



JOHN 1:6-8 | JOHN, WITNESS TO THE LIGHT

- Verse 6 –
 - In English, we might take the fact that **In the beginning was the Word** (v. 1) with **There was a man...** (v. 6) and put these together in some fashion, based on the word *was*.
 - However, in verse 1 the verb is εἶμι [eimi], the word meaning *to be* or *to exist*, while in verse 6 the verb is γίνομαι [ginomai], which is “to become” and is related to the source of our English word for *generation*.
 - Exactly the same word is used in verse 3, twice translated **made**, also in verse 10. This verb is sometimes translated *was* in the New Testament, but always with the context of *came to be*. Thus we could say, *There was born a man...*
 - The man was **sent from God**, the word being ἀποστέλλω [apostello], from which we derive the word *apostle*.
 - We often state that an apostle in the Scripture is always directly sent, and this verse appears to argue against that, for John and God had no face-to-face encounters. However, the word **from** is παρά, which typically has the meaning of *along side* and speaks of the *source* of the sending itself.
 - The English phrase *sent from* is used four other times in the New Testament:
 - Luke 1:26 **Gabriel was sent from God** - using the word ὑπό [hupo] rather than *para* - that is, sent *directly by* God.
 - Acts 10:17 - **men which were sent from Cornelius** - also using *hupo*.
 - Acts 11:11 - three men **sent from Caesarea** - also using *hupo*.
 - Philippians 4:18 - Paul says he received **of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you** - Here the word *apostello* is assumed, but not used. However, the word **from** is *para*, as in our John 1:6 text. This is to be expected because Epaphroditus is the one from whom the things were received, but he was only the deliveryman.
 - This is to say that to be “sent *para*” speaks of God as the ultimate source, while “sent *hupo*” would be to say God was the sending agent (i.e.: the voice giving the command).
 - Ultimately, these words would have reminded the reader of Malachi 3:1, in which God says, **I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.**
 - In Malachi 3:1-2, note the underlying expectation the Jewish people would have had:
 - The messenger would prepare the way.
 - The Lord would **suddenly come to his temple**. There is nothing in the text to assume (nor prohibit) a delay.
 - The arrival of the Lord would be based on *seeking* (v. 1) and would require *repentance* (implied from v. 2). John’s ministry was one of getting the Jewish people to seek their Messiah and repent in preparation for His kingdom.

- Verse 7 –
 - John **came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light.**
 - His role was to magnify another, which he would do very well. He was a witness **of the Light**, the word **of** being περί [peri], from which we get *perimeter*. John was to bear witness of *the full circle* of Jesus as the Messiah.
 - The **Light** here, of course, refers back to verses 4-5.
 - The purpose of John’s witness **of the Light** was **that all men through him might believe.**
 - The believe would be **through him**, that is, through John (grammatically, had the pronoun been to the Light, a neuter pronoun would have been required, theologically, we do not believe *through Jesus* but *in Jesus*).
 - Note that the word **men** is assumed, not translated. It would just as easily be assumed to be a reference to *all Israel*, and since John was sent as a messenger to Israel alone, and since Jesus Himself was sent as a **minister of the circumcision** (Rom 15.8), such would likely be a better understanding (i.e.: *all men of Israel*).
- Verse 8 –
 - To give clarity, the Gospel makes sure the reader understands that John was a **witness of that Light** but **was not that Light**.
 - John witnessed in a manner consistent with Malachi 3:1-2. Compare Matthew 3:1-12.

JOHN 1:9-13 | THE WORD, REJECTED

- Verse 9 –
 - Returning his focus on the Word, the writer speaks of Jesus as **the true Light**, once again speaking philosophically of *truth as light*. The light of Jesus **lighteth every man that cometh into the world.**
 - Note that in Jewish thinking *light* is foundational to this world’s purpose, and also that this foundational purpose of light was hidden in the world, seeking discovery and revelation. What the Gospel says in these verses is perfectly aligned with rabbinical teaching today. Many rabbinical discussions center on why God created light first. Here is one popular rabbinical conclusion:

First, he fixes in his mind the purpose which he desires his work to achieve. Only then does he begin the labor. This, as it were, was G-d’s procedure. And the purpose of the world that He was to create (a place where the Divine light would be hidden⁷ in the heavy shrouds of material existence) was that it should be purified and the pristine light of G-d restored. He sought, ultimately, a “dwelling place in the lower world,”⁸ meaning that His hiddenness (darkness) be transformed into a revealed presence (light). Since light was thus the purpose of the creation, and the purpose is the first thing to be decided on in the order of a work, light was created on the first day. The intention of all the subsequent creations was captured in that opening phrase, “Let there be light.”¹

7. “World” and “hidden” are semantically related in Hebrew (olam—he’elam).

8. Cf. Tanya, Part I, ch. 36.
 - Note how the rabbinical quote aligns with John 1:9-10: there was a **true Light** that was “hidden in the heavy shrouds of material existence” and thus the “Divine light” was **in the world** and yet **the world knew him not.**
 - The author was clearly steeped in Jewish thought.
- Verses 10-13...*stay tuned!*

¹ https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/110297/jewish/Torah-Studies-Bereishit.htm - accessed January 29, 2020.