



December 24, 2017

Historical Perspective

History changes our perspective on people. After every president, historians give their perspectives in light of what they know of past presidents. But, they always give a warning that the present evaluations can always change with the passage of time. They know that as time goes by history will judge them differently. This goes for other historical figures as well. Sometimes in the heat of the moment, we think of them one way- positively or negatively. But, as time goes by, history can change what we initially thought and turn us around to think of them differently. This includes everyone from CEO's to artists and writers, even friends and family members. Jesus is one of those figures. During his lifetime, people mocked and ridiculed him. Even his own family thought he was crazy. But with the passage of time, history gives us a better, deeper perspective. On this Christmas eve morning, we look back in history to see how our perspective can change because Jesus is the true light of eternal life as children of God.

Witness to Light (6-8)

First, like any historical person or event, we have a witness to coming of the light of Jesus Christ. Over the last several weeks, we've been looking at the coming of Jesus Christ, here in John's prologue to his gospel. Earlier in John 1, we looked at the deity of the eternal Word who is Jesus, "*in the beginning was the word and the word was with God, the Word was God*". This word is also the light of the world that shines the light of life to men. He is a witness to Jesus. So what does this mean?

Man Sent From God (6)

He was a real, historical man sent from God. Look at v. 6: "*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John*". This is John the Baptist who preceded Jesus. God sent

him to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry. And like any true event, there is reliable historical evidence for John's life and ministry. Flavius Josephus, a 1st century Jewish historian recorded how John the baptist called people to repentance and faith who was later beheaded by King Herod. He also mentions how Jesus succeeded his ministry.

Bearing Witness (7-8)

He was an eye-witness to the coming of Jesus, "He came as a witness to bear witness about the light". Why did he testify to Jesus? He did it so "that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light"? This is why the gospel is "good news". It's the good news of real historical events attested to by eyewitnesses testifying to its authenticity and validity; that it really happened. And it's not some fairy tale or religious myth, but true. John did this so we might believe the gospel through him. This is why John wrote this whole gospel, " 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. " (John 20:31)

Eyewitness Accounts

J. Warner Wallace, an LAPD homicide detective specializing in cold-case murders was a skeptic who wanted to disprove the gospels. He writes:

As an angry atheist, skeptic, who thoughtfully dissected Christians and the Christian worldview..I suddenly found myself reading the gospel to hear what Jesus had to say. Something about the Gospels caught my attention, more as an investigator..I had interviewed hundreds (if not thousands) of eyewitnesses and suspects. I had become familiar with the nature of eyewitness statements, and I understood how testimony was evaluated in a court of law. Something about the Gospels struck me as more than mythological storytelling. The Gospels actually appeared to be ancient eyewitness accounts.¹

The gospel is historically reliable and verified by eyewitness accounts and that's why we ought to believe in its truth.

The True Light (9-10)

So what did John testify to? He testified to the coming of Jesus who is the true light that enlightens the world. How is he the true light?

¹ J. Warner Wallace, Cold Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels, loc. 124

True Light of Light (9)

He is the true light from which all other light derives. The idea of true that John uses is that of the original and a copy. And so, John is saying that Jesus who is the light of life and the light of men is the light of God from which every other visible light is a copy. This is why Jesus will say, *"I am the light of the world"*. It's as if God created all the physical properties of light as faint reflection of the light of God's own glory that illuminates and gives light to the whole universe.

True Light of Truth

He is the true light that leads us to the truth. The whole idea of light is meant to illuminate and make things visible. Light allows us to see things as they really are. And that's what the light of Christ does for us. In his light, we see the world, truth, and everything in our lives as they really are in relationship to the light of His truth. After saying, "I am the light of the world", Jesus said, *"But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."* (John 3:21) If Jesus is the way, the life, and the truth, then it's only appropriate that the wise men followed the light of the star to behold the true light, Jesus Christ.

True Light of OT

He is the true light of which all the lights of the OT are but a shadow. All the manifestations of light and glory in the OT are types and shadows of the light of Christ. This is why Paul quotes Genesis 1, *"For God who said, 'let light shine out of the darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'"* (2 Cor. 4.6).

True Light of Gospel

This is the gospel that we celebrate at Christmas: In his very coming, he transfers us from the domain of darkness into his marvelous light. Every light that drives away the darkness is a picture of the gospel overcoming sin and death. He is indeed the true light that enlightens everyone, if you would open the eyes of your heart and look upon him in faith.

The Light of Adoption (11-13)

Lastly, we not only have a witness to the true light of Christ who comes into the world, but he is also the light of adoption that makes us children of God. The world did not know him, nor his own people receive him, v. 10 and 11. John goes on to tell us why Jesus came into the world.

Received by Faith (12)

He came to be received by faith. V. 12: *“But to all who did receive him, . . .* How do you receive him? They *“believed in his name”*. They believed in person and work of the One named Jesus. What happens when we receive Jesus by faith? To those who believe in him, “he gave the right to become children of God”. He gives us all the rights and privileges of adoption into God’s family, to become sons and daughters of God. He gives them the highest and greatest of all the blessings that God could ever give. So what are they?

A New Status

It’s a change of status from sinners to sons and daughters; from orphan to child of God. When we receive the Son of God we who were orphans, alienated by sin and alone with hope and without God in the world, we are adopted into God’s family. We become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. His relationship with God becomes our relationship with God; his status our status. This is why Jesus came into the world in our humanity. The Son of God became a son of man to make men into sons and daughters of God.

Privileges of Adoption

It’s also the privileges of adoption. God treats us as children because by adoption we are His children. What are these privileges?

Fatherly Care

We have his fatherly care. He loves us better than our earthly fathers. And if we have bad parents or we’re orphans, God is not only a father, but He’s a perfect heavenly father who loves us perfectly.

Fatherly Grace

We also have his fatherly grace. God doesn't love us because of who we are or what we've done. He doesn't love us any more or less because we are good. And because we're sinners, we're flawed, broken, and messed up. But, God loves us by his grace, not by our works. This means that once he adopts us, he will never unadopt us, even when we sin. This is a truth that ought to give us peace in every circumstance, when we are tempted to wonder if God still loves us when we fail or fall or going through a difficult trial. In 2010, a mother put her adopted Russian son on a plane and sent him back to Russia because he had emotional and psychological problems. God's love is not like that. His fatherly love will never forsake us.

Fatherly Discipline

And we have the privilege of his fatherly discipline. *"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives"* (Heb. 12:6). But, the highest and greatest privilege of adoption is a personal, intimate, communion with God as our Father. We can go to him in prayer when we need Him. We can ask him for wisdom. We can go to him for help. Or we can simply bask in his presence when we enter boldly into his throneroom of grace. And all of these we receive by faith in Christ.

A New Perspective

Let me end with this final thought on this Christmas eve. Jesus came into the world as the true light that enlightens everyone by making us into sons and daughters of God. To those who receive him by faith, he gives them the right to become children of God. And the way he did that was to become one of us and forgo his rights, his privileges as the Son of God. He gave them up on the cross in order to give them to us when he took our sins and gave us His sonship. This is the historical perspective that ought to change forever how we think of Jesus. He came into the world on a dark night in Bethlehem 2000 years ago in order to die and make us God's children, blessed and beloved.

