

“Responding to the Word”

October 12, 2025

John 1:6-13

I. Introduction

The first 18 verses of John’s Gospel are called the prologue. It is a synopsis or outline of the entire book. Verses 11 & 12 summarize the overall theme: “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Last week we looked at the first 5 verses of John’s prologue. We saw that “the Word” was John’s name for the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus was God’s Word—God’s words and actions to mankind. In those verses John proclaimed that Jesus was more than just a man, He is deity—He is the eternal Creator God and He is the source of life—physical life as well as eternal life.

In today’s Scripture, John moved from the vastness of God, eternity, and the universe to a simple, solitary person in time—“There was a man who was sent from God” and the response to his witness. After describing the Word who was God, John turned to the one who announced that the Word was God. In John 1:34, this man said, “I have seen, and I testify that this is the Son of God.” It is here that the humanness of the whole story of Jesus Christ began at a particular place and time in history. The writer, the Apostle John, simply wrote, “His name is John,” without designating him as the Prophet or the Baptizer as the other Gospels do. Since John the Apostle never named himself in his gospel, every time the name “John” appears in John’s Gospel—except in the four cases where it refers to Peter’s father (John 1:42; 21:15,16,17)—“John” is referring to John the Baptist. In today’s Scripture, the Apostle John turned to the one who came to testify of Jesus with a believable testimony so that people might believe in Jesus Christ. Then John gave the only two possible responses to the testimony about the Word and to the Word Himself: unbelief or belief. First, the messenger—John the Baptist

II. John the Baptist

A. John was sent by God. “There came a man who was sent from God.” John was sent by God. John’s role as a herald who had been sent by God was confirmed in several ways. First, John fulfilled the

Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah's forerunner. Mark emphasized this in his gospel as he quoted [Isaiah 40:3](#), [turn to Mark 1:1-4](#). The Old Testament closed with Malachi's prophesy of the Elijah-like prophet to come before the Day of the Lord; [turn to Malachi 3:1](#). John the Baptist fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the forerunner. Second, John's birth was a miracle of God since John's parents were old and were unable to have children. [Luke 1:7](#) says, "They, i.e., Zechariah and Elizabeth, had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years." Third, John's birth was announced by an angel. [Luke 1:8-17](#) records that before John's birth, "an angel of the Lord appeared to" tell John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, that he and Elizabeth would have a son who would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Finally, John the Baptist was sent by the Lord at the appointed time to begin his public ministry. [Luke 1:80](#) says, "And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel." This was God's appointed time.

John the Baptist was the first true prophet to appear in Israel since Malachi some 400 years earlier. John's bold, confrontational preaching created quite a sensation. Mark described John's impact in [Mark 1:5](#): "The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River." In [Matthew 11:11](#) Jesus said, "I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist." John the Baptist was among the greatest to live because God had chosen him to perform the most important task up to that point in human history—being the forerunner of the Messiah. John was sent by God.

B. John was sent as a witness of the Word—Jesus Christ. John's mission was not to call attention to himself; "He came as a witness to testify concerning that light." [Turn to John 1:26-27](#). Later, in [John 3:30](#), John the Baptist said, "He, i.e. Jesus Christ, must become greater; I must become less." The word "witness" is a key word in this book; the Apostle John used the noun 14 times and the verb 33 times. The words "witness" and "testify" are both legal terms. They are associated with facts, not opinion, as in a courtroom setting. John the Baptist was one of many who testified—gave facts—about

the Word, about Jesus the Christ. John the Baptist's purpose, John's commission from God, was to produce facts so that "all men might believe."

C. John was not the Light. To counter those who wanted to raise John the Baptist up—to make him something that he wasn't, the Apostle John wrote that "He himself was not the light." In Luke 3:16 John himself said, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." John was not the Light. "He came only as a witness to the light." And John willingly gave all he had to be that witness—even his life. Luke 3:19-20 says, "But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison." And later Herod had him beheaded.

III. Two Responses to the Word

John 1:9 summarizes John's message, his witness: "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." Since man has the freedom of choice, there were and there are two responses to John's and everyone else's witness concerning Jesus Christ: rejection or acceptance.

A. Sadly, some reject the testimony. The tragic reality is that many sinners reject the "Light of the World" (John 8:12). Turn to John 3:19-20. People refuse to come to the light of Jesus Christ because they love their sin and do not want it exposed and done away with. Some are willfully blind. Turn to Romans 1:28-32. So even though Jesus "was in the world, and though the world was made through him," yet, as John will show in his Gospel, "the world did not recognize him." The Creator of the world came to His creation—to the world not just for Jews but for the world. But His creation rejected Him and did not choose to recognize Him as their one and only Savior. "They didn't think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God."

The Apostle John went one step further and wrote that even those who were "His own people did not receive Him." Jesus came to God's land, to the city of David, to the land of the temple, to His chosen people. The Jews had waited all through the centuries for the Messiah and Savior to come, but sadly "his

own did not receive him.” Like their ancestors, the Israelites of Jesus’ day were “stiff-necked” (Deuteronomy 10:16)—they hardened their hearts and rejected the promised Messiah. They were spiritually ignorant and blind. Jesus was the “true Light,” the real and genuine Light, but the Jews were content with mere copies. They had Moses and the Law, the temple and the sacrifices, but they didn’t understand that all these things—these “lights”—were just copies that pointed to the “true Light” who was the fulfillment, the completion of all of the Old Testament rituals and teachings and laws. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is shown to be the fulfillment of all the Law. In John 3 Jesus said that it was not enough to be born a Jew, they had to be born again, born from above. In John 6 He was called the “the true bread from heaven” and in John 7 He is the life-giving water. In John 10:16 He is the Shepherd of the new flock and in John 15 He is a new Vine. But the people were so caught up by their religious traditions that they couldn’t understand spiritual truth. Jesus came to His own—the world, the people He had created—even His own people, His chosen people Israel, and they could not—they would not understand Him and would not receive Him. In John 5:39-40 Jesus said, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify of me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

Far from welcoming Him, His people refused to understand Him. As time went along, they became more and more suspicious, they rejected Him in blind anger, even accusing Him of being the child of the devil (Mark 3:22). Finally, they killed Him. All through the Gospel of John, there are angry, suspicious accusations made by the very religious leaders who should have received Jesus the Christ with great joy.

B. Some believe in His name. But not everyone rejected Jesus when He came. There were some who did receive Him and welcomed Him. Some “who believed in his name.” To receive Jesus Christ—to believe—involves more than just head knowledge of His claims. “To believe in his name” refers to all

that Jesus was, is and does. Saving faith accepts Jesus in all that Scripture reveals concerning Him: His deity as well as His humanity, His being Savior as well as His being Lord. *Believe* is a verb—it is an action, something a person does. We believe in or upon something. To be saved, a person must believe in or upon Jesus Christ. That is, when we believe, we yield ourselves up to be possessed by the One in whom we believe. The New English Bible puts **verse 12** this way: *“To those who have yielded him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God.”*

Though people cannot be saved from an eternity in hell until they receive and believe in Jesus Christ, salvation itself is the work of God on dead and blind sinners. John wrote: *“He gave the right to become children of God.”* As **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”* John emphasized that this is a spiritual birth from God not through *“natural descent”*—i.e. racial or ethnic heritage—there wasn’t something “magical” about being a Jew or some other race; not of *“human decision”*—i.e. personal desire or decision—one can’t be saved through following a bunch of man-made rules or “doing the best one can—being sincere”; or *“a husband’s will”*—i.e. a physical birth—one isn’t saved because he or she is part of a Christian family. (John will build on these ideas throughout his Gospel.) This is a spiritual birth not a physical birth. It is a sheer miracle of God’s sovereign grace that gives birth to His own children. They are *“born of God;”* they are born in response to God’s initiative.

IV. Conclusion

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, J. Vernon McGee gave an illustration of what *“believing into, in or upon Jesus Christ”* means. He wrote: *“Let me illustrate with a chair. I am standing beside a chair, and I believe it will hold me up, but it is not holding me up. Why? Because I have only head knowledge. I just say, “Yes, it will hold me up.” Now suppose I believe into the chair by sitting in it. See what I mean? I am committing my entire weight to it, and it is holding me up.*

Is Christ holding you up? Is He your Savior? It is not a question of standing to the side and saying, “Oh, yes, I believe Jesus is the Son of God.” The question is: have you trusted Him, have you

believed into Him, are you resting in Him? This chair is holding me up completely. And at this moment, Christ is my complete Savior. I am depending on Him; I am resting on Him.”

So, what is your response to Jesus Christ? Have you personally received the Light? Do you have more than head knowledge of Jesus Christ? Do you rest in Him completely? Is Jesus your Savior and your Lord? If He is, then [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) is for you, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” If you are resting in Him, then you are a child of God and He will be there with you wherever you go.

On the other hand, if you don’t trust in the Lord with all of your heart and instead you lean on your own understanding, then you are not a child of God. You don’t really believe in Him. All you have is “head knowledge” not “heart knowledge.” It’s not too late; why not give Him all your trust and rest in Him as your Lord and Savior? Accept the gift of eternal life before it is too late.

For those who are children of God, those who have made Jesus their Lord and Savior, this part of John’s prologue is a challenge or call to us. Like John the Baptist, we need to be “a witness to the light.” As one of Jesus’ disciples, the Great Commission is for each one of us as well; “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” ([Matt. 28:19-20](#)). [Romans 10:14](#) says, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” As children of God, it’s our turn to tell the world of Jesus Christ. You may not be called to go out and be a missionary, but as [1 Peter 3:15](#) says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” Are you ready?