

The Reception and Rejection of the Light

John 1:10-13

John 1:10-13 - *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”*¹¹ *He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.*¹² *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:*¹³ *who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

Background Notes

Verse 10: *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”* The word “world” was used in three different ways throughout the New Testament.

The first way: the word “world” was used in reference to the created world, the **material universe**. Acts 17:24: *“God, who made the world and everything in it...”* -- that is, the material universe. I believe that this is the way “world” is used in the middle of John 1:10, *“He was in the world, and the world [the material universe] was made through Him...”*

A second way: the “world” of **people**: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”*(John 3:16). This verse isn’t talking about the material universe, but the world of people. That’s the meaning of “world” at the end of verse 10: *“...and the world did not know Him.”* The world of people didn’t know Him!

Sometimes it’s hard to tell whether the created universe is in view, or the world of people - or maybe both. Both may be in view in verse 9, *“That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.”* Or, both may be in view at the beginning of verse 10, *“He was in the world...”* That is, He was not only in this material universe, but in the world of people as well. Both could be in view there.

The third way: “world” is used in reference to the evil, satanic **world system** that is opposed to God. 1 John 2:15-16: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”*

Does that sound like a contradiction in the Bible? John 3:16 says “God so loved the world,” and 1 John 2:15 says, “Don’t love the world!” The answer is that there are different uses of the word “world” in Scripture.

“World” refers to the evil satanic world system in the Gospel of John. John 15:18-19 - *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the*

world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” John 16:11 - *“of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”* John 17:16 - in his High Priestly prayer, referring to his disciples the Lord said, *“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”*

There are more Scriptures we could look at, but you see that in the Gospel of John, as well as the rest of the New Testament, the word “world” is used in these three different ways. It’s important to keep these distinctions in mind to avoid confusion.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Mankind has rejected both general revelation and special revelation.

What do we mean by *general revelation* and *special revelation*? **General revelation** refers to the various ways God has revealed Himself through nature and providence and the moral conscience of people. **Special revelation** refers to Jesus Christ and the Bible – they are the *special* ways in which God has revealed Himself. Mankind has rejected both general revelation and special revelation, and I think that we see that thought in these verses: *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him”(v10).*

At the beginning of verse 10, does the phrase, *“He was in the world”* refer only to the time after His incarnation - that is, after Jesus Christ came into the world? Or does it go back even before the time of the incarnation? The eternal Son of God was already in the world even before the “Light of the World” came into the world that had been made through Him. The same idea is seen in Romans 1:20, *“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...”*

If that is the case, then verse 10 refers to general revelation, but we see (v10) that general revelation was rejected. *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”* Again, as Romans 1:28 says, *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge...”* They rejected *general* revelation.

In verse 11, however, we move on to *special* revelation: *“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”* What is very interesting in verse 11 is the two “His owns”: *“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”* In the Greek language, those two “His owns” are different in gender. The first is the neuter gender, and the second is the masculine. So you could paraphrase this verse as, “He came to **all** that was His own, His own land, His own Temple, His own home - but His own **people**, the nation of Israel, rejected Him.”

Mankind has rejected both general revelation and special revelation. Notice, by the way, the intensified rejection here. At the end of verse 10, the world didn’t know Him. Again, Romans 1:28 *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge...”* But in reference to special revelation, verse 11 says, *“and His own did not receive Him.* They were His own people, but they didn’t receive Him. They knew who He was, but they refused to receive Him! Mankind has rejected both general revelation and special revelation - then and today.

2. Life in the family of God does not come naturally.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”(v12-13).

It is possible to be part of God’s family! Think of it - to belong in the family of God! But now notice how you **don’t** get family membership. Verse 13 shows us that it doesn’t come naturally – “not of blood,” or some sort of special human bloodline. For the Jews, then, it didn’t come by being born a Jew, by being a descendant of Abraham. For all of us, it doesn’t come by being born into a Christian home, or having Christian parents.

Membership in God’s family is not by natural descent. It is not “of the will of the flesh.” Life in the family of God doesn’t come by human effort. No amount of human work – either sacrifices in those days, or good works now - can get you into the family of God. You don’t receive life in the family of God by the will of the flesh.

Physical life can come about by the will of the flesh. If a husband and wife decide to have children, it is a natural, biological process. But not with spiritual life! It doesn’t come about “naturally,” and it is not by the will of man. Someone else can’t get you into the family of God. The prophets and the priests in that day couldn’t get anyone life in the family of God - they could only point the way.

This is still true today. Preachers, priests, and parents can’t get you into the family of God. They can’t even get life in the family of God themselves by their own willpower, let alone get somebody else in! Natural birth can come about by human will - it’s the natural outcome of marriage and the desire to have children. But spiritual life does not come about by human will.

Well then, how does it come about? The answer is inverse 12. That’s the gospel! That’s the good news! It’s simple and it’s straightforward: *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”* There it is! Receive Jesus Christ, and believe in His Name, and you receive life in the family of God.

To “receive Christ” means to **personally** trust in Him as your **Savior**. What does “believe in His Name” mean? It means to believe all the truth about Him that is revealed in the Bible, all that the name stands for. Not just that He is a historical person, but that he is **God**. Believe that He came into this world to save sinners, and that He died on the cross for your sins and for my sins. To receive life in the family of God, you must receive Him by trusting Christ as your personal Savior.

If you meet these qualifications, God gives you the right to become His child (v12). Notice - **God** gives it to you, and it is a **gift**. God gives you the right to have life in the family of God - the right to be a child of God. Salvation is a gift! The well-known Scripture, Ephesians 2:8-9, says: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is*

the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Life in the family of God doesn’t come naturally - it is a gift of God’s grace!

Practical Application

Have you really become a Christian?

In any church, it is possible that there are some folks who think they’re Christians, but they have never really become Christians. Maybe you’ve heard this question: If you were to die tonight and find yourself standing outside the gates of heaven, and the Lord were to appear to you, and ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” - what would you say?

If you were to say something like “I was a Christian all my life. My grandparents helped build this church.” Or, if you were to say, “Lord, you know I did the best I could. I’m not perfect, but I did the best I could.” Or, “I went to church as often as possible. I helped out in a lot of the programs. I gave sacrificially of my time and my money.” Or, if you were to say something like “Well, I was really involved in our community. I worked in good programs, in the name of Christ.”

Those answers would reflect exactly what we have in verse 13: *“the will of the flesh” or “the will of man.”* There is only one **right** answer: “Lord Jesus, you died for my sins, and I received You as my personal Savior. I believe in Your Name, but not just as a historical person - I believe that You are God. I committed myself to You. You gave me the right to be in God’s family. I have eternal life because You gave it to me.”

If that’s the answer you would give, that’s the **right** answer! I hope you would give that answer. Have you **really** become a Christian?