

12-14-25 Before Bethlehem: Recognize, Receive, Be Born of God

Week 3

Text: John 1:10–13

Big Idea: When you receive and believe in Christ, you become a child of God.

Aim: Expose the tragedy of not recognizing Jesus, confront the sin of rejecting Jesus, call people to receive and believe Jesus, and clarify the miracle of being born of God.

Introduction — “Don’t Miss What’s Right in Front of You”

Have you ever missed something that was right in front of your face?

Like tearing the house apart looking for your glasses—only to realize they were on your head the whole time.

Or frantically searching for your phone—while you’re talking on it.

Or parents, how about this one—you’re yelling at your kid to put on their shoes... and they look down and say, “Uh, Dad, I already have them on.”

We laugh at those moments, but here’s the sobering truth: you can do the very same thing with Jesus.

John says, **“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him” (John 1:10).**

Think about that: **The Creator** of the universe showed up in His own creation—and most people didn’t even notice. The Son came home, and His own family said, “No vacancy.”

Friend, it’s possible to be surrounded by Christmas lights, Christmas carols, even Christmas sermons - and still miss Christ Himself. You can have Him right in front of you and fail to recognize Him... or worse, reject Him.

But here’s the hope: John doesn’t stop there. He says, **“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”**

And that’s what this message is about: the greatest gift God offers, you don’t have to just know about Jesus, you can be born of God and belong to Him forever.

Read John 1:10–13

I. The Tragedy: Jesus Is Not Recognized by Many (v.10)

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.”

“He was in the world... and the world did not know Him.”

- Presence: **“He was in the world”**, the Incarnate Word stepped into His own creation.
- Preeminence: **“the world was made through Him”**, Creator God (cf. **John 1:3; Col. 1:16**).
- Problem: **“the world did not know Him”**, not mere ignorance, but relational refusal (the verb implies failure to recognize, welcome and acknowledge relationship).
- John isn’t saying the world didn’t know about Jesus. He’s saying the world didn’t want to know Him personally. They refused relationship.
- Jesus didn’t just visit. He remained. He dwelt. He walked their streets. He sat at their tables. The Light stood in the middle of their darkness—and they blinked past Him like He wasn’t there.”
- The coming of Jesus is just background noise for many today.

Theological Weight

Total blindness apart from grace (**2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:18**). **Read Ephesians 4:17-32**

Common grace can make the world beautiful, but only saving grace makes the heart believe.

Application

Are you letting Jesus be background noise, a seasonal soundtrack, but not sovereign Lord?

Repent of a casual, culture-shaped Jesus. Open the Scriptures and recognize Him as Creator and King.

II. The Sorrow: Jesus Is Rejected by His Own (v.11)

“He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.”

“He came to His own... and His own did not receive Him.”

- **“His own”** (realm and people): He came home to Israel (**Deut. 7:6**), to the land and lineage promised, yet **“received Him not.”**

- **“Received”** means “to take in, welcome, embrace, pull close.” They did not want to take him in.
- Jesus came to the people who should have known Him best, but they wanted nothing to do with Him.
- The **“came to his own”** means “to come home.” Jesus came “home” to His own people who lived in the land promised to them, and they wouldn’t take Him in.
- The tragedy isn’t that strangers rejected Him—it’s that the ones who had the promises, the prophecies, the temple, the lineage... refused to ‘receive’ the very One they were waiting for.
- Fulfillment spurned: **Isaiah 53:2–3** - despised and rejected.

Theological Weight

Rejection is not a neutral act; it’s moral and spiritual resistance (**John 3:19**). **“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”**

Application

Stop demanding a Jesus who fits your preferences. Receive the Jesus who confronts your sin.

Believers: Expect rejection. Don’t retreat.... shine (**Matt. 5:16**). **“Let your life so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

III. The Turn: Jesus Is Received by Some (v.12)

“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name...”

“But to all who did receive Him...”

- **“But”**—the gospel’s glorious contrast.
- **“All”** - The word **“all”** reminds us that Jesus came for everyone, not just for Jews.
- **“Receiving”** = welcoming with favor, taking Him in (same verb used of Jesus taking **Peter, James, John—Matt. 17:1**).
- **“Believing in His name”** = trusting the totality of who He is (His person, work, authority).
- Jesus flings the door wide open: ὅσοι—anyone, everyone, all who come.
- Belief in Greek isn’t a one-time nod. It’s an everyday leaning. A life of active trusting. Not ‘I believed once,’ but ‘I am believing right now.’

- When you believe in Jesus' Name, you're not believing in a title—you're believing in the totality of who He is.

Theological Weight

Saving faith is not mere assent; it's reliance—to “stretch yourself out” on Christ.

Repentance and faith are two sides of one turn (**Mark 1:15**): from self to Savior, from sin to the Son.

Application

Skeptic: What precisely about Jesus are you refusing to receive, His authority? His exclusivity? His diagnosis of your sin?

Believer: Faith is present tense, continue believing (**John 8:31**). Keep sitting in the chair; stop standing over it negotiating the terms. **“Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed in Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”**

IV. The Miracle: Those Who Believe Are Made Children of God (v.12-13)

“...He gave the right to become children of God—who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

...He gave the right to become children of God...

- **“Gave the right”**, legal status granted: authority, privilege, adoption (**Rom. 8:15–17; Gal. 4:4–7**). This means legal standing, royal privilege and His identity.
- **“Born...of God”**, the new birth is not hereditary (“blood”), not moral resolve (“will of the flesh”), not human orchestration (“will of man”), but God's sovereign work.
- In Christ, God doesn't just let you into the kingdom—He gives you royal status in the family.
- Not servants. Not spectators. Children—bearing His likeness, His name, His inheritance.
- You can't ‘decide’ yourself into the family of God. You must be born into it—and only God can make that happen. Salvation isn't achieved—it's conceived by the Spirit.
- In **John 3**, Nicodemus thought he needed improvement. Jesus said he needed rebirth.

Theological Weight

Regeneration, God acts to give life (**John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:1–5**).

Justification (legal declaration) and adoption (family welcome) flow to those who believe.

Baptist distinctives: After new birth, believer's baptism publicly identifies you with Christ and His people (**Acts 2:41**). Baptism doesn't cause regeneration; it confesses it.

Application

Unbeliever: You cannot birth yourself into God's family. Cry out to God; receive and believe Christ today.

New believer: Take the next step, baptism, membership, discipleship. Children belong in the family.

Church: Treat converts like children of God, not consumers, we must disciple them, don't just seat them.

We're either living in verse John 1:11—rejecting Him—or verse 12—receiving Him. There is no verse 11½.

Gospel Call — “Recognize, Receive, Be Born of God”

Hold up the gift (your prop):

God has placed His gift in front of you (**Rom. 6:23; John 3:16**).

You either receive it... or by doing nothing, you reject it.

“Salvation is not a reward for the righteous, but a gift for the guilty.”

Invitation

“Lord Jesus, I confess my sin and my inability to save myself. I now receive You and believe in Your name—crucified for my sins, raised on the third day, Lord over all. Make me Your child. I'm Yours. Amen.”

For Seekers:

Read **John 1–3**; circle every occurrence of believe/receive/born.

Meet a pastor this week; ask your hardest question.

For New/Young Believers:

Sign up for baptism & membership.

Start a Gospel of John reading plan with a mature believer.

For Established Believers:

Witness: Share your testimony with one person and invite them to Christmas Eve.

Welcome: Sit with a guest; lunch after service. Hospitality is gospel shaped.

Warfare: Expect pushback. Keep shining (**Phil. 2:15**).

Closing Benediction

“To all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12)

Go in the light of His grace, in the life of His Spirit, and as children of the Father—recognizing, receiving, and revealing Christ. Amen.