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## The Right to Become John 1:11-13

**Intro: Did God create evil?** Many people today postulate that because evil exists in the world and since God has “supposedly” created everything in the world; if that is the case then He is not a God deserving of their recognition, let alone their worship. Their reasoning is **flawed**, of course, and very **self-serving**. **If bad things happen in the world that I don't agree with or approve of, then I don't have to acknowledge a God who would allow that to happen.** What they fail to see, or are incapable of seeing, is that bad things happen in the world precisely because man refuses to acknowledge God and His revelation of Himself thru Creation, thru Scripture and thru His Son Jesus Christ (**vs10**). It is true that nothing that was created was created **apart** from Jesus Christ, the divine Word. But, if the world that was made perfect by God has become a **godless** world, it is solely because of the world's refusal to acknowledge the revelation of God or respond positively to His overtures of grace. And yet, despite this **stubborn refusal (inherent rebellion)**, the world still remains the object of its Creator's amazing love.

So far in John's prologue, we've been introduced to 2 very significant themes: the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the **complete spiritual bankruptcy** of man (**total depravity**). These 2 themes are actually related in a twisted sort of way: the depravity of man is seen precisely in the fact that men failed to recognize Jesus as Lord when He appeared among them. Now, some folks may wonder, **“Surely there must be some exception to this blanket accusation of human depravity. What about Israel, His own people? They had the Scriptures, the Law, the prophecies of His coming. They even had John the Baptist! Jesus came to the Jews especially! Certainly, they must have recognized Him?”** But, John confirms to us in the very next verse that Israel is **no exception** at all, quite the contrary!

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**11-** In fact, it's in the light of this inexplicable rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jews that we can see the depravity of man most clearly. Ancient history is full of stories about infidelity and betrayal but none of them are as significant or as dramatic as Israel's rejection of their long-awaited Messiah. He had created them, had called them into existence as a nation and had even foretold His own coming! But, when He finally arrived, He was rejected by

Israel and crucified. This is nothing less than the **supreme demonstration** of the **wickedness** of the hearts of men.

This rejection shouldn't surprise us; we've seen the same sentiment illustrated many times in Israel's history, even from the very beginning. God told **Abraham** that he and Sarah would have a son thru whom Abraham would become a great nation and all the families of the earth would be blessed. Old Abe got impatient and **tried to do it his own way** instead of God's (**Hagar**). When God came and repeated the promise, Abe asked that Ishmael be the object of God's blessing. His heart, like ours, did not naturally want God's way. **Isaac** tried to **bless Esau** instead of Jacob, even tho God had chosen Jacob to carry on the line of Israel. God had to **overrule** Isaac. Later, **Jacob's sons** tried to **kill** their brother **Joseph** because God had revealed He was going to exalt Joseph and use him for a special purpose.

It didn't stop there. We saw the fickleness of Israel's faith in Judges and it continued thru-out the monarchies of the divided kingdoms. When Jeremiah preached to the people of Judah they said, "**As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you!**" (**Jer 44:16**). When Amos went to preach against the corruption of the northern kingdom of Israel, he was accused of conspiring against the king. They told him to take a hike – go back to Judah and prophecy there, "**We don't want you**" (**Amos 7**). Time after time, the testimony of God's prophets to Israel was that God's message was consistently ignored – **Jeremiah 7:25-26**. When Jesus Christ arrived on the scene, He was received with the same contempt and disdain. He even summed up Israel's reaction in a parable (**Matt 21:33-43**). The priests & Pharisees caught on because **vs45** says they knew He was referring to them.

When Jesus came to His own place, His own people would have nothing to do with Him. When stated so bluntly and absolutely, the outlook seems grim. But that grimness is not without **relief**. Had no one received Him at all, darkness would have prevailed. But some **did** receive Him gladly and in so doing, they showed themselves to truly be **His own**.

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**12-** This is a fantastic verse (**encouraging**), especially since it appears **right after** the dismal picture of **vs10-11**. This is a verse for each one of us **personally**. John plainly states, right at the beginning of his Gospel, that **salvation by grace** apart from the keeping of the law is offered freely to all

people today. Furthermore, it also points to the **glorious benefit** allotted to those who receive Him; namely: the **birthright** to all the blessings and privileges that His coming to this world was designed convey. These blessings and privileges are summed up in this – that those who receive Him are granted **membership in the family of God**. But what does it mean for humans to become **children of God**?

In order to understand this properly, we must first recognized that people do not become God's children **naturally**. The concepts of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of men have been popular themes in the past but these ideas are not taught nor supported by the Bible. What Jesus taught and what all the Apostles stressed was that men and women **only** become children of God by means of the new birth.

The clearest example of Christ's teaching on this topic is found in **John 8**. The starting point of this discussion was the topic of freedom: Jesus told them that the truth would set them free (**32**). This was a touchy subject in a country subjugated by the Roman legions. The Jews reacted to His words most vehemently in **vs33**! This response was absurd in its falsehood. Israel, thru-out her history, had actually been **slaves** to the **Egyptians, Babylonians, Syrians, Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, Philistines, Greeks,** and now the **Romans**. There had almost been **no** power in the ancient Near East that Israel hadn't been in bondage too at some time or other. Jesus could have called them on this blatant lie but He didn't because that wasn't what He was talking about. He was talking about **slavery to sin** (**34**).

The Jews took offense to this as well, just as people do today. They first declared that Abraham was their father in **vs39**. When Jesus logically refutes their claim they turn vicious (**41**), "**We were not born of fornication**" (maybe accusing Jesus of being illegitimate), they protested: "**We have one Father - God**." Its here Jesus completely nails down the subject by denying that they were God's children in any sense of the term (**42a, 44a**). Spiritually speaking;

its **irrelevant** to be descended from Abraham physically if you're not a child of Abraham in the only sense that matters before God – **by reproducing Abraham's faith**! Now if the Jews, who did have a **special historical relationship** with God, could **not** be called children of God, how much more is this true of the rest of us? The Bible clearly teaches that sinners can only become children of God thru a new birth.

Now, the next part of our text should give great **boldness** to those who have believed on Jesus. John declares that we become God's children **not** on the basis of any **human authority** but on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Napoleon) It all depends on the authority of the commander involved. Our status as a **child of God** doesn't come from a pastor, a priest or a pontiff. It doesn't come thru a ceremony or a sacrament. Our position before God as His children comes from the highest authority in the universe, the **Lord Jesus Christ**, the King of kings and Lord of lords, before Whom every knee shall bow. If we boast in our position, let us also assume its **privileges** & **responsibilities!**

The last part of our text deals with **how** one becomes God's child. The short answer: **by faith**. This means believing the Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that thru His death and resurrection, He can save you from sin. The Bible teaches that, "**Without faith it is impossible to please God** (Heb 11:6). Paul speaks of the power of the gospel saying: **in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written: 'The just shall live by faith'**" (Rom 1:17). And in Eph 2:8-9 he says, "**For by grace you have been saved, through faith**". But, **Romans 10:9-10** is the clincher.

This text reveals 1 final truth. Belief in Jesus Christ must also be accompanied by a **verbal expression** of that belief. There's no such thing as a secret believer. The Bible teaches that Christ must be professed **publicly** because verbal testimony indicates the reality of your faith, just as the cry of the newborn reveals the presence of life in the child. The passage in **Rom 10** states that if we **confess** with our mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe** in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead we **will** be saved. **Confession** is the **proof** that your **belief (faith)** in Jesus is **genuine**.

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**13-** If vs12 describes what the new birth **is**, this vs. explains what it **is not**. Clearly, there is a lot of confusion in the world concerning the new birth. To help clarify this, John put forth 3 ways in which a person **cannot** be born again. In this, he helps to clear away false ideas that prevent people from understanding this critical aspect of the Gospel.

**1) of blood** (physical birth) - the new birth cannot come by means of any human agency (Lev 17:11 vs. blue blood). The implication is that no one's

able to claim a position in God's family based on any relationship with the important people on this earth. Even the children of Moody, Spurgeon & Billy Graham were not saved on the basis of their family relationships. Kings or bums, each must confess with their mouths & believe in their hearts that Jesus is Lord.

What are you trusting in for salvation? It doesn't matter if your **parents were Christians** or you were **born in a church**. The Bible plainly teaches that there is nothing related to your physical birth that can facilitate your salvation.

**2) will of the flesh** – in NT, **flesh** equals **natural appetites** which involves the **emotions**. John's saying a person can't become a child of God by exercising his emotions; any more than he can become God's child by being born of privileged parents. Many people today think they're Christians simply because they get an emotional charge out of attending a certain kind of church service. This attitude makes up much of the **popular religion** we see today. The Bible teaches that a surge of emotions does **not** bring new birth because it cannot! You can be moved to tears in an emotionally charged camp meeting, but that alone will **not transform** you into one of God's children.

**3) will of man** – you **cannot** become a child of God by your own determination or the power of positive thinking. These things may make you successful in this world; they may even make you very moral & ethical; but they will not, they **cannot** make you a child of God. To become a child of God a person needs to be given God's life, and this only comes from God and is only given to a person on the basis of God's grace. Sure, that person must believe on Jesus Christ to become a Christian but the point John is making here is that man never makes the first move toward God & that no one would ever be saved unless God operated in this way.

This is why the Bible speaks of our conversion as a new birth. God uses this image precisely because it shows that the initiative was entirely with the Father & not with the one being born again. What did you have to do with your physical birth? Did you get to pick your gender, family, nationality? You had absolutely nothing to do with it! Instead, your father met your mother & some time later, you showed up butt-naked & bawling! You only figured out what happened after the fact. God uses this picture to teach us that He alone is responsible for our salvation. In fact, we can only believe on Jesus because He first implants within us the faith to do so. Why does God

operate this way? So that we might become aware of His great love & mercy towards us and that we might serve Him better because of it.

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**Well, I guess there's nothing for us to do.** Wrong! Just because the initiative in salvation is with the Father doesn't mean you can sit passively be and wait to be saved. It won't happen! You have the responsibility to react to the revelation of God's truth & use the faith He's given you believe on His Son Jesus with your heart, accept Him into your life & verbally confess your of faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This is the demand of the Gospel.

Jesus came to His own but they did not receive Him. The Jews didn't have a valid excuse. They should have recognized their Messiah. They had the prophecies of His coming – prophecies of His suffering & death (**Ps 22; Isa 53**) as well as His glorious reign. But, like all men, Israel found what they wanted to find in God's Word & ignored the rest. They also had the evidence of Christ's miracles. For the Jews, these had exceptional value because the exact works He performed on a regular basis were prophesied in the OT to be done by Messiah when He appeared. They also had the ministry of John the Baptist. All Israel should have followed John's testimony & received Jesus.

The world is no less guilty today than the Jews were in Jesus' day. We have the same prophecies they had. In fact, the text of the OT has been far more widely translated & distributed in our time more than any other time in history. There's also the added advantage of having the NT & seeing in it all the fulfillments of the OT prophecies by Jesus. The Jews saw the miracles of Jesus but we have the record of them too. More than that, we have evidence of the miraculous power of Jesus Christ in the lives of multiplied millions of Christians who demonstrate the victory He gives them over the worst life has to offer. Finally, the Jews had the witness of John the Baptist & so do we; but more importantly, we have the witness of all those who's lives have been transformed by Jesus Christ, even here today!

Where do you stand? Are you running away? Are you trying to escape from reality? You might be able to do it for a while but you won't be able to do it permanently. You must face the truth of Christ either now or at the judgment. On the other hand, you don't have to run away from Him – you can just run to Him. Receive Jesus and become a child of God by faith in His name. 😊