

## 5. The Logos and the Fullness of the Times (1:6-13)

John began his treatment of the Logos by considering it in relation to God. He affirmed that the Logos shares the full essence and nature of God and therefore must be regarded as a personal being and not merely the impersonal wisdom or power of the personal God. And being one with God, the Logos was also one with Him as the Creator of all things. But more than merely Creator, the Logos was the point of connection and interaction between God and His creation; as God, the Logos manifested the life of God in the world, not just for the sake of testimony, but illumination unto communion. The Logos was God *in* the creation *for the sake of* the creation; it was in the Logos that God purposed His eternal design of intimacy with His creation mediated through man, the image-son. And though the creation, in its “darkness” of alienation and death, could neither discern nor embrace the “light” of the Logos, its antithesis to the light did not prevail; the Logos’ light continued to shine in the darkness in view of the coming day – the day ordained by God – when the light would at last triumph over the darkness. This day was prefigured in the work of creation (Genesis 1:1-5) and promised by the prophets in connection with Yahweh’s own coming in a Servant-Deliverer (cf. Isaiah 9:1-7, 42:1-16, 59:1-61:3; Micah 7:1-14; Zechariah 14:1-11; etc.).

The Day of Yahweh’s coming would see the light manifest in the Logos obtain victory over the darkness. God had pledged this day and it would certainly come. But it would not come as a thief in the night, catching men unaware and unprepared. The Lord was committed to revealing His intention to His prophets (Amos 3:7), and so He’d appointed a forerunner to herald this day – a prophet who would both announce the day and prepare men for it. Yahweh was coming into the world as the Logos, but in a new, marvelous and unimagined way; the Logos was going to be present in the world, not merely as manifested divine life and light, but as life and light *incarnate*. And befitting such a glorious theophany, Yahweh appointed a prophetic herald to announce it. This is the subject to which John next turned his attention.

a. John appropriately introduced this herald as coming on God’s behalf (v. 6). Three things about his statement are important to note. The first two are closely related and pertain to this person’s coming while the third pertains to his identity.

- 1) First of all, John used language that has to do with this person’s origin. When John said that he “came,” he was speaking about his coming into the world, not his coming to Israel – his coming *about*, not his coming *along*. The issue, then, is this individual’s creation, not his commission.

And John wasn’t merely affirming that this man was created, but that he “came into being” according to divine purpose and determination. John indicated this emphasis by using the same verbal form he employed in talking about the created order (v. 3). This language, considered in context (and alongside the larger biblical account), indicates John’s conviction that this person came into existence through the Logos with a view to the same overall purpose and goal which God had for His creation.

- 2) This idea is further reinforced by John's qualifying prepositional phrase. This man's "coming into being" had its genesis in God: he was sent *from God*. Taken at face value, John's construction seems to suggest the idea that this person came into the world from God's presence, and therefore as some sort of pre-existent creature. But treated in context, it's clear that John was indicating an intimacy of purpose, not proximity. That is, this individual came into being as one set apart and commissioned by God Himself – not sent from His side, but "sent" in the sense of being brought into existence to fulfill divine promise and accomplish a specific, foreordained mission pertaining to God's design for the creation.
  
  - 3) The third thing to note is that John identified this man by the name *John* – a reference to John the Baptist, the man who is the first subject of his account following his prologue (1:19-34). In this way, he connected this "John" with the Isaianic forerunner (cf. 1:19-23 with Isaiah 40:1ff), and therefore with Yahweh's coming in His Servant-Messiah. The significance of this connection becomes clear in John's subsequent declaration that this man (John the Baptist) came into the world as a *witness*: In Isaiah's prophecy, the forerunner was Yahweh's witness to His Servant in whom He was going to fulfill all of His redemptive and restorative promises; in John's account, this herald is God's appointed witness to the Logos' light – the light which inheres in the Logos and shines forth in the world. Already, then, John's direction is evident: *Somehow the ever-shining Logos light was going to be present in the world in a new way associated with the coming of Yahweh's Servant-Messiah.*
- b. This man John came into the world according to divine design and promise to fulfill a foreordained calling. And, again, this calling was to be God's witness – specifically, to witness to the *light* (1:7-8). Since the beginning of the world, the Logos had testified to Himself (and therefore to God) by manifesting in the world – and most especially to human beings – the light of the divine life. Now that testimony was to continue through another witness. Importantly, John's witness wasn't intended to replace or eclipse the Logos' own testimony, but to punctuate and heighten it. So also, other men before John had testified to the light as Yahweh's witnesses and John wasn't negating or overriding their testimony. *But his witness to the light was to be unique and unparalleled because now, in his day, the intensity of the Logos' light was reaching its apex*: John would not testify to the light by pointing to the Logos' invisible hand in creation and providence; rather, he would point to the Logos as personally present – the Logos as incarnate.
  
  - c. The Baptist's role was to witness to the light, but in order that "*all might believe through him*" (1:7b). In verse 5 John asserted the ongoing antithesis between the light and the darkness – an antithesis of incomprehension as well as opposition. Now, with his introduction of the forerunner, he was highlighting God's design that this antithesis should not stand. John was to testify to the light that was coming into the world in a new way with the goal that all men would embrace it.

In the imagery of the context, John's mission was to bear witness to the light that had come into the world to vanquish the darkness of unbelief – unbelief which reflects both unwitting and willful blindness (ref. John 9:1-41, esp. vv. 35-41; cf. also 6:24-36, 10:22-39, 15:18-25 and Matthew 15:1-14; Luke 23:26-39). Since the time of the fall, light and darkness had coexisted in a tense antithesis (symbolically attested in the first creation by the alternating ascendancy of day and night): Incomprehension and opposition on the part of the darkness testified that the light had not accomplished a full triumph. At the same time, the fact that the light's illumining rays continued to gather sons out of the darkness provided reassurance that one day God's primal will for His creation ("Let there be light") would see full realization in the eradication of darkness – not for a few hours but forever, and not as a physical phenomenon but an ontological and relational one (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6 with Zechariah 2:1-5, 14:1-9; Revelation 21:22-22:5).

John's calling was to testify to the light which *transforms* rather than merely *informs*. In this way he was called to prepare men for a new dawning of the light that would see God establish His kingdom of light by conquering the darkness and liberating the prisoners whom the darkness had bound, making them sons of the light (cf. Isaiah 9:1-7, 42:1-16, 49:1-12, 59:1-60:3; cf. also Daniel 12:1-3).

- d. The Baptist was sent to witness to this light, which meant he could not be that light. He was a "light-bearer," but as one called to testify to the *true light* – that is, the light of the ever-shining Logos now manifest in the world in its most real and authentic form (cf. 3:22-36). In announcing this true light, John also importantly emphasized that its coming amounted to a *new* and *everlasting* relationship between the Logos and the world. This is evident from John's use of the present tense (*coming* into the world), which highlights the perpetuity of this new coming: *Once the true light entered the world, its presence and work of illumining men would never end*. The light of the Logos was coming in an ultimate, everlasting way as the true light. This being the case, it follows that this consummate light was going to illumine men in a new way (cf. 1:8-9 with 1:4). Two things in particular indicate the newness of this coming and illumination:
- 1) First, John will show that this "true light" is the *tangible* expression of the Logos' light which, until that time, had shone in the world intangibly through the creation's nature, order and operation (cf. vv. 3-5).
  - 2) Secondly, John previously stated that the Logos' life was the light of men (1:4); now he insisted that the true light was going to illumine *every* man. What the *light* did in general terms, the *true light* would do intimately and comprehensively. Two ideas are in view here: First, John was implying that there is no other source or content of illumination for men; if a man is illumined, it is by this light (cf. 8:12; also 6:48-58, 14:6; Acts 4:12). There is no other light for men, but this one light also directs itself toward every man; this true light was coming into the world on behalf of the entirety of Adam's race (ref. also 3:19-20, 5:39-40, 8:12-32, 10:22-39, 15:18-25).