

June 30, 2024 by Steve Brandon



The Light

John 1:6-13

- 1. Witness about the Light (verses 6-8)**
- 2. Rejection of the Light (verses 9-11)**
- 3. Reception of the Light (verses 12-13)**

I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of John. This morning we will be looking at verses 6-13. These verses talk about Jesus being the "light" that has come into the world.

I listened to a podcast some years back that spoke about the importance of light upon our culture and civilization. Particularly, the light bulb, because one of the things it's allowed us to do is work deep in to the night. Man's working time use to be from sun-up to sun-down. In the north, your time was limited since you'd no longer have light to use once it got dark. With the invention of the light bulb, work times were extended! Factories could be open 24/7 if they wanted to, allowing an increase in productivity. Such is light! These verses are going to speak about light. As significant as light has been to our economy and our progress as a world since being invented, so also Jesus being the light has radically transformed our spiritual lives.[\[1\]](#)

Now, it's important to realize that these verses come in the middle of what is commonly called, "John's Prologue," (verses 1-18) which is more or less an introduction to the book. However, last week, I told you how these words were more of an "overture" to the book of John than merely a prologue. That is, these verses not only introduce us to the book of John, but they also introduce us to the major themes in the book of John. They give us a "preview" if you will of what is coming up in the book of John.

"John's Overture" introduces to us the themes of how the Word was God (1:1-3). How Jesus was the light (1:4-5, 7-8, 9). How the light of Jesus is contrasted with the darkness of the sin of mankind. How John the Baptist came to bear witness of Jesus (1:6-8). We see themes in the overture of life (1:4), belief (1:7, 12), rejection of Jesus (1:10-11), and reception of Jesus (1:12). We also read in the overture how Jesus is full of grace and truth (1:14, 16-17). These verses also mention the incarnation of Jesus, how Jesus came to live among us. There is also a mention of the new birth in John's overture.

Technically, an "overture" isn't used for describing literature. It usually describes the opening number of a ballet, an opera, an oratorio, or a musical or film. But the idea fits, of John's words giving us a head's up of what is to come later in the gospel. I believe that this has some implication upon how to preach this passage. It ought to be preached with the entire book of John in mind, because that was on John's mind as well. So, as we work through these verses this morning, I want us all to think about how the themes we read about will come up again in the gospel of John. So, let us read the first 18 verses of the gospel of John. As I do, I want for you to listen afresh for these themes.

John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 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. 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.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Before we dig into these verses let's read John 20:31: "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." We will read that verse often since it is the whole purpose of the book of John. He is writing these things so that you all would believe the Jesus is the Christ. That is my aim, that you would believe that Jesus is the Christ because believing you will have life in his name!

Two weeks ago, we looked at the first five verses of John's Overture. We saw the Word described as being pre-existent with God. We saw the Word present with God. We saw the Word was none other than Jesus, himself. We saw the creative power of the Word, and how life was in the Word. and how Word was victorious. This morning the focus of our text will be upon the Light. We will see how John bore witness about this Light. We will see how this Light was rejected by many, but received by some.

As a result, my message this morning is simply entitled, "The Light." I trust that you can see the abrupt change of topic in verse 6. The first five verses are talking about Jesus. Then, in verse 6, we see a new character introduced to another character in the story of Jesus. His name was John. Verse 6 tells us that he was "sent from God." This is different from the Word in verse 1, who was identified as God. Here we see a man sent from God. His name was John. This is not "John" the author of the book. This is "John the Baptist," the one who baptized people when they repented of their sins. In verse 7, we see his mission, or why he was sent by God.

John 1:7

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

This is the basis of my first point this morning:

1. Witness about the Light (verses 6-8)

That was John's purpose: to witness about the light. This is what we see John doing in the gospel of John. His purpose in life was to bear witness to Jesus. Look down at verse 19:

John 1:19

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

John said, "I am not the Christ." He said, "I'm not Elijah." He said, "I am not the Prophet." They said, "Who are you." He said, "I am the voice." That is the voice of preparation. The voice that Isaiah foretold would come before the Messiah. The voice that prepares the way for the Messiah. He understood that God had sent him to be the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3, which speaks of the voice who cries out making straight the way of the Lord. "Lift up every valley and lower every mountain. Make the rough places a plain. Then "the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:5).

That's was John's purpose, to bear witness about Jesus, that all might see it and believe.

John 1:7

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

We see his witness coming in verse 29. "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'" (John 1:29). That's how John was witnessing about the Light, by pointing out to people who Jesus was. Jesus was the Lamb of God, sacrificed upon the cross for our sins. Not one of the many lambs who were sacrificed by the Jews down through the ages, but the one Lamb of God, who was sacrificed for our sins!

The life of John constantly pointed to Jesus.

John 1:30-34

This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 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."

This is the witness of John, that Jesus ranks above him (verse 30). That Jesus was the one anointed by God (verse 32). That Jesus is the Son of God (verse 34). This was the missions of John's life, to bear witness about Jesus. In fact, when you read the gospel of John, this is almost the only thing we see John doing, pointing to Jesus. Look at verse 35. "The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus" (John 1:35-37). This is what John was trying to do. He was bearing witness about Jesus,

John 1:7

....that all might believe through him.

So, it was good that the disciples of John would follow after Jesus, this is why he came. John came to point others to Jesus. He came to be a witness about the Light, that all might believe through him. John has written these things, that we too, might believe John's testimony, and believe in Jesus. John's mission in life was to bear witness about the light. He shows up twice in the gospel of John. Once in chapter 1. Once in chapter 3. So, turn over to chapter 3. We pick up the context of John's comments in verse 22.

John 3:22-24

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized (for John

had not yet been put in prison).

These verses simply set the scene. Both Jesus and John are carrying out their ministry. Jesus was in the Judean countryside, which was in southern Israel. John was John is carrying about his ministry in Aenon near Salim, which was further north. Then we hear of a theological dispute:

John 3:25-30

Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.

John knew his place. He was the friend of the bridegroom. He was only a groomsman He wasn't the main show. John was there to support the groom. Jesus was the bridegroom. He was the focus of attention. John knew it well. John knew his place. He said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). This is John's mission: to see Jesus lifted up, and to see himself drift away. John's ministry was not about John. It was about Jesus, the Light of the World. Jesus confirmed that John was a witness. "You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth" (John 5:30). Everything that John the Baptist said about Jesus was true. The gospel of John is calling us to believe that Jesus is the light.

John is mentioned one more time in the book of John. In chapter 10, when Jesus traveled to the place where John was baptizing. We read in John 10:40-41, "[John] went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." Everything that John the Baptist said about Jesus was true. The gospel of John is calling us to believe that Jesus is the true Light.

Going back to chapter 1, the "true light" is mentioned in verse 9.

John 1:9-11

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 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.

This brings us to my second point, which I am calling:

2. Rejection of the Light (verses 9-11)

John was a "Witness about the Light (verses 6-8)" but not all believed. In fact, there were many who rejected the light that Jesus brought to earth. The book of John presents a battle between light and darkness. The true light shines everywhere Jesus goes in this world. But sadly, the world didn't know him. His own people, the Jews, rejected him. Verses 10 and 11 bring out the irony. Jesus made the world, and yet, he was not welcomed into the world that he created. Jesus came to his own people, the Jews, those descended from Abraham, those looking for the Messiah. Yet, he was rejected, even by his homies. Look again at verse 9.

John 1:9

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

In this sense, Jesus is like the sun, which is the source of light on this earth and gives light to everyone. Jesus gives light to everyone, because Jesus gave life to everyone.

John 1:3-4

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Yet, sadly, this light and life were rejected by the world. We see this in verse 10.

John 1:10

He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

It doesn't take much to see how this is illustrated in the book of John. In chapter 5, Jesus healed the man at the pool of Bethesda. He had been paralyzed for 38 years! Jesus told him, "Take up your bed, and walk" (John 5:11), and he did. He took up his bed and walked home to his family that night, for the first time in 38 years! The Jews tracked him down to see who it was that had healed him. "The man told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him" (John 5:15). And we read in John 5:16, "This is why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath." They should have seen the healing power of Jesus, and concluded that (at the bare least), that Jesus had come from God with such healing power! Yet, they didn't see this because they didn't know him. Instead, "the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him" (John 5:18).

Here we see Jesus

John 1:10

....in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

We see the 2. Rejection of the Light (verses 9-11). The light was shining! The light was healing the diseased! And they rejected it. We see this in chapter 6 as well. After Jesus feeds the 5,000, crowds followed after Jesus. Jesus was right to the point with the crowds who followed

after him: John 6:26 says "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."

The fact that there was a crowd following after Jesus was proof positive that Jesus, had, in fact, fed the crowd. Then Jesus tells them in John 6:27 "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." As the narrative continues, Jesus explains how he is the bread of life (John 6:35), and how they are to believe in him (John 6:29). Yet, they didn't what Jesus had to say about himself. "After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him" (John 6:66). That is, many who had seen Jesus and heard him teach and had followed him to hear his teaching, turned their back on him. They rejected him. Why? Because:

John 1:10

....the world did not know him.

In chapter 1, and verse 11, we read,

John 1:11

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. And who could be closer to his "own" than his own family?

Yet, we read in chapter 7 "For not even his brothers believed in him" (John 7:5). The hatred against Jesus was so strong that at one point, the Jews even "picked up stones to throw at him" to kill him (John 8:59). We see that at the end of chapter 8 (verse 59). That was after a long argument between Jesus and the Pharisees, which began in John 8:12 by Jesus asserting, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The Pharisees didn't like what Jesus said. They said, John 8:13 "You are bearing witness about yourself, your testimony is not true." So, they argued about the truth. Jesus told them, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). But they rejected his claims, thinking that they weren't enslaved, and therefore had not need to be set free! Jesus insisted, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36)! Then, the insults went back and forth. They said, "Abraham is our father" (John 8:39). They accused him of being born out of wedlock (John 8:41). Jesus said, "Your father [is] the devil" (John 8:44). They said, "You are a Samaritan" (John 8:48). They said, "You have a demon!" (John 8:52). The light was shining bright upon these Jews. But they hated him! They tried to kill him. This is what John is previewing for us in verses 9-11, The 2. Rejection of the Light. Jesus was shining bright! They rejected Jesus.

In chapter 15, Jesus distills it all down as he thinks about leaving the world. He says:

John 15:18-25

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

"They hated me without a cause" (Psalm 35:19). Jesus had walked among the Jews as the light of the world, yet, they rejected him. They didn't believe. Even though Jesus did many miracles in their presence, healing the sick (John 4, 5), feeding thousands (John 6), giving sight to the blind (John 9), raising the dead (John 11), they still did not believe. Instead, they rejected him, turned him over to Jesus, and used their political clout to force Pilate to put him to death. This is irony of ironies, that

John 1:9-10

The true light, which gives light to everyone....He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

Instead, they rejected him and put him on a cross to die! Yet, none of this caught Jesus by surprise. He said "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). This is John's message to us! Believe in Jesus, so that you may have life in his name! Don't be like those who rejected Jesus. Be like those who received Jesus. This takes us to our third point this morning:

3. Reception of the Light (verses 12-13)

We see this in verses 12 and 13. In contrast with those who rejected him, John writes,

John 1:12-13

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.

I trust that you see there that to receive Jesus is to "believe in his name." And to "believe in his name" is to give you the right to become a child of God! What an amazing promise this is! That we can become one of God's family by faith in Jesus! Later, John would reflect upon the

meaning of this and be blown away! He wrote "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). In other words, what sort of love is this, that the God of the universe, would take us into his family, to be one of his own? That is exactly what God has done for all who believe in Jesus. He has brought us close, into his family. To be one of his people! This comes through the spiritual new birth.

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about this in John, chapter 3. "Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus asked how this was possible? "Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born" (John 3:4)? It is certainly not possible on the physical realm. Jesus directed Nicodemus to the spiritual new birth. "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).

When we receive Jesus, when we believe in his name, we are transformed, born again, born from above, if you will. This metaphor speaks about a transformation. Paul said that in Christ, we are a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Peter says that we are "called out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus uses the metaphor of the new birth. Then he says to Nicodemus, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8).

In other words, when it comes to begin born again, it's not your work! It's the work of the Spirit. It's the Spirit, blowing like the wind, who comes into your life, transforming you so much so that it seems as if a new birth has taken place. How does this take place? Not because you were born Christian, not because your parents and grandparents were Christians, not because you made some choice to follow Jesus, not because of your own will-power. But because the Spirit blew in your life. You are born again through God's sovereign grace in your life.

This is the picture of the new birth. It's like our first birth. None of us chose to be born into this world. God brought us into this world. and God will bring you into the spiritual world through a similar process. This is what John says,

John 1:13

who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

You say, how do I know if this is true of me? Verse 12. Did you receive Jesus? Have you believed in his name? Though many rejected the light throughout John's gospel. There are those who received the light as well. The disciples received Jesus. In chapter 1, we see the first disciples receiving Jesus. Andrew encountered Jesus and found Peter, his brother and said, "We have found the Messiah" (John 1:41). Nathanael said to Jesus, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

The woman at the well received Jesus. After encountering Jesus at the well, and learning about the living water that Jesus gives (John 4:13-14), she returned to her village and told them "He told me all that I ever did" (John 4:39), persuading many in the town to believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world (John 4:42). When an official's son was sick, he came to Jesus, seeking help. When Jesus said, "Go; your son will live," the man believed (John 4:50). When he found out that it was at the very hour that Jesus said these things that his son was healed, he believed and all his household (John 4:53).

The man born blind received Jesus. He didn't know who it was who had healed him. But when Jesus later revealed himself to the man, he said, "Lord, I believe" and "he worshiped him" (John 9:38). Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, received Jesus. Even before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world" (John 11:27). Because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many of the Jews were believing in Jesus (John 12:11).

Even Thomas, the doubter received Jesus. Thomas was the one who demanded proof: "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." Eight days after saying this, Jesus said to Thomas, John 20:27, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe (John 20:25-27). Thomas did so and said, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

The gospel of John is filled with those who believed in Jesus and received the light and with those who rejected the light. John was purposeful here. He wants to say the light was in the world not all was hunky dory. Lots of people hated him. But there are others who received him. And John says "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). That's the big question for all of you today is this: Do you believe in Jesus? Have you received him?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 30, 2024 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] <https://www.npr.org/2024/06/05/1197959235/history-of-light-classic>.