Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus: The Divine Light
Scripture: John 1:6-13
Code: 43-3

Open your Bible, if you will, to the first chapter of the gospel of John, and we are continuing our wonderful journey through this glorious presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is introduced to us in this book in metaphoric language. He's presented to us, as John opens, as the Word, as the Life, and as the Light. Each of those is a way to speak of His deity. He is the Word because He is the communication of God. He is the Life because He is the very eternal life itself who gives life to everything that lives. And He is the Light because He is the one true illuminator, who illuminates all spiritual reality.

I want to read the opening of this gospel again, from verse 1 to 14, so that you have it in mind. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overpower it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

In our previous looks at the gospel of John, we have considered the fact that Jesus is the Word and the Life. And this morning I want us to notice that He is the Light. In verse 4, it is said of Him, "The life was the Light of men." And then five subsequent times in the verses that I read, He is referred to as the Light, as the Light.

Let's just borrow a little bit from science, to get an understanding of why this idea of light is attached to the Lord Jesus Christ. When we think of light, we have to consider it in its most simplest terms and sort of take it for granted because we're so used to it. Life is full of darkness and light. We understand them without a scientific explanation. But whenever there is a term like this, borrowed from life, used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ, or God Himself, it behooves us to dig a little deeper into the concept to see if we can't see that God is viewing far more than we might see on the surface.

We experience light in an ecstatic way. It is either dark, or light, or some degree in between. For us, light is on and off, it is present or it is absent. And we look at light as some kind of static condition. Nothing, frankly, could be further from the truth.

To give you a scientific definition of light might help expand your understanding a little bit, and then we can apply it to what we're learning here about the Lord Jesus Christ. Light, in fact, is energy. Science defines light as luminous energy, as radiant energy, as electromagnetic energy, and light is moving at a speed of 186,282 miles per second. It is anything but static. It is anything but fixed. It is considered as a wave, as a corpuscular or quantum phenomenon. It is, in great measure, indescribable as to the power and the source of that power. And the quantum idea is a testimony to the idea that it cannot be comprehended as to the source from which it draws its velocity, and its very existence. Light is a wave, moving at 186,000 miles per second. This wave can hit the retina of the eye and when it does that, it makes things visible. It illuminates things, all colors depend on light. Where there is light, we see. Where there is no light, we do not see. It is high-speed energy that hits the eye and makes things visible.

When you think about light in that way, you are seeing it, or viewing it in a way that is directly applicable to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is divine power in the spiritual realm, making things visible. When the Light, the spiritual light of Christ, hits the living soul, which would be equal to the open and functioning eye, everything is illuminated in the spiritual realm. The Light, according to John, is none other than the life--that eternal life who is the Lord Jesus Christ--who is the Word that comes from God. He is the Word because in Him God speaks. He is the Life because through Him God gives life. He is the Light because by Him everything in the spiritual realm is illuminated. Apart from Him, there is no word from God. Apart from Him there is no life. And apart from Him, there is no true understanding--all is darkness.

John has captured some very basic things--simple on the surface and yet profound to express who this person is that we call the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the living wave of divine power, moving at infinite speed, shining brightly into the spiritual realm to illuminate all that is otherwise dark. The Word is the Life, who is the Light that overpowers the darkness. The darkness, verse 5 says, cannot overpower the Light.

Our Lord Jesus Christ makes everything spiritual truly discernible and visible. You see the way the spiritual realm truly is, only in the light of Christ. Apart from Him, everything is dark. Even in the world of religion, the realm of religion, everything is dark without Christ.

So John introduces us to the one who illuminates the spiritual realm. And while in reading that you might think, starting from verse 6 down, that it's a bit eclectic. It talks a little bit about John, and then it talks about the world, and then about Him coming to His own, and about people who believe, and so

forth. You might see this as a bit eclectic or maybe he's just kind of pulling a few things together that are unrelated, but that is not the case. We want to give John more credit than that.

What he's doing here is identifying the Light. And he refers to it six times, and he will refer to Christ as the Light again as we will see in subsequent sections, even this morning, of the gospel of John. But what John is going to do in this opening chapter is to turn that Light on some very essential, foundational, bottom-line, bedrock, spiritual truths. He's going to shine the Light where the Light initially needs to be placed in order for us to understand the foundational realities. The light of Christ will shine and reveal in this section the nature of true ministry. The Light will shine and reveal the very nature of the Savior Himself. The Light will shine and reveal the nature of sinners. It will shine and reveal the nature of believers, and it will even illuminate the nature of God--all of that in this section. We will see the truth about Christian ministry, the truth about Christ Himself, the truth about sinners, the truth about believers, and the truth about God when the Light shines--and the Light is none other than Christ. The arrival of the divine Light drives the darkness away from these foundational realities.

Now remember, John has a gospel objective here. He says at the end of his letter that he has written all these things that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. So this is a saving effort; this is a gospel effort; this is an evangelistic book. He wants us to be saved, and He knows that can only come when we understand the gospel. And these are the foundations of the gospel that John shines the light on at the very, very beginning.

Now let's begin where John begins and talk, first of all, about the light of Christ illuminating the true nature of ministry, the true nature of ministry--gospel ministry. And this is first in John's order, so we accept that as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit: "there came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness"...or for a witness...to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light."

The essence of gospel ministry, which is the responsibility of every preacher, every believer--we're all to be giving a witness to Christ. The essence of the nature of gospel ministry is right there established for us at the very beginning of this gospel. Since the purpose of it is evangelistic, this is critical to John that we understand the nature of Christian ministry and why we are as believers in the world, and why some of us preach and what is to be the theme of our preaching.

But let's back up and start at verse 6 and this morning we'll run from verse 6 through 13. The change is very abrupt here. "There came a man." Just mark that. There came a man. Up to this point, we've been in verses 1 through 5, and we've been talking about the uncreated One, the eternal One, who in the beginning existed already, who was with God, that is, was with God distinct from God and yet was God. He is the One who created everything that exists and nothing has come into existence that He didn't create. He is life itself and gives that life, and He is Light.

So we've been talking about the eternal Son of God, the second member of the Trinity, verse 14 says, who "became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." So we've been talking about God who became a man.

Now we have a shift in verse 6. "There came a man." "There came a man." We move from the uncreated One, the Creator, the eternal One, preexistent, coexistent with God, self-existent, that is life is in Him, to a mere man. Now John's going to give us a lot of things in his gospel that give testimony to Christ. John will give us many things that give testimony to Christ. He will point us, for example, to the testimony of the Father. He will point us to the testimony of the words of Jesus, the works of Jesus. He will point us to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, to the testimony of eye-witnesses of His miracles, to the testimony of His disciples. John will give us at least seven different lines of evidence to show that verse 14 is true, that the eternal uncreated Word of God became flesh. But he begins by pointing us in the direction of this testimony that comes from a man named John. Another man named John; John means gift of God, and John the apostle is the writer, but here he's referring to a different John: "There came a man sent from God, whose name was John." He's not talking about himself; he's talking about John the Baptist, as we know him, because of his ministry of baptizing people in the Jordan River who had come to him to hear that Messiah was coming. And they needed to repent and get their hearts right, and to symbolize their desire to be washed and cleansed from sin, John put them through a baptism, which was really what they did to Gentiles who were outside the covenant when they wanted to become a part of worshiping the true God and become a part of the religion of Israel.

John had a massive amount of people coming from Jerusalem and Judea, to prepare for the Messiah, at least on a superficial level, when he was baptizing them and so he became known as John the Baptist. He is the last Old Testament prophet. There hasn't been one for 400 years until he arrives. You can read about him in the early chapters of Matthew, the early chapters of Mark, and the early chapters of Luke, the details of his story. He is the last Old Testament prophet; he is the greatest man who ever lived, up until his time, Jesus said in Matthew 11:11. Why? More intellectual? No. More spiritual? No. More influential? No. He's the greatest man who ever lived up until his time because no man ever had a greater responsibility or a more privileged duty. He introduced people to the Messiah. That made him greater in terms of responsibility and privilege than anyone who had ever lived. He was bold, forthright, and yet he was humble. He was resolute; he was so faithful to the preaching of the truth that it cost him his head, as Matthew 14 tells us--the story of his being beheaded.

But here we are introduced to John, not in a sense of all of his biography, which we find in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but here we are introduced to John only in the sense that we get a look at his ministry. And his ministry is defined in verse 7 in very simple terms. "He came for a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through Him."

In that one verse, verse 7, you have the model for gospel ministry, a model for gospel ministry. John lays this down at the very outset. If his purpose, and it is, is to cause people to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name, then that becomes the mission of every true believer and every true preacher. And here John sets the foundation for that kind of ministry.

Looking at verse 6, just for a brief moment, it is indicated to us that there came a man sent from God whose name was John. I cannot tell you all the times that I have been introduced by that verse. People referring it to me in a gracious gesture. But John...somebody might doubt whether I've actually come from God, in any sort of directly divine act. But you couldn't doubt it with John because John, first of all, was prophesied to come in the Old Testament. In the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, he would be the voice crying in the wilderness, "Make way for the Lord, straighten out the highway." He is the one spoken of at the end of Malachi who would come before the Lord's arrival. So he comes from the Lord in a very direct sense, as he is prophesied, clearly by prophesy he is sent from the Lord.

Secondly, his parents were barren. They were in their eighties, at least. They had never been able to have children. He is miraculously conceived, which adds another component to the fact that he is definitely sent from the Lord. His conception is a miraculous conception.

To add another component to the fact that he's sent from God, we would be reminded in Luke 1 that his arrival was announced to his father by an angel who came from heaven. I can promise you in my own case, as an example, there are no prophesies that I would be a preacher, there were no miracles that brought me about, and no angels showed up at my parents' house. So this is a man sent from God in a completely different way. Even his timing in Luke 1:80 it says, "There was a day for his public appearance, and God had ordained that very day." He is the true prophet. And, in fact, in Matthew 14 and Matthew 21, we read that everybody thought he was a prophet. Everybody believed he was a prophet because of the nature of his ministry and the nature of his preaching.

So this bold, powerful, humble, effective prophet comes along. But he is a man, and that's the contrast here. The Lord Jesus was from all eternity. John came into being in time. The Lord Jesus is the eternal Creator. John is His creation. The Lord Jesus is God. John is sent by God. The Lord Jesus is the Light. John testifies about the Light. He comes, verse 7, "as a witness," or for a witness. He comes for a witness. If you read it, he came as a witness, it makes the word "witness" seem like it's referring to the man, but it isn't. "He came for a witness" is a better way to translate it, because the Greek is not a person, but the message, *marturia*, "the message." He came for a message. "He came for a message, to testify." Both of those come from the same root. One is a noun form--he came for a message, to give a message; he came for a testimony, to give a testimony. The other, *martureo*, is the verb. Both terms fit the courtroom. He came to step into the courtroom of the world and give

evidence of the Christ, being the Son of God. That's why he came. He came as a man who had the true evidence from heaven regarding the Light. He had the facts by which to give the message, the testimony to the court of the world so that they would understand the truth about the light. Notice "about the Light," "about the Light."

I can't emphasize that enough. Gospel ministry is about the Light. It is about Christ. It is giving the facts, the truth, the evidence concerning who He is, why He came, and what He has done. That's gospel ministry, to give the facts concerning the One who is the Word, the Life, the Light, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to demonstrate that indeed the Word became flesh, dwelt among us for thirty-three years, put His glory on display, the very glory that belongs to One who proceeds from the Father, full of divine grace and truth. All true Christian ministry is established here as being Christ dominated, Christ centered. This is the true nature of Christian ministry, it is about Jesus Christ. John points people to the Savior.

Down in verse 15, John is giving his testimony. He's crying out, shouting at the top of his voice, "This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me. He who comes after me, existed before me." So he is talking about the One who though man is also the eternal God. He gave constant testimony concerning Christ.

Verse 29, he points to Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Verse 30, "This is He on behalf of whom I said. After me comes a man who has a higher rank than I for He existed before me." Verse 34, "This is the Son of God." Verse 36, "Behold the Lamb of God." That's His testimony. It's a Christ-centered testimony. And it continued to be the subject of his preaching. This is a foundation which Paul builds on when he says, 1 Corinthians 2, "I'm determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 4 gospel ministry as proclaiming Jesus as Lord, the one in whom the glory of God is shining, none other than Christ.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus says to the disciples and the believers that the Holy Spirit is going to come and you're going to be witnesses unto Me. You're going to give the same kind of testimony, same word, *martures*--you're going to be giving testimony in the courtroom of the world of the evidences that point to Me, the Savior, the Son of God, so that people can believe in My name and be saved. Christ is our subject. Christ is our theme. There is no other subject. There is no other theme.

And just to deny any confusion, in verse 8 John the apostle says that John the Baptist was not the Light, but He came to testify about the Light. That's what true preachers do. That's what true ministers do. That's what true believers do. We testify about the Light. John knew he wasn't the Light. Over in chapter 3, verse 25, "There rose a discussion on the part of John's disciples," John the Baptist. By the way, the only...when you see in the book of John the word *John*, the name *John*, most of the time it's John the Baptist. There's only one other John in the whole gospel of John, and that

appears four times--and that's John, the father of Peter. John the apostle never uses his name; he chooses to call himself "The disciple whom Jesus loved." So when you see John, most often it's John the Baptist; and four times or so, most of them at the end, it's the father of Peter. So here we have John the Baptist, according to verse 25, and his disciples are having a discussion with a Jew about purification. They came to John and they said to him, "Rabbi, he who was [which means "teacher"], he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified [that means Christ], behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him."

You know, your career is over. Do you understand that? They're not coming to you anymore; they're coming to the One you were testifying about. "And John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it's been given him from heaven.'" Which is to say, "Look, I had my place. I received from God the commission and discharged it. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I'm not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.'" He knew he was not the Light, not the Christ. And that's why in verse 30 he says, "He must increase, I must decrease." Let me fade away and let Him take the spotlight.

So verse 8 says John was not the Light. Now some people have brought up an issue and it's an important issue to mention, so I want to point you to it. In John 5:35, in John 5:35 a comment is made about John, John the Baptist. And it says "he was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."

Well, wait a minute. John at the beginning in chapter 1, John the apostle says, "[John the Baptist] was not the Light." John himself says, "I'm not the Christ. He is and I give testimony to that." But here it says "he was the lamp [or the light] that was burning and shining, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." What's the issue here?

The word "lamp" in 5:35 is *luchnos*; it means "a portable lamp"--small portable oil lamp with a little wick. John was that kind of light. He was a derived light. But in chapter 1, verse 8, when it says Jesus is the light it's the word *phos,* which is essential light from which you get "photography," "photosynthesis." Any time you see the *pho* that's from that Greek word "light." Jesus is essential light; John is a lamp that reflects that light in the same sense that you and I are the light of the world, and we're not to hide our light.

So at the very start of this wonderful gospel, John illuminates the nature of true gospel ministry, all true ministers, faithful witnesses, center on the evidences and the facts concerning the person and work of Christ, to make the case that He is who the Scripture says He is. That's the theme of all preaching by all obedient, loyal, faithful ministers and Christian witnesses. Ministers are not priests; we are not priests; we are not mediators. We are not sacred agents who somehow draw down through ceremonies and rituals some kind of divine life and grace and dispense it to somebody else. We don't do that. That's a deception. We don't bring divine grace through any sacramental means to

people. We're not spiritual advisors. We're not coaches, which seems to be a popular term. We're not helpers, psychologists, who through our good advice make people feel better about themselves. We're not miracle working healers who have some kind of anointing from heaven that exalts us above everybody else. All of that is just lies. No preacher is anointed in any supernatural way above anybody else. There's no such thing in Scripture.

All true ministers are sent from God to declare the true witness and testimony concerning the Light, concerning Christ, who alone dispels the darkness. And when we give the true and accurate and complete testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are loyal and faithful. That's why as long as you come to Grace Church, and as long as you've been coming, you will see Christ the theme of everything.

Why? Back to verse 7, "So that"...Here's the purpose..."so that all might"...What?..."believe through him." Who's "him?" Not Christ. Through John, in this case. "He came for a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him."

You say, "Wait a minute, do people believe through a man?" Yes, yes. That seems like a stretch. Look at Romans 10. What's the Great Commission? You know what the Great Commission is? "Go into all the world and"...Do what?..."preach the gospel to everybody." Why, why do we need to do that? Why do we need to do that? Because if they don't hear the gospel, they can't be saved. In Romans 10, we could pick it up in verse 13, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord"...Jew or Gentile, there's no distinction he says back in verse 12..."whoever believes will not be disappointed," verse 11.

Then verse 14, "How will they call on Him in whom they haven't believed? How will they believe in Him whom they haven't heard? How will they hear without a"...What? A what?..."preacher. How will they preach unless they're sent?" No wonder they say, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" Verse 17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word concerning Christ."

So John is a model. John came for a witness to give testimony about the Lord Jesus Christ so that all might believe through his preaching, through his ministry.

People come to salvation by believing preachers, by believing the evidence they present, by believing other Christians who have taken the gospel to them and explained it and given the facts and supported it. And those who come to Christ, come to Christ through human means, and say from that Old Testament text, of course, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news." We love the people who brought us the gospel, right?

The goal of gospel ministry is believing through our preaching. That's why Paul says, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; it's the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes." I'm a debtor to the Jew and the Greek to preach the gospel. All that in Romans 1:16 to 18. It may be foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1, may be a stumbling block, but to those who are being saved, it is the power of God unto salvation.

So the light is shining, first of all, in this foundational passage in John, on the nature of true ministry. Secondly, the light illuminates the nature of the Son of God, the true nature of the Son of God. We would know from the Old Testament, the second member of the Trinity. We would know the Trinity because we see all three persons of the Trinity engaged in the Old Testament. We would know that there is a relationship between the members of the Trinity. There are conversations between the members of the Trinity: "the Lord said unto My Lord," for example, in the Psalms. We would know something about the nature of God because His attributes are disclosed in the Old Testament. We know a lot about Him. But there would be a measure of darkness until the light appears. And the light illuminates Himself. The light shines to reveal the very Light itself, the very essence of Christ. And what we learn in verse 9 is "there was the true Light which coming into the world enlightens every man."

When Christ arrived, now the second member of the Trinity becomes clear to us. Now we see who He is. We know, from the New Testament, that He was working in the Old Testament. That He was a spiritual rock, for example; that brought water to the children of Israel in the wilderness. We know other things about Him that are referred to in the New Testament. We know that He was actually the One on the throne in Isaiah 6 of whom the angel said, "Holy, holy, holy." We know that He is the Savior of Isaiah 52 and 53, the One who would be our substitute. But there's still shadow around that until we come into the New Testament and the light arriving illuminates Himself. And we see the light of the glory of God like never before shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Which is more glorious, which is more instructive? To see a cloud of fire at night? A cloud of light in the day, leading the children of Israel, or to look into the face of Jesus Christ? He is the effulgence of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, Hebrews 1. He is the One in whom the Godhead dwells bodily. He is the one in whom the glory of God is revealed, full of grace and truth.

The light shines then on the true nature of gospel ministry and it shines on the Light itself. He is the true Light. We see that. The *alethinos*; "genuine" it means; "real;" "legitimate, as opposed to false." He is the true Light, as opposed to borrowed light, secondary light, derived light. He is the true Light, as opposed to shadows and symbols. He is the pre-eminent, all-glorious emanation from God. The glory of God shines in Him, more brilliantly than in any other revelation. And consequently enlightens every man who sees Him for who He is.

What does it mean "enlightens every man?" What it means is for every man who truly sees Christ, there is complete enlightenment about who He is--not available in the Old Testament, not available.

No one really could see the full glory of Christ until He came into the world. He enlightens every man. He is the only Light for every man. Everyone who is enlightened is enlightened by Him. Everybody who understands salvation and His role as Savior; everyone who understands that understands it because they see Him for who He is. Everyone who is truly enlightened; everyone who sees spiritual reality, who sees the supernatural world the way it really is; everyone who is enlightened genuinely and savingly is enlightened because he has seen the light of Christ. You can't be saved apart from Christ. He says in 8:12 of John, "I am the Light of the world. No man who follows Me will ever walk in darkness." The only Light the world has is Christ. He is the only Light that can enlighten anyone and everyone. His light is the only sufficient light.

In John 3 verse 16, we all know, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." But it goes on. "God didn't send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who doesn't believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Again, John's theme of believing in Him for salvation.

And then this: "This is the judgment," verse 19, "that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, doesn't come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

The light of salvation shines only in Jesus Christ. J.C. Ryle put it this way: "Christ is to the souls of men what the sun is to the world. He is the center and source of all spiritual light. Like the sun, He shines for the common benefit of all mankind, for high and for low, for rich and for poor, for Jew and for Greek. Like the sun, He is free to all, all may look at Him and drink health out of His light. If millions of mankind were mad enough to dwell in caves underground, or to bandage their eyes, their darkness would be their own fault and not the fault of the sun. So likewise, if millions of men and women love spiritual darkness rather than light, the blame must be laid on their blind hearts. But whether men will see or not, Christ is the true sun and the light of the world, there is no light for sinners except in the Lord Jesus," end quote. What a great statement.

As the sun is the light that lights the world, so Christ is the Light that lights every man. There is no other light. And if you accept the Light, you're saved. And if you reject the Light, you're judged.

How did He manifest Himself? Verse 10, "He was in the world." "He was in the world." He was in the world that He made. "The world was made by Him." He was in the world for thirty-three years. He was present in His creation. For thirty years in Nazareth, the people had Him in their neighborhood and the first time He came back to preach, they tried to kill Him, tried to kill Him. For three years He ministered in the land of Israel and banished illness, banished demons, demonstrated His power over

nature. He was the mystery of godliness, God in human flesh. He was the invisible God made visible. He was in the world, the very world that He made. And He demonstrated His creative power, didn't He? Gave people limbs, gave people organs, gave people eyes, new hearing mechanisms. Gave people life from the dead, controlled storms, walked on water. He showed His creative power. And He put Himself on display by being in the world. This is the greatest manifestation of the Savior, the second member of the Trinity who would be our sacrifice.

So the coming of Christ then enlightens us about the nature of spiritual ministry and it enlightens us about the nature of the Savior Himself. Thirdly--and I'll hurry a little bit--Christ coming into the world as the Light, illuminated the true nature of sinners, illuminated the true nature of sinners. In order to get the gospel in your mind and understand its urgency and importance and understand the truth about how it operates, you have to see this third point. John makes this unmistakably clear and you will probably recall these verses by memory. Back to the middle of verse 10. "The world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."

Look, we understand that men are sinners, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked is not new. That's Jeremiah 17:9, way back. We understand the Fall in Genesis 3. We understand that mankind is cursed. We understand that God has to drown the whole human race very early in the book of Genesis, because He sees only evil continually. We understand the depth of human depravity; it's the history of the Old Testament and the account of the New, as well as all human history up to the very moment we live. We understand the wretchedness of the world. But never, never has that wretchedness and the profound nature of that darkness been more on display then when people reject the light. It's one thing to reject the light of the Law. It's another thing to reject the word of Old Testament prophets. It's another thing to reject the revelation of God written in the Old Testament. But it is a far more indicative thing to reject Christ.

This is incomparable testimony to the depravity of man. Put the blazing Light of heaven, full of grace, full of truth, in the world of sinners, and when they reject Him, you will have the most dramatic evidence of the depth of their depravity. One thing to reject a man, a prophet; it's another thing to reject a scroll that someone wrote. But it is quite a flagrant thing to reject the living God in human flesh. Never, never has the depravity of man been so clearly revealed as when the light came into the world and exposed all that was hidden in the darkness of the human soul. No disclosure of the sinfulness of sin is ever as revealed as this. How wretched are you when you resent Jesus Christ--when you will not believe in Christ; then; ever since then; or now? Again, rejecting written revelation, rejecting spoken revelation, rejecting a preacher, rejecting a prophet. Very revealing. But rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the most devastating indication of the depth of human sin. Verse 10 says, "The world didn't know Him." Romans 1 says, "They don't know God." And John 1 says, "They don't know Christ." Engulfed in spiritual death and blindness, they love their sin. And John, as I just read in John 3:19 and 20, this is the judgment that comes on them that the Light shines but "men love"...What?..."darkness rather than the Light." They plunge deeper and deeper into the darkness.

To those that are perishing, the light is foolishness. They didn't know God in Romans 1. They don't know the Son of God in John 1. Still true today.

He gave ample evidence to the generation that were there when He arrived and has left ample evidence in the testimony of Holy Scripture. In John 5 He says, "Can't you believe My words, and if you can't believe My words, can you believe My works? And if you can't believe My works, can you believe My Father? If you can't believe My Father, can you search the Scripture, for they are they that speak of Me."

There is plenty of evidence of human sin, plenty of evidence of the depth of human depravity. But never is it more stark then when people know about Christ, have the truth in their hands, and reject Him because the light is never shone in such glorious brilliance, and the people who plunge deeper into the penetrating darkness demonstrate the sinfulness of sin.

And it even goes beyond that. In verse 11, "He came to His own." What do you mean "His own?" Well, it means His own place, His own people, His own country, His own nation, His own town, "and those who were His own did not receive Him." It wasn't just the world that didn't know Him, the Gentile world, the outside world, continuing even to today. It was the very people who claimed to believe in the true God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Old Testament. It was the most religious people on the planet. It was the people who had, according to Romans 9, the Law, the prophets, the covenants, the adoption, the fathers--all that God had poured into the people of Israel. You will find in the Law, the prophets, the historical writings, and the Psalms--all those categories in the Old Testament--used dozens of times this phrase by God: "My people, My people." That's what's being referred to. He came to His own people, and those who were by their own statement His own people did not receive Him. How deep is depravity?

The greatest illustration of human depravity in history is the Jewish rejection of Christ when He was here. There is nothing parallel to that, nothing. "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." John's going to show us the history all through this gospel of Jewish rejection of Christ.

There's a fourth illumination, the Light illuminated the truth regarding gospel ministry, regarding the Savior Himself, regarding sinners, and, fourthly, the Light illuminated the true nature of believers. Just briefly on this.

Verse 12 tells us the plan was not thwarted in spite of the world's rejection and the rejection of Israel. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." What does it mean to receive Him? It means to believe. They're parallels. "As many as received Him...to those who believe in His name." To believe in His name is to receive Him, to receive Him is to believe in His name, to believe in His name is to believe in what His name means and it means all that He is. There will be some who will believe. The word "but" is a small,

powerful fulcrum that makes a dramatic shift from the previous unbelief. But as many as received Him, or believed in Him, He gave the privilege to become children of God. And that's the true nature of believers.

What are we? Are we just religious people? Are we just people who follow creeds? Are we just people who go through religious ceremonies? Are we just people who have a certain moral code that we live up to? No. The true nature of believers is we are children of God. And you don't find that really clearly indicated in the Old Testament, because the people in the Old Testament would only call God Father in a creative sense, not in an intimate, personal sense. We cry "Abba, Father"; we speak to God as our personal Father because we are His everlasting children. Because we received Christ and believed in Him, believing in the three Latin words: "sense," *notitia*, we know the truth; *ascensus*, we ascend to the truth; *fiducia,* we trust in the truth and we put our destiny in the hands of the One in whom we believe. We believe in His name. And therefore, we have the privilege "to become"--there's that creative word again; "to be being" is eternal; "to become" is in time, to be created. So what happens is, we will be created again. We were created physically, and as believers in Him we have become children, we have been created as spiritual children. This is the second creation; that's why it's called "the new birth," or being "born again, or being "born from above," as we'll see in John 3.

The One who created us materially, physically, will create us spiritually. And this One is Christ Himself. Nothing was made without Him in the physical creation, and no one is spiritually recreated without Him either. "As many as received Him [Christ]" believed in His name. "To them He gave the right to become [created] children of God." He creates us. Christ creates us anew--second birth, regeneration.

So the true nature of a believer, not a follower of somebody in the sense of a student, not a person who is guided by a moral code, or an ethical system, but the true nature of a believer is that he is a new creation, a child of God everlastingly true.

So John, one by one, shines the light of Christ to illuminate the nature of ministry, to illuminate the Savior Himself, to illuminate the condition of sinners, to illuminate the nature of believers, and one more, this is a big subject, but I'm just going to make quick reference to it. The Light coming into the world also illuminated the true nature of God, the true nature of God.

If men are as sinful as they are, if they are as wretched as they are, if they love the darkness as they do, if they're spiritually dead and spiritually blind, how can they possibly believe? How can they possibly receive Christ? How can they possibly become children of God? How can they possibly be born again? How can it happen?

Verse 13, here we look into the very nature of God. "Who were born"--to be a child you have to be born; this is that new birth, regeneration. "Who were born not of blood." Know what that means?

Heritage, descent; it doesn't come down from your ancestors. That's not how you become a child of God, not because of your parents or your grandparents, or your family. "Nor of the will of the flesh." Not because of personal effort, personal moral effort, personal spiritual effort, personal religious activity. "Nor of the will of man." What does that mean? The acts of others, some sacramental system, some system of religion plied by so-called priests on your behalf. You're not going to become a child of God by family heritage. You're not going to become a child of God by personal effort. You're not going to become a child of God by some man-made system--all impossible.

How? You "were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Only God can do this miracle. And here we're introduced to the true nature of God with regard to the gospel. God is by nature a Savior. He's a Savior whose mighty power causes us to receive His Son and to believe in His name. He will have much more to say about this later on in the gospel, but at the very foundation we need to know that in this ministry of evangelism and gospel presentation and giving testimony and witness to Christ, God will work to give life to dead sinners. It is His heart to do that. God our Savior, God our Savior, says the apostle Paul again and again and again. God who is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe; He is a saving God. Who is a pardoning God like You? Read Ezekiel 36 and 37; God presents the New Covenant of salvation. Read Jeremiah 31; God is by nature a Savior. It's in His heart to give life to dead sinners. This is what we need to know as the foundation, the bedrock essentials for Christians. We need to know that God by nature is a saving God who gives life to dead sinners. We need to know that believers are those who become by new creation eternal children of God. We need to know that sinners are deep in blindness and darkness and flee the light. We need to know that Christ is the only true light to enlighten every man, and we need to understand that the nature of ministry then is to present Christ and give testimony to Him and see what God will do for His own glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, it's been a marvelous, marvelous time with the apostle John as we've gone over the words that once, several thousand years ago, he penned on a piece of parchment as the Holy Spirit poured them through His mind; and to see that they are today alive and powerful, penetrating, gripping, truthful, and that nothing as the centuries have rolled by has diminished in any sense any word from You, because every bit of it is everlasting, everlastingly true. It would be our prayer today as we've read earlier in the service that no one would harden his heart in unbelief against the truth concerning Christ and plunge deeper into the darkness. But would You in Your kindness as a saving God give new life because people can only be born when they're born of God; they can only be regenerated when You regenerate them. We know the new birth is Your divine work, and, Father, we ask that You would do that on behalf of sinners. Cause them to receive and to believe the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and use us to spread that truth as faithful evangels that others may hear and believe. How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they're sent? So send us here and around the world with the truth concerning Christ. Be lifted up and exalted among us and,

Lord, glorify Yourself by giving life to dead souls, giving new birth, spiritual life for Your glory, we pray. Amen.

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