

February 16, 2014
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to study John 1:9-13.

1. In what ways does Jesus enlighten everyone?
2. List four means by which God has revealed Himself to the world.
3. What is included in the word “world” in this text?
4. What is involved in “receiving” Christ the Light?

TO KNOW CHRIST IS LIFE EVERLASTING

John 1:9-13

“Do you know the Lord?” That is a great question for evangelism that is totally unacceptable according to most professing Christians. Why? The question presents us with two opportunities. One we get to explain “the Lord,” and two, it allows us to explain “know.” That is what this text is all about.

This text deals with another good question that is unacceptable for evangelism. “Have you received Jesus Christ?” “What does that mean to a pagan?” that wise people ask. Actually, that is exactly that question at which we should arrive after we have studied the words in our text.

The True Light Was Not Welcomed by Everyone in His World (vv.9-11).

John told us that He who enlightens everyone was coming into His world. This is a good way to describe the miracle we call the incarnation. The Word, who is God, *was coming into the world (v.9b)*. The grandeur of this event has been all but obscured by the celebration of Christmas. The Creator was coming into the world that had fallen into sin and was under the influence of Satan. What could be more astonishing than that? John put it in other words, very simply saying that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14)*.

He is the true light who enlightens everyone. I prefer a translation of this phrase the emphasizes the pronoun as the Greek text does. It reads, *He was the true light who lightens everyone, coming into the world*. He, the Light of the world, came to enlighten. The verb means to give light, to shine upon a person. Generally the word carries the idea of opening up something to view, or exposing it. It is the same word John used in the Revelation several times to talk about actual light that God will provide supernaturally. In our way of thinking, the word gives us the idea of shining a spot light on a dark area in order to reveal what is actually there.

In that sense it is true that Jesus came to uncover truth. More exactly Jesus, God the Son, came to shine a spot light on God’s perfect, righteous, character, which at the same time exposes our horribly unrighteous character. The True Light draws together all of God’s gracious self-revelation into a darkness piercing beam. This week a news article revealed that Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories has developed a new laser in which they combine several various lengths of light into one beam forced through an inverted prism as it were (layman language). It produces a laser beam of light that is 10,000 times more powerful than all the electric power stations in America combined. It delivers a petawatt of energy, delivering over 600 joules over a 450 femtoseconds—whatever all that means. All I know is that the fantasy of Starwars is upon us.

I can’t understand the gathering and focusing of light rays to make a laser beam, but I do understand the marvelous truth that Jesus gathers all the beams of light that reveal God and shines it in one powerful beam on the darkness of a sinful world. For example, we

know that God revealed Himself in nature. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them (Romans 1:18-19).* We know that God revealed Himself in the conscience. *They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (Romans 2:15).* And we know that God revealed Himself in the written word. *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God (Romans 3:19).*

Now we know that all of that revelation of God is drawn together in Jesus as the Enlightener concentrates all truth about God in Himself. *But in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:2-3a).* No wonder God says every person is without excuse (Rom. 1:20). We know!

The Enlightener came into His world to enlighten and His world did not accept Him. That is incredible in light of the fact that He made the world. John said, *He was in the world, and the world was made through him.* John used the word *cosmos* for world in this text. Originally (classical Greek) that Greek word referred to something that is well assembled or put together. This is the way Peter used the word to warn women not to let their **adorning** be only outward, (1 Peter 3:2). With use the term came to speak of something that is orderly and structured. In that sense we can see how it applied to and described the cosmic order of the universe quite well.

As John uses the word here it is an obvious reference to the entire world which includes every aspect of the universe, not just the ball of dirt called earth. The heavens, the earth, the people on the earth, is the *cosmos*. In fact, John sometimes used the word to describe even the corrupt, sin-infected philosophical system of the world under Satan's influence. That is what John meant when he wrote that we "must not love the *cosmos* neither the things in the *cosmos*" (1 John 2:15).

God the Son made the world perfectly. We already studied in verse three that He made all things. When He did, He made all things good. Seven times in the creation story we read that God concluded that what He did was "good." The word *good* describes something excellent, agreeable to His standard, something He finds pleasant. That was then. That was before sin. But when He was in the world, everything was imperfect. The world, under Satan's influence changed dramatically. By the time God came into the world physically, the world was so thoroughly sinful that it did not recognize its Creator.

Not surprisingly then, the Creator's creation did not accept Him. The world didn't even know Him (v.10b). John wrote succinctly, *yet the world did not know him.* The world did not (*ginosko*) detect, recognize, or notice Him. To know as this word describes it is to come to understand, perceive and be familiar with. This is not a matter of intuitive knowledge but being able to figure out who the Jesus of Nazareth really is. Or even more basic, it is being able to understand who God is. Jesus' world could not get it.

Oh but wait! Doesn't the Creator, the Light, the Truth enlighten everyone (v.9a)? Yes He does. He brings the light of truth to the darkness of ignorance. And as He does the Great Deceiver deceives and blinds the eyes of those who will not believe. So Paul rightly concluded, *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).*

The people chose to reject the enlightening that God gives them in the same we people who we know today still choose to reject the understanding Christ gives. The problem is just like Paul described it two thousand years ago when he confessed, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. . . .*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 (Romans 1:16-21).

What makes the story so sad is that the Creator *came to His own* (v.11a). The Word, the Light, the Life became a Jew. Let's not be too harsh on those first century Israelis for not welcoming God the Son with open arms. God becoming human was unlikely. God born of a virgin was impossible. The eternal King being born a commoner was unacceptable. And to go out and live in the hills of Galilee, like some kind of a hillbilly was really unacceptable! For the Eternal Word to grow up and work as an itinerant teacher might be somewhat acceptable but not expected. To be a miracle worker made Him suspect.

And to be a teacher of ideas opposed to traditions was wholly unacceptable.

What did they want? What would they have expected if they knew their Creator King was coming? They expected a prince who would be born in the king's palace. Or at least He should be a mighty warrior. He should be a leader who knew, understood and kept the oral traditions. He needed to be a man who could rally followers around himself, not offend them with his words. The incarnate Word was none of that. So they didn't accept Him.

Common sense causes us to ask, "Why not come to the Gentiles?" They were by far the majority of people just as we are today. They ruled the world, just like we do today. They were less radical, less volatile. Yes, but God had promised that the Savior would be born in the line of Abraham and that all the world would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3).

Therefore, God the Son had to come to His own people — and they rejected Him (v.11b). John wrote that *His own people did not receive Him*. The Jewish people rejected the Word. The leaders led the way in rejection because it was obvious that He would not submit to them. The populace followed their lead because they learned that to accept Him was too costly. Even his own brothers rejected Him until after He rose from the dead. Is it any wonder that the majority of people have not and will not receive Him?

Some Received the Light and Were Given Life (vv.12-13).

Those who believe become children of God (v.12). John taught about a special blessing God has reserved for who receive Him. The conjunction *but* at the beginning of this clause contrasts this group of people with the ones who did not receive Jesus. This is a special group identified by a comparative term. God reserves a blessing for the *osas*. What is that? The word refers to as much as, or as many as. It doesn't matter how many that group may include.

Whoever the individuals might be, they are the ones who receive the True Light. To receive is far more than to tacitly agree to certain facts. No one who lived in first century Israel could deny the existence of this one named Jesus. Nearly everyone had to acknowledge certain truths about Him (such as His signal teaching ability or His miracles). But only some of the witnesses of Jesus' ministry laid hold of, grasped or seized the Truth incarnate. To receive Him is a wonderful invitation that was transform your life for now and for eternity.

Reception is manifested through faith. The ones who embrace the Word are the same ones *who believed in his name (v.12b)*. The ones who receive Jesus Christ are the ones who believe Him. More precisely, John said that we believe in His name. His name includes every aspect of His person, which requires us to trust the reality of His deity. His names includes every aspect of His work such as living perfectly under the Law or His many miracles. It includes every aspect of His character such as the fact that He is holy, righteous, and honest — especially regarding who said He is!

If we do not fully embrace (in principle— leading to reality) every detail about how Jesus is presented in His Bible, we do not have faith and have not received Him. We must grasp—lay hold of— every detail about God the Son, even if we cannot comprehend or explain every detail. That is what it means to agree in principle. That is the first step. We must then grow to understand more and more the details that we have already embraced, and as a result embrace Christ's name more tightly. In other words we say, "I believe everything I know about Jesus Christ and if anything else comes to light in my study of the Bible I will believe that also." This describes well the process of a child embracing Christ by faith and then growing to understand progressively more about what they embraced.

Reception of the Word from heaven results in adoption. If we believe, *he gave the right to become children of God (v.12c)*. The **right** is an authority to become children of God. The word speaks of possibility, freedom, or opportunity. Faith in Christ's name, opens the door for adoption which is a right or an authority. Christ gives it at salvation, when we lay hold of His name. Understand the amazing work of salvation. Grudem gives an overview of the process with this description: "In regeneration God gives us new spiritual life. In justification God gives us right legal standing before Him. But in adoption God makes us members of His family." (Wayne Grudem, p.736). In other words, people who believe what Christ reveals as He enlightens, become children of God. People who do not believe remain children of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3).

Justification removes the penalty for our crimes against God, but it does not bring us into a favorable relationship with God. And yet we do not intend to minimize God's act of justification. Justification and redemption are critical before there can be adoption. *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5)*. All points of salvation (conversion, justification, redemption, and adoption) occur simultaneously. But, adoption, brings us into a realm of God's incredible favor toward us, like the favor a father shows to His own children.

Adoption allows us to have a new understanding of God as Father instead of Judge. Being adopted opens to us all the benefits of being God's child. His personal care and concern, peace with Him, reconciliation with Him, and liberty in Him. The great promise of adoption is, *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Roman 8:14-16)*. What a wonderful condition to be in!

To be put in the family of God actually requires new birth. Those who believe experience supernatural rebirth (v.13). We are not reborn through human power. John made that point very clear: *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of*

man (v.13a). I like a very literal translation of this phrase: *not out of bloods, not out of the will of the flesh, not out of the will of a husband [human]*. That is pretty clear isn't it?

The word for born (*gennao*) is used mostly in the New Testament in the literal sense of being born through natural child birth processes (45 times). But there are exceptions to that rule. The exceptions occur when the word used figuratively (20 times). So on the one hand John uses the term literally to say that people who are adopted into God's family are adopted not because we are born naturally, of the blood, the flesh, the will of a husband. There are no miracles involved in that process. No one is reborn into the family of God through natural processes. That means that you are not a child of God because your parents are Christians. In the same way you are not a child of God because you are an American. You are not a child of God because you were "born in the church."

Nor is anyone reborn by the will of flesh or man. The word for *will (theleima)* speaks of what one wishes to bring about by his own actions. This is what happens when a man says to a woman, "Let's have kids." It is the expression of a desire. The flesh exercises this will regularly—to the tune of over 7 billion on earth today. No one can be reborn into the family of God because another person desires it for him or her. For example, parents who pray diligently for their children's spiritual rebirth are not the cause of the miracle.

Nor can the person himself/herself be reborn because he or she desires it. What? Wait a minute! We preach to extract the desired result that people will want to be born again. And we put pressure on people to want that. Now are we to learn that salvation is not the result of human desire! Here is an odd thing. How then is a person born again?

Here John uses the term **born** in the spiritual sense. In that sense the word can speak of a relationship between a teacher and student where the teacher begets the student to a level of understanding the subject. In that sense of the word Paul called himself spiritual father of the Christians in Corinth, and of Onesimus. Also, in the spiritual sense of the word *born* it speaks of becoming brand new by conversion through God's power. It is just like the miracle of God creating something from nothing. Like: *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."* (Ge 1:1); or *"So God created*

man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Ge 1:27); or as David concluded, “Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.” (Ps 139:16).

And so God creates us brand new when we by faith embrace the True Light who enlightens us. That miracle is the topic of Jesus’ discourse with Nicodemus in chapter three. It is the miracle of new creation John refers to in 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18 as he repeatedly used the phrase *begotten of God*.

Therefore, it is only possible that we are reborn through God. We are not born out of the will of the flesh *but of God (v.13b)*. Again a more literal translation would render the phrase, *but out of God they were born*. God must implant the desire for salvation in our souls. The individual must act on the desire, but God must do the “re-birthing.” In that great act of mercy He removes sin, its guilt, penalty, and power. He gives a new heart that brings new desires.

What an amazing God. He returned to His creation, that Satan has ruined, in order to cast the light of truth on what has happened. Most people reject the light and press down the truth in order to worship themselves and their gods. But some are enlightened, zealously embrace the name of Christ, and God gives us new birth and puts us in His family. How amazing this God is!