, or someone else? Well, we will find out a lot more about him in verses 19-34 of this chapter,

¹ Ron Prosis, *Preaching Illustrations from Church History*, pg. 118

but the short answer is that this is John the Baptist – the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. The other gospels tell us quite a bit more about his background and his specific ministry and message. But here we are simply told that John came as a witness about the light. And remember, that is the *modus operandi* of John in his gospel. He is teaching us the deep theological significance of these facts and people that the other gospels have introduced us to. And the overwhelming significance of John the Baptist's ministry is that God sent him as a witness to validate the true light. So, we see in verses 6-8 that the true light is validated through the witness of John the Baptist.

- b. This witness has been sent from God, and his name was John. You probably know this already, but nowhere in John's Gospel does he refer to himself by name. Rather, when needed he refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. All of the gospels are anonymous by the way. The authors do not state their name as the author in the book. But it isn't hard to figure out who each of the authors was, and there is no exception here. We know that John the apostle wrote this gospel, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, even though he doesn't use his name in the gospel. There are only two John's referenced in the book – the one is the father of Simon Peter, and the other is John the Baptist.
- c. And these verses are obviously referring to John the Baptist. He was a man sent from God – quite literally – he was sent from God. In Luke 1 we are told about his unique and miraculous conception. His parents were well beyond the childbearing years, but the angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah in the Temple and told him that his wife Elizabeth was going to have a son and he was to name him John. Then after John was born, the Lord loosed Zechariah's tongue and he prophesied about John – how he would be the prophet of the Most High and how he would go before the Lord to prepare his ways (Luke 1:76). And this was in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi about the coming of the forerunner before the appearance of the Messiah. Now, some 70 years after that has been completed – here John the apostle writes to confirm John the Baptist's ministry. He was truly sent from God.
- d. I probably bored you to tears last week with too much Greek, but I told you it was important, and indeed it is. Those two Greek words in particular that play such a significant role in the prologue are the words *eimi* and *egeneto*. *Eimi* has the meaning of existing and being, but the word *egeneto* has the meaning of coming into existence or being brought into existence. In verse 6 we are told that John was brought into existence and was sent from God – the verb *egeneto*. And then in verse 8 we are told that John was not the light – that is the verb *eimi*. He did not exist on his own as the light. He was brought into existence to bear witness about the light. This is super important because there were many who had great respect for John the Baptist – and rightly so. But some of his followers were tempted to think more highly of John than they should have. And so, these verses set that straight. He was sent from God – he was brought into existence by God –

quite literally through his miraculous birth – and he was a witness to the true light.

- e. That was his role in God's good plan for the salvation of lost souls – to be a witness to the truth about the Light. This is a legal and official term. There is no greater truth to be verified and validated than the truth about Christ. If what he says about himself is true, and if the biblical record about him is true – then everything is eternally illuminated by this great light – this Jesus Christ. But if it is all false and made up – well, then we can all go on our self-focused and self-consumed way – eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. So, the Scriptures put before you one witness after another who verifies and validates the truth about Christ. John's Gospel alone is filled with 7 other witnesses to the validity of Christ. The Father is a witness in 5:37; Jesus' words are a witness in 8:18; Jesus' miraculous works are a witness in 5:36 and 10:25; the Spirit of God is a witness in 15:26; the OT Scriptures are called upon as a witness to Jesus in 5:39; the Samaritans who believed in him are his witness in 4:29; and the disciples are his witnesses in 15:27, 19:35, and 21:24. In other words, in the courtroom of eternal truth there is ample testimony to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
- f. And this is John's purpose – his life mission statement if you will. He exists for this purpose – to testify to others about Jesus. This is what is repeated in verses 7 and 8 so that you don't miss it. There is this identical phrase in both verses – to bear witness about the light. He was not sent as a light to draw people to himself. He was not to be the light in the dark which would bring all the moths to his heat. Rather, he was to be the flashlight which pointed the way to the true light of God. He was not to be the illuminating light which shared his own revelation and lit up the dark minds of his generation. Rather, he was to be a witness to the true light who was coming into the world. And this is exactly what we see in his ministry. Just look with me at a few texts here in John's Gospel.
 - i. 1:20, 23 – His first recorded words are in response to the question – who are you? And His response is – I am not the Christ. He takes the steam out of this engine before it ever leaves the train station – I am not the Christ. So, they keep pressing him – who are you? And look at what he says in verse 23. *Read 1:23.*
 - ii. 1:26-27 – They proceed to ask him why he is baptizing, and he uses the opportunity to point to Christ as the one who is coming. *Read 1:26-27.*
 - iii. 1:29-34 – He sees Jesus and he uses it as an opportunity to witness to others about the truth about Jesus.
 - iv. 1:35-37 – He again sees Jesus and testifies once again to the truth that Jesus is the Lamb of God. And his ministry was obviously effective because his disciples immediately left him and followed Jesus.
 - v. 3:22-24 – even after Jesus' public presentation as the Messiah, John faithfully continued his ministry as a witness. He just kept pointing people to the Messiah for as long as the Lord would have him do that.

- vi. 3:25-30 – He is pressed by his disciples about Jesus and about how he relates to the Messiah. And the last words of John in this book are – “He must increase, but I must decrease.”
- g. So, the overwhelming testimony and legacy of John the Baptist is that everything he said, every opportunity he had – he points others to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. He was not the light, but he came to bear witness about the light. In chapter 5, John will actually be called a light – but it is a different Greek word meaning a small and portable lamp. That’s what John was – a small and portable lamp whose job it was to witness to others about the true light who was coming into the world. And he did this so that all might believe through him. He was simply a conduit of truth. A flashlight to illumine the dark path to the true light.
- h. And this puts before us then the purpose and the nature of all true Christian ministry. Christ’s servants are all to follow in the legacy and the example of John the Baptist. They are to all be witnesses of Christ in the world. This is to be your constant occupation and concern – to witness to others of the truth about Jesus the Christ – the Son of God – so that they might believe in his name and have eternal life. The true light is validated by the witness of John the Baptist on the pages of the New Testament, and it is validated by Christ’s followers on the pages of history. They are to bear witness about the light!

II. The True Light is Victorious – 1:9

- a. The true light is validated through John’s witness, and then in verse 9 we see that the true light is victorious. Verse 9 says, “The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.” The word for true means more than just correct versus false. It means that it is the genuine and authentic light as opposed to something false or fake. Jesus is the true and authentic light. And this true light was – it existed all of its own accord – that’s the Greek word *eimi* again. This true light is a self-existent light. And this true light which has always been – is now coming into the world verse 9 says. And in coming into the world this true light gives light to everyone in the world.
- b. To understand this verse, it would help us to think about the scientific facts of light for a minute. When we think of light and darkness we don’t immediately think of movement or energy. Rather we think of something that is either there or not – either the light is on or it isn’t. But, you scientific ones in the room know that light is energy – electromagnetic radiation to be more specific. This energy is moving at the rate of 186,282 miles per second – which is a number beyond our comprehension. God has so designed the human eye to receive these waves of electromagnetic radiation called light and by it to see everything. Every color, every object, every movement is discernible to us as it is illumined by light.
- c. Jesus is that true and authentic light in the spiritual realm. He is the illumination of all that is true and real in the spiritual realm. When the light of Jesus hits the spiritual eye, everything is illumined. Without Jesus everything is dark and unknowable and unclear – but when Jesus shines the truth of all things becomes clear. He says this of himself in 8:12 – “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Certainly, he

doesn't mean the light of life in the physical realm. Whether or not you have Christ you can see the light of life in the physical realm. But in the spiritual realm, you are in the dark until and unless you have Jesus shining. He is the light of the world. He says that again in 12:46 – "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness." So, the illumination of the light of Jesus hits the spiritual eye through the means of faith – of belief in Jesus. We are in darkness in our sinful rebellion against God, but when we are confronted with the light of life and we believe in Him, we are brought from the darkness and into his marvelous light – as 1 Peter 2:9 says. Our spiritual world is lit up by this true light and we see all that is true in and through him.

- d. But what are we to make of verse 9's statement that this true light gives light to everyone in the world? Some have said that this is referring to Jesus in kind of a general revelation way – like Creation. That his truth shines on all through Creation. Some have said that he illumines, or brings to light, in a special way to salvation for all people in the world without distinction. But the best explanation is that Jesus as the true light comes into the world through the incarnation and shines upon everyone. And in shining upon everyone this true light divides the human race between those who reject the light and those who receive the light. This light comes into the world shining its light upon everyone. And this shining light is not ever overcome by darkness. Even those who reject this light, or who don't respond to this light because of their spiritual blindness have the light shining upon them. The light is victorious over the darkness, even if the darkness doesn't comprehend what is going on.
- e. An illustration from the life and preaching of Donald Grey Barnhouse will help here. He is the well-known Presbyterian Preacher from Philadelphia, and he was preaching in Ireland near the beginning of the Second World War. Because of the war they had certain hours that were blackout hours because of potential bombings, and part of that time was during Dr. Barnhouse's planned preaching times. So, he was preaching in the dark. Well, one night, while he was preaching someone accidentally turned on the main switch for the lights and all the lights came back on. Dr. Barnhouse stopped preaching and there was a great commotion as folks scrambled to figure out what was going on. There was a man on the front row who was particularly agitated as he leaned over to the man sitting next to him and asked, "What happened? Why did he stop?" The agitated man was calmed down when he was told that the lights had suddenly come back on accidentally and they were scrambling to figure out what was happening. The agitated man calmed down and waited for the commotion to end. He was of course the only person in the room who didn't know the light had come on because he was blind.
- f. And this man represents the world into which Jesus came – so blind that they couldn't see the light, but the appearance of the light immediately separated those who could see and those who could not. Like this, Jesus, as the true light shines upon all mankind and separates the rejecters from the receivers. The light

of Jesus shines victoriously in this dark world and forces a distinction. Whether people see it or not, the true light is shining.

III. The True Light is Rejected – 1:10-11

- a. This leads quite naturally to what he explains in verses 10-13 about this true light then. The distinction this true light draws is made abundantly clear here. The true light is rejected in one case, and received in another. In verses 10-11 we see the true light rejected. In verse 10 we have the generalized statement of rejection by the world, and then in verse 11 we have the more specific statement of rejection by Jesus' own people. He was in the world, and the world itself was created by him, and yet the world did not know him.
- b. I referenced Romans 1 last week, but that is the clearest testimony in the Scriptures about the revelation of God in Creation and to all mankind, but this truth is rejected and exchanged. The truth about God is exchanged for a lie in the sinful human heart, and instead of worshiping and serving the Creator, we turn and worship the created things. This is the spiritual darkness which permeates humanity from the time of Adam and Eve to our very own day. This is what sin has done to us. We have given ourselves over to this rebellion, and it has made us spiritually blind and full of darkness. This is the testimony throughout the Scriptures about mankind's spiritual state apart from the grace and light found in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - i. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. – 2 Cor. 4:4
 - ii. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. – Ephesians 2:1-3
 - iii. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. – Ephesians 4:18
 - iv. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. – 1 Cor. 2:14
- c. So, this makes clear the general and widespread rejection of the true light. But this is specifically and most obviously true in the rejection that Jesus faced from his own people – or more literally in the Greek – from his own home. He came to his own home and his own people did not receive him. This is the most obvious case of the depravity of mankind ever seen on the pages of Scripture – the rejection by the Jews of Jesus' generation of his light. They had before them the clear and undeniable revelation of the authentic light and life and Word of God – and they said that he must have come from Satan! As bright as the light was, they simply couldn't see it. They were blinded in their sins by the god of this world.

Their understanding was darkened. They were spiritually dead, unable to respond. Their hearts were hardened in the deceitfulness of sin and they were completely ignorant to the truth about Jesus Christ. There could not be a worse rejection of Jesus than this. And he tells us why in chapter 3 – “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.” (3:19)

IV. The True Light is Received – 1:12-13

- a. But not all is lost. After hearing of this most awful rejection of the true light, we come to one of the most glorious words in all of Scripture – the adversative conjunction, “but.” But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. This corresponds to the purpose of John’s Gospel – that we would believe in Christ, and by believing we would have life in his name. In the midst of this deep theological prologue about the Word we see the necessary marriage between theology and response. The issues of belief and the new birth are immediately brought to bear upon the topic of the worlds’ rejection of the true light. Jesus came as the light, not just to be rejected, but also to be received. And to as many as received him, he gave them the right to become children of God.
- b. Receiving the true light is synonymous to believing in his name. This is the positive response to Jesus that we will see promoted throughout this gospel. The disciples will believe, and they will leave all and follow Jesus. The Samaritan woman will believe in Jesus and she will go and tell her whole town that she has met the man who is the Messiah. Thomas will finally and truly believe after the resurrection of Jesus and he will say – My Lord and my God! To receive Jesus is to believe upon Jesus. It means to agree with everything that is true about him as communicated in his name – Jesus. It means that he is God and Savior and Messiah and Lord and Creator and Redeemer and the Lamb of God, and on and on it goes. To believe in Jesus is to receive all that He is as true and to be moved by the knowledge of the truth to faith in Him for salvation and life. This saving faith gives us the right then to become the children of God. In John’s Gospel we are never called sons of God, but we are called children of God. There is only one Son – and that is Jesus. In Paul’s writings we are made sons of God through adoption in Jesus Christ. But here, those who believe in his name are given the right to become his children.
- c. But how does this happen? How is it that the majority of the world and of Jesus’ own people reject him, but that there are some that receive him in faith? What makes the difference between the groups? Are the ones who receive Jesus by faith just the smarter crowd?
 - i. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring

to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” – 1 Cor. 1:26-31

- d. John tells us here that those who believe in the name of Jesus are those who were born. And now we know that he is not talking about a physical birth, but a spiritual one because he is talking about spiritual light which is shining through Jesus. So, we are introduced here to the spiritual birth from above. In chapter 3 we will learn that no one can see, or enter, the kingdom of God if they are not born from above. Instead of unpacking all of what that means this morning, we will wait until chapter 3 – but just look at what verse 13 says. This new birth – this spiritual birth from above – happens at the initiative and by the power of God. It does not happen by the initiative of blood – or literally of bloods in the Greek. In other words, you do not believe in Jesus and show this spiritual birth based upon your physical birth – the blood of your dad and the blood of your mom coming together to form you in your mother’s womb. This is not a natural birth of human genetics. You are also not born again, or born from above, based upon the will of the flesh. This is the desires of the flesh – often associated with the sexual impulse of the human body. The new birth from above is not brought about by some human desire. Nor is it brought about by the will of man – this is conscious decision of the person as an expression of their will.
- e. In other words, there is nothing human about this new birth. There is nothing earthly or natural about it. It is a supernatural birth from above brought about by God. And that is how the verse ends – who were born – not of all these things – but of God. So, those who receive this true light are those who believe on his name. And they believe on his name because they have been born of God and are given the right to become children of God.

Conclusion: The true light has come into the world. Have your spiritual eyes of faith been opened to see this Jesus? If they have not, may today be the day of your salvation. If they have, may you see yourself as John the Baptist now – one who has been given the great privilege to be his witness in every way. Let’s pray.