



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### John 1:6-9: The Ministry of John the Baptist

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*"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."*

#### Background Notes

The "John" who is mentioned in verse 6 is, of course, John the Baptist. Why was he called "John the Baptist"? Was Baptist his last name? No! Was that his denomination? He wasn't a Presbyterian, he wasn't a Methodist, was he a Baptist? No! "Baptist" was his function; he baptized people who were preparing themselves for the coming of the Messiah. John's baptism was not Christian baptism, or "believer's baptism." It was a "baptism unto repentance."

The Jewish people who underwent John's baptism were basically saying four things. 1) I repent of my personal sins. 2) I repent of my part in the sins of the nation of Israel that has rejected the prophets of God. I repent of my part in this nation's sins of rejecting God. 3) I am prepared for the coming Messiah, the true light of the world. 4) I am ready for the Messiah to set up his kingdom.

John the Baptist, then, was a forerunner of the Messiah. He was like a herald announcing the arrival of a king. John's mission as the forerunner of the Messiah was predicted more than 400 hundred years before, in the Old Testament, in Malachi 3:1, *"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.*"

Notice the contrast between John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus in the verses that we have just read, as well at the beginning of the Gospel of John. Notice in verse 6: John was only a man. There was a **man** sent from God whose name was John. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus Christ was referred to as the **Word**, and the Word was **God**. Verse 1: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* John was only a man. The Word, the Messiah, was God.

A second contrast: the beginning of verse 6 says, *"There was a man..."* The man John came into being, whereas "the Word" always was (v1). There is a definite contrast in the Greek word that is used in verse 6: "there was.." -- a clear contrast between "there came," or "there came into being," in reference to John, in contrast to the Word. The Word was always in existence; the Word was already in existence.

The third contrast is that John was only a witness to the light (v7-8). The Lord, of course, **was** the Light, "the true Light" (v9).

We have mentioned that the theme of the Gospel of John is "Christ as the Son of God." John's purpose in writing this Gospel was to convince people to believe this truth, and as a result to have the light and life of Christ. So Christ as the Life and Christ as the Light are sub-themes running throughout the Gospel of John. As the Son of God, He is the Life and the Light -- verse 4: "*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*" In verses 6-9 we see a continued emphasis on Christ as the Light. If people will respond to this Light, and believe this true Light, they will have life, divine life, new life -- they will have Christ as Life.

Let me read a few more verses from the Gospel of John where these sub-themes of Christ as the life and Christ as the light emerge:

John 8:12, "*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

John 11:25, "*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*

John 14:6, "*Jesus said to him, (that is to Thomas) "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

The sub-themes of Christ as the Light and Christ as the Life run all the way through the Gospel of John.

## **Doctrinal / Teaching Points**

### **1. The goal of witnessing is evangelism.**

"*This man [John the Baptist] came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe"(v7).* Notice, John was not sent to be a witness by being a good neighbor, or being a model citizen. He was sent to be a witness of Christ by verbalizing the message – the message that people would believe, and must believe, in order to have Light, in order to have Life.

We must do the same. That is what evangelism is all about. Some Christians think, "Well, if we are good neighbors and model citizens, we are being good witnesses." But we have not reached the goal of witnessing if we are just good neighbors and model citizens -- because the **goal** of witnessing is **evangelism**. Your neighbors are not evangelized until they know the gospel, and they know that they have to make a decision to believe. Have your neighbors been evangelized, or do they only know you as a good neighbor? Of course we are to be good neighbors and model citizens, but our witness must get to the point of evangelism. John was sent for that reason, and we too are sent. The Great Commission, which definitely applies to us, is "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel.*" The goal of witnessing is evangelism.

One of our neighbors is a single mother who has two children. Last summer we sent ten-year-old Justin to a Christian camp. Why? Just to be good neighbors? Just so that he

would have a good time? Much more than that -- so that he would be evangelized, so that he would hear the gospel. The goal of witnessing is evangelism.

## **2. Christ is God's standard of perfection for everyone.**

*"That was the true Light [referring to Jesus Christ] which gives light to every man coming into the world"(v9).*

What does this verse mean? Is this the Quaker idea that every person has the "inner light," the so-called "spark of the divine"? No, that is not it. Is this verse teaching *universalism* – the idea that everyone eventually is saved? No, that certainly is not what this verse is teaching! It could mean that since Christ, the true Light has come into the world, that light is now available to all people.

However, I believe that the primary meaning of this verse is that as the Light, Christ sheds light on everyone, showing that everyone falls short of God's moral standards. Christ is the true Light, the real, the genuine Light. He is God's ultimate moral standard, because He is God! When Christ came into the world, all of mankind --no matter what race, what background, what culture -- all of mankind was exposed by the Light. That is, the Light shone on everyone, and showed everyone that they fell short of God's standards. That is the idea -- the Light shone **on** them, not **in** them. It would be like a room full of dust. When the light is low or dim or turned off, you don't see the dust -- but when the light is turned on, the dust is exposed.

Suppose you were to get a call this evening from a friend who lives out of town. They're visiting in your town, they're going to show up at your house in a half hour, and you haven't dusted or vacuumed the house in some time. What are you going to do? I have a suggestion: if you turn the lights down low, you can't see the dust! Bright lights show up every speck of dust. (That, by the way, is why I like to eat in restaurants that are well-lit!) Well, that's the idea in verse 9. In the same way, the bright Light of Christ shows people their imperfections. It shows that **all** fall short of God's standards!

Notice that some translations refer the phrase "comes into the world" to Christ, and some to "every man." *"That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."* No matter which way this is translated, the main point of verse 9 is that Jesus Christ is God's standard of perfection for **everyone**.

### **Practical application**

#### **You don't have to do miracles or have a lot of charisma to be a good witness.**

We don't need to do miracles or have a lot of charm to be a good witness. Sometimes we think, "If only I could do a few miracles, my witness for the Lord would be so much better, so much more powerful." Let's learn the lesson from John the Baptist. He was a good witness, but he did no miracles.

In Luke 7:28 the Lord said, *"For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist..."* Think of the many miracles done by Elijah and Elisha -- but Jesus said that John was greater! Why? Because he announced the King!

The power of being a good witness is not in doing the miraculous, but in being sent by God to preach Christ. John was a man sent by God to be a witness for Christ; we are sent by God to be witnesses for Christ.

You don't have to have to have a lot of charisma to be a good witness, either. Again, we sometimes think, "If only I had more charisma, more charm! I could be a better witness if only people were more naturally drawn to me!" Again, learn the lesson from John the Baptist. John the Baptist didn't have a lot of charisma. People were not drawn to John the Baptist because of his charm!

John the Baptist grew up in the wilderness. Luke 1:80 says, "*So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.*" John the Baptist wore unusual clothing, and he ate locusts and wild honey. If John the Baptist were living today, some people would even call him a social misfit! But he was humble, he was sent by God, and he announced Christ. You don't have to have a lot of charm to be a good witness. John the Baptist was a very humble man; he referred to himself as "just a voice crying in the wilderness." He said he was not even worthy to untie the sandals of the Messiah -- less important than a servant! No wonder God used him!

Let's be more like John the Baptist! We need to be sent by God, and we **are** sent. We need to announce Christ, and we need to be humble. Let's pray that we will be more humble -- humble enough to be a good witness. Remember, you don't have to do miracles or have a lot of charisma to be a good witness.