

John 1:6-18

I. Prologue (1:1-18)

A. The Word (1:1-5)

B. The Light (1:6-18)

We are first introduced to Jesus as the *Light* in vv. 4-5, and the Apostle John is going to continue with this title in the next section. But first, we are introduced to John the Baptist in v. 6. While we will consider John's baptism of Jesus next week, he is brought to our attention in passing today. We don't learn much of John the Baptist at this point, unlike Luke's record, which tells of the angel's announcement to his parents of his coming birth, as well as the birth itself and his circumcision in Luke 1.

The Apostle John isn't about to make John the Baptist the main character, though. After all, *this man came... to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe* (v. 7). Every other person in John's Gospel is secondary to Jesus Himself, because Jesus is the One upon whom people must believe. And, here again, we have the first mention of this central theme of *belief* that will run throughout John's Gospel.

Verse 10 returns to what we read in v. 3, that *the world was made through Him*. Jesus came into the world, *He came to His own* (v. 11), but they *did not know Him* nor *receive Him*. Despite His teachings and His works, despite the number of Old Testament prophecies He fulfilled, those in the world – and the Israelites in particular – rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Yet, as we continue on into v. 12, John notes that some did receive Him, which he then qualifies as *those who believe in His name*.¹

Also in v. 12, we have for the first time in the Gospel what the result of that belief is: *the right to become children of God*. Believing in Jesus brings us to the point that we are brought into God's family. We become His children. The relationship between the believer and God goes from one of estrangement to one of friendship. These *children of God*, however, aren't born in the same manner in which we come from our mothers' wombs. *Children of God* aren't born as if they were *of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*; rather, *of God*. John will return to this idea when he recounts Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus in 3:3-8. But for now, Morris notes:

“All human initiative is ruled out. People are born ‘of God’; they can be born into the heavenly family in no other way.”²

It doesn't matter what our genealogical history or societal roles are. There's nothing that's inherently passed down from generation to generation, or inherently better about any “classification” of people. The way to *become children of God* is through believing in Jesus or, as John also puts it, receiving Him.

This is why Jesus came to earth. In v. 14, we read that *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. John's already established that Jesus is fully God (v. 1c); now, he seeks to establish that Jesus is fully human. The eternal Son of God wrapped Himself in flesh and became human so that He could redeem humanity

¹Note the word here is *receive*, not *accept*. To receive something implies that you are taking a passive role; someone else is actively giving. To accept something, however, takes on a more active role. The Word of God speaks of the former, not the latter. Belief is also seen as something that is received from God (Eph 2:8)!

²Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 90. Grant Osborne adds: “This new-creation reality, this spiritual rebirth, cannot be brought about by human passion or family planning. Only God can accomplish it. It comes about not by natural means but by supernatural intervention. We participate via faith in Christ.” *John*, 32.

(cf. Heb 2:14-17). The Greek word for *dwelt* is the same root word as *tabernacle*. The tabernacle and temple may no longer house the presence of God, but Jesus has that covered!

John goes on to write that *we beheld His glory*, the glory of God Himself. Jesus is unique in His person and work. We are familiar with the phrase *only begotten* (NIV: *one and only Son*) because of John 3:16, but John uses this word a total of five times in his writings (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). As the Son of God, Jesus fulfills a unique purpose in God's plan; He is a unique person of the Triune God, although He shares in God's *glory*.

From Jesus' *fullness* we have received *grace upon grace* (v. 16, NASB). John contrasts the ministry of Jesus with the ministry of Moses, writing *that the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* (v. 17). That makes sense, since Jesus reveals the Father, who Himself is *full of grace and truth* (v. 14).

Note the balance here! *Grace and truth*! The Mosaic Law was heavy on the truth as it revealed the character of God, and there was indeed grace to be found because it was God's revelation of that truth. We weren't owed that understanding! Nevertheless, the Law itself couldn't bring someone into a right relationship with God. The Law was good at pointing out our sin (Rom 3:20) and pointing us to Jesus (Gal 3:24), but the reason we needed Jesus was because the Law couldn't deliver us from our sins on its own! But now, Jesus has come, and He has brought both grace and truth in great abundance. Both are a part of any Gospel ministry. Grace without truth is licentiousness and unloving; but truth without grace robs us of hope, and is equally unloving! This balance that exists perfectly in Jesus should be a goal in our own lives, as well. May we not have one without the other!

John ends his prologue in v. 18 when he writes:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

If we want to know the Lord, we must look to Jesus. John's Gospel is all about teaching people who Jesus is and what He's done. He is *the way, the truth, and the life*. *No one comes to the Father except through Him* (14:6). Who better to represent the eternal God than His own Son, who is *the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person* (Heb 1:2). *Jesus is the image of the invisible God* (Col 1:12). And God has now *spoken to us by His Son* (Heb 1:1). A new grace, a new covenant, has been announced!

Will we listen to John's record of what Jesus had to say?