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A Witness to the Light John 1:6-10

Intro: We are making our way thru the prologue to John's Gospel. In it, we have heard the Apostle declaring certain divine attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ; attributes that point not only to His deity but also to His role as the second person of the Trinity, as well as His purpose in coming into this world. Now, in vs6, the Apostle throws us curve ball. In the midst of declaring & describing the glorious wonder of Jesus Christ, the Word, the Son of God; John inserts the 1st of what will be 2 brief narrative sections into his prologue (2nd in vs15). As curious as this may seem, this is not an intrusion but rather an insertion by design. These 2 seemingly out-of-place sections actually serve to remind the reader that John is not merely concerned with stating timeless truths about Christ but that he desires to show how these truths are anchored in human history. Every thing John says about Jesus was true while He was in eternity and was still true when He took on the form of a servant and walk on this earth among men.

6-8- Note: John the Apostle never refers to John the Baptist as the Baptist in his Gospel; he simply calls him John. The author is careful to distinguish other characters in the book that have the same name such as "**Judas, not Iscariot**" in 14:22. Why not John the Baptist? Because he is the only John mentioned in the book. The Apostle doesn't even refer to himself by name in the book. He merely refers to himself as, "**the disciple whom Jesus loved.**"

Most Christians tend to overlook the importance of the ministry of John the Baptist. We rightly focus more on the ministry of Jesus, recognizing that John was only the forerunner of the Lord. The Apostle here reveals to us the purpose of John's ministry: **to bear witness of Jesus Christ**. This was his reason for existing. John was a charismatic person. He preached to the multitudes that went out into the desert to hear him much like they would later to hear Jesus. His following was so large, the priests and Levites in Jerusalem sent delegates out to investigate his teaching.

But, John was more than just a charismatic speaker; he was the pivotal character of biblical history. Jesus said of him in Luke 16:16, "**The law and**

the prophets were until John,” meaning John was the last of the OT prophets, the last of the representatives of the old order. After John’s preaching of repentance, Jesus came along preaching the Kingdom of God, which, from that time forward, was entered into by faith in Jesus. John was also the herald of this new way of God dealing with man and by his faithful obedience, he earned the praise of Jesus Christ (**Matt 11:11**).

This mainly points to the truth that those who came after John and believe in Jesus would receive the Holy Spirit. But it may also speak of John’s extraordinary humility. Scriptures says whoever humbles himself will be exalted and John certainly did that. He called himself a voice crying in the wilderness. You cannot see a voice, you can only hear it. So, it was John’s role and pleasure to simply be the herald of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Like the Apostle Paul, John the Baptist’s sole concern was that Jesus would be magnified, either by his life or by his death and in this he was true and faithful in his God-given duty as forerunner and herald of the Light.

John was also known for his ministry of baptism & the fact that he was the one who baptized Jesus. But, when the apostle brings up John here in his prologue, it is not for the sake of his ministry itself or that he baptized Jesus. He mentions John here solely for the sake of his testimony of Jesus. The **witness** of John appears in this 1st chapter as an established, **historical** testimony. Thus, the appearance of the **Light of the world** was **identified historically**.

We see the author’s emphasis on John’s testimony as much by what he **doesn’t** say about John as what he does say. Missing from this Gospel are many aspects of John’s ministry that appear in the other gospels: no mention of his preaching of repentance or of him being a herald for God’s kingdom, no direct call to repentance. He doesn’t perform any water baptisms – the Apostle doesn’t even record the baptism of Jesus even tho we know he was there.

Apparently, the actual baptism wasn’t the Apostle John’s focus here. Instead, everything is focused on Jesus Christ.

In the place of a baptism, there is Jesus. In the place of an act, there is the verbal proclamation of His person.

Oddly enough, the recorded words of John the Baptist don’t really add to or

develop the themes of John's Gospel and the Apostle never really refers back to or makes use of John's recorded words again. So why include them? The Apostle could only have included them so that he could present them as legal evidence for the benefit of his readers.

The Apostle sees John the Baptist as the 1st and greatest witness of the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. John's reference to and singular interest in John the Baptist is precisely as **a witness** of Jesus.

Witness – We'll be looking at the actual testimony of John the Baptist later in the chapter. But for now, let's look at the outline provided in the text that shows why the witness of John the Baptist was so effective. This outline is clearly stated in vs7-8 and has 3 parts: that John the Baptist, who was sent from God, was 1) not that Light but 2) was sent to bear witness of that Light in order that 3) men might believe thru him. We'll see this exact outline play out in the 2nd half of this chapter: 1) 19-28; 2) 29-34; 3) 35-51). But let's consider how this outline applies to us personally.

1st) John was aware that he was **not the Light** – this is important because all successful witnessing of Jesus must begin with this realization. When any Christian, no matter their role in the kingdom, starts to think there's something important about himself, they'll always cease to be an effective witness for Christ. The testimony will stop.

2nd) John bore witness of the Light – Living out your Christian faith is critical to being a good witness but we must recognize that it is not in itself witnessing. Living out your faith is the most essential foundation for being an effective witness. If our lives don't match what we profess then our profession will be rejected. But, "living" it is **not** witnessing.

Witnessing is speaking to others about Jesus Christ. The word itself implies this as **witnessing** is a legal term that refers to verbal testimony given in a court of law. If we're to do this effectively, we must be able to speak about who Jesus is, what He said about man's sin problem, why His death and resurrection are the essential solution for dealing with that problem and how one comes into a relationship with Jesus on a personal level.

3rd) John's goal was to bring people to faith in Christ – Duh! But, it's possible for a person to become so mechanical in their witness that they can go thru all the motions of witnessing without actually looking or praying for a response to Christ in faith by the other person. Winning an argument is far

less important than winning a person to the Lord.

What do we take from this: 1) when you witness this way – people will believe! Not everyone, maybe not even most but some will. This is God's way of doing things. He has chosen to save men by the foolishness of preaching and that means by the foolishness of verbal proclamation of the truth. It is foolish, by man's estimate; maybe even ours. But, we must remember that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for those who will believe (**Rom 1:16**).

9- What was the greatest moment in the history of the world? Some may say the invention of fire, wheel; Greek culture, Roman Empire; splitting the atom or landing on the moon. While these are important & very significant, the only answer a Christian can give is the arrival in human history of the **Creator** in the person of **Jesus Christ**. All other human events pale in comparison. This event alone is preeminent. This event (moment) is what our text refers to.

John says this was the **true** Light; **not true** as opposed to false but **true** as opposed to **partial**, or as we say, "**the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth**" as opposed to just part of the truth. A better translation would be real or genuine. Thus, **the light of Jesus was the real light beside which all other lights were imperfect or misleading**. That's not to say there is no good to be found in the world. The things previously mentioned are great and the world would be poorer without them. These things only offer a limited value. These "lights" are only partial lights and can even be misleading if one was to follow them exclusively. Why? Because only Jesus Christ is the Light that enlightens all darkness and only Jesus Christ gives spiritual illumination.

The problem with the world is that men are always mistaking the partial lights for the real one. One light that men followed, particularly in the 19th & early 20th Centuries was the light of **progress**. Discoveries in science and the advent of diplomacy around the globe cause men to follow the light of progress in droves. Many believed human society would evolve into it's own version of utopia but after 2 world wars, 2 atomic bombs, a Cold War and nuclear proliferation; most rational people are willing to admit that the doctrine of inevitable progress was just an illusion.

Another partial light that's prominent today is the pursuit of **material**

prosperity. The **American dream**; but thanks to us, the rest of the world follows it too, or tries to. This idea that happiness comes from having more: **\$, things, free time**. These things are good but they only have a **limited benefit**. They're better than poverty, starvation, illiteracy or unemployment but, they are **not** the way to contentment! They **do not** make the heart of man **right with God**.

It's **not** that the world's lights are **false** lights, they're just **imperfect** light; they are **partial**. They do **not** supply what men need most for the **satisfaction of the inner hunger of their souls**. John's saying that the **only** place the lost can find adequate illumination about themselves and where they stand before an almighty and righteous God is **in Jesus**.

We are to look to Him! Those who do will find that He's the One who is able to **guide** them thru the darkest night; the One who's able to **help them discern** between lights that are better & lights that are worse; the One who is able to cause them to **grow spiritually** and in every other way in their lives.

The other thing this verse teaches us is that today, the Light of Jesus Christ shines on **every man**. Not just Jews but all men. Jesus came to shine on all men so that everyone everywhere might share in His kingdom (glorious)!

10- Jesus the unknown! For some 30 yrs, from His birth until the public ministry of John the Baptist, the Lord of Glory was in the world of men & He was unknown to them. How is that possible? Why did the world not know Him?

1) The world didn't want to know Him – When Jesus came into the world His light shone on men's darkness & revealed it for what it was. Men hated Him for that. Thus, they refused to acknowledge Him as God's Son. Jesus speaks of this in **3:19**. Man didn't want to acknowledge Christ then & they don't want to do it today either. Man is so in love with their sin that they don't want anyone to dissuade them from it. The fact is: men do not want Jesus Christ.

2) The world was unable to recognize Him – Not only did they not want to see Him, they were also **spiritually blind**.

Paul confirms this in **II Cor 4:3-4; I Cor 2:14**. You see, when man fell into sin, he fell all the way to the bottom and there he stays, hopelessly lost, blind to all spiritual truth & completely unable to help himself **until** God reaches down by grace, lifts him up out of the miry clay, puts his feet on solid ground & says to him, "**This is the way, walk in it.**"

When we understand that this is an accurate picture of man as God sees him, then we can also understand why John the Baptist had to appear as Christ's forerunner. John's ministry was to bear witness of the Light. If John had not come to bear witness of Jesus, no one, including the Lord's disciples, would ever have noticed Him.

Of course, John did come, he did bear witness of the Light & how did men respond? Not by falling down & worshipping Him (as they should've) but by crucifying Him. The cross was man's response to God's goodness. Man – you & I – do not naturally want Jesus but in spite of our sin, He still loves us & comes to us with grace to draw us back to Himself. If you believe that, God's already at work on your heart. Will you respond to His call in faith?

There are 7 different kinds of witness mentioned in John's Gospel: **1)** Jesus Himself (8:14); **2)** the Father (8:18); **3)** the Holy Spirit (16:13-14); **4)** Scripture; **5)** Christ's works; **6)** John the Baptist. The 7th is the witness of ordinary folk: Samaritan woman, those who saw Lazarus raised, the disciples; even John was an eye-witness of the crucifixion. So too, you and I are included in this last category. But what does this mean?

It means that God thinks your testimony is important enough to be included alongside all those other monumental testimonies to the glorious person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your testimony may not have a very wide scope. It may not be spectacular. But it is still most important. Each of you know a special aspect of Christ's personality or work that only you can point to adequately: what Jesus has done for you! Here the thing – when you do point to it & witness of Him – people will come to know Jesus personally as their Savior. 😊