

Sunday, December 17, 2023 | The Light Has Come

Week 3 | John 1:9-13 | “The Children of the Light”

In this series, *The Light Has Come*, we’re unpacking the prologue of John's gospel.

In week 1, we covered the first 5 verses. Jesus, as the Word, was with God and was God before the beginning. And through the Word, God created everything, and through Jesus, all creation holds together. Thus, **the Word of God is the light of men**. Indeed, just as he was at the dawn of creation, Jesus is the life that humanity needs.

Last week, we moved from talking about the eternal Word to being introduced to a specific person in time: *John the Baptist*. While all the gospel writers make a special mention of him, John the Apostle strips back the larger-than-life persona of John the Baptist to reveal who the man was at his *core*. Before Jesus’ cousin was a baptizer or even a preacher, he was a *witness*. He pointed people to the Son of God. And through his example, we learn that **there is no greater purpose for one’s life than bearing witness to the Light**.

Today, we'll explore the very *heart* of the prologue. After learning that the Light (aka the Word, aka Jesus) made the world and then sent a witness (aka John the Baptist) to prepare the world for His arrival, we can't help but wonder how the world *reacted*? To put it mildly, the response was mixed. To put it bluntly, it was mostly awful. Apparently, the world, by and large, didn't want anything to do with the Light.

However, the Light's entrance into our world wasn't *all* bad. The few who did welcome Him became something *new*. Though they were outcasts, destitute, and utterly statusless, anyone who accepted the Light became a *child* of God!

Christ takes believers from the orphanage and makes them *heirs* to the Kingdom (e.g., Oliver Twist, Despicable Me, Annie).

I want you to notice *two* things:

i. The rejection of the Light (vs. 9-11)

READ: John 1:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ The **true** light, which gives light to **everyone**, was coming into the **world**. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world **did not know** him. ¹¹ He came to his **own**, and his **own** people did **not** receive him.

When John claimed that the Word was the “true light,” he insisted that the Word was *genuine* light, light in its *purest* form, or *undiminished* light (cf. 4:23; 6:32; 15:1; 17:3).¹ And while truth can stand on its own, to say the Light was “true” is to distinguish it from something that is **not true**, something we might call a “false light”—i.e., those things that claim to be truth par excellence but are, in fact, misleading (e.g., angler fish pic). To be clear, I'm not just talking about bald-faced lies, though that would indeed fall under the category of a “false light.” I'm also talking about those things that might have a *bit* of truth but are not the whole truth (e.g., feelings, science, reason, etc.).

For instance, if you only look through the lens of your feelings, you will never find objective truth. Or, only look through the lens of science, and you will never find philosophical truth. Or, only look through the lens of reason, and you will never see the truth embedded in some work of art or experiment.

Thus, “truth” refers to certainty *sine pari* (without equal). And, in fact, this is how the term is used throughout the rest of the gospel (e.g., 4:23 – “true worshippers,” 6:32 – “true bread,” 15:1 – “true vine,” 17:3 – “true God,” etc.). As the saying goes, “All truth is God’s truth.” Little truths are but little lights illuminating a little part of our world. Only the Son of God can light up the world as a whole. Each truth is but a small part of a larger Truth, and every truth points back to Jesus (cf. 14:6).

John tells us the “true light...gives light to everyone.” Truth is not just for the elites; God has given light to everyone. But what does he mean by this? He is **not** referring to “general revelation” (Rom. 1:20).² His point is that only through Jesus can every man, woman, and child be spiritually enlightened.³ The Light (Jesus) is for everyone—i.e., the Jew and non-Jew (cf. 12:32).

This illumination for “everyone” came as a result of the fact that the “true light” came “into the world.” The Greek word John uses for “world” is **κόσμος** (*cosmos*). And, as with our discussion of the terms “witness” and “believe” in verse 5, *cosmos* is another favorite term for John. In fact, of its 185 uses in the NT, 105 of them (56.7%) are found in a book written by John.⁴ And,

¹ Kruse, Colin G., *John*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Revised Edition, (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 2017), p. 60.

² Köstenberger, Andreas J., *John*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 36; contra Morris (1995), p. 84.

³ Köstenberger (2008), p. 35, “This is the only instance of the term **φωτίζω** (phōtízō, enlighten) in the Fourth Gospel.”

⁴ Morris, Leon, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Revised Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), p. 111, “Altogether it occurs 185 times, of which 78 are in his gospel, 24 in the Johannine Epistles, and 3 in Revelation. It is not frequent in the

at its most basic level, “*cosmos*” denotes *order*. Before the Word spoke, there was no world; existence did not exist. But then the Word spoke, and the world came into being; existence began to exist. And this is why John reminds us, “He was in the world, and the world was made through him...” The World owes its existence to the Word.

Now, one would expect that the creature ought to know its Creator. After all, what coin is not stamped with its country’s iconography? What piece of art is not signed by the artist? What child does not resemble their parents in some way? However, in the irony of ironies, John reveals that even though “the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”

So, while, at its most basic level, *cosmos* refers to the literal universe, in the Gospel of John, *cosmos* almost always refers to a select group of *people*: sinful humanity.⁵ But which people? The Jews.⁶ Tragically, the phrase “he came to his own” means, quite literally, “he came home” (cf. 16:32; 19:27).⁷ Jesus came to the one people group on earth where he should've been known, and when he arrived, almost no one knew who he was. And even after he revealed himself, no one believed (“received) him. In fact, his own hometown tried to kill him (cf. Lu. 4:14-30)!

This dichotomy of Christ vs. the Jews, Jesus vs. the World, Truth vs. Untruth, Light vs. Dark, and Good vs. Evil is the tension that drives John’s account (cf. 7:7; 14:30; 15:18; 16:11, 20, 33; 17:25). Time and again, you will see Jesus standing on one side and the world standing on another, long-standing enemies that seem irreconcilable. However, despite the hostility, we’ll see the Lord approach the world, trying to make peace. But, instead of accepting the olive branch, John shows us that the world turns its back on the Son of God, going so far as to crucify him in their rejection.

Those made by the Light killed the Light with their own hands.

ii. The reception of the Light (vs. 12-13)

READ: John 1:12-13 (ESV)

Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 8 times, Mark 3 times, Luke 3 times); in the Pauline Epistles it occurs 47 times. It is thus a word of some importance for John and to a lesser extent for Paul, but it is not used much by other New Testament writers.”

⁵ Köstenberger (2008), p. 35.

⁶ Though to be clear, the Jews are representative of the whole human race. John is not antisemitic; he was a Jew, after all. The Israelite’s rejection of their Israelite God is indicative of how every human being has rejected their Creator (cf. Isa. 53:6).

⁷ Kruse (2017), p. 60; Morris (1995), p. 85, “When the Word came to the world he did not come as an alien. He came home.”

¹² But to all who did **receive** him, who **believed** in his name, he gave the **right** to become **children** of God, ¹³ who were **born**, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

These words are the heart of the prologue. Everything before it was leading to it, and everything after will point back to it. For all intents and purposes, it is “the functional center of the prologue.”⁸

Though the world and the Jews rejected Jesus. The Lord was received by a select few. The term "receive" refers to an open acknowledgment of Jesus' claims.⁹ Carson says, "...such faith yields allegiance to the Word, trusts him completely, acknowledges his claims, and confesses him with gratitude."¹⁰ And “believed” is active association with his identity (“in his name”). Thus, to receive the Light, a person must accept the Lord as he's presented himself to us, and they must walk according to his teachings.

After a person receives the Light, the Lord gives them “**the right to become children of God.**” This is a “legitimate claim” to become a part of Jesus’ family.¹¹ The believer's *status* goes from being an orphan to being a child.¹² They’re given a seat at the dinner table. To be called "sons of God" is a remarkable thing. It indicates that we are exalted to a unique status, even more so than Israel. Unlike the Jews who never referred to God in parental terminology, Christians get to call God "Abba, Father." (1 Jn 3:1-2).

When John said, “**who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God,**” he contrasted two kinds of birth.¹³ The phrases “of blood,” “of the flesh,” and “of the will of man” refer to the *natural* way that someone enters the world—i.e., the mingling of DNA via sex, which was first initiated by a person. But, to be born "of God" is to go through *supernatural* pregnancy, one that is not at all *physical* but entirely *spiritual*. “Being born into the family of God is quite different from being born into a human family.”¹⁴ And considering man is not a part of the equation at all, this is the work and will of God. Salvation comes as a result of God's initiative. You may think that you have come to God. However, the opposite is

⁸ Klink, Edward W., *John*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan Academic, 2016), p. 103, quoting Neyrey, *John*, 44.

⁹ Köstenberger (2008), p. 38.

¹⁰ Carson, D.A., *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Cambridge, U.K.; Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), p. 125.

¹¹ Köstenberger (2008), p. 39.

¹² Klink (2016), p. 104.

¹³ Klink (2016), p. 105, ““Birth” is an important Johannine metaphor, referring to something both natural and supernatural.

¹⁴ Carson (1991), p. 126.

true. If you've come to God, it is because God has drawn you. He is the initiator (cf. 6:44).¹⁵ Rather than procreation by regular means, to be saved is a creative work of God.

READ: John 3:3-5 (ESV)

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"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.

To be alive, one needs only to be born. But, to be *truly* alive, one needs to be born again.

So, what's the takeaway?

Reject the Light and **remain** a child of the Devil, or receive Him and **become** a child of God.

READ: John 8:42-47(ESV)

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If **God** were your **Father**, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your **father** the **devil**, and your will is to do your **father's** desires. He was a **murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the **truth**, because there is **no** truth in him. When he **lies**, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a **liar** and the **father** of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

There is no middle road. You either believe in Jesus and become a part of his family. Or, you reject Jesus and remain Satan's offspring.

¹⁵ Klink (2016), p. 106, "Beyond the process of nature, beyond every Jewish or other genealogy, beyond every action of the body, and beyond every will of human authority, there are children who have been brought into existence by the creative power and will of God."

Video Description

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SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: <https://docdro.id/bEvegkh>

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