

**“LIFE IN HIS NAME”:  
THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

---

CHILDREN OF GOD  
(JOHN 1:9-13)

**I. Jesus the True Light (John 1:9)**

- A. Having clarified that John the Baptist is not the Light, but only a witness to the Light, the Gospel of John now takes our attention back to the Light himself: “The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world” (v 9).
- B. This statement is talking about the descent of the Light of God into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. Notice that John calls Jesus the “*true* light.”
  - 1. “True” stands in opposition to what is false, which is a trait of the devil and his sons.
  - 2. “True” also denotes what is ultimate or final.
    - a. Consider statements where Jesus says that he is “the true bread” (6:32), “true food,” “true drink” (6:55), and “the true vine” (15:1).
    - b. By calling our Lord Jesus the “true light,” John is distinguishing Jesus...
      - i. from all the false prophets and teachers who claimed to be the light.
      - ii. from all the lesser lights that have gone before him, the great prophets of Israel of whom John the Baptist was one.
    - c. Our goal is not to shine our own light, but to allow the true Light to be seen through us and to be reflected off us.
- D. John also says that Jesus is the light “which gives light to everyone...” —The Light of God imparts light to everyone and anyone who would receive him.
- E. Verse 9 teaches us that the life-giving Light of God is meant for the sinful world.

**II. The World Did Not Know Him (John 1:10-11)**

- A. How does the world react to the Light when he does come? Not so well.
- B. Chapter 1:5 intimated that when the Light shines into the world, the world will resist the Light. Now, in v 10, we see this for a fact: “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.”
  - 1. John is speaking about the time when the Lord Jesus was serving in the world.
  - 2. The true, life-giving Light of God had come into the world in the person of Jesus.
  - 3. Although the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.
  - 4. Our sinfulness had so damaged the world’s ability to perceive the truth, that when the Creator himself shows up in human flesh, the world was incapable of recognizing him.
  - 5. This lack of recognition goes beyond mere ignorance. As Dr. Andreas Köstenberger points out, this phrase “did not know him” is “a willful refusal to accept or believe (in) someone or something” (*John*, 36).
  - 6. The most fatal sin in the Gospel of John is not adultery, murder, or any other sin—it is *the sin of rejecting Jesus*.
- C. Verse 11 adds, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”
  - 1. This phrase “own people” most likely refers to the Jewish nation.
  - 2. The Creator Light took the form of an Israelite.
  - 3. He came to the people of his own race, speaking their language, speaking from the Scriptures he himself had given to them through his prophets.
  - 4. Yet, his own people did not receive him.

### III. There Are Those Who Believe (John 1:12, 13)

- A. Thankfully, rejection does not have the last word.
  - 1. Back in verse 5, we were told that the darkness would not be able to overcome the Light.
  - 2. Verse 12 expresses more clearly what that means. Here is the high point of our passage today: “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”
    - a. Or more literally: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (NKJV).
  - 3. This verse tells us two things.
    - a. There were those who did respond favorably to his message.

b. What our Lord did for these people who responded favorably to him.

B. The favorable response: Receiving and believing in Jesus

1. These actions interpret one another.

a. To receive Jesus requires that we first believe in him.

b. Believing in Jesus leads to receiving him into our lives.

2. *Believing* is the outward-looking action. When we believe in Jesus, we look away from ourselves, we abandon all hope in ourselves and in the world, and we go to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

3. But since Jesus gives himself to us when we believe, believing also entails *receiving*. The believer receives what Jesus desires to give, namely, himself and every good thing that God desires for him or her to have.

4. This idea of taking Jesus into our lives may explain why Jesus uses food and drink to illustrate what it means to believe in him and receive from him.

a. John 4:13-14: “<sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, “*Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,* <sup>14</sup> but *whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*”

b. John 6

- 6:35: “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

- 6:55-57: “For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.* <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so *whoever feeds on me*, he also will live because of me.”

c. To believe in Jesus is to receive him for eternal life the same way we receive ordinary food and drink for physical nourishment.

5. Are we trusting on Jesus today for our salvation? Are we receiving Jesus by faith every day for the forgiveness of our sins, for our reconciliation with God, for our growth in obedience, and our eventual and certain perfection before the Father? All those precious blessings come to us through Jesus Christ.

#### IV. The Honor of Sonship (John 1:12)

A. What is the specific blessing that verse 12 raises to our attention? “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,”—what did Jesus do for them?—“he gave the right to become children of God...”

1. “Right” (Gk. *exousia*) = “authority.”
  2. By faith in Jesus, by ongoing but simple trust in Jesus, you and I are given the highest honor that any human being could ever have, which is the royal honor of becoming the children of God.
- B. What does it mean to be called “children of God”?
1. It means that believers should not blindly look up to the children of the world—especially those with great influence and attractiveness.
  2. It means that we have the most important Person and Treasure in the universe, God himself.
    - a. The most important part about being children of God is our relationship with God himself.
    - b. God is our Father and we are his children. God loves us and gives himself to us to be our Life, our Source of joy and strength.
    - c. Some key Scriptures:
      - Luke 10:17-20: “The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!’<sup>18</sup> And he said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’<sup>19</sup> Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.’<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”
      - Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”

## V. Born of the Will of God (John 1:13)

- A. Verse 13 teaches us that the children of God “were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
- B. Those words guide our attention to the basis on which everything is built—*God*.
  1. God is the Foundation and the Basis of all things.
  2. God is the first and ultimate cause of our salvation and acceptance into God’s family.
- C. The first cause of our salvation was not...
  1. our faith in Jesus.
  2. our will to turn from our sins and return to God.
  3. the person who witnessed for Christ to us.
- D. Ultimately, it all comes back to God himself as the first cause.

- E. Herman Ridderbos writes, “the concluding statement in vs. 13 traces the entire gift of being a child of God, including the manner in which it is effected, to its deepest ground: ‘procreation’ by God” (*The Gospel of John*, 47).

## **VI. God Our Savior**

**Just as God stood at the beginning of the universe, God stands at the start of his new creation. Behind every decision to turn from sin and return to God, behind every decision to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, is the gracious, life-giving will of God. Once again, God utterly demolishes whatever confidence we humans have in ourselves. The true Hero of the world story is not human determination or human power in all its different forms. Humanity has been compromised by sin. Humanity itself has become part of the problem. So if we are to be saved, salvation must come from the outside of the human race. And it has. God has sent his true Light to free us from the darkness of sin. And God has granted us the faith to receive his true Light, so turning us from his enemies into his beloved children. God alone is our Savior. Praise him. Thank him. Rest in him.**