

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 4

“ JOHN 1:9 *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.* ¹¹ *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.*”John 1:9-11)

THAT WAS THE TRUE LIGHT

INTRODUCTION

So far as the revelation is concerned, the work of God is always preceded by light, or illumination. It was that way in the creation of the heavens and the earth, God first called light into existence, then the work was under way. Before the Lord destroyed the world with a flood, He first shined light on the situation, informing Noah of the status of the world, and what He was going to do about it. When He called a nation to Himself, and commenced working with them, He first called for illuminating their moral and spiritual status, declaring the Law, through which the knowledge of sin was granted. Now, in our text, before the work of the Savior commenced He shed light on the situation, confirming the need for a Savior, and why any successful work would have to be initiated from heaven. In His great salvation, the work of extricating men from Satan’s dominion and the power of darkness begins by Him commanding the light to shine into our hearts, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Christ Jesus. (2 Cor 4:6). In Christ Jesus, before there can be spiritual maturity, or any significant advance, the day must dawn, and the Day Star rise in our hearts (2 Pet 1:19). The eyes of our understanding must be illuminated if we are to enjoy the fulness of God’s great salvation (Eph 1:18). Attempting to grow in spiritual darkness is like God attempting to create the world in the environ of darkness. From one point of view, such a thing is impossible. From another, it is simply something God will not do. Actually, it is astounding that this is so little known in our time. Men have grown accustomed to darkness, whereas the heavenly mandate is to become accustomed to the light – accustomed to walking in the light (John 11:9; 1 John 1:7), where the things of God are comprehended, the tactics of the wicked one are perceived, open doors can be discerned, and real blessings and dangers are recognized. Ignorance is not a proper surrounding for growth up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15). Adding to our faith is something that requires illumination, and seeing things plainly. The mode of the Kingdom is, *“I would not have you to be ignorant!”* For a person not to know what has been revealed always puts the individual at a decided disadvantage. Satan gains the advantage in darkness, or moral and spiritual ignorance.

THAT WAS THE TRUE LIGHT

“John 1:9 *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*”

From the beginning of his Gospel account, John focuses on the Savior –the One who came to *“seek and save that which was lost”* (Lk 19 :10). The Law focused upon the human condition by simply affirming what God requires, and, by doing that, revealed the spiritual poverty that had gripped the world. The ministry of the Prophets, for the most part, was shining the light on the sinfulness of the very people to whom God had revealed Himself. Time and again He raised up the

holy prophets, sending them early, to turn the people away from their iniquities. It all seemed so futile, the novice might wonder why the Lord spent so long sending out what appeared to be unheeded warnings.

However, there was a reason for it all. Apart from the intervention of God Himself, the situation was absolutely hopeless. This had to be seen by principalities and powers in heavenly places, as well as discerning men upon the earth. He did send the flood until it had been adequately demonstrated that the problem of advancing iniquity could not be solved by men. He did give Abraham and Sarah a son until it was impossible for them to have one. And, He did not send a Savior, until it had been shown beyond all doubt that Satan was absolutely dominating every man. So it is today. No individual will have a prevailing interest in Jesus Christ until he perceives, even after considerable effort, that he is doomed, condemned, and without hope.

THAT. This is referring to He that was in the beginning, being the Word that was with God and was God (John 1:1). It is the One without whom nothing was made that was made (John 1:3). This is the One in whom was life, and that life was the light of men (John 1:4), yet men did not comprehend it (John 1:5). It is the One who shined into the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5). It is the One of whom John the Baptist, sent from God, came to bear witness (John 1:6-8).

THE TRUE LIGHT. Other versions read, *"the real light,"*^{NJB} and *"the real thing."*^{MESSAGE} Most versions read *"true light."*

The word translated *"true"* has a rather extensive meaning, and it will be profitable to look at it briefly. "THAT WHICH HAS NOT ONLY THE NAME AND RESEMBLANCE, BUT THE REAL NATURE CORRESPONDING TO THE NAME, IN EVERY RESPECT CORRESPONDING TO THE IDEA SIGNIFIED BY THE NAME; REAL, TRUE GENUINE; OPPOSITE TO WHAT IS FICTITIOUS, COUNTERFEIT, IMAGINARY, SIMULATED OR PRETENDED; IT CONTRASTS REALITIES WITH THEIR SEMBLANCES; OPPOSITE TO WHAT IS IMPERFECT DEFECTIVE, FRAIL, UNCERTAIN."^{THAYER}

The Real Nature Corresponding to the Name. The Son of God is not simply called *"Light,"* He IS light. That is His nature. In God's Kingdom, nothing carries a name or identity that does not properly describe what that entity is said to do. There are theoretic Christ's that cannot save, cannot deliver, cannot regenerate, and cannot bring one to glory. Such do not have the Divine nature, and they do not shed light upon those among whom they exist.

In Every Respect Corresponding to the Name. There is nothing about Jesus that fails to illuminate, make clear, or reveal. He does not obscure, conceal, or hide what is to be seen. If men are sitting in darkness, it is because the Son of God is not there, or they are blind. When men are aware of the real Jesus, moral and spiritual change begins to take place. Real transformation and deliverance are experienced. The absence of such things confirms that the real Jesus is not present – or is, for the time present, yet is not recognized or trusted.

Real, True, Genuine. The Lord Jesus Christ is not an idea, and He is not to be treated as though He was. This takes place when men theorize about Jesus, speculate about Him, His nature, and what He is doing. All such intellectual meanderings are simply the result of not seeing, comprehending, or understanding Christ Jesus. A Savior upon whom one depends, yet who does not deliver, transform, lift, and guide, it not genuine. No amount of defense or apologetics, can make such an one real.

Opposite of What Is Fictitious, Counterfeit, Imaginary, Fictitious, Simulated, pretended. Things that are fictitious are only vain imaginations. They really do not exist. Things that are counterfeit exist, but do not accomplish what they are set forth to do. Things that are imaginary only can exist in erroneous thoughts. Things that are simulated are lifeless and profitless copies. Things that are pretended can only be acted out on a stage, but cannot contribute to life.

Let us be clear about this. Wherever fruitlessness is found, yet identity with Christ is claimed, a fictitious savior has been embraced – *"another Jesus"* (2 Cor 11:4) or a *"false Christ"* (Matt 24:24). In such a case, the person or people have *"believed in vain"* (1 Cor 15:2). A "false

Christ" (Mk 13:22) cannot deliver the things that God promises or requires.

THAT LIGHTETH EVERY MAN THAT COMETH INTO THE WORLD. The phrase *"that cometh into the world"* pertains to the Word being made flesh, not to men being born. A clearer reading is, *"There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."*^{NASB} That is, the coming of Jesus into the world is what enabled Him to illuminate every man. It is as *"the Man Christ Jesus"* that He sheds light on our situation, as well as the salvation of God. Until the Word was made flesh, it was not possible for men to know God as He intended. Nor, indeed, could they behold their condition as they should.

HE WAS IN THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD WAS MADE BY HIM

" 1:9 THAT LIGHTETH EVERY MAN THAT COMETH INTO THE WORLD – Continued. Not only was it necessary for the Word to become flesh so He could die, it was also necessary for us to be able to comprehend God to some degree. There is a gulf so great between God and man, that some things simply could not be shown to them until the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Actually, the Divine light was dimmed slightly by the humanity of Christ. That was proved by the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt 17:2). However, once Jesus died, taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29), when He returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit was able to illuminate what Jesus had said and did when He was among men (John 14:26; 15:26). Now, however, the glory of Jesus is not dimmed. He has been glorified, and faith is enabled to perceive a glorified Christ, which is the source of true understanding.

^{1:10} *He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not."*

HE WAS IN THE WORLD. Other versions read, *"The Light was in the world,"*^{CEB} *"He came into the very world,"*^{NLT} *"in the world he was,"*^{YLT} *"The Word was in the world,"*^{CEV} *"The Word was already in the world."*^{ERV}

Several of the versions confuse the text. Some say *"Light"* was in the world,^{CEB} others that He *"came into the world,"*^{NLT} another that *"the Word was in the world,"*^{CEV} and still another, *"The Word was already in the world."*^{ERV}

John is not speaking of the incarnation of Christ – "came into the world." He is not speaking of the Lord being in the world as *"The Word,"* which He was in the beginning. This is particularly speaking of the Lord as *"the Light."* This is the fifth time John has referred to the Savior as *"Light"* (1:4,5,7,8,9). **He was "in the world" as the Illuminator and Clarifier.** This was Deity in a body, having humbled Himself so He could be seen, perused, touched, and heard. The Lord was the same Person, but in *"another form"* – disguised, as it were, as a Man. **The fact OF Him being "in the world" has particular regard to His ministry,** during which the Light began to shine brightly, so that no one regarded Him as a common man, although in His upbringing, that is what they thought of Him (Mk 6:3).

THE WORLD WAS MADE BY HIM. If ever there was a domain in which the inhabitants should have recognized the Lord, it was the world which He made *"to be inhabited"* (Isa 45:18). The fact that the Word created the world is stated with remarkable consistency and frequency in Scripture (John 1:3,10; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 3:9; Col 12:16,17; Heb 1:2,10; Rev 3:14). This is something that is never recognized and emphasized by an evolutionist – even a theistic evolutionist. Evolution emphasizes an imagined process, while the God of heaven emphasizes **the Creator** – and there is a vast difference between the two. The Scriptures describe the process of creation as set in motion by the Word of God.

While Jesus was in the world, the fact that all creation was subject to Him as its Creator, was confirmed by many of His miracles. There as the miraculous catches of fish (Lk 5:6; John 21:6), the stilling of the tempest (Matt 8:24-26), and the calming of the raging sea (Mk 4:39).

There was the turning of water into wine (aberrant 2:9), the summoning of a fish with a coin in its mouth (Matt 17:27), the multiplication of five loaves and two fishes (Mk 14:19), and the raising of the dead (Mk 5:42; Lk 7:14-15; John 11:43). There were certainly enough public demonstrations of His unparalleled power and authority to lead men in this world to recognize Him. But this was not at all what happened.

THE WORLD KNEW HIM NOT. Other versions read, *"the world did not know Him,"*^{NKJV} *"did not recognize Him,"*^{NIV} *"had no knowledge of him,"*^{BBE} *"didn't recognize the light,"*^{CEB} *"did not acknowledge him,"*^E *"no one knew Him,"*^{CEV} and *"yet the world didn't even notice."*^{MESSAGE}

Paul affirmed to the Corinthians, *"The world by wisdom knew not God."* That is precisely why *"preaching"* became the appointed means of enabling men to perceive Christ. *"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (1 Cor 1:21).

This is why people do not believe on Christ – they do not recognize who He is. It is why people profess that they know God, yet deny Him in their works (Tit 1:16): they do not know who Jesus is! This is the reason for all slothfulness, indolence, indifference, unfaithfulness, and departures from the faith: they do not perceive the true identity of Jesus. This is why men fill their minds with the wisdom of this world, all the while neglecting the Word of God, which is the documented wisdom of God: they have failed to detect who Jesus is. All factions, false doctrines, and aberrant teachings are the direct result of not knowing, recognizing, or discerning that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If knowing God and Christ is eternal life (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20), then not know Them is the epitome of death and alienation from God.

Note that this failure to know Christ took place after God had extended Himself to make Himself and His Christ known. It was after extensive revelation. That alone proves the depravity of men – that given such evidence, they still did not know.

HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN

^{1:8} "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

John is providing a context within which the Son of God is to be perceived. The real identity of Jesus Christ cannot be known through the wisdom of men or the wisdom of this world. If an attempt is made within the framework of worldly wisdom to understand and know God and Christ, to know the will of God, and to understand the Scriptures, such an effort will yield no true benefit. God will not allow any aspect of His Kingdom to be discerned if His Son is not recognized.

HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN. In order to show the extent of the effect of sin upon mankind, John now points out that Jesus came *"to His own"* – i.e. His own people. These are the people, *"who are Israelites," to whom pertained, or belonged, "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen"* (Rom 9:47-5). This is the people to whom God gave the Law, through which the knowledge of sin is gained (Rom 3:20). It is through this people that the lineage leading up to Jesus was established (Matt 1:1-17; Lk 3:23-38). All of the Prophets were sent to them (2 Kgs 17:13; Jer 25:4; 26:5). All of the promises were given to them (Rom 9:4; 15:3). The promises of a coming Messiah were all given to them (Isa 9:6-7; Isa 32:2; Jer 23:5; Lk 1:72; Rom 1:1-2). John the Baptist was sent to them by God to prepare the way for the coming of His Son (Lk 1:78-79).

If ever a people should have recognized the Savior of the world, it should have been Israel. For fifteen hundred years God focused His attention exclusively upon these people. He deposited all written revelation among them. His miracles were devoted to them. They experienced His mighty deliverances. He kept them alive in famine, and overthrew their enemies. He Himself said to them,

"What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isa 5:4). After all of that investment, how would they receive the promised Savior of the world?

HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. Other versions read, *"did not receive Him,"* ^{NKJV} *"did not accept Him,"* ^{NRSV} *"did not take Him to their hearts,"* ^{BBE} *"didn't welcome Him,"* ^{CEB} *"even they rejected Him,"* ^{NLT} *"gave Him no welcome,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"didn't want Him."* ^{MESSAGE}

God's revelation to Israel had certainly been precise. The Prophets had spoken with clarity. Yet, when Jesus came, that is not what they wanted, even though God *"hewed them by the prophets"* (Hos 6:5), led them (Psa 78:14), guided them in the wilderness (Psa 78:52), and delivered the heathen nations in Canaan to them (Josh 24:11). God Himself said to them through Moses, *"For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"* (Deut 4:7-8). If ever there was a people who should have received the Son of God, it was Israel! But they RECEIVED HIM NOT! They failed to recognize the One for whom they had been prepared, and concerning whom they had heard.

God can choose people, deliver them, lead them, bless them, teach them right and wrong, favor them, love them, and overthrow their enemies – and yet, all of that will not change the people. None of those will result in illumination, repentance, a new heart, a new spirit, or a preference for God Himself. The presence of God *"manifest in the flesh"* (1 Tim 3:16), dwelling among them (John 1:14), going about doing good, and healing all who are oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38), will not produce a single new birth. The Lord can heal their sick, feed their hungry, and raise their dead – and yet they still will not be able to receive Him! They will still oppose Him, deliver Him up to Pilate, and call for His crucifixion. The people will join their religious leaders in saying, *"We will not have this Man to reign over us"* (Luke 19:14). They will rejoice in John the Baptist *"for a season"* (John 5:35), but eventually will forget about the One He foretold.

John is showing us that if men are going to be saved, it will take more than information to turn the people. Being exposed to the mighty works of God will not open their eyes. Eating miraculous bread will not change their hearts, but shortly after that occasion, many of His disciples abandoned Jesus, never to walk with Him again (John 6:66). A just and holy Law with appropriate penalties and promised rewards will not be enough to change the people. Harsh warnings and severe judgments, and chastening will not cause the people to change their ways.

If there is going to be any salvation, God will have to be the total Author of it. He will have to provide for His wrath to be assuaged, and His love and mercy to break forth. He will have to define the reason for men being saved, and be the One who actually does it. The first chapter of John establish this with unquestionable certainty, and there is proof that the essential Worker in salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ. This will be established with increasing clarity throughout this Gospel.