

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/17/2023 PM  
John 1:6-13 “The True Light Who Came into the World”<sup>\*\*1</sup>  
Series: “*When God Became a Man*” John 1:1-18

Brad Brandt

Main Idea: In John 1:6-13 we learn that there is no one like Jesus, *no one*. This passage uses a contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus to demonstrate that reality.

- I. There are many witnesses (6-8).
    - A. John was a great man (6).
      - 1. He was sent from God.
      - 2. He was like a prophet.
    - B. John had a great ministry (7).
      - 1. His goal was to point people to Christ.
      - 2. His goal was to see people believe.
    - C. But John wasn't the light (8).
  - II. There is only one who is the light (9-13).
    - A. Jesus is unique because of what He *does* (9).
    - B. Jesus is unique because of what He *did* (10-11).
      - 1. He came to the world.
      - 2. He made the world.
      - 3. He was not recognized by the world.
      - 4. He felt the rejection of those who were His own.
    - C. Jesus is unique because of what He *will do* (12-13).
      - 1. He will bring sinners into the family of God.
      - 2. He will do for us what we can't do for ourselves.
- Implications: In light of the fact that there is no one like Jesus...
- 1. We must receive the person of Jesus.
  - 2. We must believe in the name of Jesus.
  - 3. We must bear witness to Jesus.

This morning we began a series, “*When God Became a Man*”. We’re looking this month at the vital text of John 1:1-18. This evening we come to John 1:6-13 in a message entitled, “*The True Light Who Came into the World.*”

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

When God fulfilled His eternal purpose to communicate with a rebellious world, He did so through a word, indeed through the Word. But the world didn’t understand. And so the world took that Word and killed it.

Why is it that people misunderstand and reject God’s Word? Is it because God chose the wrong Word? Is that why people reject the Word, because God’s communication isn’t clear? No. When God sends a message, it’s perfect.

Why then did people reject His message? Why did they nail His Word to a cross and kill it? And why today do people do the same? Why do they not submit their lives to what God has said?

And take it a step further. Why is it that some people *do* hear His Word and believe it? What makes them embrace what they once rejected? Is there something in them that makes those who accept the Word different from those who reject it, or is there reception of that Word due to something external to them?

---

<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> This sermon has been adapted from an earlier message preached at WBC on 12/18/2005 as part of a Christmas series in John 1; see also the John series in 2012.

We're going to find answers to those important questions this evening as we open our Bibles to John 1. This morning we looked at the first five verses of the book and learned that Jesus is the *Logos*, the Word. We also learned that Jesus is the *Life-bringer* who created everything in the universe, and the *Light-bearer* who revealed the way and indeed is the way.

Now as we ponder John 1:6-13, we're going to find out who this Word is, and we're going to see that there is no one like Him, *no one*. This passage actually uses a contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus to demonstrate the superiority of the Word. There are two points to the message. One, there are many witnesses. And two, there is only one who is the Light.

### I. There are many witnesses (6-8).

A witness, of course, is a person who testifies to what he knows. That's what John did. John was a witness.

Notice verse 6, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." That's interesting. In an introduction to a biography about Jesus, the apostle John inserts a reference to a man named John. Why? And what "John" is he talking about, and why do we need to know about John if this is a book about Jesus?

As I mentioned this morning, one of the first things I typically do with seekers is encourage them to read the Gospel of John. And one of the first responses I hear from those who take the challenge is, "What's going on in chapter one? I know that John is writing this book. But who's this 'John' in verse 6?"

The answer, of course, is it's a different John. The author is John the apostle, a man who spent three years as an eyewitness of Jesus, and who at the time of writing (some sixty years later) was serving in the city of Ephesus. The John in verse 6 is the man commonly known as John the Baptist (though John doesn't refer to him as "the Baptist" here or anywhere else in his gospel).

What does the apostle John tell us about John the Baptist? Three things.

**A. John was a great man (6).** "There was a man sent from God." Stop there. We need to go back to verses 1-5 to see an obvious contrast. In verse 1, "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God." Then verse 2, "He was with God in the beginning." Then verse 3, "Through him all things were made." Then verse 4, "In him was life."

That's what's true of the Logos, the second person of the Triune Godhead, the One who is the Life-giver and Light-bearer. The subject of verses 1-5, Jesus the Christ, is none other than God Himself.

But what about the subject of verses 6-8? Who is he? Verse 6 begins, "There came a *man*." Don't miss that. We're talking now about a *man*. A great man, without question, but nonetheless, a man. This isn't the Logos. This is a man, and concerning this man we learn a couple of things in verse 6.

1. *He was sent from God.* The NIV says, "There came a man who was sent from God." Indeed, the word "came" in verse 6 ("was" in the KJV) means "to come into being." Jesus "was," but John "came." Jesus is God, but John was sent from God.

2. *He was like a prophet.* The text specifies that his name was *Johannes* in the Greek, in English *John*. John's name means "Jehovah has been gracious." Prophets were men sent from God. John the Baptist was a transitional figure, a bridge between the Old

Testament and the New Testament. His attire of camel's hair clothing and his diet of locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4) remind us of the ancient prophet, Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:8). And like Elijah, John was a great man.

**B. John had a great ministry (7).** Verse 7 tells us what it was, "He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him." In his ministry, John devoted himself to a twofold goal.

1. *His goal was to point people to Christ.* The KJV's translation, though wooden, captures the repetition that exists in the Greek text, "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light." John was a *witness*—that's what he was. And he came to *bear witness*—that's what he did.

The *witness* theme runs throughout this fourth gospel. The apostle John presents witness after witness to substantiate the deity of Jesus, at least seven witnesses in fact.

We see the witness of the *Father* (5:37). There's the witness of *Jesus Himself* (8:14). There's the witness of the *Holy Spirit* (15:26). John also mentions the witness of Jesus' *works* (5:36), the witness of the *Scriptures* (5:39, 46), the witness of *those with whom Jesus came into contact* (like the woman of Samaria in 4:39, and the man born blind in 9:25, 38, and the disciples in 15:27). And it begins here with the witness of John the Baptist.

There is a legal ring to this gospel. Testimony is a serious matter, and it's required to authenticate the truthfulness of something or someone. It's not always easy to discover the truth about someone. That's the purpose of witnesses, to substantiate the truth.

John was a witness. Simply put, his goal in life, which turned out to be a very short life of approximately thirty years, was to be a witness, to point people to Christ. Why?

2. *His goal was to see people believe.* As verse 7 specifies, "So that through him all men might believe." Bearing witness isn't an end. It's a means to an end. The end isn't a paycheck or notoriety. It's to see people believe, to bring them to faith.

Faith in whom? Faith in the light. "He came to bear witness about the light (8)."

Again, I find it intriguing that John the apostle would insert this paragraph about John the Baptist right in the middle of his introduction of Jesus. Why would he do that? The answer may have to do with John's followers.

John knew what his role was, but apparently, after his death some of his followers didn't. They began to elevate John.

Remember, the gospel of John was written more five decades after John the Baptist died. There are historical indications that there was actually a sect who revered John the Baptist. We find a hint of that in Acts 19:3-4. Do you remember what Paul found when he first visited Ephesus as a missionary? Luke writes, "There he found some disciples and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?' 'John's baptism,' they replied."

Perhaps John the apostle faced the same thing, or worse. Perhaps he knew there were people who gave John the Baptist a place that (as Barclay puts it) "encroached upon the place of Jesus himself."<sup>2</sup>

That's nothing new. One of the great barriers we face in evangelism is that people settle for substitutes. They're not interested in Christ because they've given someone or something else the place that Christ alone deserves in their lives.

---

<sup>2</sup> William Barclay, *John*

Maybe as John tried to share Christ with some people, he saw them reject his message because of their inappropriate elevation of John the Baptist. So John the apostle corrected the confusion. How? He didn't depreciate the Baptist. He just exalted Christ.

Suppose I took you outside on a clear, summer night. And suppose I asked you to lie on your back on a grassy hillside and look at the magnificent stars in the night sky. And just imagine that while you're gazing at the Big Dipper, I take my flashlight, use it as a pointer, and direct your attention towards Polaris, the amazing north star.

And suppose I tell you some amazing facts about this great light we call the "North Star," how that it does not appear to move, and that it's some 2,000 trillion miles away. Would your response be, "Wow! What a beautiful flashlight!"?

No. It may be a nice flashlight, but it doesn't compare with that magnificent light in the sky called Polaris. In fact, the purpose of the flashlight was to point our attention to the real light, and once that's accomplished, we forget the flashlight.

So it was with John, and so it should be with us. John was a great man, and he had a great ministry. But he wasn't the light.

**C. John wasn't the light (8).** "He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light." Throughout his gospel, John takes great care to show the subordinate role of John the Baptist. In verse 8, we're told John wasn't the light, only a witness to the light. In verse 20 we see John the Baptist denying that he was the Christ. In chapter three, when the Jews came to John and told him what Jesus was doing, they expected him to resent the intrusion. But instead, he announced, "He must become greater; I must become less (3:30)." In 4:1 the text points out that Jesus gained more disciples than John. And in 10:41 the people recognized that Jesus did things John never did.

No, John wasn't the light. That's not to demean John. Jesus Himself later gave this commendation of John, saying in 5:35, "John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light."

But John wasn't the light. What was he? According to Jesus, he was a lamp. What does a lamp do? It displays light. It exists so that light may be seen through it.

This was John's assignment. And by application, ours too. People ought to see the Light (which of course is Jesus) shining through us. Is that happening in your life? Do people see Jesus clearly in the way you live and talk? Do they see Him at school? In the break room at work?

My friends, John is an excellent model for us, for like John, we exist for Jesus, to point people to Him. If we've come to know Jesus, we are called to make Him known to others.

That's what a witness does. He is always looking for God-sent opportunities to tell people about Jesus. A witness knows that people need to hear about Jesus. Not about me, but *about Him*.

That raises a question. Why do people need to hear about Jesus? This brings us to John's second point. One, there are many witnesses. Two, there's only one light.

## II. There is only one who is the light (9-13).

As we compare what our text tells us here about Jesus and John, we can't help but be amazed by the contrast.<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ *was* from all eternity (1), but John *came* (6). Jesus Christ is *the Word* ("logos," 1), while John is a mere *man* ("anthropos," 6). Jesus Christ

---

<sup>3</sup> See Hendriksen, p. 76.

is God, while John is commissioned by God. Jesus Christ is the real light; John came to testify concerning the real light. Jesus Christ is the *object* of trust, while John is merely the *agent* through whose testimony men come to trust in Christ (8).

Jesus is in a category all by Himself. He is unique, for three reasons according to John in verses 9-13 (one present, one past, and one future).

**A. Jesus is unique because of what He *does* (9).** "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." Ponder that word *true*. The Greek language has two very similar words translated "true" in our English Bibles. The first is *alethes*, which means "true as opposed to false" (such as  $2 + 2 = 4$ ; is that true or false? the answer is *true*) The other is *alethinos* which means "real or genuine as opposed to unreal" (like Coke which is the *real thing* as opposed to imitation colas).

It's the second word that John uses here. Jesus is the *real* light. Yes, there are other lights flickering in the world, each claiming to offer you a path out of the darkness. And sad to say, there are lots of people following those imitation lights.

It's true. Satan masquerades as what? An angel of *light* (2 Cor. 11:14). But there's only one who is the real light. The Logos is the only *real* light.

And what does He do? John says He "gives light to every man." James 1:17 says that every good gift comes from above, from the Father of lights. Commentator Leon Morris says, "There is a general illumination of mankind. It is the common teaching of the New Testament writers that God has revealed something of Himself to all men (Rom. 1:20), sufficient at least for them to be blameworthy when they take the wrong way instead of the right way." John attributes this work of general illumination to the Logos.

Jesus, the Logos, gives light to every man. That's not to say that everyone sees the light, for they don't (and for reasons John will discuss in verse 13). But the light is there nonetheless because that's what Jesus does. He is the One who "gives light to every man."

**B. Jesus is unique because of what He *did* (10-11).** "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." John mentions four past activities connected to Jesus.

1. *He came to the world.* He was in the world. John should know, for he saw him and spent three years with him. The Son of God visited the world *in cognito*.

2. *He made the world.* "The world was made through him ["by" in the KJV]." That's quite a feat to put on your resume, isn't it? He made the world (also in verse 3).

3. *He was not recognized by the world.* "The world knew him not," as the KJV puts it. Unthinkable! The Creator came, and His creation didn't recognize Him.

The innkeeper didn't recognize Him, and so He was born in a stable. King Herod didn't recognize Him, and so He was taken as a babe into hiding in Egypt. Later, Mary and Joseph's other children, Jesus' half-brothers and sisters, didn't recognize Him and accused Him of being out of His mind. The crowds that loved His free meals didn't recognize Him, and in the end forsook Him. So also the religious leaders didn't recognize Him and even attributed His works to the devil. And finally, Pilate and the Roman soldiers didn't recognize Him and executed Him.

Every day He was on planet earth, the Logos was an enigma to the world. And that was especially true at the cross. It didn't make sense to the people. The God-sent Messiah shouldn't die a criminal's death, should He? No, but He did.

And why? Because that was God's plan, His eternal, grace-shaped plan. God sent His Son to take the place of lawbreakers, and God's Son paid the penalty that lawbreakers deserve to pay. This is what happened on the cross. And when it happened the world didn't recognize it, for the world didn't recognize Him.

That will *not* be the case when He comes the second time. Revelation 1:7 says, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen."

4. *He felt the rejection of those who were His own.* Verse 11 explains, "He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him." Keep in mind that this is His world. He built it. Barclay paraphrases verse 11, "It was into his own home that he came, and his own people did not welcome him."

We could rightly translate the opening words, "He came home." When Jesus came to this world, He did not come as an alien. He came home. And He didn't come to North America or China or Russia. He came to Israel, to the place and people He had chosen and blessed for more than fourteen centuries. Had He come to some other nation and been rejected, it would have been bad enough. But He came home, to the people who should have known He was coming, to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the very nation He Himself had chosen.

He came to His own. But His own didn't receive Him. It started with *no room* in the inn, then 33 years later, the world said to Him, "There's *no room* on the planet for you!"

So He destroyed those rebels, right? He gave those ungrateful rejecters what they deserved, didn't He? No, He didn't.

You say, "Well, that's what I would have done." Me, too. But that's what makes Jesus so unique, for instead of giving us what we deserve, He took what we deserve, the very wrath of God, so we don't have to experience that wrath. Ever.

At this point we might *miss the point*, by thinking, "Well, that's terrible what the Jews did, and what the Romans did. Jesus' came to them and they did not receive Him. That's a tragic shame." And it was, but so is this. When people today refuse to receive Him.

If verse 11 is tragic beyond description, then verse 12 is amazing beyond description. Listen to these astounding words, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

This is the third reason. It's not just what He does and did.

**C. Jesus is unique because of what He *will do* (12-13).** And what will He do?

1. *He will bring sinners into the family of God.* Yes, Jesus brings *sinners*, people who have broken God's law and deserve to be cast into hell forever. Jesus brings sinners *into the family of God*. Not into second-class citizenship, but right into the eternal family of God.

What sinners? Does Jesus' death as a substitute bring all sinners into the family of God? No. What sinners does He bring?

Verse 12 gives the answer, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." What sinners? Those who receive Him, and believe on His name.

According to verse 11, some sinners do not receive Him. According to verse 12, some sinners do receive Him.<sup>4</sup> Those are the only two options. We either don't receive Jesus (as in verse 11) or we receive Him (as in verse 12). *Rejection or reception.*

And with the two options come two results. What happens if we receive Him? What happens to *all* who receive Him? He gives "the right to become children of God." Wow, a place at the table in the Father's family! But what happens if we don't receive Him? Then we remain outside His family and have no right to call ourselves His child.

I think these two actions are synonymous. To "believe" in Jesus *is* to "receive" Jesus, to receive Him as a person, to enter into a personal relationship with Him whereby we trust Him to be our Savior and Lord. To "receive Jesus" and to "believe in His name" are not separate actions but two sides of the same coin.

We're called to believe in His name. What name? "Give him the name Jesus," said the angel in Matthew 1:21, "because he will save his people from their sins." *Jesus*, Yeshua, meaning, "The Lord saves."

To believe in the name of Jesus means you agree that He alone is the One who can save you. You cannot save yourself. No one else can save you either. The Lord saves.

That's how a person becomes a child of God. Contrary to popular thinking, we are not all God's children. We are born into this world as someone else's children, the devil's. Oh, we don't know it for we are blind to our condition, but it's true. "You belong to your father, the devil," Jesus told some religious people in John 8:44.

How do we become children of God then? John tells us right here. We must receive the Word and believe in His name.

But there's a huge problem, and it's universal. When we enter this world, we are dead in our sins. What does *dead* mean?

If I go to funeral home and offer a dead person a gift, what will he do with it? Not a thing. A dead person is powerless to receive your gift, right?

This is our problem. We are "dead in our trespasses and sins," according to Ephesians 2:1. Dead people don't receive gifts, do they?

They do *if* their heart starts beating again. And that's precisely what God does for dead sinners. His "Spirit gives birth to spirit," as Jesus will tell Nicodemus in John 3:6.

Verse 12 tells us what we must do. Verse 13 tells us what God must do in order for us to do what we must do.<sup>5</sup>

What's true of God's children? You'll notice that verse 12 ends with a comma. Verse 13 says those who have become God's children (NIV) "were born not of natural descent (literally 'not of bloods'), nor of human decision, or of a husband's will, but born of God." The ESV says, "who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

---

<sup>4</sup> See F. F. Bruce, pp. 37-8. F. F. Bruce suggests that right here we see a summary of the gospel of John: "Over the first main division of the Gospel, to the end of chapter 12, we might write the words, 'his own people did not receive him', but over the next division (chapters 13-17) we might write the words which immediately follow in our present context: 'But as for those who did receive him....' --and it is of those that we read at the beginning of chapter 13, 'He had set his love on his own people who were in the world, and he loved them to the uttermost.'"

<sup>5</sup> Verse 13 states, "Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. Some commentators follow the example of Irenaeus, translating the subject as singular, "to him who was born," suggesting that verse 13 is talking about Christ and His virgin birth. But the oldest manuscripts use the plural.

This verse is so significant. Barclay says this is a Jewish phrase for the Jews believed that a physical son was born from the union of the seed of the father with the blood of the mother. But birth into God's family is quite different from physical birth.

Divine birthright has nothing to do with who you know, or who your parents were, or what nationality you hold. Those things are spiritually irrelevant.

No one gets into the family of God because he has "connections." There are no group rates! Your parents can't get you in. Your friend can't do it for you.

I talked with someone about their need for Christ and they responded, "I used to go to church all the time." But that person missed the point, didn't he? The fundamental issue isn't church. It's his need to be born again into God's family. Church is good, for sure, for church is where we learn about the One who gives new birth. But you can go to church and not know Him. You can go to church for lots of years and not know Him.

So then, how do we become God's children? How does it happen? The end of verse 13 tells us. We must be "born of God", literally, "born from out of God." God must do something for us that we cannot do for ourselves. Only God can produce spiritual birth.

John develops this truth of God's sovereignty in salvation throughout his gospel.

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him (John 6:44)."

"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe...This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him (John 6:63-65)."

Paul said the same thing in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."

And James put it this way in James 1:18, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth."

And Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:23, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."

In his epistle of 1 John, John elaborates further. 1 John 3:9 says we have been "born of God." In 1 John 4:7 we read, "Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." And in 1 John 5:1, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

To enter God's family, you must be born of God. Have you been? "How can I know?" you ask. Our text tells us. You'll know it because you have received His Son and believed in His name, and you received His Son and believed in His name because He gave you a new heart that would receive Him and believe in Him.

Do you see how dependent we are on God, my friend? We need Him not only to provide the gift of salvation, but also to enable us to accept the gift. And by His grace, this is what He does for those He has chosen.

This is the wonderful truth about our God.

2. *He will do for us what we can't do for ourselves.*

Implications: In light of the fact that there is no one like Jesus...

1. *We must receive the person of Jesus.*
2. *We must believe in the name of Jesus.*
3. *We must bear witness to Jesus.*