

“Responding to Jesus” (#2 of 10)

For New Horizon URC, February 26, 2017, by Pastor Rand Lankheet
Scripture text: John 1:10-18. Read vss. 1-18.

Before reading: John is writing about Jesus. His purpose for writing is that we might truly trust in Jesus as the Son of God. And trust in Him as our Saviour.

This afternoon, John tells us how people responded to Jesus--when he first came to this earth.

And, of course, people today respond to Jesus in these same ways.

By the way, it can be a bit confusing in this first chapter. There are two men with the name “John.”

There is John the writer, the disciple of Jesus. Then, there is another John, who is sometimes called “John the Baptist.” (施洗约翰) John the Baptist was one of the first people to announce the arrival of Jesus.

[Read 1:1-18. Our focus will be: vss. 10-18.]

Introduction: A few years ago I traveled to the Netherlands. My grandfather’s grandfather was born in a small town there, in the year 1840. When he was 7 years old, his family immigrated (移民) to the States. Now, I imagine that at first a few letters were exchanged between those who immigrated and their relatives who remained behind. But by the time my own grandfather was born, there was no contact between the two branches of the family. By the time my own father was born, he did not even know the town where his ancestors (祖先) came from. He didn’t even know if our family name was spelled the same way, or had been changed. -Here’s the point—even families will lose connection over the generations.

Over time, they become complete strangers to each other.

-Well, John tells us in the first three verses that Jesus was and is the eternal Logos (道). And, with the Father and the Spirit, He created the first human beings in the world.

In vs. 10, John tells us this sad truth: that when Jesus came into the world, many generations later, [quote] **“the world did not [even] recognize him.”** How sad is that!

Think of it: The Creator of all the people of the world is not recognized by the later generations!

Though Jesus was their Creator, He was a complete stranger to people on the earth.

Now it’s understandable, that today I wouldn’t recognize my distant relatives in the

Netherlands. 160 years had gone by. But with Jesus, people didn’t recognize him for another reason.

What was that reason? [Read vs. 5.]

The people of the world were living in the darkness of their sin nature.

In that spiritual darkness of their sin nature they couldn’t see or understand Jesus.

So the people of the world refused to put their faith, their trust, in Jesus.

1.B. And **even the Jewish people** rejected Jesus. That’s even worse, when you think about.

You see, for thousands of years, the Jews were taught about the coming of their Messiah (受膏者, 救主). The Anointed One of Yahweh. The special descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The latter prophets even gave specific information about the coming of Jesus.

For example, the prophets said he would be a biological descendant of King David.

The prophets said he would be born in Bethlehem.

They said he would appear in the region of Galilee.

But Jesus, full-grown, now appears in the region of Galilee. But the Jews, his own people, do not even recognize him. In fact, they end up rejecting him. Even to this very day.

[Re-read vss. 10-11.]

Jesus tells a parable in Matthew chapter 21. It’s known as the “Parable of the Tenants.” (在葡萄园做工的比喻)

A certain landowner planted a vineyard (葡萄园). He then rented that vineyard to some tenant farmers (佃农) and went away on a journey. He was gone for a few years. When the first good grape harvest was brought in, the landowner sent his servants to collect rent on that vineyard. But the tenants grabbed (抓住) his servants—they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. As the months went by, the landowner sent other servants. But each of them were terribly mistreated. / Finally, the landowner sent his own son to the tenants.

The landowner thought, "Surely, the tenants will respect my son." But when the tenant farmers saw the son coming, they said: "This is the heir (继承人) of the owner. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance (产业)." They threw that son out of the vineyard and killed him. And that's exactly what happened to Jesus. When God the Father, sent his own Son, Jesus, to earth. To his very own people. The covenant people. The Jews. Surely the Jews will receive the Son of the Father, won't they? But, the Jews rejected Jesus. Even worse, they ended up killing Jesus. "Crucify him, crucify him," they shouted to Pilate. So Jesus was crucified, killed on that cross. He was **completed rejected** by his own people./ -How sad, when you think of it...sad that Jesus' own people, the Jews, would reject Him. And the vast majority of Jews to this very day continue to reject Jesus. But it really is no different today....people today do not recognize their Creator God. People are busy with life; they are preoccupied with their jobs and their families. Not merely that...they are living in their own darkness of heart. Though Jesus is close by...revealed on the pages of the Bible, proclaimed in biblical churches. Yet, people will not see him. Or understand about him. They reject their own Creator God. How very, very sad! //

2. In contrast to that sad note, John adds a joyful note: [Read from vs. 11 to vs. 12-13. "Yet." Despite everything. Despite all the rejection, yet, **SOME**, even many, **DID RECEIVE JESUS**. They received Jesus by a true and living faith. You here this morning, are among the millions and millions throughout the history of the world, who have received Jesus. Praise the Lord!! You have come to trust in Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah, the Anointed One. -And in Jesus, you have received life! True life, eternal life through Jesus.

2.A. John describes what happens, for those who receive Jesus. [Read vs. 12.

Notice---John speaks of simply "receiving Jesus."

Illus: Boys and girls, when someone gives you a gift, you really don't have to do anything.

You simply reach out your hand, and you receive the gift.

The giver does all the work. If your parents are the givers, they are the ones who looked what you needed, or wanted, as a gift. They went out, looking for it, and buying the gift.

They wrapped it up in nice paper. You really did nothing. In the English language we call this "being passive." It's the opposite of being "active." The giver is the active one. The receiver is passive. Simply receiving.

So, you see, God is the **active one** in our being saved. God gives us Jesus as a gift.

Later, John will record Jesus saying about himself, John 3:16: "God so loved the world that **He gave** his one and only Son." God actively loved us, and God actively gave us Jesus.

We simply receive Jesus.

Vs. 12 refers to those who receive Jesus...that they "**believe in his name**." In Jesus' name.

Now, that's a biblical way of saying it. A Jewish way. We today would say:

"We believe in Jesus. We trust in Jesus as our Saviour." But the ancient Jews would often say: believe in Jesus' **name**. Why is that?

Well, in ancient Hebrew culture, the name represents the person. [Repeat.

So, for example, in the third commandment God says: "You shall not take the **name** of the Lord your God in vain." The name. The name of God represents the very being of God. /By the way, orthodox (正统的) Jews today, will not say "Yahweh" or "Jehovah"...they will simply refer to Him as "the Name." They just refer to "The Name."

So, when John says in vs. 12 that we must "believe in Jesus' name," John means we must believe in Jesus himself. In the person of Jesus, and in His work for us. /

2.B. So, how, specifically, does that happen? How does this life come to us, through Jesus?

Look at the next verses [Read vs. 12-13.

John first gives three **negative** statements--saying how it does not happen. And then he gives a positive statement. First, look at the negative statements: This life through Jesus comes to us, "**NOT**" what?

a) Not "by blood." That is, not "by natural descent." That is, our life through Jesus does not come to us biologically. Biological life involves human cells and DNA and genes.

You and I have a certain “bloodline” (血统) through which we inherit physical characteristics. But the life Jesus gives does not come to us by our bloodline. It’s not biological.

b) Secondly, vs. 13, it is “not of the will of the flesh.” That is, not by human desire or decision. Not through biological desire, or by sexual desire. That’s the way children are conceived (被孕育) by their parents...through physical desire.

c) Nor is this life from God, of/by “the will of a man/a husband.” In ordinary life, we set a goal to do something. By hard work, we can often fulfill that goal.

But that’s not how spiritual life comes into us. That’s not how we are born again.

Spiritual life, Jesus new life in us, happens by another way... **How?**

In the last words of vs. 13, John tells us that life through Jesus comes to us as we are **“born of God.”** Born of God. Later, in John chapter 3, you remember that Jesus tells Nicodemus that this life from God results from a work of God’s Spirit. It is invisible to the human eye. It’s like the powerful blowing of the wind. It’s not caused by us, or directed by us. But, it comes to us completely from God. He causes us to be “born again”

Billy Graham once wrote a famous book, entitled “How to Be Born Again.” But that is a bad title.

Being born again is not something we decide to do, or plan to do, or work to do.

God does it in us, and for us. [Read also vs. 18.]

Appl: Is that you, this afternoon? Do you know, truly know, that you need Jesus?

You see, it’s not enough for you to be once-born, born biologically. You need to be twice-born.

You need spiritual birth, as well as physical birth. ... Pray, ask God, simply....in your own words.

“God, I need you to cause me to be born again. I don’t know exactly what that means, but I know I need something more in life. Some deeper purpose. Some new life in my heart, my soul...show me Jesus, God, I pray.”

The Bible says that anyone who calls on God’s name for His gift of Jesus, will be answered. And will be saved. + //

3. One more thing, about responding to Jesus. Remember, that’s the main point of the sermon—How people respond to Jesus. Some reject Jesus. Others receive Jesus.

John now lists **SOME RESULTS** of positively responding---of trusting in Jesus.

These are beautiful words...encouraging words, for us, today. [Read vs. 16-17.]

3.A. Remember that John was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples. And of the Twelve, John was especially close to Jesus...truly loving Jesus with a deep love, caring, agape love.

John says: vs. 16, “we have all received [from Jesus] grace for grace.”

Other translations make it more clear: “we have all received **one blessing after another.**”

Grace upon grace upon grace.” Continual expressions of God’s wonderful gifts to us in Jesus.

That starts, of course, with His grace to be born again---regenerating and converting grace. And there’s the grace of “faith”---the Bible says Jesus even gives us the gift of faith, ability to put our trust in Him.

But, says John, the grace from Jesus continues to flow in our lives, like an ever-flowing stream.

Blessing upon blessing upon blessing. A continual stream of gifts. Through Jesus.

Appl: How is that for you? I know how it is for me. Sometimes it seems that flowing river is running dry. The experience of the reality of Jesus in our lives, can become weak, at times. In certain seasons of life. That’s why it is good, isn’t it...to read from the gospels, directly, about Jesus. And to hear again this testimony from John: “We” have “all” received one blessing after another.” “We”—“all of us. John uses the plural (复数), referring to himself, and the Eleven faithful disciples.

And John is referring to the thousands of converts (信徒), who later learned about Jesus and were following him. Right up to our present day. **Includes us, today.**

It means being close to Jesus **in the context of his Church, His Bride...**

John says “we, together, all of us.” We together are God’s people today in the church.

That’s how ancient Israel experienced God’s grace—as a covenant (圣约) people, together.

Together we must remind one another about Jesus.

Together we keep teaching about Jesus. And learning about Jesus.

“To encourage one another”...Illustration from myself.... +

May we together increasingly be that kind of church, here in Scarborough..../

One last thing.... 3.B. This stands in contrast to the ancient time of Moses.

In vs. 17, John shows an important contrast between Jesus and Moses.
There is a big difference between the time of Jesus and the time of Moses.

Johns makes an important contrast: vs. 17: the Law **by Moses**, **VS.** Grace and Truth **by Jesus**.

John uses the word "law" here in the bad sense of that word...referring to all the details of legislation (法规). And, particularly referring to the failure of God's people to fully obey.

So that all those bloody sacrifices (献祭) were necessary. All the blood of bulls and goats.

But, those animal sacrifices never relieved people's burden of sin and guilt.

Those animal sacrifices could not fully assure people that God forgave them their sin.

But, when Jesus came, the very Logos, the very Son of the Father....and offered himself for our sins, ah! **Then God's people experienced GRACE as never before. God's full love and mercy.**

They could know the full forgiveness of all their sins.

That's a powerful message for us today. Remember, the gospel is not bad news.

It's good news. Wonderful, grace-filled news. To us who are so often discouraged in life.

God shows us GRACE, full MERCY, through Jesus. We cannot do anything to earn our salvation.

We cannot do anything to prove ourselves worthy to God.

We must simply reach out our hands, our empty hands, and receive Jesus.

LET US PRAY.