
John 1:6-18 *The Word becomes Flesh!*

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: God sent John the Baptist as a forerunner to Christ, to be a herald and sign that the Messiah had come. This was so that people might see and believe that Jesus Christ would come, He was the Light to the world, and He would come to save the lost. Then, John calls for people to repent, to embrace righteousness, to trust and obey, and to become God's child, purging the grip of darkness forevermore. John was not the Light; rather, he was a witness of the Light, a testimony of the new covenant of grace from God to us. Even though Christ made the world and all things, darkness corrupted everything. Sin blinded people from the Truth so they needed His light to know God and to live. John's witness is so that people may now see the Light, the hope and love of God, accept His saving grace so to become the children of God, and be reborn—all of which can come only from God. To prove and make this happen, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, became a man and lived amongst us. He remains pure and His Light shines to show us the Love and plan of God. John passionately points this all out to the people so they may change their ways, telling them someone greater than he (John) is coming so that all we who trust in Him can receive His rich blessings. God's unfailing love through the faithfulness of Christ is available to us and we can see God by seeing Christ.

Contexts and Background:

This passage continues the prologue, introducing to us the God-Man, who is eternally existing and who now comes as fully God and becomes fully man. He becomes flesh and dwells among us. God is now one of us, God among people, personally conveying His Love, personally giving us His grace! In John's Gospel there is a lot of word repetition; this was a Jewish literary device to bring emphasis on the importance of what was being said. What is more important than God saving us?

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *John.* The writer of this Gospel is John the Apostle. However, he never refers to himself by name because of his humility. He only writes about Christ. Thus, "John" always refers to John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-6; Mark 1:2-6; Luke 7:20).
- *Witness.* This was a legal term for both Jews and Romans. This meant one who testifies in a court of law or before an official. Isaiah used this term to state how true believers would testify about God to evil nations and at the end of days. Here John the Baptist's sole mission was to testify about Jesus so people might believe in Him (Isa. 43:10; 44:8; John 3:27-30; 10:41; 20:21)
- *All men might believe.* God extends His grace outward and forward to all people. God is not just the God of the Jews; He is the God of the universe—of all things. The Jews were instruments of His choosing to be His witnesses; now John is the witness of Christ who brings the Gospel to all. Jesus is relevant to all people of all times, of all ethnicities, ages, and places. The only restriction is to those who are not His—who refused His offer.
- *Light.* Meaning what is never ending and what is true versus what is not true or what comes against it, such as the darkness of sin. In context, this refers to the good news of Christ, the Gospel, and that the true truth is that God so loved the world, He came to save those who do not deserve or merit it (Matt. 11:11; John 3:16; 4:24; 6:32; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7-14; 11:25; 14:6; Acts 19:1-3; Rom. 1:19-20; 2:12-16).

- *Gives light to every man.* This is referring to the incarnation of Christ. The “**Mishneh**,” a Jewish commentary that contains its tradition, states that God offered all nations His Law and light, but only the Jews accepted it. He then gave the Jews the responsibility to be the light bearers to all nations. It also states that God lamented His offer of light to all, because all rejected Him and the ones who did accept Him were not serious. This tradition was popular then, but John’s use of that language and mystique to show the True Light is not tradition but Christ. Now through Christ, all have the opportunity to believe (John 17:5, 14-15).
- *World.* A very common word in the New Testament, and depending on the context, it means the people or the earth or all of creation—as in the universe as it means here (1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Pet. 3:3).
- *The world did not recognize him/receive Him.* Meaning the people who are opposed to God. Jesus’ coming was the most incredible event of all time, yet He was not welcomed by most; He was even scoffed at, and then martyred. The religious Jews were so wrapped up in their traditions and assumptions they did not seek the One True God or really honor Him with faith and trust. Thus, not just the Gentile world, but also the Jewish world did not recognize God’s Word, His call, His principles, or His Son (John 17:5, 14-15).
- *But his own did not receive him.* The Jews believed by tradition that their heritage through Abraham saved them. John stated, as God’s previous prophets had, that it is only the faithful who accept His revelation and Word. Grace is free and unmerited; however, a response must be made from the faith He gives from the Spirit’s work. We have a responsibility to take and build on what He gives us through salvation and faith and the opportunities and gifts he presents to us. Now the time is at hand; the final opportunity is through Christ (Isa. 2:3; 65:2-3; Jer. 7:25; 31:31-34; Matt. 3:8-10).
- *Who received him.* Grace is free and can never be implemented by human achievement, yet there is a call for us to receive it. He gives us the faith but we have to take it and work it and grow it (Eph. 2:8-10).
- *He gave the right.* Only God gives us entrance into His presence and family, and this is by grace alone, the undeserved gift of God (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; John 2:29).
- *Children of God.* Referring to those who received Christ as Lord and Savior by the action of the Holy Spirit. Our new life in Christ removes us from darkness and the penalty of death into an intimate relationship with Him. This is not by birthright or ethnicity or by human will or works; rather, it is a gift of God we receive and build on (John 3:3-8).
- *Born of God.* Meaning God regenerates us. He is the One who initiates and presents us with salvation. He is sovereign as well as pure, holy, and has the perfect, complete, holy means to know who one of the elect is; and His way is perfect. Our way, if it were possible, would be extremely flawed and ineffective. He is the only One who can save us; it is by His work and decree (John 3:1-21; 5:24; Rom. 6:4-6; 9:18; Eph. 2:1; 2:5; Col. 2:13; 3:1)
- *The Word became flesh.* Here meaning Christ who is fully God—the ultimate reason, the same substance and essence of God, the Creator—came into His creation as both an eternal being and a created being, a man—fully God and fully man. The Spirit and full force of God came together. This is called the “Incarnation.” Christ, who is not a created or made being, came into the world as one of us. This means that Jesus Christ, being fully Divine, was also born into the world as a full-fledged person who would live in our place, fulfill the law, and become our substitute for the penalty of sin we incurred. He took that penalty and paid it by His sacrifice on the Cross and His

shed blood. This is the heart and purpose and reason of Christianity, of whom and what Christ is, and what He came to do. Without this incarnation, we have nothing of real substance, nothing that can save us; rather we just have a meaningless religion with good ideas (Joel 2:32; Matt. 20:28; 26:36-46; John 1:14-19; 29; 3:13-18; 8:28, 58; 19:35; 21:24; Rom. 5:8; 8:32; 9:5; 10:9-13; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; 8:9; 12:8-9; 13:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 1:15-17; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3-12).

- *Dwelling/dwelt.* Means being in a tabernacle where God can be found or to pitch your tent with God, as when He personally guided His people through the Exodus for forty years. This also indicates the temporary period of time Jesus would be on earth and, in context, the eternity He gives us to be with Him. Here is Jesus, being fully God, dwelling among His people, and now living in our hearts and in eternity. Now we have an active, involved, loving, and caring God who knows us as our Creator and who also lives humanity's experiences firsthand. He is the One in whom we can place our hope, love, and faith. This is also a retort to early Gnostics and some Greek philosophers who stated (and got in trouble for) that God and man cannot co-exist together. The divine is dynamically opposed to human nature. Although this is true, God made it possible for Jesus. It was common that most of the Greek and Roman gods impersonated people. One of these, "Heracles," was a mortal—half man and half god, but not an eternal full God and full man like Jesus (Ex. 3:12-14; 25:8; 33:7-11; 40:34-35; John 6:35, 48-51; Acts 14:11; Col. 2:9).
- *His glory.* This means the Lordship, Supremacy, Sovereign Ruler, and the Holiness of God as a reference to Who He is, requiring our utmost and highest respect and our call to give Him praise for His glory. "To God alone be the glory" was a critical and important slogan for the Reformation (that must be held to by any serious believer) that life and all purpose is to give God glory (1 Kings 8:1-11; Matt. 17:1-8; John 17:5)
- *One and Only/the Only Son.* A reference to the Trinity nature of God, of which Christ is the "eternal generation" of God, the Son, second person of the Trinity.
- *John testifies.* John was very public with His ministry and did not hold back. Bringing a testimony is essential to knowing, eternalizing, and showing your faith; it is the active demonstration of the Gospel working. Christ is the One who gives us grace, forgiveness, and our life, purpose, and salvation. Many prophets often had heralds who would go before them to make advertisement and warning. John the Baptist was highly revered by the people—even by some of the officials and leadership. He was more than a mere prophet, but he was a mere man and not the One who came to save. Jesus, being eternal, actually came before John even though John's human birth and public ministry were first on the scene (Matt. 3; John 8:58; Acts 19:3-5).
- *Fullness of his grace.* Grace was a common greeting then—like saying "hello" today. It means "may good things come to you." In the context and biblical language, it is an extraordinary gift we get from God that we do not deserve. "By grace alone" was also a decisive and important slogan for the Reformation, to which a Christian must adhere (Psalm 26:3; Prov. 16:6; John 4:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Rev. 1:4; 22:21).
- *Moses.* He represents the Law and the Prophets, and the Old Testament that is now fulfilled through the grace of Christ. This is a contrast of the covenants God has had with humanity.
- *Grace and truth.* Means the covenant that God has with humanity and His steadfast purpose to keep and fulfill it. "Truth" refers to the reality and relevance of God for us now. It also refers to the Law and God's patience with and mercy for His people who were not keeping it, bearing it, or respecting it. Now Christ comes to fulfill the Law and bring us God's grace. This is a key principle of our Christian faith that means we are holy in Christ; He sets us apart for a reason and a purpose. Our life has meaning and value; therefore, Jesus wants that meaning for our lives to be infused by Him so that the purpose becomes to glorify Him, enjoy grace and fellowship in Him,

and share it with others. This is also what the *Westminster Catechism* states, “What is the chief purpose of man? Man’s (all of humanity who proclaims Christ as Lord) chief end (objective) is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” (Gen. 24:27; Ex. 34:6; Psalm 25:10; 26:3; 73:24-28; Prov. 16:6; John 17:21-23; Rom. 1:6-7; 11:36; 1 Cor. 10:11; Eph. 1:5-8; 2:7; 1 Thess. 3:11)

- *No one has ever seen God/His Glory.* God is omnipresent and all powerful in the universe and He cannot be seen or contained. But Christ reveals God by being God incarnate and we display God by our Christian character. This is also an image of God’s shadow being displayed before Moses when God’s greatest prophet and Law-giver could not see Him directly. Now the people can see God firsthand through the Word having been made flesh (Ex. 16:1-10; 33:18-23; John 2:11; 12:22-33; 13:23; Rom. 3:19-23; 2 Cor. 3:6-18; Gal. 3:10-26; 1 Tim. 6:16).
- *God the One and Only/only begotten Son.* Here meaning the one and only true one. This is an absolute, clear declaration of the Deity of Christ (Ex. 24:9-11; 33:20; Heb. 11:17; 1 John 4:9).
- *Father’s side/bosom.* This means a position of greatness and power as well as the great intimacy of the Godhead. In context, this is another emphatic statement testifying to the Deity of Christ (Luke 22-23; John 13:23; 14:8-10).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Do you know who Jesus is? He is the face of God, the One who eternally lives and reveals to us the Father. He is the one who gives you life and the light of the Word for your salvation! We know God by knowing Christ, who is God. We know Him by knowing His written Word that carries to us His living Word. Are you living your life because of Who He is and what He has done for you? Are you forever devoted to Christ as LORD? Does your character reflect Who Christ is and what He is doing in you? Do you believe in the eternal Christ? Are you living up to what you believe with trust and hope? If not, why not (1 Pet. 4:19)?

Christianity is not earned or presumed; it is not learned or reasoned or built or formed or inherited or purchased. It is something that no price can ever lay hold of—except the price paid on our behalf by Christ! Yet once we have it, we can lean, learn, reason, inherit His character and eternal life, and continually build upon it. For us to have real effectual faith, we have to receive Jesus Christ as our own. Not through our parents or our church or our religion, but ours alone—faith that is real, relevant, and personal. Our faith and knowledge in Christ must be received initially, a move that the Spirit enables us to do.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How should someone who is filled with grace and truth treat other people?
2. Have you ever had to testify to something—like in a court? How is this like sharing Jesus so people may believe in Him?
3. How can we see and know God by seeing and knowing Christ? Why were there people who opposed Jesus' coming, both then and now?
4. What does it mean to you that God is now one of us? How would you communicate to someone that God lived amongst people, personally conveying His Love by personally giving us His grace?
5. How would you describe John the Baptist? How was he a forerunner to Christ? What does this mean to us today?
6. How and why did John the Baptist show people how to see and believe that Jesus Christ is the Light to the world? How would you have reacted? How does this motivate us to be good witnesses today?
7. How can Christ be more within you as the ultimate purpose and meaning of life and all things we are to do?
8. What does it mean to you to repent and embrace righteousness? How and when did you first start to trust and obey? What does it mean to you that you are God's child? How does this help you now to escape the grip of sin and darkness?
9. What does it take today to tell people to trust in Christ so they can receive His rich blessings?
10. How do you show God's unfailing love and faithfulness? How can you do a better job at showing others that Christ is available to them?
11. Christ is the One who holds all things and who holds us. How does this help you in your faith and in daily life?
12. The question inlayed in this passage is *what will you do now? How then shall you live? What are you going to do to play your faith forward?*