

*“Light and Life for Man”*

December 16, 2012

Text: John 1:9-13

**In Scripture we find an enigma at the point of salvation,  
where God’s will & man’s will, seem to crisscross.**

Biblical enigmas such as this, are like beautiful diamonds that we can look-at/admire from one angle, then look at again from the opposite point of view, & admire all the more.

They need not cause us confusion/frustration, but rather gratitude/wonder.

They are not biblical inconsistencies.

Just enigmas (mysteries) we don’t yet understand.

Does it shock you to know that God understands something you do?

It shouldn’t, because Isa 55 says His ways/thoughts are higher than ours (55:8).

**This particular enigma centers on the question of whose will is dominant w/ regard to our salvation—ours, or God’s?**

Are we saved because we asked X to save us, or did we ask Him to save us because God first regenerated our hearts?

The answer to both is “Yes,” and there is no contradiction or inconsistency.

Enigma yes, mystery yes; but contradiction, no.

\* The work of salvation primarily has to do w/ Jesus' forgiving us, cleansing/sanctifying/preserving/perfecting us , who were born as depraved sinners.

So we might answer, that it's all God's doing—not ours;

That we are just passive recipients of salvation.

\* But in today's text we'll read that God gives new life to anyone who believes in Jesus X, & activates his will to receive Him.

God commands us to believe, so if our will is not involved, but irrelevant to salvation, why would He give us such a command?

Commands are addressed to man's will.

However, the Bible also says the H.S. must enliven and open our hearts (as spiritually dead sinners) before we can believe.

Although we may not arrive at a final solution to the question in this life, Scripture enables us to see the enigma clearly, & hopefully to inch our way toward a better understanding of it, as we dig deeply into God's Word.

**In today's text we find 3 principles by which to break down this enigma of man's salvation, into its component parts...**

\* God's Light Enlightens Every Human Being (vs 9).

\* God Gives Life to Whoever Receives the Light (10-12).

\* People Are Born Again According to God's Will (vs 13).

**\* Principle #1—God’s Light Comes to Enlighten Every Human Being**

[John 1:9]=> *“There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”*

**As we have seen over the past few weeks, the “true light” is the pre-incarnate X, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Godhead, who John calls the Logos (the Word).**

Last week we saw that the world is filled w/ spiritual darkness, but that God’s Light always shines out into that darkness with His truth/righteousness.

In verse 6, John introduced John the Baptist, saying that he was sent to give witness of the Light (Jesus), so all might believe in Him.

Then the Apostle added=> *“He [John] was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light”* (1:8).

This is now the context for John’s statement in today’s text, that *“There was the true light”* the real/genuine light—Jesus X. I.e., John was not that true light, only a reflection of the Light—a witness to the fact that X, the true Light of God, had come into the world.

**The wording in the rest of verse 9 is important, because it describes 2 ongoing/never-ending truths=>**

The Light is always coming into the world, & it is always enlightening (revealing God’s truth) to every man/woman (John uses “man” in the generic sense of mankind).

God wants you (a/w/a everyone else) to know about Him, and to come to His Son for salvation.

So He has sent His Son, the Light, into the world, to enlighten us about Him.

God's Light (His Son) always sends His beams of truth and righteousness into the world, to enlighten mankind.

It's God's nature to constantly reveal Himself/His-truth to people lost in the spiritual darkness of this world.

**Scripture calls Jesus X “a *light* of revelation to the *Gentiles*”**  
(Lk 2:32).

But God's Light came to Israel more directly than to the Gentiles.

Abraham saw it in his vision of the smoking oven and the flaming torch, Moses saw it in the burning bush, Israel saw it in the pillar of cloud/fire, & the H.P. saw it in the Shekinah glory over the Ark of the Covenant. In all of these cases, God's Light was coming into the world, revealing Himself/His-will to Israel, His people.

It came to them in other ways as well=> each time God revealed the truth to His people through a prophet, He was sending them light, shining His truth into the midst of His people.

**But John is saying “every man” is enlightened by God's Light, which is always coming into the world—every human being, everywhere.**

Even those who know nothing of Abraham, Moses, or  
Israel's-prophets have-been/are-being enlightened, by  
God's Light.

How can that be? God reveals His own moral nature to man,  
through man's conscience—1 facet of God's image in man.  
Because man was created in the image of God,  
our conscience is modeled on the moral nature of our  
divine Prototype, whose moral image we bear.

God has also revealed His power/nature in a general/indirect way,  
through creation.

Paul put it like this in Rom 1=> *“That which is **known**  
**about God is evident within them; for God made it**  
**evident to them. / For since the **creation of the world****  
**His invisible attributes, **His eternal power and divine****  
**nature, have been clearly seen, being understood**  
**through what has been **made**, so that they are without**  
**excuse”** (1:19-20).*

**This makes you/me/every-man/woman responsible for the  
Light God continually shines on earth, enlightening  
each one of us, and leaving us w/o excuse for ignoring it.**

That's why that verse I just read in Rom 1 ends by saying=>

*“...so that they are **without excuse.**”*

God has given all men enough enlightenment, so that we  
are responsible to learn more about this Creator who  
has placed His image w/i us, & surrounded us w/ a  
world of evidence, that points to His existence/power.

The Lord will lead anyone who deals properly w/ this light of His general revelation, to His special revelation of truth, in Jesus X, so that through faith in Him we can become born again.

There's an illustration of that in Acts 16, where God brought Paul to Philippi, & to a woman there named Lydia, whose heart He opened up to hear Paul's message.

Lydia had worshiped the Lord as best she knew how, & when she received the light of special revelation about Jesus, she believed it, & become born again.

**\* Princ. #2—God Gives Life to Whoever Receives This Light**

**This is where man's will comes to the fore in his salvation.**

Unfortunately, few receive God's light; none apart from the H.S.'s healing their spiritual blindness.

Jesus said=> *“This is the judgment, that the **light** is come into the **world**, and men **loved the darkness** rather than the light; for their deeds were evil”* (Jn 3:19).

Man is born with a natural affinity for darkness, not for light.

In verses 10 & 11 of our own text, we find 2 examples of man's unwillingness to come-to/receive the light.

In verse 10: mankind in general.

In verse 11: the Jewish people.

[Verse 10]=> *“He ]X, the Light of God] was in the **world**, and the **world** was made through Him, and the **world** did not*

*know Him.”*

**The word “world” is used 3 different ways in John’s Gospel.**

\* It can refer to the physical world in which we live.

John uses the word that way twice in the 1<sup>st</sup> ½ of this verse.

\* “World” can also refer to the spiritually corrupt world system dominated by Satan.

\* Thirdly, “world” can refer to mankind—the whole human race.

E.g. Jn 3:16=> *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*

This is how John uses “world” here, at the end of verse 10.

When the incarnate Word of God (the Light of God)

entered the world of mankind, as a man Himself,

they did not know/recognize Him, for who He was=>

The Logos, the Son of God, the Light of the world,

and therefore the Messiah.

They should have, but they were so heavily influenced by the evil world system, so spiritually blinded by Satan, & so caught up in their own little schemes, private pursuits & personal agendas, that they rejected the Light of God—His own Son.

They didn’t “know” who Jesus actually was, nor did they recognize/acknowledge Him, as such, in spite of all that He had revealed to them.

Their sin had alienated them from God, and in the stupor of that alienation, they were devoid of any spiritual

discernment, & so they rebelled against His divine authority.

**They should have recognized/known their own Creator/God, when He came to earth.**

He did miraculous deeds that only God Himself could have done.

But instead of considering the evidence and coming to the right conclusion about Jesus, they willfully misjudged Him, & went on about their lives, as usual.

The Light came into the world which He Himself had made.

It was His own world, and in Him it was all held together.

And yet the world of mankind ignored the evidence that its Creator had come to earth, & refused to acknowledge, that He was who He claimed to be.

**Not even wanting to know Him, they rejected/crucified Him.**

Someday they will hear Him say to them, “*I never knew you:*

*depart from me, you who practice lawlessness*” (Mt 7:23).

And even though they’ve never known Him, they’ll have to

bow before Him, confessing Him as Lord (Phil 2:10),

while they stand before Him in judgment (Jn 5:22).

**The Jews were even more culpable than the rest of mankind, because God had given them a great deal of truth about the coming Messiah, thru the prophets He sent them.**

But according to=>

[Verse 11]=> “*He came to His own* [His own world/home/people], *and those who were His own did not receive Him.*”

**It was tragic that mankind as a whole didn't know the Son of God, when He came to earth, but even more tragic, that His own people refused to receive Him.**

These people were His own unique possession.

He had made a nation of them by freeing them from their bondage/slavery in Egypt.

He had told them, *“You shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine”* (Ex 19:5).

In the OT He had formed a special/protective relationship w/ them, meeting them at Mt. Sinai;

Then repeatedly after that, through their high priests.

God looked back fondly on those early days of their nationhood, describing it like this in Ezek 16:4=>

*“On the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths.”*

I.e., as a nation, you were like a helpless/abandoned baby.

[Vs 5]=> *“No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born. / When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live!' I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live!' / I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall, and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare. / Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered*

*your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine, ' declares the Lord GOD" (16:4-8).*

I.e., "I married you."

This is the Second Person of the Godhead speaking, reminding His people of the tender-loving care He had always given them.

And how did they requite that love?

Isa 1:4 sums up their response=> *"They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him."*

But worst of all, when He came to them, as God in human flesh, they handed Him over to their Roman enemies, & cried out *"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"*

John 1 doesn't bring all this up, but simply says these sad words:

*"Those who were His own did **not receive Him.**"*

What a marvel of understatement that is.

They didn't take Him to themselves with the same kind of loving commitment He had always shown to them.

They didn't form a warm/loving relationship w/ Him, before He came to earth, & when He came, they killed Him.

The world's rejection of X is shocking, but this is even worse.

God incarnate had merely been “*in the world*” (available to mankind in general) but He actually “*came to His own*”— & they took His life.

What if He came back today, as the same humble man, who could heal the sick and raise the dead?

Would you love Him? Would you even know Him?

Would you reschedule this week’s upcoming activities to spend time sitting at His feet, listening to Him, letting Him know You love Him, as Mary of Bethany did?

**Not everyone rejected Jesus—a few disciples received Him.**

[Verse 12]=> “*But as many as **received** Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** in His name [all that Scripture reveals Him to be].*”

The-world/Israel as a whole, rejected X, but a few received Him, forming a relationship with Him based on faith/love.

To these few, He gave eternal life.

Jesus had always known that only a small remnant would ever really believe in Him like this.

In the Sermon on the Mount, He had said=>

*“The gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and **few** are those who find it” (Mt 7:14).*

**John says this small remnant “*believed-in*”/ “*received*” Jesus.**

“Believing” is personal/wholehearted acceptance of what Scripture says about Jesus;

While “receiving” embraces Him as a love-gift from God  
for our blessedness.

A person may believe that X is God’s Prophet/Priest/King,  
just as he may believe someone to be a good doctor.

But to “receive” that doctor, he’d have to place himself  
under that doctor’s care.

The same is true of believing-in/receiving X as who He  
is=> God’s Prophet/Priest/King.

1) As a believer I must receive Jesus as my Prophet, who  
proclaims to me God’s truth & His will, & I must abide by  
His teaching.

I must open myself up to His words, ready/willing to apply  
them to our my own heart/life.

When I listen to a sermon from God’s Word, I need to  
respond as if it were addressed directly to me—by X.

Do you view Jesus as God’s prophet to you personally?

2) I must also receive Jesus as my Priest, trusting His sacrifice  
alone to atone for my sin, trusting that His gracious love  
really has done that for me.

He stood before God the Father, offering Himself as the  
propitiation by which my guilt might be removed.

I must trust in Him, & only Him, as the basis for my  
confidence that God’s anger over my sin is past/gone.

Do you trust X (& His grace alone) to save your soul?

3) I must also receive Jesus as my King, giving Him my allegiance.

He is a wonderful Counselor, but He isn't willing to be only a counselor to me, just making suggestions.

He will accept nothing less than the Lordship over my heart and life, w/ me giving myself completely up to His absolute authority—both body/soul.

Have you surrendered yourself to Jesus as Lord—not just as *the* Lord, but as *your own* Lord, the Ruler of your life?

**Now John adds that whoever believes-in X's "name" (all that Scripture reveals Him to be) & receives Him personally, to him X gives the right to become a child of God.**

This is why man's will is so important in his own salvation.

That's an interesting way of putting it, but what does it mean?

Is John saying we're not actually saved, but merely have the right to become saved?

In the next verse, John will say that a believer is born of God, so he must be truly saved from the moment he first believes.

He can see it in his own character, having been born of God, and made like Him, a new creature in X=>

\*E.g., I Jn 2:29=> *"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who **practices righteousness is born of Him.**"*

\* I Jn 3:9=> *"No one who is **born of God** practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is **born of God.**"*

\* I Jn 4:7b=> *“Love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”*

So in what sense does a believer merely get *“the right”* to become a child of God?

The word *“right”* means authority/power.

It's almost always translated that way.

Although positionally, a person becomes a child of God at the moment he believes, he may not behave much like God at first, because he's still a spiritual infant.

But he has the authority/power w/i him to grow into his own character, *“working out”* his own salvation

(Phil 2:12).

Peter tells us=> *“His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life & godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence”* (II Pet 1:3).

Though our spiritual transformation is instantaneous, it also sets in motion a gradual process by which God's life w/i, slowly matures us, & ultimately manifests itself w/i us, as godliness.

Our will is involved at every step of this process, from beginning to end.

John said it like this in I Jn 3=>

*“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him”* (3:2).

John's point, is that our right to become God's child in the fullest sense (morally/spiritually like Him) lies in our union w/ X. As we abide/walk in Him, obeying His Word, we will become children of God, who truly resemble their Heavenly Father.

**Having seen the role of man's will in his own salvation,**

**John now shows us God's side of the enigma=>**

**\* Princ. #3—People Are Born Again According to God's Will**

[Verse 13]=> “ *who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* ”

**John is saying that spiritual birth is altogether different from natural conception/birth.**

Not only is it true that a person himself is not the one who decides he should be born—either naturally/spiritually.

But in the case of spiritual birth, it's also true that the will of a person's parents plays no role, nor the will of any other human being.

The only will that ultimately matters in a person's regeneration, is God's will.

**Let's 1<sup>st</sup> consider the factors that make no difference to our salvation=>**

1) “*Born not of blood* [lit. bloods]”—by this John means heredity, which the Jews considered very important to a relationship w/ God.

They believed themselves to be children of God simply because they had the blood of Abraham and the patriarchs w/i them (as they viewed it).  
I.e., they viewed it as a matter of biochemical inheritance.

Their parents had them circumcised to confirm that fact. Those who were really serious about their Jewishness also sought to obey the Law just to reaffirm it themselves. John says, none of that counts at all, with God=>  
It's no a matter of "bloods."

2) "*Nor of the will of the flesh*"—for John "*the flesh*" is the human body in its mortal condition.

Some people are conceived as a result of their parents' momentary passions.

Whether a baby was intended or not, it was conceived/born nonetheless.

John is saying, there are no such "accidents" in spiritual birth.

3) "*Nor of the will of man*"—here a man determines that he wants to have a child (in those days, usually a son), so he approaches his wife, & the child is conceived.

John is saying, the only One who makes a decision about a spiritual birth is God—not the person himself who is reborn, not his well-intentioned parents, nor anyone else.

As we saw in verse 12, man's will is involved in believing and receiving X.

But ultimately, that will is under the irresistible influence of the H.S., who must initiate it all.

**Spiritual rebirth/renewal are completely in the hands of God.**

That's why John ends verse 13 w/ the words=> "...*but of God.*"

\*\* 2 Thes 2:13-14—"**God has *chosen* you from the beginning for *salvation* thru sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. / And it was for this He called you thru our gospel."**

Someone=> Yes, but God chose me because of something good He knew I would do=> choose Him.

Jesus told His disciples=> "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you*" (Jn 15:16).

Spiritual regeneration/renewal are phenomena that even the greatest of humans could never begin to accomplish.

At the time it happens to a person, he is spiritually dead, lifeless, and helpless, in his trespasses/sins (Eph 2:5), incapable of any spiritual choice at all.

He wouldn't even have the will to believe in X, if the H.S. didn't place the faith in his heart to do so (Eph 2:8-9).

Salvation is God's gift, from God's initial choosing, to the H.S.'s conviction of sin, to the believer's final glorification.

He deserves all the glory, & no man should boast—at all, that he was saved because of something he did, or a choice he made.

**\*\* I Pet 1:3=> “Blessed be the *God* and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be *born again*.”**

Someone: I would be shocked, if that were actually true.

That’s how Nicodemus felt about it when Jesus said=>

*“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

Then Jesus explained Himself=> *“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit”* (Jn 3:3,8).

He is unpredictable/uncontrollable.

You cannot control either the wind/HS’s regenerating you.

Nicodemus=> *“How can these things be?”* (Jn 3:9).

He had always thought he was in control of his spiritual life.

This seemed inconceivable to him.

The truth of the whole matter is that people are born again according to the will of God or they’re not born again at all. God has given mankind His general revelation, but man has so handicapped himself w/ sin, he always ignores it. When the H.S. overrides this spiritual blindness/ignorance, brings God’s Light, God’s Word, to our life, witnesses to our heart that Jesus can/will save our soul, & gives us the faith that it’s true, we do have the power and a responsibility to believe.

But apart from God's 1<sup>st</sup> giving us spiritual life, we  
couldn't believe it.

Someone: What can I do if I'm not saved?

Seek God's face, praying that He will give you the faith to  
believe in Jesus.

Assume that your desire to have a relationship w/ Him has  
come to you from the H.S.

**So let me ask you a direct question=> Have you personally  
believed in Jesus as fully-God, fully-man, & as your  
own Savior?**

If you have received Him as your own Prophet/Priest/King,  
you can answer w/ a confident/resounding "Yes!"

Someone: Well, at least I was baptized in His name.

That's not the issue—Have you believed in Jesus for who He is,  
receiving/welcoming Him as your Prophet/Priest/King?

If not, I would invite/entreat you to do so right now.

## ***“Light and Life for Man”***

December 16, 2012

Text: John 1:9-13

1. God gives new life to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ and activates his own will to receive Him; however, the Bible also says the Holy Spirit must open our hearts, as spiritually dead sinners, [14 before] we can believe.

**In today’s text we find three principles by which to break down this enigma of man’s salvation into its component parts...**

**\* Principle #1—God’s Light Comes to Every Human Being**

**[John 1:9]**

Jn 1:8

2. The Light is always coming into the world, and it is always enlightening (revealing God’s truth) to [12 every] man.

Lk 2:32

3. God reveals His own moral nature to man through man’s conscience; God has also revealed His power and nature in a general and indirect way through [18 creation].

Ro m 1:19-20

**\* Principle #2—God Gives Life to Whoever Receives This Light**

Jn 3:19

**[Verse 10]**

Jn 3:16

4. When the incarnate Word of God (the Light of God) entered the world of mankind as a man Himself, they did not [10 know] or recognize Him for who He was.

Mt 7:23; Phil 2:10; Jn 5:22

**[Verse 11]**

5. It was tragic that mankind as a whole didn’t know the Son of God when He came to earth, but even more tragic that His own people refused to [16 receive] Him.

Ex 19:5; Ezek 16:4-8; Isa 1:4

6. They didn’t take Him to themselves with the same kind of loving commitment He had [14 always] shown to them.

**[Verse 12]**

7. The world and Israel as a whole rejected Christ, but a few received Him, forming a relationship with Him based on faith and love; to these few He gave [16 eternal] life.

Mt 7:14

8. Whoever believes in Christ's name (all that Scripture reveals Him to be) and receives Him personally, to him Christ gives the [12 right] to become a child of God.

I Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7b; Phil 2:12; II Pet 1:3

9. Though our spiritual transformation is instantaneous, it sets in motion a gradual process by which God's life within slowly matures us and ultimately manifests itself within us as [20 godliness].

I Jn 3:2

**\* Principle #3—People Are Born Again According to God's Will**

**[Verse 13]**

10. Spiritual rebirth and renewal are completely in the hands of [8 God].

II Thes 2:13-14; Eph 2:5, 8-9; I Pet 1:3; Jn 3:3, 8, 9

11. The truth of the whole matter is that people are born again according to the [10 will] of God.

12. Have you believed in Jesus for who He [6 is], receiving and welcoming Him as your Prophet, Priest, and King?