

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

John 1:6-13 | The True Light

Sunday August 16, 2026

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

Several weeks ago we started our new study on John's Gospel.

Last Sunday, we finished the opening verses of his prologue.

In the first five verses, we learned John's reason for writing—his thesis for his Gospel.

Jesus is God of very God.

In other words, Jesus is the very essence/substance/being of God and has the same characteristics of Yahweh/Eloheim.

Jesus is God AND wrapped in flesh and bone.

We also learned two new titles for the Lord Jesus—"The Word" and "Creator."

In other words, the Lord Jesus is uncreated and eternal, and because he is uncreated and eternal, He is the Creator who is life Himself and offers spiritual light to sinners.

The spiritual light is called Salvation:

Last Week KEYPOINT 1:

Salvation is the complete forgiveness (pardon) and deliverance from sin because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, John continues His theme/illustration with light—not only light, but True Light.

We'll also meet one of the most dynamic characters of the NT—John the Baptizer.

We'll learn his role and purpose—and how John's life, role, and purpose impact us today.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

Let us hear the Word of the Lord:

SCRIPTURE:

John 1:6—*There was a man sent from God whose name was John.*

John 1:7—*He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.*

John 1:8—*He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.*

John 1:9—*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*

John 1:10—*He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.*

John 1:11—*He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*

John 1:12—*But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name,*

John 1:13—*who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.*

May the Lord bless the reading of His Word.

PRAY:

For the wellspring of life is with you. By means of your light we see light.

EXEGESIS:

John 1:1—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2—He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:3—All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

John 1:4—In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

John 1:5—That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

John 1:6—There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

Today we see an immediate shift in John's Gospel.

He is shifting his focus from *the Word* to *the messenger*—John the Baptist.

The idea here is that the Baptist “appeared.”

Notice that he didn't appear on his own terms or authority.

He didn't ordain himself—this is not his idea or movement.

John 1:6—There was a man sent from God...

Who is this man sent from God?

The name *John* means “the gift of God.”

He’s a gift because he is first prophesied in the OT.

Both Isaiah and Malachi speak of John the Baptist.

Isaiah 40:1—“*Comfort, comfort my people,*”
says your God.

Isaiah 40:2—“*Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and announce to her
that her time of hard service is over,
her iniquity has been pardoned,
and she has received from the Lord’s hand
double for all her sins.*”

Isaiah 40:3—A voice of one crying out:
*Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness;
make a straight highway for our God in the desert.*

Isaiah 40:4—*Every valley will be lifted,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled;
the uneven ground will become smooth
and the rough places, a plain.*

Isaiah 40:5—*And the glory of the Lord will appear,
and all humanity together will see it,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.*

This person—the voice of one crying out is John the Baptist.

He is the forerunner to announce the Lord’s coming.

Next we have Malachi— the last book in the OT.

Malachi 3:1—*See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming,” says the Lord of Armies.*

In the closing few verses of the OT.

Malachi 4:5—*Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.*

In a few weeks, John will teach us how the Baptist comes in the Spirit of Elijah.

But for now, who is this man that these men prophesied about?

John the Baptist/Baptizer/Immerser was born to Zechariah, a priest, and Elizabeth.

Not only was his coming prophesied in the OT, but his birth was also miraculous.

Now, John’s Gospel doesn’t mention any of this, but the other Gospels do.

His birth is so special that the angel Gabriel met with Zechariah and told him that his wife, who was too old to bear children, would bear a child, and that he was to name him John (Lk. 1:5-25).

- The Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit before birth.
- After his birth, his father prophesied about his son’s future role.
- He wore camel hair and ate locusts and wild honey.
- People from all over traveled to the Jordan River to hear him preach about repentance and to be baptized by him, confessing their sins.
- He was the first to announce publicly that Jesus was the Savior, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)
- King Herod murdered John.

Jesus said this about John the Baptist:

John 5:35—*John, was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.*

Matthew 11:11—*“Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared.*

In other words, the Baptist is the greatest of all the prophets.

Wait! Greater than Moses?!

I’m not gonna argue with Jesus, but we have to ask, “Why?

Why would the Lord Jesus call John the Baptist the greatest prophet to ever appear?”

He didn’t perform any miracles—his ministry only lasted six months...

John is the greatest prophet for several reasons.

First, he was the pivot of biblical history. Jesus said...

Matthew 11:13—*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

Luke 16:16—*“The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then, the good news of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone is urgently invited to enter it.*

The OT prophetic office ends with John the Baptist because he is the pivot point in Biblical history.

His arrival signals how everything is about to change.

The Baptist stands at the great turning point in redemptive history—the transition from the Old Covenant age of promise and anticipation— to its fulfillment in Christ and the New Covenant.

Second, John was the greatest prophet because God the Father chose him to perform the most important task up to that point in human history—

And that is to introduce His Son, the second person of the Trinity—the Lord Jesus Christ— to the world.

John foretold this amazing news through preaching repentance and baptism.

John 1:7—*He came as a witness to testify about the light,*

John came as a witness.

What does a witness do?

A witness testifies to what he knows to be true.

A witness establishes the truth/facts.

When a news station wants to report an event, it interviews eyewitnesses.

Eyewitnesses also guide our legal system.

Think of someone in the court of law (Law & Order), taking the witness box, swearing under oath.

Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth—so help you, God?

It's a crime to lie under oath as a witness—(btw, God tells us that it's a moral crime to lie at any time.)

Regardless, when credible witnesses testify to an event, we are morally bound to accept their testimony as true.

God sent the Baptist as a witness.

We, as the church, are also witnesses.

We are not called to be attorneys. We are not called to debate or argue.

We are called to be witnesses—to share the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth concerning who the Lord is and what He has done.

Yet, we are to do these things with the spiritual gifts that the Lord has given.

So when we share Jesus day by day, it's not a burden.

Because we're actually working in our strengths—so it's a joy to be a part of the Great Commission.

KEYPOINT 1:

God doesn't call every Christian to be an expert attorney for the defense (Evangelist), but He does call every Christian to take the witness stand.

We don't have to know everything to share Jesus.

Why are we called to take the witness stand?

John 1:7— so that all might believe through him.

Belief is a major theme in John's Gospel.

As we study, we'll learn how "belief" is a word of action.

Believe in what?

John 1:7— *so that all might believe through him.*

Not a what—but a Who. Now we know who to believe in.

It's one thing to have faith; it's another to have faith in the right person.

Having faith in the wrong person is painful.

Having faith in the wrong savior is tragic.

John 14:6—*Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

John 1:8—*He (the Baptist) was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.*

The Baptist knew he wasn't the Savior.

- John was a man; Jesus is God.
- John was a witness; Jesus is the Word.
- John was a servant; Jesus is the Son.

In a few weeks, we're going to study the humility of John the Baptist.

But for now, this is a very important lesson for us—reminding ourselves who is who.

Whenever Christians lose their humility and puff themselves up—thinking they are the light instead of reflecting the light—they will always lose their witness for the Lord.

Think about a full moon on a clear Arizona night.

The moon can be so bright that you can see where you're walking.

But here's the interesting thing:

The moon doesn't produce its own light.

It's reflecting the sun's light.

In a similar way, Christian witnesses reflect the Son of God as well.

Pastors aren't the light—missionaries aren't the light.

John the Baptist wasn't the light—Jesus is the Light.

And that's exactly what John the Apostle says next:

John 1:9—The true light that gives light to everyone

The Lord Jesus is the “ultimate” Light—He's the source.

The prophets gave flickers of light—their light pointed beyond themselves.

Jesus is not merely another bearer of God's light—He is the Light to whom all the others pointed.

The Greek noun *for* “true” means *not partial*.

As we would say, “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” as opposed to part of it.

As sinners, we are prone not to tell the whole story.

Or we mix in unrelated details to shift the focus away from the truth.

However, there is nothing mixed into *God's truth*—His light is pure.

Our versions of truth are diluted with sin.

So God's light, truth, and holiness are so pure that it's terrifying.

That's why, when the preincarnate Jesus shows up in the OT, people thought they would die.

What does the light/truth do when it shines directly in and on our personal lives?

It exposes the darkness of our hearts, and it uncovers the depravity in our lives.

This is why the world hates the Lord and His True light.

The Lord's light reveals our dirty laundry—the most vile of our sins are exposed in His light.

Nothing is hidden from Him.

Have you ever walked into a hotel room at night and thought it looked perfectly clean?

Then the next morning you open the curtains and sunlight pours across the room.

Suddenly you see dust on the table, fingerprints on the glass, crumbs on the floor.

The sunlight didn't create the dirt—the sunlight revealed what was already there.

Likewise: Jesus doesn't make us sinners by exposing our sin—His light reveals the sin we try to hide.

And the world hates that, but it's not just the world.

As a Christian, how do you respond when someone points out sin in your life?

Do you say, “THANKS”—or do you deflect the light back on to them? Making them the problem?

KEYPOINT 2:

The greatest and most terrifying thing ever to happen to us was the coming of Jesus Christ to enlighten the world.

John 1:9— was coming into the world.

This is an interesting phrase—we don’t talk that way.

We say things like: “I was born for this!”

After Jesus fed the 5,000 Jews with a boy’s sack lunch...

John 6:14—they said, “This truly is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

Martha told Jesus before Lazarus’ resurrection...

John 11:27— “I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world.”

Jesus told the Disciples...

John 16:28—I came from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

Jesus' ultimate origin is not from this world—He came from the Father.

John 1:9— was coming into the world.

The Greek noun for world is *kosmos*.

Kosmos has several meanings, and it's important to know the context around each use.

Verse 9 describes the physical world as it does in the first two uses in verse ten.

John 1:10—He was in the world, and the world was created through him,

The third use refers to people.

John 1:10—and yet the world (the people) did not recognize him.

Why didn't people living in the world recognize Jesus?

Because Satan dominates the world.

Whenever we start talking about Satan, many of us become uncomfortable—others roll their eyes.

So I want to be very sensitive to you.

It's important to know, but not dwell on the fact that Scripture talks about how this world is dominated by a very real enemy—Satan.

Luke 4:5—So he (Satan) took (Jesus) up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

1 John 5:19—the whole world is under the sway of the evil one.

Scripture describes him as a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

However, please know that Scripture also says that “He that is in you”—the Holy Spirit—“is greater than he that is in the world.”

Now, Someone else enters the world/kosmos.

John 1:10—He was in the world,

John's attention moves toward Jesus' *incarnation*. Big Picture:

- The Creator enters His own creation
- The Author enters His own story

How is it possible that the eternal Son of God

- Could also be Mary's son?
- Grew up physically like you and me
- Increased in wisdom and stature
- Became thirsty, hungry, and tired.
- Experienced sadness, anger, and wept.

John 1:10—and yet the world did not recognize him.

The world didn't physically recognize the Lord.

They didn't identify Him as God—their Messiah and Savior. Why?

Because Jesus was so human! He looked like an ordinary Jew.

He didn't have a halo around His head to identify Himself.

But Jesus's physical appearance is not what John is talking about.

The Greek verb for "recognize" is *ginōskō*—meaning "to know" or "understand."

This isn't a physical problem, but a spiritual one.

Not only did the world not recognize the Lord, but they didn't want Him.

John 3:19—*The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.*

John 3:20—For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed.

Apart from the Lord, we love our sin—hate people who expose it.

Therefore, we'll avoid the Lord, have nothing to do with church, and certainly won't read the Bible.

We want to live in darkness and not get caught loving our sin and worshipping our idols.

So that's how the world responded to the Lord during His arrival—how about His own people—the Jews?

John 1:11—He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

It's one thing for the world not to recognize God, but it's another for God's own people to reject Him outright.

After all, the Lord chose the nation of Israel, led them out of their physical slavery to Egypt, and made a promise to love and take care of them.

Exodus 19:5—you will be my own possession out of all the peoples,

We should realize that the Jews were the most enlightened of all people.

This rejection of the Lord goes beyond ignorance and reveals an astonishing ingratitude.

John 1:11—and his own people did not receive him.

Notice how John doesn't say that they don't know Him, but that they did not receive Him.

The Greek verb here is *paralambánō*, meaning “to take with” or “to take along.”

It is used of Joseph taking Mary as his wife (Matt. 1:20, 24).

Apart from Adam and Eve hiding in the garden, this verse is one of the saddest verses in Scripture—the Lord’s people didn’t want the Lord.

All through Jesus’ life, He was unwanted:

- King Herod didn’t want Him, so he murdered the babies of Bethlehem.
- Even the religious leaders didn’t want Him.
- When Jesus cast a legion of demons (thousands) out of one man into a herd of pigs and saved his life, the townspeople asked Jesus to leave (Mk. 5:17).
- Finally, the crowd of Jews didn’t want Him either and shouted, “Crucify him, crucify him!”

Have you ever watched a video of a soldier returning home, surprising his family?

Imagine this: Picture a soldier coming from a long deployment.

His family knows he's coming home—they don’t know when.

Everyone has been talking about his return.

Finally, the car pulls into the driveway.

He walks to his own front door.

He knocks—so excited to be home.

And his family looks through the window—
and refuses to open the door to let him in.

They didn’t receive him home.

That's far more painful than not recognizing him. Why?

Because this is his home (Rev. 21:3).

- Israel had the prophets.
- Israel had the promises.
- Israel had the covenants.
- Israel had the Scriptures pointing forward to Messiah.

And when their Messiah came home—they refused to open the door.

John 1:12—*But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name,*

Here's the good news: rejection isn't the end of the story.

To *all* who receive Christ—Jew or Gentile—God gives the right to become His children.”

Nobody walks into God's family waving a list of rights.

We have no natural claim upon sonship—John says God *gives* us this right.

It's bestowed, not demanded; grace, not entitlement.”

Christianity isn't about demanding our rights from God— it's about marveling at the fact that God would give us anything good—let alone be members of His family.

God bestows a change of status—children of darkness to children of light.

And those whom God brings to life respond by believing in His name.

John 1:12— *to those who believe in his name,*

“Believed” (Gk. *pisteuō*) implies personal trust.

Romans 10:9—If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

You will be born again!

John 1:13—who were born...of God!

“Were born” means “born again.”

Just as we had nothing to do with our physical births, God is solely responsible for our spiritual births.

We didn’t take the initiative to be physically born—our parents did.

Think about your birth certificate:

Your name is on it. Your birthday is on it. Your parents' names are on it.

But there's one signature you'll never find—Yours.

- Did you authorize your conception?
- Did you choose your parents?
- Did you schedule your birth?
- Did you choose where to be born?
- What part did you play?

We contributed nothing to our physical birth. Why?

Birth is something that happens to you.

Picture a delivery room moments after birth.

Does the doctor hold up this baby and say: “Congrats, you did it!”

In a similar way, we didn’t take the initiative to be spiritually born again—God did.

Ephesians 1:4—*For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world*

James 1:18 NLT— *He chose to give birth to us...*

John now lists three ways people think that they can come to God on their own terms.

John 1:13— *who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man,*

- In other words, your religious denomination cannot save you.
- Human birth cannot save you.
- Human determination cannot save you.

How, then, is anyone saved?

John 1:13— *but of God.*

Two of the greatest words in human language—But God!

But God, who is rich in mercy... made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. (Eph. 2:4-5)/

But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)

I planted, Apollos watered, **but God gave the growth**...(1 Cor. 3)

God has chosen what is foolish in the world... God has chosen what is weak...(1 Cor 1:27)

But God can—And God does.

John 3:3—*Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

There’s no “if’s, and’s, or but’s.”

Spiritual rebirth comes from a Spiritual Father.

1 John 3:1—*See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God’s children—and we are!*

And because God has chosen to save His children, this is great news!

God didn’t have to save anyone!

- We were dead—but God made us alive.
- We were sinners—but God demonstrated His love.
- We could not give ourselves birth—but God caused us to be born again.
- We were in darkness—but God shone His light into our hearts.

APPLICATION:

We are witnesses whether we realize it or not.

The last thing the Lord told the Disciples:

Acts 1:8—*and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

The question is whether we are:

- Good or bad witnesses
- Righteous or unrighteous
- Holy or unholy
- Different or indifferent witnesses.

We witness to others without saying a word to them—our demeanor, our attitude, our body language.

We witness by the way we:

- Talk to others
- Our tone—whether it's kind or harsh.
- Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

PRAY:

BENEDICTION:

*May the LORD bless you and protect you;
may the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
may the LORD look with favor on you
and give you peace.” ’ (Num. 6:24)*

POP QUIZ

1. What was John the Baptist's primary role as the one sent from God?

- A. To introduce and testify about Jesus Christ
- B. To replace the Old Testament prophets
- C. To establish an earthly kingdom
- D. To perform signs proving his prophetic authority

2. In the sermon's courtroom illustration, what does John's role as a "witness" teach Christians about evangelism?

- A. Christians should avoid discussing their faith unless asked
- B. Only Christians with the gift of evangelism should speak about Christ
- C. Every Christian must become an expert debater
- D. Every Christian is called to testify truthfully about Christ

3. What does the sermon's illustration of the moon teach about John the Baptist and Christian ministry?

- A. Christian witnesses reflect the light of the Son
- B. Christians produce spiritual light through good works
- C. John's light eventually became equal to Christ's
- D. Only pastors and missionaries reflect Christ's light

4. In the sermon, what is emphasized by calling Jesus the "true light" in John 1:9?

- A. Jesus was one of several equal sources of divine light
- B. Jesus is the ultimate Light to whom the prophets pointed
- C. Jesus brought a truth completely unrelated to the prophets
- D. Jesus replaced a previously false revelation from God

5. What spiritual truth is illustrated by sunlight revealing dust and fingerprints in a hotel room?

- A. Only unbelievers have sins that need to be exposed
- B. Christ's light reveals sin that was already present
- C. Sin disappears automatically when it is exposed
- D. Christ's light creates the sin found in human hearts

6. According to John 1:10, why did the world fail to “recognize” Jesus?

- A. Humanity’s problem was spiritual blindness rather than merely physical recognition
- B. Jesus physically looked completely different from other Jews
- C. Jesus purposely concealed his identity
- D. The world had received no revelation about a coming Messiah

7. What is especially tragic about John 1:11, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him”?

- A. The people who were expecting the Messiah refused to receive him when He arrived
- B. Israel had never been told that a Messiah would come
- C. Jesus arrived in Israel without demonstrating compassion
- D. The Gentile nations received Jesus while every Israelite rejected him

8. According to John 1:12, what does God give to those who receive Christ and believe in his name?

- A. The right to become children of God
- B. The right to inherit salvation from their parents
- C. The right to demand earthly prosperity
- D. The right to earn salvation through obedience

9. What point does the birth-certificate illustration make about spiritual rebirth?

- A. Physical and spiritual birth are identical in every respect
- B. Just as we did not initiate our physical birth, God initiates our spiritual birth
- C. People choose their spiritual birth in the same way they choose their physical birth
- D. Spiritual birth depends primarily on a person’s religious family

10. What responsibility follows from God bringing his people from darkness into life and light?

- A. Christians should withdraw from unbelievers to protect their witness
- B. Christians should leave witnessing primarily to trained evangelists
- C. Christians should prove their faith mainly through theological debate
- D. Christians should live as faithful witnesses to Christ in words and conduct

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Monday — Sent to Be a Witness | John 1:6–7

1. John understood that he was **“sent from God.”** How would viewing your daily life as being “sent from God” change the way you approach your family, workplace, and relationships?
2. God doesn't call every Christian to be an expert evangelist, but He does call every Christian to be a **witness**. Who has God placed in your life who needs to hear the truth about Jesus?
3. What fears or excuses keep you from being a witness, and what practical step can you take this week to become a more faithful witness?

Tuesday — Reflecting the True Light | John 1:8–9

1. Like the moon reflecting the sun, Christians don't produce the Light—we **reflect the Son**. What areas of your life currently reflect the Lord clearly, and where is that reflection being obscured?
2. John knew, **“He was not the light.”** In what ways have pride, the desire for recognition, or being concerned about what others think of you— become more important than sharing Jesus day-by-day?
3. When the Lord's light exposes sin in your life, do you respond with repentance and gratitude—or defensiveness and blame? What has His light exposed recently that you need to address?

Wednesday — Loving the Light | John 1:9–10

1. The sermon compared the Lord's light to sunlight revealing dirt in a hotel room: **the light doesn't create the dirt; it reveals what was already there**. What sin might you be tempted to keep hidden from God's light?
2. John 3:19 says people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. What does your daily life reveal that you presently love most—The Lord or something competing with Him?

Thursday — Receiving the Messiah | John 1:11–12

1. Israel had the prophets, promises, covenants, and Scriptures—and yet rejected its Messiah. Is it possible that you possess tremendous biblical knowledge while resisting something that the Lord is commanding you to do? What is it that you're resisting?
2. In the soldier illustration, the returning soldier came home only to find his own family refusing to open the door. Are there areas of your life where you gladly acknowledge Jesus as Savior but resist receiving His authority as Lord?
3. John 1:12 says those who receive Christ are given **“the right to be children of God.”** What should change in my thinking, priorities, fears, and relationships because God has made me His child?

Friday — Born of God | John 1:12–13

1. The birth-certificate illustration reminds us that we contributed nothing to our physical birth. How does knowing that your spiritual birth ultimately comes from God affect your pride and deepen your gratitude?

Saturday — Living as a Witness

1. Jesus told His disciples, **“you will be my witnesses”** (Acts 1:8). If someone observed your life this past week without hearing you speak, what conclusions might they draw about the Lord you represent?
2. The sermon reminds us that we witness through our **demeanor, attitude, body language, words, and tone**. Which of these most needs to change in you so that you represent the Lord more faithfully?
3. Consider the people you will encounter tomorrow at church and throughout the coming week. What would it look like to display **“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”** so that others see the True Light reflected through you?

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