



# *In The Dark Streets* **SHINETH**

In the Dark Streets Shineth: Week 3

December 17, 2023

## **At Christmas, Jesus enters our world of darkness with us**

**John's weird Christmas story:** A recap of John 1:1-9

- 1) Word and creation - John 1:1-3
- 2) Light and life - John 1:4-5
- 3) Witness of John - John 1:6-9

## **The next part of the story...**

**10** He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. **11** He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. **12** But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. **13** They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. John 1:10-13

## **The true light was realized but not recognized (John 1:10)**

As Jesus came into the world as a light, most people did not recognize him as the Messiah. The reason we lift up the shepherds, wise men (aka magi, royal astrologists), and John at Christmas time is that they were among the few that recognized the significance of Jesus coming into the world. Even during his lifetime, people struggled to recognize Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

**27** Jesus and his disciples left Galilee and went up to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" **28** "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets." **29** Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah." Mark 8:27-29

### **Humanity received Jesus as a gift, but then rejected him (John 1:11)**

Despite Jesus coming to the chosen people of God, it was exactly those most deeply entrenched in their Jewish faith who were most resistant to Jesus and his ministry. This resistance would lead to his death on the cross. We still reject Jesus today because we struggle with sin and love our own darkness.

**31** Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. Mark 8:31

**19** ...God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. **20** All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. John 3:19b-20

### **Belief, not bloodline, defines the family of God (John 1:12)**

A question when John was writing his gospel was, "Is God's grace exclusive to the Jewish people?" Many believed that it was their heritage as Abraham's children that saved them and that only Jewish people would enjoy heaven. John emphatically says everyone has the right to be saved and to become God's children through their faith in Jesus.

**6** In the same way, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." **7** The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. Galatians 3:6-7

### **Born again by the Spirit (John 1:13)**

**3** Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." **4** "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" **5** Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. **6** Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. John 3:3-6

We don't recognize Him.

We reject Him.

**He still redeems us anyway.**

# REFLECTIONS

1. Have you ever recognized someone famous when no one else did? What was that like?
2. Where have you recognized the presence of God in “the least of these”? How can your God stories help others to recognize the presence of Jesus?
3. All of us struggle with sin and most of us feel the pull of one vice or another. Is there something in your life that pulls you into darkness that you struggle to let go of?
4. If God’s family is not exclusive to just those who already believe, what can you do to extend the invitation for people to join God’s family?
5. What does it mean to you that, despite the ways we reject Jesus or fail to recognize Him, He still redeems us anyway?