

He Loved Me...
He Loves Me Lots
The Gospel of John

Text
John 1:6-13

Topic
God sent John the Baptist to give testimony about Jesus so that everyone would hear and believe

Title
"Heeeear Johnny"

We use the word 'effect' to describe unusual phenomena. My two favorites are the Butterfly Effect and the Mandela Effect.

📖 The Butterfly Effect proposes that small changes lead to cosmic consequences. Ray Bradbury illustrates it in his short story, *A Sound of Thunder*.

A company offers hunters the chance to travel back in time to shoot extinct species such as T-Rex. One of the hunters strays off the path and unknowingly steps on a butterfly, killing it. After returning to the future, small then catastrophic changes are attributed to the butterfly's death.

📖 The Mandela Effect describes instances of shared false memory. The name comes from people being certain they remember Nelson Mandela dying while in prison in the 1980s. Mandela died free on December 5, 2013.

The most famous Mandela Effect is the dialog between Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker in *The Empire Strikes Back*. "Luke, I am your father" is an iconic phrase many remember, *but it is not what Vader said*. He said, "No, I am your father."

Our verses in the Gospel of John could be called The Jesus Effect.

The apostle John claims Jesus "was the true Light which gives light to **every** man coming into the world... that **all** through Him might believe" (v9&7).

John uses the word "believe" at least sixty times in his Gospel. "Believing" is going to be front and center in many of our studies.

I'll organize my comments around two points derived from the text: **#1 Every Person You Share Jesus With Can Believe God**, and **#2 Every Person You Share Jesus With Can Be Born Of God**.

#1 - Every Person You Share Jesus With Can Believe God (v6-11)

His disciples once asked Jesus, "Who then can be saved?" Theologians throughout the centuries have asked and sought to answer that question.

A surprisingly large number of Christians answer the question the way this Reformed writer does: "The saving intent of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is **limited to the elect, those for whom Jesus died.**"

They reason that Jesus did not die for everyone. He died only for the elect who before Creation were predestined to believe. People who were not elect in eternity past *cannot be saved*. They are instead predestined for damnation.

An important Reformed document states, "The express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree."

We teach that “God so loved” everyone in “the” entire “world” of mankind “that He gave His only begotten Son,” Jesus, “that *whoever*” who has ever lived who “believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

This discussion has gone on for centuries. There won't be a resolution of it in this life. It is acceptable to hold either view; it really is.

I propose something simple: Since both views rest upon biblical scholarship, and a Christian can hold either, you are compelled to choose the one that offers salvation to whoever will believe.

I want to look upon *everyone* and know they are a person Jesus Christ died for, not a “maybe” who cannot be saved because God predestined them to suffer conscious, eternal punishment in Hell.

Let me put it in question form: Why would you choose to believe God limits His offer of salvation **if you don't have to?** You *don't* have to, **so don't.**

One more thing. The folks in the limited atonement, unconditional election, double-predestination, field of T.U.L.I.P's are adamant that their view is the only one that has biblical scholarship. More than once I've been told that if a person sincerely studied the Bible, they would conclude Jesus died only for the predestined elect. Don't fall for that argument. Scores of scholars, resources, and church history offer biblical proof of the “whosoever will” heart of God.

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

John the Baptist. John the Baptizer. John the Immerser. John the Forerunner. John has been known by these names.

The apostle John never uses any descriptor in discussing him. He introduces him as “a man sent from God.”

Have you ever introduced someone? You probably had a cheat sheet listing the person's many awards and accomplishments, as well as personal details.

The introduction of John featured none of those.

- No statistics on how many he baptized.
- No mention of the number of followers.
- No references to his program of wilderness discipleship.
- He wasn't promoting the locust and honey diet.
- There was no line of camel's hair clothing.

He was merely a "man sent from God." We know some of his preparation before being sent from God:

- John had a miraculous conception, announced by an angel. His parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were childless and far too old to have a child.
- John was filled with God the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb.
- He was a Nazarite from birth. He abstained from all products that come from grapes; he never cut his hair; and he was careful not to come in contact with a dead body to avoid defilement.

Jesus called John a prophet and said, "Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).

Every Christian is the product of a miraculous second birth and filled with God the Holy Spirit.

You and I are "sent from God." We are to go into all the world with the Gospel message. To quote the Blues Brothers, "We are on a mission for God."

If you don't already, begin to see yourself as sent from God to your family and friends, at your workplace - anywhere you are.

Joh 1:7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

Joh 1:8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

Joh 1:9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

We could add 'John the Witness' to his titles. He spoke of Jesus, not of himself. We might want to check our testimony to be sure we are not bringing any attention to ourselves.

Use only as much of your life BC (Before Christ) necessary to point to Jesus.

The apostle John told us in the first five verses that "in the beginning," a Person called "the Word" was with God and was God. In verse fourteen, he will inform us that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

**Only one Person can be introduced as "God in human flesh appearing,"
the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The entire world of men lies in spiritual darkness. Not just around us but *within* us. We have a heart of darkness, born as we are with a sin nature.

- Satan's emissaries are called "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Ephesians 6:12).
- Mankind is described as having "minds the god of this age has blinded..." (Second Corinthians 4:4).

"Light," "Light," "Light," "Light," "Light" - five times in these three verses. Two more times in verses one through five. Jesus shone as "Light" in the darkness of fallen, sin-darkened Creation.

Jesus "gives light to every man coming into the world... that all through Him might believe." The International Standard Version is better: Jesus "was the true light that enlightens **every person** by His coming into the world... so that **all** might believe because of Him."

It saddens me that so many commentators read these words and immediately begin parsing them to exclude those they deem the non-elect.

The grace of God necessary to believe has been called "prevenient grace." It *comes before*, enabling a person to recognize sin, repent of sin, and believe

Jesus for the forgiveness of sin. God, in His grace and by the Holy Spirit, frees your will so that you might believe.

One of our favorite verses is First Timothy 4:10, "For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, **who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.**"

"Every man," "all," "whoever," can believe

Joh 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

Commentator John Gill has an interesting, and I think correct, take on verse ten. He lived in the 1700s, so his English is a little hard for us. He writes,

The phrase "He was in the world" is to be understood, not of Jesus' Incarnation; for the word "was" denotes past existence, from before the Creation of the world; and the world is the world in general, as opposed to Judea, and the people of the Jews in the next verse. The Incarnation of the Word is spoken of in verse fourteen as a new and distinct thing from this. [He was] in the world, when [it was] first made, and [has been] since, by His essence, by which He fills the whole world; and by His power, upholding and preserving it; and by His providence, ordering and managing all the affairs of it, and influencing and governing all things in it. He was in it as the light and life of it, giving natural life and light to creatures in it, and filling it, and them, with various blessings of goodness. He was frequently visible in the world, in an human form, before His Incarnation, as in Eden's garden to our first parents, to Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, and others.

I like what John Gill says because it includes Jesus' activity from Creation to His first coming. The Lord watched over us for millennia, providing for us, protecting us, loving us. From the Garden until now, His plan of salvation has been kept on track and on time by His providence.

"The world did not know Him." The apostle Paul expands on this in the first chapter of the Book of Romans. He says that mankind "did not think it

worthwhile to keep knowing God fully... For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him. Instead, their thoughts turned to worthless things, and their senseless hearts were darkened" (v18&21 ISV).

The clause "although they knew God" refers to a knowledge of God such as Adam and Eve had both before and after the Fall. How long this knowledge of God continued before it was perverted is not stated, **but people knew God.**

- Years after the Garden, we see Him talking with Cain about murdering Abel.
- As John Gill noted, He appears to believers with some frequency in the Old Testament as a Christophany - as the Angel of the Lord.

Jesus did not abandon Creation. Mankind abandoned their Creator. In our natural birth, we prefer darkness to His light.

Joh 1:11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

- The first "His own" is probably a general reference to Jesus coming to Earth, to "His own" Creation.
- The second "His own" definitely refers to the nation of Israel. God created a new nation from Abraham through whom Jesus would be born.

God became man and came to His own Creation and His own created nation:

- Gentiles eliminated God and worship "images that looked like mortal human beings, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles" (Romans 1:23).
- Israel rejected Jesus. Isaiah long before had prophesied of Jewish national unbelief, saying, "Who has believed our message?" (53:1).

You can believe. Your family members can believe. Your children can believe. Your friends can believe. Your employer and your employees can believe. Our government leaders can believe.

Not everyone will believe and be saved. It isn't because they can't believe, but because they won't believe.

#2 - Every Person You Share Jesus With Can Be Born Of God (v12-13)

Alan Jackson's biggest hit was *Chattahoochee*.

I'm thinking of another song of his that wasn't a hit and doesn't appear on lists of fan favorites. It's titled, *We're All God's Children*.

*Here comes a Baptist, here comes a Jew
There goes a Mormon and a Muslim too
I see a Buddhist and a Hindu
I see a Catholic and I see you
We're all God's children
Why can't we be one big happy family?*

"Dear Alan,
We are **NOT** all God's children."

Joh 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

Joh 1:13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The fact that those who believe "**become** children of God" means that all people are *not* God's children by natural birth. You become God's child in a second, spiritual birth.

The RMS Titanic had twenty lifeboats that, in total, could accommodate 1,178 people the night it sank. There were 2,208 souls on board. They did not have "as many" lifeboats as they needed.

"As many as received" Jesus means there are enough "eternal-life" boats to receive whoever believes.

John equates "receive" with "believe." You "receive" Jesus by "believ[ing] in His Name." When you "believe" Him, you "receive" Him.

Neither *believing* nor *receiving* is a work you perform. Salvation is God's gift to be believed and received by faith.

You "believe in His name." One commentator said,

His Name refers to all that Jesus is in His person as the eternal Word made flesh. It refers to all that He did by dying on the Cross as the substitute for your sins. Believing in His name means that you stop relying on your own merits and works as the way to approach God and instead you rely totally on what Jesus did for you on the Cross. It means that when you stand before God, your only hope for Heaven is not your good works, but rather that Jesus died for your sins and you are trusting in Him alone.

Jews in the first century thought themselves the "right" children of God on account of "blood," "the will of the flesh," and "the will of man."

- "Blood" refers to ancestry. Jews thought they were God's children by merely being Abrahams descendants
- "The will of the flesh" is self-righteousness in keeping rules and rituals to deserve salvation.
- "The will of man" refers to the desire of someone else for you to be saved. Roman Catholics, for example, believe that all who die "imperfectly purified" go to Purgatory. They pray and offer Mass for souls in Purgatory. *There ain't no Purgatory.*

The birth of a child of God is not a natural birth; it is a supernatural work of God. A person responds in faith to Jesus, and they are born-again.

Being born-again is called *regeneration*. I prefer the less technical but still accurate term, *rebirth*. The rebirth is a spiritual, holy, and heavenly birth that results in our being made alive spiritually.

I'll let you in on another doctrinal controversy. The same folks we discussed earlier who limit the atonement to the predestined elect have an unexpected position on rebirth. They say that "rebirth *precedes* faith." In their world, **you are born-again, and afterward you are given faith to believe.**

If anyone knows about believing, it's John who uses the word so much. Remember what John said about why he wrote?

"But #1 these are written that you may #2 believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may #3 have life in His name" (20:31).

Notice the order:

1. You read or hear the "written" word.
2. You "believe."
3. You "have life," i.e., you are born-again.

We will talk a lot more about rebirth when Jesus visits Nicodemus at night.

Jesus says of us, "but he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than [John]" (Matthew 11:11).

Do you feel "greater" than John? One sense in which we *are* greater is that we are collectively called the bride of Jesus. John considered himself a friend of the Bridegroom. Bride beats friend.

Let's build on that analogy. I'm betting that when you were engaged to your fiancé, you were joyous and wanted to let everyone know. You could hardly wait to introduce them.

We are the bride of Jesus. Currently, we are engaged. Jesus is our fiancé.

Be joyous and introduce Him to others.