

## John's Prologue: The True Light

John 1:3-13

**[Pray] phd seminars on it... three weeks - you're smart... graduate next week**

**Who is Jesus Christ, really?** We are continuing to look at this all-important question.

**Attempts to re-invent Jesus have been happening for 2,000 years.**

**Today, the media's assault on the biblical Jesus, the post-modern's negative attitude toward knowing truth, the anti-Christian agenda in universities, and America's collective ignorance of the Bible, have produced a generation of cynics and doubters, as it pertains to the biblical Jesus and biblical Christianity.**

**It's imperative that we recognize and revere the biblical Jesus, not reinvent him.**

- The Prologue reveals some **very important characteristics** of the real Jesus.
- Last week we took a close look at John 1:1-2...
  - Jesus' **preexistence**, his **unique relationship** w/ the Father, & his **divine essence**.
- Today, we're continuing to look at the identity of Christ, as John now speaks Jesus as **the True Light**.
- **If you are unsure about Jesus, or skeptical of Jesus and of the church, we want to invite you in to this study of John's gospel, in which we are taking a careful look at Jesus.**

**Why is the identity of Jesus important?** Let me state two obvious ones:

### **1. His identity is central to the Christian faith.**

**Have you ever observed that the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' don't include anything about the teaching or earthly ministry of Jesus?**

- **They go from his birth – to his death!**

#### Apostles'

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
**born of the Virgin Mary,**  
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

#### Nicene

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
**he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.**  
**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;**

- **Did they not think that those three years of ministry were important?! Of course not.**

- The teaching of Jesus and the miracles of Jesus serve to explain **who He is, and what He came to do.**
- Many say today, **“It doesn’t matter who Jesus is. Just live by his ethical teaching. The golden rule, etc.”**
- **The early Christians didn’t even include his teaching in the creeds!**
- What mattered *ultimately* was who He was, and what He came to do.

If you want a version of Christianity that doesn’t believe that Jesus was fully God and fully man and that he died for sinners on the cross, and rose from the dead, **then you don’t have historic Christianity!**

## 2. His identity is central to your view of salvation.

- You can’t separate **Christology from soteriology.**
- Have you ever met someone who said, **“I don’t know what I believe about the incarnation ... about Jesus. But doctrine doesn’t matter anyway. What really matters is that you live a good life.”**
- The problem is that **they have just stated is a doctrine!** A belief.
- And what is that belief? **That this person doesn’t need a Savior.**
- This person essentially believes **salvation by works.** **“I can be good enough. Who Jesus is, is not of ultimate importance.”**

If you think his identity is essentially unimportant, than you don’t believe the gospel. You have a different concept of salvation.

The identity of Jesus is central to historic Christianity, and it’s central to our view of salvation. Therefore our task as his witnesses is to say, **“Sir (Mam) consider Jesus.”**

Let’s consider him by looking at this passage in 3 sections...

### #1: Jesus: The Creator Who Gives Life/Light (1:3-5)

John turns his attention from Jesus’ relationship to *the Father*, to his *relationship to creation*.

The Pre-existent Savior (v. 1-2) is also the Self-existent Creator (3).

#### A. Creation (1:3)

- All things were made through the Word, Jesus.
- It sounds redundant; but the point is to be comprehensive.
- If there was a made thing, He made it.
- He is the agent of Creation.
- This is consistent with the rest of the NT (cf., Col 1:15-17)

#### Hebrews 1:1-3

**1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, *through whom also he created the world.* **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

#### Revelation 4:11

- 11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created.”

## 1 Corinthians 8:6

yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist,  
and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

### Application:

- **Respect Creation.**
  - After all, it is our Lord’s work!
  - If you come to my house and start throwing trash everywhere, that’d be wrong.
- **Recognize who made you.**
  - He made the **macro** things and the **micro** things.
  - He made the shape of your face, the color of your eyes, and your hair (to whom it applies!).
  - You are therefore, valuable!
- **Enjoy creation, but worship Creator.**
  - Creation must not be the object of worship because it isn’t worth it!
  - **Creation is dependent, not divine.**
  - We owe our existence to Jesus.
  - He made us, we are accountable to Him, and must live to worship him.

## B. Life/Light (4-5)

Now, John introduces us to two great themes in his book: life/light.

- He refers to them in both a physical and spiritual sense in this book.

Jesus is “Life” in that he is **self-existing**.

- He was not created. “the Son also have life in himself” (5:26).
- As fully divine, Jesus **is the giver of life**.
- “Where does life come from? That’s a basic question.”
  - Doctors don’t give life ultimately. We don’t give life ultimately.
  - Ultimately, life comes from the Creator: “In him was life”
  - **Life is sourced in a person.**

“Light” is also an echo of the creation account (**Gen 1:3**), as it was God’s first creative act.

Later in the gospel Jesus proclaims that he is the “light of the world” (**Jn 8:12; 9:5**) and the “life” (**Jn 11:25, 14:6**)

- In these later passages, John is more concerned with light and life as expressions of his **incarnation** and **salvation**.
- Here, the context of verses 1-3 is to be taken **more broadly**.
- Life/light refer to **creation** (v. 3), but John is likely preparing us for the idea of salvation as light and life.

**“that life was the light of men.”**

The One who has life, gives *light*. Or, the True light gives light.

- In verse **9-13**, the True light came into the world – that is in his incarnation.
- This pre-incarnate light in the world came *from* The True light.
  
- So I take verses 4-5 to refer to “**general revelation**” we sometimes call it.
- **There are characteristics of our Lord imprinted on creation.**
  - Light in people: goodness, beauty, wisdom, etc.
  - The fall damaged but didn’t destroy the imago dei.
- We have the marks of the creator on us (cf., Acts 17).
- We know of the reality of God through nature and conscious. (Rom 1.19-20)
- There is an inner witness in people that point them to Creator.
- We are made in the imago dei, and therefore, we are lead to ask deep questions about he existence and meaning of life.
- **Bavinck: “In the absolute sense, nothing in creation is atheistic.”** Light is present.

**“The Eternal Word is the Creator of everything, including you. What’s more, since life is sourced in Him, your experience of life comes from Him. And the life that He gives to you, serves as a light for you, revealing something in you: that there is something or someone beyond you; namely, *Him*.” (Art Azurdia)**

### **Verse 5**

The darkness has not “understood it” or has not “overcome it.”

- Both are true. Maybe we could translated it “the darkness has not **mastered it**” – understood or overcome it.
- Why can’t they understand it? Sin has affected us.

### **Three Important Ideas:**

**#1: A Serious War.** The light is met with **tremendous resistance.**

- We find here **two opposing kingdom’s** introduced in **1:5**.
- Darkness is the enemy of the light.
- “People love darkness rather than light.” (**3:19**)

**#2: A Superior Power.** Light/Darkness are **not** opposites of equal power!

- The darkness **can’t overcome** the light.
- No person can ultimately put out this light in his/her hearts.
- **The most hardened atheists can’t put out the light.**
- Does that mean everyone is a Christian? **No.**
- Why? They **suppress** the truth (Rom 1). But they can’t put out the light.

**#3: A Supernatural Need.** We need divine intervention to see and surrender to Jesus.

- John is a brilliant writer. He’s echoing Genesis again.
- **Genesis 1:2 – darkness.** Then there’s a confrontation with darkness, then... “Let there be light!” and **the darkness surrenders to it!** “And there was light.”
- Why do some people surrender to the light rather than suppressing the light?
- Answer: **God turns up the voltage.**
- God does a work of **new creation.**

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

This is a work of God's amazing grace in our lives to help us see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Maybe that's you. You realize there's something or someone beyond you; you are trying to suppress it, turn against it. But God keeps turning up the voltage, pointing you to Jesus Christ.

- A friend in D.C. several years ago... "Who is I am?" He couldn't put out the light. He didn't suppress it, but sought the truth... He says, "Read John." He did. He became a Christian.

**My friend, embrace the light of the world!**

## #2: John the Baptist: A Witness to the Light (1:6-8)

We are introduced now to one who testified to him: John the Baptist.

- This may seem like an interruption, but I think it's deliberate.
- This paragraph transitions from **creation to incarnation/salvation** (v. 9ff).
- It also shows us why the light can't be put out – **God will have a witness to it.**

**6: He was "sent from God,"** a way to identify him as a prophet.

- He's an Elijah-like prophet.
- He has a particular task...

**7-8: To be a witness**

- The object of his witness was *the light*.
  - Many in John's day were enamored by John the Baptist, and couldn't move past him to Jesus... He is showing that John the Baptist is a messenger, not the Messiah.
- John the Baptist didn't spend his time talking about himself.
- Why was he so resolved? Because he want people to *believe*.

John the Gospel writer's concept of "light" is *developing*.

- He has moved from a person's inner light, to the incarnate light, Jesus.

## 3 Words about Witnessing:

**#1: A Sovereign Plan.** God's purpose is to have witnesses to the light.

- **God is a sending God.** He sends us into the world to bear witness (John 20:21).
- John the Baptist plays a unique role in redemptive history. In many ways he serves as an example for the rest of us.
- One of the reasons that the light of Jesus can't be put out is that **God has had witnesses to the light throughout history.**
- If you are turned off by the idea of "witnessing" then please think again.
- God saves people through a *witness*.

- I know it may feel awkward; it may be uncomfortable or even frightening at times; but God has purposed to use people just like us, to bear witness to the light.
- We are God's evangelistic strategy: men and women empowered by the Spirit, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

## #2: A Strange Practice. It may sound strange to tell people **to look to the light!**

- Why do we witness to the light?
- That sounds strange to you? Light supplies its own proof!
- **If you go out on the street and proclaim: "Look, there's the sun!" People will think you've lost it! They can see it already!**
- Why does the light of the world need a witness?
- The world suffers from **spiritual blindness.**
- Therefore we witness to Jesus **prayerfully**; that eyes would be opened.

## #3: A Self-less Pursuit. John's witness involved **making much of Jesus not himself.**

- Notice the word "**not**" (v. 8). He was "**not** the light."
- That's an important word to trace through John the Baptist's ministry.
- Notice verses **19-20**. "I am **not** the Christ."
- 1:27 – "I am **not** worthy to untie his sandals."
- John knows its all about Jesus, not himself.
- Summary statement, "He must increase, I must decrease." (**3:30**)
- John knows he's not the main thing! **He's like the one singing the national anthem before the game!** He's not the main event!
- He's not the Groom. He's a witness.
- He embodies this verse: "Not to us oh Lord, but to your name give glory" (**Ps 115:1**).
- Paul: "What we proclaim is **not** ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (**2 Cor 4:5**).

## The best witnesses are **self-less and Christ-exalting.**

- The reason many don't witness faithfully is that they are self absorbed and self-exalting.
- They key to being a faithful witness it to get over yourself and marvel at the glory of Christ.

## What makes Christianity unique is Christ.

And those who have found salvation in him know this.

We are NOT commending ourselves to people or a particular moral system to people; we are presenting a *person*: Jesus.

John Stott tells the story of a young man in India, Sundar, who grew up hating Christianity, despising it as a foreign religion. At age 15, he publicly burned one of the gospels. But three days afterword, he encountered Christ in a remarkable way, and soon came to understand the gospel clearly. He was converted and then became a traveling preacher. One day in a Hindu college he was confronted aggressively by a lecturer, who asked him what he found in Christianity that he didn't have in his own religion.

"I have Christ," he replied.

"Yes I know," continued the lecturer, "but what particular principle have you found that you did not have before."

**“The particular thing I have found,” replied Sundar, “is Christ.”**

**Like John the Baptist, may we continue exalting Christ to a world in need.**

### **#3: The World: Two Responses to the Light (1:9-13)**

#### **The True Light (9)**

- **“was coming”** or literally: **“The true light ... *coming* into the world.”**
  - A phrase John uses to refer to the incarnation, spelled out clearly in v **11**, **“he came.”**
- **True Light:** Jesus is called **“the true Bread”** later when comparing him to the manna.
  - What he means is that Jesus is the **true Light**, he is superior to all pre-figuring lights.
  - **Jesus is the climactic light.**
  - **He is the saving light.**
  - **He is God’s ultimate revelation of Himself.**
- Read **John 12:35-36, 46.**

**In the OT, the coming of the Messiah was often conveyed by light. (Isa 9:2).**

**The True Light, the Messiah, causes a *reaction*.**

- **Two examples: hunting and chapstick.** Light causes a reaction.
- **Some fly to the light like a moth, others flee from it like a cockroach.**
- The light polarizes the entire human race.
- All of humanity is divided into two groups, the *rejecters* and *receivers*.

**How do people group the massive human race today? Nations. Races. Politics.**

- The most important categorization according to the Bible is what you do with Jesus Christ.
- This is the all-important decision: Will you be a **rejecter** or a **receiver**?

#### **Group 1: The Rejecters (10-11)**

**10: The world didn’t know him! This is fallen humanity.**

- Notice what a theology book we are building in the Prologue!
  - **Trinity, Christology, Creation, Imago Dei, Fall, and Salvation.**
- **This is a sad: people didn’t recognize the one who made them.**
- This is spiritual darkness. It’s a tragedy.

**11: Not only did the world not recognize him, but even the Jewish people didn’t welcome him!**

- They had prepared for ages – since Abraham! But they didn’t welcome him.
- Out of the entire human race, God chose to reveal himself to a particular family, a people. He gave land, the law, and the temple. God gave them pictures and promises that prepared the way for the Messiah.
- **Israel should have rolled out the red carpet, and paid him homage.**
- **But no – born in a manger, Herod tried to destroy him, a refugee baby in Egypt...**
- **When his ministry began, they wanted to hurl him off the side of a cliff.**

- **They called him a devil. They tried to stone him. They plotted to kill him. They rejected him; a friend betrayed him, another denied him, and the others forsook him. The crowd mocked him, and then they crucified him.**

At the end of **the first half of the book**, we see this.

- First half of the book, the Book of Signs, 3 years of ministry, largely among Jewish people, we read in **12:36** – he departed from them.

Then in **13:1ff**, we then pick up his **private instruction** with the disciples, those who would receive him (with the exception of Judas).

## **Group 2: The Receivers (12-13)**

**12a:** There's another group! "But to all who **believe** in his name..."

**Some were Jews and some were Gentiles.**

**What was most important was this... They "Believe in his name"**

- Or better rendered, "**believing into his name**"
- This is **not** just a *mere agreement to facts about Jesus*.
- The **demons** have a great understanding of who Jesus is!
- Believing here means **resting the whole of your life on all that He is**.
- Theology itself can't save you; **you must rest in Jesus**.

**12b:** The **status** of those who truly believe....

- "the right to become children of God"
- **He gave them a "right" – a privilege which they had no right to claim previously.**
- **A right to a new status...**
- **He made them something they were not!**
- Same root word when talking about the pre-existent Christ "becoming flesh" – Deity took on humanity.

It is true that God has made **every person**, and you might call them "children of God," and you could in some sense call the **Jews** "God's children" by birth; but John's saying something else: **no one is born into the true family of God.**

## **Being a true child of God means knowing God as your Father!**

You are loved with the Father's love.

- He brings you into this intimate relationship.
- He provides your needs even before you ask.
- **Muslims have 99 names of God. They have a rosary that has 33, 66, or 99 beads.**
- **And they recite the "99 attributes" or "excellent names of God."**
- **Some of those names we would use: Creator, Provider, Protector, Peace, Wisdom, Holy, etc.**
- **A mythical proverb says 100<sup>th</sup> name unknown... except one creature: the camel (!) which explains the Camel's look of ineffable superiority – his size & that little smirk.**
- **We say "No, the name you are missing is known to Jesus – it's Father."**
- **The Muslims don't know God as a loving Father.**



To be a Christian is to know God as “Father.” “Abba Father.”

- We are not called to imitate God as Father. We should exhibit his character.

**Being a true child of God means you belong to the family of God.**

- We have brothers and sisters.
- Joshua: “Are all these people our family?”
- When I travel the world, one thing that always hits me – is how **we have family all around the world.**
- Serbia... Nigeria... South Africa... Ukraine... Texas- family ... Yankees fans!
- Duke fan/Yankee fan - Palka - only the gospel!

**How do we become a child of God? Receive Jesus. Believe in Jesus.**

**13:** This is a divine perspective... Verse 12 is about what we must do: Believe/Receive....

- **But of God** – Both perspectives are true.
- Believe, and you will become a child of God.
- **And if you truly believe, you can be assured it’s because God has worked in your life to cause you to believe.**
- We’re saved through the pleasure of his will.

**The entire human race has been divided between the rejecters and receivers.**

- **John 3:18-19**
- His coming into the world compels a response from everyone.

**Applications:**

**#1: Right now, you either belong to the rejecters or the receivers.**

- There is no third category.

**#2: Your belonging is determined by whether or not you’ve believed in Jesus.**

- It’s not about your marital status, whether you’ve been in prison, your race, your financial status, or whether you have grown up going to church services or not.
- Have you truly believed?

**#3: If you are a rejecter, you can become a receiver today.**

**Jesus Christ is of such importance that the entire human race pivots on him.**

*We can’t ignore him  
We don’t deserve him  
Now Believe in him  
And come adore him*