

I Am Second!

John 1:6-18

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever been around people who turn everything that is said about themselves? Psychology calls these people narcissists. What we are going to see in our text today is the exact opposite of a narcissist. We are going to see a man who puts himself second in his role and position while putting Christ first. Some of you may be familiar with the website *I Am Second*. It's a website of testimonies where people share their faith and how they have become Second and God is First. This morning in our text we will see that John the Baptist is the first *I Am Second* testimony.

The first chapter of John intertwines the life and role of Jesus and the life and role of John the Baptist. The first five verses are what we call the Prologue, and verse 6 introduces a significant man at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. We will see in our text this morning how the Apostle John who is the author introduces John the Baptist then jumps back to Jesus then back to John the Baptist. John is introducing so much to us in this first chapter that it is hard at times to keep up.

TEXT:

⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷ to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸ John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹ The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

¹⁵ John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' "

¹⁶ From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness

came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us. ¹

I. The Role of John the Baptist (6-9)

A. John's role was a witness to the Light of God.

B. God had given him this role in relationship to His son Jesus coming onto the scene of human history.

C. Who is John the Baptist?

1. A little background regarding John was he was a cousin to Jesus through Mary and Elizabeth as testified in Luke's Gospel.
2. Mark's Gospel begins with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.
3. All three of the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel include the ministry and testimony of John the Baptist.
4. The name that is tagged at the end of John's name is the name Baptist. This has nothing to do with the Baptist denomination. There were different sects of Judaism: a) The Saducees, b) The Pharisees, c) The Zealots, d) The Essenes, e) The Baptizers

A.R. Meyer states...

While John denies that he is corporeally the prophet Elijah, it is undeniable that the four Gospel narratives associate them with each other. New Testament writers sometimes reused foundational figures from the Old Testament traditions, particularly those whose deaths are shrouded in mystery. The burial of Moses is "unknown to this day" (Deut 34:6), and Elijah is taken up in the whirlwind (2 Kgs 2:11). These are the two figures who appear with Jesus at His transfiguration (Mark 9:2–13; Matt 17:1–13; Luke 9:28–36).

Descriptions of John the Baptist clearly set him in the tradition of Elijah. John appeared as an ascetic in the Judaeen wilderness near the Jordan River wearing camel-hair clothing and a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild honey (Mark 1:6; compare 2 Kgs 1:8). Similar to both John and Jesus, Elijah also had a disciple "calling" (1 Kgs 19:19–21). Before Elijah ascended into heaven, in response to Elisha's plea to remain with him, we read "Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." (2 Kgs 2:6).

John baptized on the east side of the Jordan, opposite Jerusalem (John 1:28). Much of Elijah's prophetic activity occurred on the east side of the Jordan, and he ascended to heaven from there as well (1 Kgs 17:5). The Babylonian exiles may have come to the eastern shore of the Jordan upon their return to Jerusalem (Webb). John's baptism could symbolically represent

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Jn 1:6–18). Tyndale House Publishers.

a “return from exile” or a “new exodus,” as entering the water (symbolized through baptism), and consequently the land, was set within the paradigmatic theme of Israel’s prior water crossings, not only of Israel’s exodus from Egypt through the “Sea of Reeds,” but also through crossing the Jordan in the book of Joshua (Stegemann, Webb). The most viable understanding of John the Baptist as portrayed in the Gospels is the direct prophetic continuity with the expectations of a coming Elijah. “John’s emergence was at the same time the promised return of Elijah” (Stegemann, 217).²

Matthew 11:11-15

¹¹ Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴ and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

5. So, why does the prophet Elijah even come up in this conversation regarding John the Baptist? Listen to the last few verses of the Old Testament written by the prophet Malachi:

Malachi 4:4-6

⁴ “Remember to obey the Law of Moses, my servant—all the decrees and regulations that I gave him on Mount Sinai for all Israel.

⁵ “Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. ⁶ His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

6. John the Baptist’s life was summed up in that he was to witness and testify that Jesus is the Light. Remember Simeon’s testimony at the Temple regarding Jesus as the Light.

Luke 2:29-32

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. ³⁰ I have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared for all people. ³² He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

² Meyer, A. R. (2016). [John the Baptist](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

II. The Rejection of the Creator by the Creature (10-11)

- A. This illustrates how far Israel, as well as the rest of humanity, had fallen away from the living God.
- B. Also, it must be stated that Israel was looking for a militant Messiah to overthrow their enemies, in this case, the Romans, so that they could be the chosen people of God again with privilege.
- C. But considering that Yahweh became human and the unique creature that bears God's image, mankind, didn't recognize Him.
- D. *He came to His own* – I believe this statement points out that God came to His people Israel, but Israel rejected Yahweh's incarnation.

Matthew 15:24

Then Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel."

- E. The ultimate sign of their rejection was their desire to crucify the God they claimed to be their priority of worship.

John 19:12-16

¹² Then Pilate tried to release him, but the ***Jewish leaders shouted***, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar.' Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar." ¹³ When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*). ¹⁴ It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, "Look, here is your king!" ¹⁵ "Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him! Crucify him!" "What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back. ¹⁶ Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus away.

Paul's clear indictment of the creature rejecting Creator is Romans 1:18-32

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have

been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.³

III. The Reborn of God (12-13)

- A. The only way to be reborn is to recognize and receive who the Word of God is, Jesus the Christ.
- B. All those who believe in His name. Notice it is His name, the name of Christ Jesus, not your name, and John the Baptist is a great example of this. He was not about making his name great like in the days of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), but about pointing out how great the name of Jesus is.
- C. There was no Christian celebrity culture in the message of John the Baptist.

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Ro 1:18–32). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

- D. Jesus gives us the right to be called “children of God.” What a blessing, honor, and privilege we have been given by the only true child of God.
- E. Becoming a “child of God” changes our entire identity.
- F. In granting us this opportunity to those who receive Him and believe in His name, Jesus is sharing His righteous privileges as the Son of God and also as the Son of Man.
- G. We will never share in Christ’s divinity, but we are privileged to share in Christ’s humanity.
- H. Now some may say, “I thought we were already human?” No, we are something less than human because we sin. This is the reason the closer we get to God the less sense humanity as a whole makes to us. It is the reason we look back on our lives and say to ourselves, “What sense did that make?!”
- I. Jesus is the only truly human one (the 2nd Adam, see Roman 5) because He remained righteous as the Image Bearer of God without sin or deceit.

1 Peter 2:21-25

²¹ For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.

²² He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone.

²³ He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

²⁴ He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right.

By his wounds, you are healed.

²⁵ Once you were like sheep who wandered away.

But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

J. Jesus invites us back to our created intention of God regarding our humanity.

K. The only way back is through the offer only Christ offers.

C.S. Lewis in “The Problem of Pain” page 90-91...

Now the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator—to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature. When it does so, it is good and happy. Lest we should think this a hardship, this kind of good begins on a level far above the creatures, for God Himself, as Son, from all eternity renders back to God as Father by filial obedience the being which the Father by paternal love eternally generates in the Son.

This is the pattern which man was made to imitate—which Paradisal man did imitate—and wherever the will conferred by the Creator is thus perfectly offered back in delighted and delighting obedience by the creature, there, most undoubtedly, is Heaven, and there the Holy Ghost proceeds. In the world as we now know it, the problem is how to recover this self-surrender.

We are not merely imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are, as Newman said, rebels who must lay down our arms.

L. We become children of God:

- 1.) not born by human parents
- 2.) nor by human desire
- 3.) or by a husband’s decision
- 4.) but by God.

M. What does this mean? It means that ancestry.com can’t help you through lineage, nor physical birth, or mere human decision. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that makes our spirit come alive or is reborn within us. (Notice this passage foreshadows the conversation of Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3)

John 3:5-8

⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

IV. The Revelation of God through Jesus (14-18)

A. A new understanding of the presence of God coming to dwell with His people is coming to be revealed in verse 14.

D.A. Carson

For the first time since v. 1, the term *ho logos*, ‘the Word’, reappears. At this point the incarnation, the ‘in-fleshing’ of the Word, is articulated in the boldest way. If the Evangelist had said only that the eternal Word assumed manhood or adopted the form of a body, the reader steeped in the popular dualism of the hellenistic world might have missed the point. But John is unambiguous, almost shocking in the expressions he uses (*cf.* especially Barth, pp. 85ff.): *the Word became flesh*. Because succeeding clauses in this verse allude to Exodus 33:7–34:35, it is tempting to think this first clause does the same. The ‘tent of meeting’ was the place where the LORD ‘would *speak* to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend’ (Ex. 33:11). In Exodus Moses hears the divine name spoken by God himself, and this is followed by God’s *word* written on two stone tablets. Now, John tells us, God’s Word, his Self-expression, has become flesh.⁴

Exodus 33:7-34:9

The Tent of Meeting

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. ⁹ When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. ¹⁰ And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. ¹¹ Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Moses’ Intercession

¹² Moses said to the LORD, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’ ¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (pp. 126–127). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

nation is your people.”¹⁴ And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”¹⁵ And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.”¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”¹⁸ Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”¹⁹ And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”²⁰ But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”²¹ And the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.”²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

Moses Makes New Tablets

34 The LORD said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.”² Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain.³ No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.”⁴ So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone.⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”⁸ And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.⁹ And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”⁵

Listen to N.T. Wright:

‘In the beginning was the **Word**.’ At once we know that we are entering a place which is both familiar and strange. ‘In the beginning’—no Bible reader could see that phrase and not think at once of the start of Genesis, the first book in the Old Testament: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ Whatever else John is going to tell us, he wants us to see his book as the story of God and the world, not just the story of one character in one place and time. This book is about the creator God acting in a new way within his much-loved creation. It is

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Ex 33:7–34:9). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

about the way in which the long story which began in Genesis reached the climax the creator had always intended.

And it will do this through 'the Word'. In Genesis 1, the climax is the creation of humans, made in God's image. In John 1, the climax is the arrival of a human being, the Word become 'flesh'.

When I speak a word, it is, in a sense, part of me. It's a breath that comes from inside me, making the noise that I give it with my throat, my mouth and my tongue. When people hear it, they assume I intended it. 'But you said ...', people comment, if our deeds don't match up to our words. We remain responsible for the words we say.

And yet our words have a life which seems independent of us. When people hear them, words can change the way they think and live. Think of 'I love you'; or, 'It's time to go'; or, 'You're fired'. These words create new situations. People respond or act accordingly. The words remain in their memory and go on affecting them.

In the Old Testament, God regularly acts by means of his 'word'. What he says, happens—in Genesis itself, and regularly thereafter. 'By the word of the Lord', says the psalm, 'the heavens were made' (33:6). God's word is the one thing that will last, even though people and plants wither and die (Isaiah 40:6–8); God's word will go out of his mouth and bring life, healing and hope to Israel and the whole creation (Isaiah 55:10–11). That's part of what lies behind John's choice of 'Word' here, as a way of telling us who Jesus really is.

John probably expects some readers to see that this opening passage says, about Jesus himself, what some writers had said about 'Wisdom'. Many Jewish teachers had grappled with the age-old questions: How can the one true God be both different from the world and active within the world? How can he be remote, holy and detached, and also intimately present? Some had already spoken of the 'word' and 'wisdom' as ways of answering these questions. Some had already combined them within the belief that the one true God had promised to place his own 'presence' within the **Temple** in Jerusalem. Others saw them enshrined in the Jewish law, the **Torah**. All of this, as we shall see, is present in John's mind when he writes of God's 'Word'.

But the idea of the Word would also make some of his readers think of ideas that pagan philosophers had discussed. Some spoke of the 'word' as a kind of principle of rationality, lying deep within the whole cosmos and within all human beings. Get in touch with this principle, they said, and your life will find its true meaning. Well, maybe, John is saying to them; but the Word isn't an abstract principle, it's a person. And I'm going to introduce you to him.

Verses 1–2 and 18 begin and end the passage by stressing that the Word was and is God, and is intimately close to God. John knows perfectly well he's making language go beyond what's normally possible, but it's Jesus that makes him do it; because verse 14 says that the Word became flesh—that is, became human, became one of us. He became, in fact, the human being we know as Jesus. That's the theme of this gospel: if you want to know who the true God is, look long and hard at Jesus.

The rest of the passage clusters around this central statement. The one we know as Jesus is identical, it seems, with the Word who was there from the very start, the Word through whom all things were made, the one who contained and contains **life** and light. The Word challenged the darkness before creation and now challenges the darkness that is found, tragically, within

creation itself. The Word is bringing into being the new creation, in which God says once more, 'Let there be light!'

But when God sends the Word into the world, the world pretends it doesn't recognize him. Indeed, when he sends the Word specifically to Israel, the chosen people don't recognize him. This is the central problem which dominates the whole gospel story. Jesus comes to God's people, and God's people do what the rest of the world do: they prefer darkness to light. That is why fresh grace is needed, on top of the grace already given (verse 16): the **law**, given by Moses, points in the right direction, but, like Moses himself, it doesn't take us to the promised land. For that, you need the grace and truth that come through Jesus the **Messiah**, the **son of God**.⁶

B. Israel was waiting for the *Shekinah glory*, like in the days of Moses and Solomon, to come and dwell in the Temple, but Jesus, the Word tabernacled in flesh, gave a new meaning to God's return among His people.

C. John the Baptist testifies to the eternity of Jesus in verse 15.

D. The Apostle John clearly reveals the role of Moses as the lawgiver who was the top dog in Jewish belief while revealing Jesus' role was to bring grace and truth.

E. Verse 18 again reveals the divinity of Jesus making known who the only God actually is. Jesus is the revelation of God.

CONCLUSION:

Don Steward

Jesus is called, "the Word of God." Although Scripture does not define what is meant by that term it could refer to the fact that He is the personification of the written and spoken word. The testimony that God revealed through the prophets during the Old Testament period was now made human with the coming of Christ. Hence the Word became flesh.

⁶ Wright, T. (2004). [*John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10*](#) (pp. 3-5). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.