

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Word and John the Baptist**

#### **John 1:6-8**

When I was young I would not find it difficult at all to sit down and read a book in the dimmest light. Unfortunately as we age this is not true at all. Now I find myself much more dependent on a good table lamp than I was when I was younger. And sad to say, there are times when even the light of a 100 watt bulb right beside my chair may not be enough light for me to see something that I could have easily seen as a child.

Now when it becomes obvious to me that I don't have enough light to see something of interest, I usually go to our hallway cupboard and get out one of our super flashlights, hoping that a more direct beam of light might offer a little bit more help.

This dynamic of bringing more light to bear on that which seems dim in order to see more clearly is also necessary at times in the spiritual arena. This takes us back to our study of the Gospel of John.

What have we learned so far in our study? We have learned that the Apostle whom Jesus loved, a member of Christ's inner circle, wrote the fourth Gospel. We have also learned why he wrote this Gospel. John wrote this Gospel so that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and be saved according to his purpose statement in John 20:31.

How important is it that we believe Jesus is the Son of God, or in other words "God the Son?" If we reject the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, or in other words "God the Son" then we have rejected Christ, as He has been revealed in the Scriptures, and we cannot be saved. The deity of Christ is therefore an indispensable theological truth that John not only emphasizes in his purpose statement in John 20:31 but throughout his Gospel.

Accepting the deity of Christ helps us to understand why Christ is referred to as the "Word." He is called the "Word" because as God, He alone can reveal or explain God to mankind. What does **John 1:18** say? **"No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."**

The introduction which goes from John 1:1 through John 1:18 simply spells out for us in greater detail what is clearly stated in John 1:18. The question that we have been asking ourselves in our study of the introduction is this: "What makes Jesus qualified to reveal God to man?"

First of all, what we learn about the Word and God in John 1:1-2 makes Jesus qualified.

What were those things we have learned about the Word and God? *We learned that the Word like God is eternal.* Look at the first phrase of John 1:1. **"In the beginning was the Word,"** or in other words "At the beginning of time was continuing the Word." What else did we learn about the Word and God? *We learned that the relationship between the Word and God throughout eternity was close.* What did the verse say? **"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God,"** or in other words "the Word was face to face with God." And what was the last thing that we learned about the Word and God? *We learned that the Word was God.* Isn't this exactly what the verse tells us? **"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."** Then John goes on in verse two to essentially repeat what he has just shared in verse one.

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What makes Jesus qualified to reveal God to man? First of all, what we learn about the Word and God in John 1:1-2 makes Jesus qualified. What else qualifies Jesus to reveal God to man?

What we learn about the Word and creation in John 1:3-5 makes Jesus qualified. What were those things we have learned about the Word and creation? *We learned that all things came into being through the Word.* Look at **John 1:3**. What does it say? **"All things came into being by Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."** Every created thing owes its existence to the Word without exception. What else did we learn about the Word and creation? *We learned that the creation of the heavens and the earth is Christ's initial attempt, as the Word, to reveal God to all of mankind.* What did John 1:4 say? **"In Him (the Word) was life, and the life was the light of men."** The life that was unleashed through Christ at creation was the first light made available to men to lead them to acknowledge the majesty and power of God. What else did we learn about the Word and creation? *We learned that Christ's initial attempt to reveal God to mankind through creation has only, at best, been marginally successful.* What did John 1:5 say? **"And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."**

Obviously if mankind was going to be pointed to God and ultimately to salvation itself, a greater light would have to be provided. This will lead us quite naturally into our next section of verses within the introduction.

What makes Jesus qualified to reveal God to man? First of all, what we learn about the Word and God in John 1:1-2 makes Jesus qualified. And secondly, what we learn about the Word and creation in John 1:3-5 makes Jesus qualified.

And thirdly, what we learn about the Word and John the Baptist in John 1:6-8 makes Jesus qualified to reveal God to man. This is the section of Scripture we will be dealing with this weekend. Let me read this section of Scripture for you. **"There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. (7) He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. (8) He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light."** Who is the "John" referred to in this passage? Everyone agrees that the John being referred to in this passage is John the Baptist. And this conclusion will be apparent to us I believe as we study these three verses.

But why is the Apostle John introducing John the Baptist at this point in **John 1**? The world needed more light than what the Word provided through creation which is clear from **John 1:4-5**. The Word, or in other words Jesus, certainly responded to this need for more light by orchestrating a number of incredibly powerful supernatural events spread over a very long period of time that are recorded for us in our Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, the prophets themselves who recorded for us these events were a part of this additional light supplied by the Word.

But by far the most brilliant display of light that the Word was prepared to provide, in His attempt to penetrate the darkness spoken of in John 1:5, would certainly be His own coming. His coming would be the super-duper flashlight.

But before the light from this super-duper flashlight could actually become available something else had to happen according to the Scriptures and this something had everything to do with John the Baptist. This is why the Apostle John introduces John the Baptist at this point in this chapter.

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And this leads us to a second thing we learn about the Word and John the Baptist.

So what do we learn about the Word and John the Baptist from this passage? First of all we learn that John the Baptist was sent by God, or in other words we learn that John the Baptist was sent by the Word (John 1:6). Again, let us look at the very first phrase. **"There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John."**

The Apostle John in this statement is accomplishing two things. First of all he is making sure his readers understand clearly that John the Baptist should not be in any way accorded the same honor that he accorded the Word. He was able to accomplish this by making it very clear that John the Baptist was simply a man. What did John say? **"There came a man."** On the other hand he is also concerned that John's true greatness should not be diminished either, so he goes on to say, **"There came a man, sent from God."** This statement immediately makes John special. But he was not simply special, he was special in a very unique way. What do I mean by this? This leads us to a second thing we learn about the Word and John the Baptist? Not only was John sent from God but we learn that John the Baptist came to bear witness of the light, or in other words he came to bear witness of the "Word" in a way different than other prophets (John 1:7). Let us now look at **John 1:7. "He came (John the Baptist) for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light."** When we initially read this verse it does not seem to separate John the Baptist from other prophets who also bore witness to the coming Messiah. But this is far from the truth.

John the Baptist was that special "voice" that Isaiah prophesied would prepare the way of the Lord in Isaiah 40:3. What does this verse say? **"A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'"** But how do we know that John the Baptist is that voice?

First of all, we know that John the Baptist is that special voice because he said that he was in John 1:23. What were the words of John the Baptist according to the Apostle John in **John 1:23? He said, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said."** Secondly, we know that John the Baptist was that special voice based on the testimony of Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3 and Luke 3:4.

What did Matthew say? **"For this is the one (referring to John the Baptist) referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!'"**

What did Mark say, **"As it is written in Isaiah the prophet (referring to John the Baptist), 'Behold, I send My messenger before your face, who will prepare your way; (3) The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.'"**

What did Luke say, **"As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the Prophet (referring to John the Baptist), 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.'"**

John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets and acted as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. In **Matthew 11:13** Jesus said, **"For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John."** Other Old Testament prophets proclaimed a message that explained the

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person and work of the coming Messiah. John the Baptist's mission was to announce His coming. This is the way we can say that John was uniquely special among all of the other prophets.

Whenever a head of state enters an official gathering, he or she is preceded by a fanfare designed to prepare the people to offer respectful attention. Hence, the Queen has the trumpeters of the Household Cavalry; the President of the United States has the marine band playing "*Hail to the Chief*." This is standard procedure. So we should have no difficulty understanding the appropriateness of having a herald prophetically being assigned to the coming of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords as He enters the human stage at His first advent. And who was this herald that had been prophesied in the Old Testament? John the Baptist was that herald.

This was the reason why John was sent into this world. Obviously he performed this mission with distinction. He invested himself fully in carrying out this mission. He held nothing back. Certainly this will become more apparent to us as we continue our study of the Gospel of John, which has much to say about John the Baptist.

How about ourselves? Can we say that we have performed our mission with the same distinction? John the Baptist's mission was to announce the coming of the Lord. Our mission, as Christians is to call people to follow Him. What was the instruction of Christ to His followers? "Go make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

John the Baptist had a mission that he carried out with distinction. We also have a role that hopefully we will carry out with distinction as well.

If we are going to do this, if we are going to carry out our mission with distinction then we must not let ourselves make the excuse that we are simply too busy to take an active part in this work. How can we, who have been sent on a mission by Christ, think that this is an acceptable excuse?

In addition to this, if we are going to carry out our mission with distinction then we must not let ourselves become satisfied just because at some point in our lives we tried to point someone to Christ. We should never be satisfied as long as we are drawing breath. Certainly John the Baptist would never in his lifetime have been satisfied with whatever effort he might have expended, even if that effort was Herculean in pointing people to Christ. How do we know this?

Let us again look down at the verse and continue reading **John 1:7**. "**There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.**" John the Baptist was a very impressive figure in the performance of his mission. I would hope that we would all aspire to be so faithful. But could there be any potential downside to those who serve the Lord with such distinction?

John the Baptist would not consider his mission of bearing witness to the light as complete until everyone had come to believe in Christ (John 1:7). What did the Apostle John say about John the Baptist? "**He came as a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.**"

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Let me ask you this question. How might people respond to John the Baptist when they, through their observation of his single-mindedness conclude that he was in fact the voice crying in the wilderness? I believe that the answer to this would be that they might very well be drawn to give him more honor than he rightfully deserved or even wanted. I believe this is the reason why John goes on to write **John 1:8**.

Look at **John 1:8 "He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through Him."** Why did John want to make it clear that John the Baptist was not the light? John the Baptist was so highly respected and unfortunately even revered that John felt it necessary to re-emphasize the fact that he was simply a witness and not the light (John 1:8). This instruction was given nearly 2,000 years ago but it still has a very practical application for us today. It is easy to follow the wrong man, even if he is on the right track. Sometimes Christ is neglected because of inordinate attention given to those who are serving Him. Yes it is good to have examples that we can follow, but we should always be able to see beyond them to Christ.

### CONCLUSION

We can only come to know God through Christ. This is why He is called the Word. He alone is qualified to reveal God to man. He is fully qualified to do this because of what we learn about the Word and God; what we learn about the Word and creation; and finally because of what we learn about the Word and John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was the last burst of light the Word provided this world before His earthly entrance dwarfed every other light that He had provided prior to His coming.