

John 1:10-14

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you study the third commandment and compare what God said in Exodus 20 when he first gave the commandments at Mt. Sinai, and what he said in Deuteronomy 5 as his people are about to enter the promised land, you notice that God gives two reasons that his people are to observe the Sabbath. In Exodus 20 he tells his people that as they rest on the Sabbath they are to remember that he created them and all things. In Deuteronomy 5 he tells them that as they rest on the Sabbath they are to remember that he redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. As his people traveled in the desert he had them make a tabernacle, a tent, which was the place where he revealed himself to his people and assured them of his presence, and the place where they could inquire of God and learn the truth.

As John begins his Gospel he picks up on these Old Testament themes. He reminds us that The Word who became flesh, Jesus, is the eternal, almighty God. He was with God in the beginning. He took an active part with the Father in the creation of all things. **Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.** God still wants to be recognized as the creator of all things. To rob him of that glory and ascribe creation to someone or something else is a fundamental, grievous sin.

Christmas reminds us that The Word, the eternal, almighty creator of all things, became flesh. In fulfillment of his promise to Adam and Eve, he came as the seed of a woman. In fulfillment of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Solomon, he came as a Jew from the tribe of Judah and from the house of David. As Isaiah foretold, Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, the fullness of the deity in bodily form. When he was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit the Creator became a creature, the Creator entered his creation that had been ruined by sin. But John reminds us that, **though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.**

On the one hand, that's understandable. He was hiding his glory in flesh and blood. He didn't look any different than any other human being. He didn't look like someone who had the power to create things out of nothing.

On the other hand, most of the people of the world had failed to acknowledge him as the creator long before this. And the same is true today. The majority of people in the world would rather believe that the world came into existence by means of some cosmic accident. They know what the Bible says, yet they deliberately choose to believe anything but what the Bible says. They will believe that life on earth began when aliens zapped the earth's oceans with some cosmic ray, but they laugh when the Bible says God created all things in six days by the power of his word. Though the world was made through him the world still today does not want to acknowledge him as the Creator.

We might not be surprised at the fact that the world of unbelievers who reject the Scriptures as the source of truth would not recognize God as Creator. But, God has always had his remnant, his chosen people, those who did believe. Even when Elijah thought he was the only believer left on the face of the earth, God reminded him that there were 7,000 just in Israel who still believed. At the birth of Jesus, though they were no longer an independent nation, Israel still existed as God's chosen people. Although many of the leaders in Israel were Sadducees who rejected the Bible as God's truth, the Pharisees worked hard to preserve the word, even adding hundreds of additional laws to, in their minds, help preserve it. Surely those

who claimed to honor the Scriptures above all else and who did acknowledge God as the creator of all things, surely they would recognize the prophecies as they saw them being fulfilled before their eyes. Surely they would receive him. But John says, **he came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**

After Jesus was baptized by John he went to his own. He traveled through Judea and Galilee teaching in their synagogues and performing many miraculous signs, so many that John says he couldn't record them all in his book. Yet Jesus characterized those who were his own people in this way, **John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."** ' He pictured them in the parable of the wicked tenants who, when they saw the son of the owner coming, decided to throw him out of the vineyard and kill him.

The Word, the Creator, the one who had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, the one who had brought them to the Promised Land and given them miraculous victories over their enemies as long as they were faithful to him; he came to visit them, in person, he made a body his tabernacle, but they did not welcome him or thank him; they plotted against him and killed him.

Still today his own, those who claim to be Christians, who claim to receive him as Creator and to uphold the Bible as truth end up rejecting him when he comes as their Redeemer. Although they proclaim that God created the world in six days, as Scripture says, and that Jesus is God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, they rob him of his glory as the Redeemer by claiming that they contribute something to their salvation.

John reminds us that those who do receive Jesus as their Redeemer didn't come to believe and trust in him by their own power. He says, **to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.** Or as Jesus later explained to Nicodemus, children of God, believers, are those who have been born again, or born from above. Those who are born of natural descent, physical birth, are born in sin. They cannot and will not receive Jesus as their savior. A second birth, a spiritual birth, is necessary. Believers are born of God through water and the Spirit. They are given the right to be children of God, they have not earned that right.

John was one who Jesus chose to be with him in his ministry, as he tented in flesh and blood on earth. John was one who heard everything that Jesus taught. He saw all of the miracles that Jesus performed. He was one of those who was present on the mount of transfiguration as Jesus let his glory as God shine through his flesh and blood and he began to shine like the sun. John was there at the foot of the cross. He saw the spear pierce Jesus' side so that the Romans were assured that he was truly dead. He was present on Easter evening, and at the Sea of Galilee and in the upper room a week after Easter. He saw the resurrected Jesus. He says to us, **the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

Jesus, the Word become flesh, wrapped in clothes and laid in a manger, has come to us. He has come to show us the truth about God. The truth is that God has graciously provided a way for his sinful creatures to avoid the just punishment they deserve. He has become our brother so that he could experience what we experience, so that he could be tempted in every way we

are tempted, yet remain sinless. He became our brother so that he could take our place on the cross. On the cross he not only endured the physical pain and suffering of crucifixion, but he took upon himself the punishment we deserve for our sins. He was forsaken by the Father. He proclaimed, "it is finished." Every sin ever committed has been paid for in full. There is nothing left for us or anyone else to do. Jesus has redeemed us by his blood. God has provided a way for his sinful creatures to be saved, but only one way. As Jesus says, **no one comes to the father except through me.** Jesus is full of truth and the truth is that salvation is by grace through faith that is worked by the Holy Spirit. It is a gift of God. Any suggestion that we contribute to our salvation in any way, even that faith is our own decision, means that it's no longer a gift of God's grace and robs Jesus of his glory as the Redeemer.

Although Scripture makes it clear that we are no longer bound by the covenant at Sinai so that we are no longer required to rest from all work on Saturday, the principles God was teaching his people still apply to us today. No matter how many people refuse to acknowledge him as the Creator, the truth is that he is the Creator of all things. No matter how many people refuse to acknowledge the Virgin Birth, the truth is that the Creator became one of his creatures. Jesus is God in flesh and blood. No matter how many people refuse to receive him, He is the one who reveals to us that God is full of grace and truth. In Jesus, he proved that he is faithful to his promises. In Jesus he proved that he is a gracious God who has provided a way of salvation for all for free.

Don't rob God of his glory. Swallow your pride and receive him as your creator and redeemer. And if you do, give him all the glory, acknowledge that even your faith is a gift of his love and grace.