

## The Witness – *John 1:6-13*

**Introduction** – The prologue to John’s gospel is full of themes that will be developed throughout the book. We already have been introduced to *life, light, and darkness*. Another word and theme is *witness*; John will use this word twenty-nine times. In the synoptics we learn quite a bit more about John the Baptist; this gospel will focus on some unique aspects of this man’s ministry. He came to be a witness and he did so with a particular goal, for he was “*sent from God*.” Matthew Henry says, “*John was like the night watchman that goes round the town, proclaiming the approach of the morning light to those that have closed their eyes, and are not willing themselves to observe it*.” Keep that picture in mind as we go through these verses. Or consider John to be like your irritating pre-dawn alarm clock going off. It’s morning. It’s time to get up. You can’t stop the morning from coming but you can turn off the alarm and cover the head with your pillow – for a while...

**The Goal of John’s Witness** (vv6-9) – Mark tells us that John came “*preaching a baptism of repentance*” (Mark 1:4) but that can be twisted and misunderstood. The evangelist (this is often used to clarify which John is being spoken of) says that John came “*to bear witness of the Light*” and for the purpose “*that all through him might believe*.” (v7). The gospels are not at odds with one another because repentance and faith go together. They are two sides of the same coin. To repent is to “*turn around*” and to believe is to “*turn towards*.” The baptizer (not “the Baptist” – another side note) was not only interested in calling out their sin but in pointing them to the One Who could take care of that sin (v29). He was more interested in winning the person than winning the argument. Both Johns had the same goal (v7, 20:31) and this has historic significance. John wrote his gospel in Ephesus, where there was a time where a twisted understanding of the baptizer’s message had seemed sufficient without a Savior (Acts 19:1-7). To this day there is a small heretical group that exalts John the Baptist and not Jesus.

Here is a perennial problem. People often become followers of messengers rather than the message. Ministers are not priests; they are not mediators between God and man, they aren’t celebrities. They are witnesses (v8). John’s ministry was enormous (Mark 1:4-5). It was a firestorm causing trouble with the religious and political authorities (1:22, Mark 6:17-18). This was God’s perfect preparation for the coming of the Light by making people aware of the depth of the darkness that was their own lives. But the goal wasn’t to be impressed with the messenger. The goal wasn’t to be impressed with the message. The goal was to be impressed with the need for and to turn to the Savior. This should be the goal of every minister and every message.

V9 – “*He (Jesus) was the genuine Light coming into the world, which gives light to every man*” (my translation). There may be other lights in the world, ideas or things, good things, that satisfy us partially and for a time. But there is only one “*true light*” just as there is only one sun that rises in the morning, and only that sun gives light to every man (see also 1 John 2:1-2). Some want an atonement that touches every last man, woman and child – but is ineffectual. Pessimistic Calvinists want the atonement to be effectual – but only for a few dozen folks. John preaches an effectual cross which will manifest itself as nothing less than the salvation of the world (3:17, Rom 4:13).

**Thick Spiritual Blindness** (vv10-11) – The very One who made the world (the people of the world) didn’t know Him, didn’t recognize Him, and couldn’t see Him (v10). Even His own special covenant people would not receive Him, like servants of a vineyard rejecting the owner of it (v11, Matt 21:33-43). The first reason for the rejection is because they did not want Him (Rom 3:10-11). The second reason is that they were unable to recognize Him because of their spiritual blindness (2 Cor 4:3-4, 1 Cor 2:14). This is what we see in sin and unbelief; it is the inability and undesirableness of acknowledging and giving thanks to the One Who created you – even when He comes to you – even when great witnesses have been given to His holiness, truth, and grace. “*Professing to be wise, they became fools...*” (Rom 1:22).

It is worth noting that the “they” (the unbelievers) are just like “us” (the believers) when we sin. Our sin is an act of ungratefulness to the One we claim has come to destroy the works of the devil as we try to build it up again. “*Shall the very sin which was the murderer of our Beloved be harbored by us? The very thought is treason...These sins of mine were my best friend’s worst enemies...Our sins were the nails and our unbelief the spear*” (Spurgeon), and yet here we go again, playing with those nails.

**Receiving and Believing** (vv12-13) - *"We are great sinners – but we have a great Savior."* – Ryle. These verses are a summary statement of the gospel. Though we could not and would not receive Him, even so, He was sent, and brought about such a change that it would be called being *"born"* and *"born again"* (3:3). This is creation-language again. Just as darkness cannot overcome the light, and just like He created all things out of nothing, just like we had nothing to do with our first birth, no say in the matter, so, and praise God, we had nothing to do with this second one. The ones who received Him and believed in His name were the ones who were born of God, *"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man..."*

This receiving and believing go hand and hand. It is not simply receiving Jesus like a warm fuzzy spiritual blanket. It is not simply believing in words, a series of propositions. It is coming to a Person, defined by the Word as your Savior and the Savior of the world. He is prophet (Word), priest (Lamb of God), and King (Lord of all). He is offered as your Savior and friend. He will deliver you from your sin, from its powerful hold and its eternal condemnation. He stands in the way of God's holy wrath upon you as a perfect atonement and intercedes for you against all the accusations of the devil. *For as many as received Him, to them He gave the right/authorization to become children of God* (with all the rights, privileges, and obligations).

Do you hear the alarm clock? What will you do?

---

Dave Hatcher – August 22, 2021