

# John 1:9 Commentary

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

## JESUS' RISE FROM OBSCURITY FOLLOWED BY OPPOSITION IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

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## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY GOSPEL OF JOHN (shaded area)

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John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man: en (3SIAI) to phos to alethinon ho photizei (3SPAI) panta anthropon erchomenon (PM/PP) eis ton kosmon. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

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- **true:** John 1:4 Jn 6:32 Jn 14:6 Jn 15:1 Isa 49:6 Mt 6:23 1Jn 1:8 1Jn 2:8 1Jn 5:20
- **every:** John 1:7 Jn 7:12 Jn 12:46 Isa 8:20 1Th 5:4-7
- [John 1:9 Christ the Only True Light - Charles Simeon](#)
- John 1:9 The Word as Light - F B Meyer
- [John 1:9-13 How to Become a Child of God - John Piper](#)
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- [John 1:9 F. Godet](#)

**Barclay** - He was the real light, who, in his coming into the world, gives light to every man.

**KJV** John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

**NET** John 1:9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

**ASV** John 1:9 There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.

**BBE** John 1:9 The true light, which gives light to every man, was then coming into the world.

**CJB** John 1:9 This was the true light, which gives light to everyone entering the world.

**CSB** John 1:9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

**DBY** John 1:9 The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man.

**ESV** John 1:9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

**NAS** John 1:9 There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

**NIV** John 1:9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

**NLT** John 1:9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

**GWN** John 1:9 The real light, which shines on everyone, was coming into the world.

**NAB** John 1:9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

**NEB** John 1:9 The real light which enlightens every man was even then coming into the world.

**NJB** John 1:9 The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone; he was coming into the world.

**NKJ** John 1:9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

**NRS** John 1:9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

**RSV** John 1:9 The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

**TNT** John 1:9 That was a true lyght which lyghteth all men that come into the worlde.

**WEB** John 1:9 {That} was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

**YLT** John 1:9 He was the true Light, which doth enlighten every man, coming to the world;

## **THE TRUE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

After a brief "*parenthesis*" introducing John the Baptist (Jn 1:6-8), the writer returns to focus on Jesus. First, recall that John has just written of the Baptist "He was not the Light" (Jn 1:8) and now in stark contrast he describes "the true Light." Second, notice how the beginning of this passage ("*There was the true Light*") parallels the introduction of John the Baptist (or better described in this Gospel as "John the Witness") - "*There came a man sent from God, whose name was John*" (Jn 1:6) Having introduced the one who would bear witness, John now introduces the One about Whom witness was to be borne!

John of course is not saying he was "a false light, but, in comparison with Christ, he was a very small light. Christ is the great Light that deserves to be called so. Other lights are but figuratively and equivocally called." (Matthew Henry)

**There was the true Light** - Jesus the God-Man. As in **the beginning** (Jn 1:1-note) John again uses the verb **was** in the **imperfect tense** which reflects Jesus' continual existence. One could paraphrase it "There *always* was the true Light." **The true Light** continually **was** before John **came** (Jn 1:6). Throughout all eternity **the Light** was present. Now John says that the eternally existing **Light** (Fully God) is entering time (Fully Man), coming into the world He created, but now a world darkened by sin and in desperate need of a Redeemer and of spiritual vision to see the true Light!

One application is that because Jesus is the True Light, we can always count on Him. He will always be the Source of pure Light. And this is good to remember when we as believers experience times of spiritual darkness. In those times we can choose by grace through faith to run into His Name, the True Light! As Solomon said "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe (**sagab** = lifted up). (Pr 18:10-note)

John also describes Jesus as the true Bread and true Vine.

### **POSB - THE WITNESSES TO THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, John 1:1-51**

Jesus the Light of Men: The Second Witness of John the Apostle, Jn 1:9-13

1 Christ was the Light (John 1:9)

- a. The true Light (John 1:9a)
- b. His mission: Light men (John 1:9b)

2 Christ was tragically rejected by the world (John 1:10-11)

- a. He was in the world, but was rejected (John 1:10)S
- b. He came to His own people, but they rejected Him (John 1:11)

3 Christ was wonderfully received by some (John 1:12-13)

- a. How: By believing (John 1:12b)
- b. Result: Became sons of God (John 1:12a)
- c. The Source of Sonship: A new birth (John 1:13)

1) Was not of man (John 1:13a)

2) Was of God (John 1:13b)

Introduction: the world is in desperate straits. It is full of darkness—the darkness of sin and despair, of sickness and death, of corruption and hell. The darkness looms over the whole world. This is the problem dealt with in the present passage. There is hope in Jesus Christ, for Christ is the true Light, and Light dispels darkness.

1. Christ was the Light (John 1:9).
2. Christ was tragically rejected (John 1:10-11).
3. Christ was wonderfully received by some (John 1:12-13).

Earlier John had written that "**the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend** (apprehend) it." (Jn 1:5-note), but now he says "**the Light... enlightens every man.**" At first glance this seems like a contradiction. What John is saying in essence is that everyone (**every man**) has a chance to believe (Jn 1:9), regardless of whether they fail to comprehend (apprehend) the Light.

**F B Meyer** has a message on The Word as Light in which he discusses "the characteristics of the Light - Light is pure... Light is gentle... Light is all pervasive... Light reveals" (See full message - **John 1:9 The Word as Light**)

**Wiersbe** - Jesus is the "**true Light**"—the original of which every other light is a copy—but the Jews were content with the copies. They had Moses and the Law, the temple and the sacrifices; but they did not comprehend that these "lights" **pointed** to the **true Light** Who was the fulfillment, the completion, of the Old Testament religion.

Believers like John are not the Light but are commissioned to reflect His Light (Mt 5:16-note). **Are you fulfilling one of the great purposes for which you were created and then redeemed** (Eph 2:10-note)?

**POSB** - Christ was "**the true Light.**" Other men may claim to be lights; they may claim that they can lead men to the truth. Some may claim they can...

- reveal God to men.
- show the nature, meaning, and destiny of the future and other things.
- guide a man out of the darkness of sin, shame, doubt, despair, and the fear of death and hell.
- do away with and eliminate the darkness entirely.

However, such men are false lights. Their claims are only ideas in their minds, fictitious ideas, and counterfeit claims. Their thoughts and positions are defective, frail, and uncertain—just as imperfect as any other man-made position dealing with the truth.

**Jonathan Edwards** writes that "There is not now, ever was, nor will be, any man in the world enlightened but by Jesus Christ. Every man that comes into the world, who ever is enlightened, is enlightened by Him; or hereby is meant that this Light is not only to enlighten the Jews, but that it enlightens indifferently every man, let him be of what nation whatsoever. It was fit that the true Light, when He came, should be a general light. Moses enlightened only the nation of the Jews, because he was not the true light." (Jonathan Edwards' Notes on the Scriptures)

**What did John mean by referring to Jesus as the true Light? Kostenberger** says "By affirming that Jesus is the "true light"—just as he is the "true bread from heaven" (Jn 6:32) and the "true vine" (Jn 15:1)—John indicates that Jesus is the fulfillment of OT hopes and expectations." ([John Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament](#))

**Barnes** on the **true Light** - A false light is one that leads to danger or error, as a false beacon on the shores of the ocean may lead ships to quicksands or rocks; or an "ignis fatuus" to fens, and precipices, and death. A true light is one that does not deceive us, as the true beacon may guide us into port or warn us of danger. Christ does not lead astray. All false teachers do.

**D. A. Carson** on the **true Light** - John's point is that the Word who came into the world is the light, the true light, the genuine and ultimate self-disclosure of God to man. ([The Gospel according to John The Pillar New Testament Commentary](#))

**A T Robertson** on the **true light** - "The light the genuine," not a false light of wreckers of ships, but the dependable light that guides to the harbor of safety.

Although it is probably not John's main intent the fact that Jesus is the **true Light** places Him in stark contrast to the many false Messiahs that have arisen over the last 2000 years and are predicted to arise in the last days preceding His Second Coming (Mt 24:11, 24). "Jesus, as opposed to any other "luminaries," is the true and exclusive revelation of God to man." (Barton)

**Kenneth Gangel** on **true Light** - We have created virtually every kind of artificial light possible for special effects on television and films. But nothing can compare with watching God's sunrise or sunset, or perhaps staring from the blackness of an Arizona desert into the night sky at stars and planets God has made. Jesus is the true light, not some imitation. (Holman New Testament Commentary)

**Constable** on the **true light** - The word "**true**" is one that John used repeatedly in this Gospel. "**True**" (Gr. alethinon) here refers to

what is the ultimate form of the genuine article, the real as opposed to the counterfeit. John did not mean that Jesus was "truthful" (Gr. *alethes*). Jesus was not only a genuine revelation from God, but He was also the ultimate revelation (cf. John 4:23; John 6:32; John 15:1; John 17:3; Hebrews 1:1-2).

**Godet** on **true Light - Alethinios**, true, is one of those terms for which the Johannine style shows a peculiar predilection. It signifies in John, as in classical writers, not the true in opposition to the false, but the veritable (perfect) realization of the idea (here: the essential or absolute light) in opposition to all imperfect manifestations (as in this case, the forerunner and the other divine messengers whom the world had seen down to the time of Jesus Christ.) ([Commentary on the Gospel of St. John](#))

**Westcott** adds this note on **the true light** - In this relation the **Light** is characterized as (1) the **true (alethinios) Light**, and (2) that which enlightens every man. The former expression (1) marks the essential nature of the Light as that of which all other lights are only partial rays or reflections, as the archetypal Light (see Jn 4:23, 6:32, 15:1). The "**true light**" in this sense is not opposed to a "false light," but to an imperfect, incomplete, transitory light. ([The Gospel According to St John](#))

**Vincent** notes that Wycliffe translates **true Light** as "**very light** (compare the Nicene creed, "*very God of very God*"). This epithet is applied to light only here and 1John 2:8, and is almost confined to the writings of John.

## **SHADOWS OF MESSIAH'S "LIGHT" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

When John refers to Jesus as the **TRUE LIGHT**, he is saying that He is **GENUINE**, that He is the **REAL LIGHT**, that He is the ultimate **LIGHT** that Israel has been looking for throughout the Old Testament. In the same way Jesus Himself testified that He was the "**TRUE BREAD** from heaven" (Jn 6:32) and the "**TRUE VINE**" (Jn 15:1) The manna (bread = Ex 16:4 > Jn 6:32) in Exodus was simply a foreshadowing of the ultimate fulfillment in Messiah, for as He explained "the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." (Jn 6:33) And the depiction of Israel as God's vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-6, 7-note, Jer 2:21, 12:10, Hosea 10:1) was fulfilled in Messiah, the true Vine. The OT had a number of references to Messiah as light, about Whom the rabbis had written in their comments on the [Tanakh](#).

For example, Isaiah foretells of the coming Messiah Who would be a light entering the darkness = "The people who walk in darkness Will see a **great light**; Those who live in a dark land. **The light** will shine on them." (Isaiah 9:2-note)

John is saying Jesus is that light, the **true Light**, the Light for whom Israel has been praying and looking! And yet as we see in Jn 1:11, they missed the **true Light**, because of their spiritual blindness (cf 2Cor 4:4, Acts 26:18) and thus remained in spiritual darkness, the very darkness the true Light had come to dispel! Oh, the tragedy of it all! Little wonder Jesus lamented "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling." (Mt 23:37)

In another Messianic prophecy Isaiah records the words of God = "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people (cf Isa 49:8), As a **light to the nations** (Gentiles), 7 To open blind eyes (Acts 26:18), To bring out prisoners from the dungeon, And those who dwell in darkness from the prison (set captives free those who are spiritual slaves to sin and Satan)." (Isaiah 42:5-7)

**Comment:** A man who was part of the Jewish **remnant**, righteous and devout **Simeon** (Lk 2:25-26) upon seeing Jesus (Lk 2:27-28, 29-31) in the child Jesus saw the fulfillment of Isaiah's 300 year old prophecy and testified that the One he saw and held in his arms was indeed the **true Light** "A **LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES**, and the glory of Thy people Israel." (Lk 2:32)

Compare the prophecy in Isaiah - He (God) says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant (addressing His Son, the Messiah) to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You (the Messiah) a **light of the nations** (to the Gentiles) so that (**term of purpose** - What is the purpose?) My salvation may reach **to the end of the earth** (to Jews and Gentiles!)." (Isa 49:6)

There is a prophecy of Messiah in Nu 24:17 "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, And a scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.

**Spurgeon** commenting on Nu 24:17 which he interprets as **Messianic prophecy** writes - "As a star, He shines also with the light of knowledge Moses was, as it were, but a mist, but Christ is the prophet of **light**. "The law was given by Moses"—a thing of types and shadows—"but grace and truth come by Jesus Christ." If any man be taught in the things of God, he must derive his **light** from the Star of Bethlehem. You may go as you will to the universities, to the tomes of the learned, to the schools of the philosophers, but in spiritual things

you receive no **light** till you look up to Jesus, and then in His **light** you see **light**, for there is transcendent brightness in Him. He is the wisdom of God as well as the power of God; He is the way, the truth, and the life. **Divine light** has found its centre in Him! **His light**, too, is that of comfort. Oh! how many have emerged from the darkness of their souls and found peace by looking up to this Star of Jacob, the Lord Jesus Christ! Well did our hymn put it:—"He is my soul's bright Morning Star, And he my Rising Sun." One glimpse of Christ and the midnight of your unbelief is over. But a sight of the five wounds and your sins are covered and your iniquities put away. Happy day, happy day, when first the soul beholds a crucified Redeemer, and gives herself up to Him, relying upon Him for eternal salvation. Shine, sweet Star—shine into some benighted heart to-night! Give Thou holiness, give light, give the knowledge of God, give thou joy and peace in believing, in believing in the precious blood! ([The Star Out of Jacob](#))

Finally **Malachi** records a prophecy which alludes to light, declaring "But for you who fear My name the **Sun of righteousness** will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall." (Mal 4:2-note) ([See related discussion - The Sun of Righteousness Will Rise](#))

Lk 1:78–79 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

**Herbert Lockyer** summarizes the Name of Jesus as the Light--

I am the LIGHT of the World; he that follows Me... shall have the Light of Life (John 8:12).

- The Light... John 12:35.
- The True Light... John 1:9.
- A Great Light... Isaiah 9:2.
- A Light Come into the World... John 12:46.
- The Light of the World... John 8:12.
- The Light of Men... John 1:4.
- A Light to Lighten the Gentiles... Luke 2:32.
- A Star... Numbers 24:17.
- The Morning Star... Revelation 2:28.
- The Bright and Morning Star... Revelation 22:16.
- The Day Star... 2 Peter 1:19.
- The Dayspring from on High... Luke 1:78.
- The Sun of Righteousness... Malachi 4:2.

**True** (228)(**alethin**os from **alethes** = true, one who cannot lie) is an adjective which pertains to being in accordance with historical fact - genuine, real, true, that which conforms to reality. It is that which has not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature corresponding to the name, in every respect. **Alethin**os emphasizes *completeness* and *authenticity*. Jesus was not only a *genuine, authentic* revelation from God, but He was also the **ultimate revelation** of a number of OT Scriptures that pointed to His coming as **the Light** (Isa 9:2 = "The people who walk in darkness Will see a great **light**" quoted in Mt 4:16; Ps 27:1, Isa 42:6-7, Isa 49:6 = "I will make you a light of the nations so that My salvation [**yeshua**] may reach to the end of the earth" = Rabbis considered this as a Messianic passage).

While some like **Marvin Vincent** say that "**alethin**os signifies *true*, as contrasted with *false*" **William Barclay** sees a subtle distinction which disagrees with Vincent's description of **alethin**os noting that in the "Greek there are two words which are very like each other. The King James Version and the Revised Standard use the word **true** to translate both of them; but they have different shades of meaning. The first is **alethes** (227). **Alethes** means *true* as opposed to *false*; it is the word that would be used of a statement which is true. The other word is **alethin**os. **Alethin**os means *real* or *genuine* as opposed to *unreal*. So what John is saying is that Jesus is the **real light** come to illumine men. Before Jesus came there were other lights which men followed. Some were flickers of the truth; some were faint glimpses of reality; some were will o' the wisps which men followed and which led them out into the dark and left them there. It is still the case. There are still the partial lights; and there are still the false lights; and men still follow them. Jesus is the only **genuine light**, the real light to guide men on their way. ([John 1 Commentary - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

In his first letter John uses **alethinós** three times to speak of the Father and the Son - And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is **true**, and we are in Him who is **true**, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the **true** God and eternal life. (1Jn 5:20-note)

**Boice** - In the Greek language there are two different but related words that are almost always translated “true” in our Bibles. The first is the word **alethes** which means “true” as opposed to “false.” That is, if you were to make a statement in a court of law, it would be either true or false, right or wrong. But that is not the word that John uses here. Here John uses the word **alethinós**. This word means “true” as opposed to “partial” or, as we would say, “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” as opposed to part of it. A better way of translating this word would be by use of the terms “real” or “genuine.” Thus, we should say that the light of the Lord Jesus Christ was the real light beside which all other lights were imperfect or misleading. ([Gospel of John, James Montgomery Boice](#))

**Pulpit Commentary** - The difference between **alethes** and **alethinós** is important. **Alethes** is used in John 3:33 and Jn 5:31, and very often to denote the **true** in opposition to the **false**, the veracious as distinct from the deceptive. **Alethinós** is used in the Gospel (Jn 4:23, 37; 6:32; 7:28; 15:1; 17:3), 1John 5:20, and Rev 3:7, and hardly anywhere else, for the **real** as opposed to the phenomenal, the archetypal as opposed to the various embodiments of it, the veritable as distinct from that which does not answer to its own ideal. Now, about this veritable light, in addition to all that has been said already, two things are declared. (H.R. Reynolds and T. Croskery)

**A W Pink on true Light** - Bishop Ryle in his most excellent notes on John’s Gospel, has suggested that the adjective “true” has here at least a fourfold reference. **First**, Christ, is the “true light” as the **Undeceiving Light**. Satan himself, we read, “is transformed into an angel of light” (2Cor. 11:14), but he appears as such only to deceive. But Christ is the **true Light** in contrast from all the false lights which are in the world. **Second**, as the “true light,” Christ is the **Real Light**. The real light in contrast from the dim and shaded light which was conveyed through the types and shadows of the Old Testament ritual. **Third**, as the “true light” Christ is the **Underived Light**: there are lesser lights which are borrowed and reflected, as the moon from the sun, but Christ’s “light” is His own essential and underived glory. **Fourth**, as the “true light,” Christ is the **Supereminent Light**, in contrast from all that is ordinary and common. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another of the stars; but all other lights pale before Him who is “the light.” The latter part of this ninth verse need not detain us now, having already received our consideration under the exposition of verse four. The light which “every man” has by nature is the light and reason and conscience.

**Heading** has an interesting comment on **true Light** - The “true Light” should be taken with the “true bread” (John 6:32), the “true vine” (Jn 15:1), and “the truth” (Jn 14:6). There had been physical manna provided by God in the wilderness, and there was plenty of falseness around, and light could be darkness (Luke 11:35). The “**true Light**” and the “**true bread**” are the spiritual counterparts in Christ to the **light** (cf Ex 26:35, 27:20) and **bread** (cf “bread of the Presence” Ex 25:30, Lev 24:5-6, Nu 4:7) in the holy place in the tabernacle, while the light of glory and the golden pot of manna (Ex 16:33, Heb 9:4) were to be found in the Holiest of all. When light falls on a surface, it shows up its reflective power. Moreover, light is sometimes absorbed, and is re-emitted. In Moses’ case, after having been in the glory of God’s presence, his face shone; namely he absorbed the glory falling upon him and then re-emitted it (Ex 34:29-35; 2 Cor 3:13). On the other hand, if Light falls upon dark and evil hearts then they could not reflect anything of Christ. This is the open manifestation of the effect of Christ upon men; but the Light would possess the complete spectrum, including, for example, X-rays. Visible light touches upon that which is outward, but X-rays touch upon that which is inward. Thus the Lord had the power of introspection, as in the case of Nathanael (Jn 1:47), of men in general (Jn 2:25), of the Samaritan woman and her past history (Jn 4:18, 29); truly, “the Lord looks at the heart” (1Sa 16:7; Heb 4:12-13). Moreover, it is internally that the Light has “shined in our hearts” to grant us spiritual knowledge (2 Cor 4:6). (What the Bible teaches)

**T W Hunt** - Whether we need enlightenment or illumination for our path, Jesus is the True Light. (The Mind of Christ)

**Bruce Barton** - Whenever we see the lights of Christmas, let them remind us that they recall Christ, our true Light.

**POSB** - The **true Light** was (is) Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means that Jesus Christ was what other men are not. Other men may claim to be the light of men, but their thoughts are only false imaginations. Christ alone was the true Light. Christ is to man what light is to man, and Christ did for man what light does for man.

⇒ Light is clear and pure: it is clean and good. So was Christ (Eph 5:8).

⇒ Light penetrates: it cuts through and eliminates darkness. So did Christ.

⇒ Light enlightens: it enlarges one’s vision and knowledge. So did Christ.

⇒ Light reveals: it opens up the truth of an area, a whole new world and life. It clears up the way to the truth and life. So did Christ (Jn 14:6).

⇒ Light guides: it keeps one from groping and grasping about in the dark trying to find one’s way. It directs the

way to go, leads along the right path. So did Christ (Jn 12:36, 46).

⇒ Light exposes and strips away darkness. So did Christ (Jn 3:19-20).

⇒ Light routs the chaos. So did Christ (cp. Ge 1:2-3).

⇒ Light discriminates between the right way and the wrong way. So did Christ (Ep 5:10. Cp Ep 5:8-10)

⇒ Light warns: it warns of dangers that lie ahead in one's path. So did Christ.

⇒ Light protects: it keeps one from tripping, stumbling, falling, and injuring oneself and losing one's life. So did Christ.

## COMING INTO THE WORLD

**Steven Cole** on the phrase **coming into the world** - Does "**coming into the world**" modify "man," as in the New King James, "That was the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world"? Or, (as with the NASB, ESV, CSB, and NIV) does it refer to the Light coming into the world? Grammatically, it could refer to either. But in this gospel, coming into the world or being sent into the world is repeatedly said with reference to Jesus (Jn 6:14; 11:27; 16:28; 18:37). And, the following verses (Jn 1:10-11) talk about Jesus being in the world and coming unto His own. So the best way to take it is that Jesus, the Light, comes into the world and enlightens every man. ([John 1:6-13 God's Witness, Your Verdict](#))

Even if one chooses the NAS (et al) rendering there is still a question among commentators regarding the significance of the verb **coming**. Specifically some see this **present tense** which strictly read would speak of His continually coming or as Christ's coming from the beginning of time. Other commentaries feel that **coming** refers to His incarnation. Why is this distinction significant? Because it will influence how one interprets the phrase **enlightens every man**. If one interprets **coming** as His coming even in the OT since the beginning of the world, then one will likely invoke natural revelation to explain how His **coming** could **enlighten every man** ([See below](#)). On the other hand if one interprets **coming** as His incarnation, then **enlighten every man** is not interpreted as natural revelation ([See below](#)).

**B F Westcott** on **coming into the world** (coming is **present tense** = continually coming) - The same idea of a constant, continuous coming of the Word to men is found in Jn 6:33, 6:50, where "that cometh" (katabainon - stands in marked contrast with "that came" katabas - Jn 6:51, 58). Taken in relation to the context, the words declare that men were not left alone to interpret the manifestations of the Light in the Life around them and in them. The Light from whom that Life flows made Himself known more directly. **From the first He was on His way to the world, advancing towards the Incarnation by preparatory revelations**. He came in type and prophecy and judgment. ([Ibid](#))

Notice how **Westcott's** last remark suggests he favors the reference to coming as referring to His pre-incarnation coming, especially in the special revelation of Scripture ("type and prophecy").

**Pulpit Commentary** on **coming into the world** - it is further declared that this Light was ever coming (**present tense**) into the world. [Bengel](#) and Hengstenberg, as Lange and Baumgarten-Crusius, regard it as in the purely historic sense, declaratory of the great fact of the **Incarnation**. But Ewald, Keim, Westcott, and others decide that it refers to His **continual coming into the world**. Up to the time of the Incarnation, the great theme of the prophets is (ho erchomenos) **the Coming One**. Nor can we conceal the numberless assurances of the Old Covenant that the Lord of men was always "*coming*," and did come, to them. At one time He came in judgment, and at another time in mercy; now by worldwide convulsions, then by the fall of empires; again by the sense of need, of guilt and peril, by the bow of promise which often broke in beauty on the retreating storm cloud, by the mighty working of conscience, by the sense given to men of their Divine relationships and their dearness to God, — by all these experiences **He has ever been coming**, and He cometh still. Ever since the coming in the flesh and the subsequent cessation of that manifestation, He has ever been coming in the grace of the Holy Spirit, in all the mission of the Comforter, in the fall of the theocratic system and city, in the great persecutions and deliverances, the chastisements and reformations, the judgments and revivals of his Church. The eternal, veritable Light which does, by its universal shining, illumine every man, is still coming. The cry, "**He is coming**," was the language of the noblest of heathen philosophies; "**He is coming**," is the burden of the Old Testament; "**He is coming again**," is the great under song of the Church to the end of time: "**Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**"

John has just stated the Baptist **came** (three times - Jn 1:6, 7, 8 all aorist tense) but now describes the True Light of Jesus as **'was'** and then as "**coming**" (present tense). This seems to suggest that from His eternal existence since the beginning of the world the true Light has been coming in some form (type, shadow, prophecy, etc), and this coming reaches its culmination in John 1:14 when the Word became flesh.

**Heading** on what **coming into the world** modifies (the **true Light** or **men**) - The Greek text of this verse permits an uncertainty as to its rendering. Texts, margins and footnotes allow the variation. The uncertainty resides in the words "that cometh into the world",



the verb *erchomenon* being a present participle. The AV refers this verb to "every man", but JND and the NEB refer it to the true Light. (In the former case, the ending -on is masculine accusative; in the latter case, it is neuter nominative since the word for "Light" (*phōs* is neuter.) We prefer the latter rendering, "He was the true Light which, coming into the world, lightens every man", the context being the manifestation of the Light in the world, not men coming through birth. (What the Bible teaches)

**Marvin Vincent on coming into the world** - John's frequent use of the phrase **coming into the world**, with reference to our Lord. See John 3:19; 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37. In John 3:19 and John 12:46, it is used as here, in connection with light. Note especially the latter, where Jesus himself says "I **have come as light into the world**, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness."

The verb **coming** (*coming into the world*) is in the **present tense** which [Westcott](#) says conveys the "idea of a constant, continuous coming of the Word to men... the words (**coming into the world**) declare that men were not left alone to interpret the manifestations of the Light in the Life around them and in them... From the first He was (so to speak) on His way to the world, advancing towards the Incarnation by preparatory revelations. He came in type and prophecy and judgment."

[Marvin Vincent](#) adds that "The **Light was**, existed (**Ed: was** is in the **imperfect tense** which reflects Jesus' continual existence), when the Baptist appeared as a witness. Up to the time of his appearance it (the true Light) was all along **coming**: its permanent being conjoined with a slow, progressive **coming**, a revelation "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1).

Thus **Westcott** and **Vincent** see the verb **coming** as including all the revelations of Christ (natural and special) which were given prior to His final full revelation in His incarnation.

A number of commentators interpret **coming** as a preview or preliminary reference to Jesus' incarnation - Ridderbos, Carson, Borchert; Schnackenburg; Laney. **Kostenberger** agrees writing "'The true light is coming into the world' is a very subtle way of conveying the gospel to Hellenistic ears. It is hard to imagine a more discreet fashion of speaking of an event as momentous as the incarnation of the Word." ([John Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament](#))

**Coming** (2064) (*erchomai*) is a very common word in the Greek and generally refers to the movement of a person from one place to another, and means "to go or to come" (depending on the context). Motion toward the speaker (come) or away from the speaker (go). **Erchomai** may be used with reference to persons, animals, or things (see below) which are coming or going. To move towards, to draw nigh, to approach, to advance nearer, in any manner, and from any distance. Because of the frequency of **erchomai** in the NT and the Septuagint, this discussion is simply an overview of the many ways *erchomai* is used in Scripture. To really understand this verb the reader is encouraged to look at the uses in Scripture.

In the first NT use the **wise men** had "come to worship Him." (Mt 2:2, contrast **Herod** in Mt 2:8) Of the **Spirit coming upon Jesus** (Mt 3:16) A **prayer for Thy kingdom to come** (Mt 6:10)

**Erchomai and the Coming of the Lord** = Jn 4:25. **Second Coming** - Mt. 16:27–28; 23:39; 24:30; 25:31; Acts 1:10-11; 11Cor. 11:26 Ps 96:13, Hos 10:12, Zech 2:10, 9:9. **Vine** says **erchomai** fixes our "attention on the journey to and the arrival at a place, **parousia** fixes it on the stay which follows on the arrival there." In the Revelation, the **present tense** is used repeatedly to describe the **coming of Jesus** and signifies a **futuristic present** (aka, "prophetic present") which describes what is going to take place in the future as though it were already coming. The **Second Coming** of Jesus Christ is clearly one of the main emphases of the Book of the Revelation. Notice the word **behold** in several of the passages below! God desires that this truth grip our heart and guide our footsteps! **Are you ready to meet Him face to face beloved** (cf 1Jn 2:28-note)?

**BEHOLD, HE IS COMING** (**present tense**) WITH THE CLOUDS and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen." (Rev 1:7)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who **is to come** (**present tense**), the Almighty." (Rev 1:8, cp Rev 4:8b)

Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else **I am coming** (**present tense**) to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. (Rev 2:5)

Repent therefore; or else **I am coming** (**present tense**) to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (Rev 2:16)

**I am coming** (**present tense**) quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. (Rev 3:11)

"**Behold**, **I am coming** (**present tense**) like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame." (Rev 16:15).

And **behold**, **I am coming** (**present tense**) quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book." (Rev 22:7)

**Behold, I am coming (present tense)** quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. (Rev 22:12)

The Spirit and the bride say, "**Come.**" And let the one who hears say, "**Come.**" And let the one who is thirsty **come**; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (Rev 22:17)

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, **I am coming (present tense)** quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (Rev 22:20)

Of the **antichrist** = Da 9:26.

Of the coming of the **New Covenant** (Jer 31:31)

**Erchomai** - basic meaning come, go, used of persons and things, events and situations; used both literally and figuratively, with the meaning varying according to the context and the accompanying preposition; (1) of persons; (a) as coming forward publicly come, appear, show up (Mt 11:14); (b) as the future coming of the Messiah going to come, will come (Jn 4:25); (c) figuratively, as the spiritual coming of God (Jn 14:23); of Christ (Jn 14:18), of the Spirit (Jn 15:26); (d) as the coming of persons to God (Jn 14:6); (2) of events happen to someone or something (Phil 1:12); (3) of time in a future sense of time coming, will come (Jn 16:4). Used in prayer - Ps 102:1, 119:41, 77.

**Erchomai** is used in Mt. 16:28 of "the Son of Man **coming** in His kingdom" where the emphasis is, not upon His arrival or personal presence, but upon His coming from heaven to earth.

**Erchomai** is used in Mk 8:34 in the sense of becoming a disciple of Jesus, one who follows His instruction and enters into His fellowship. Likewise, to **come** after Jesus means to become His disciple, follow His teachings, and enter into His fellowship. In a parallel use in Jn 5:40 Jesus says "you are unwilling to **come** to Me, that you may have life."

In John 1:9 God took the initiative to move towards men who hated Him! He sent His Son from a distance in time and space to save sinful mankind! Here in **John 1:9**, **erchomai** is in the **present tense** a tense that normally describes continuous action, but see John's other uses of **erchomai** in the **present tense** referring to Jesus = John 1:15, 27, 3:31, 6:14, 11:27, 12:13.

Figuratively **erchomai** describes **time** coming ("days will come" = Mt. 9:15; Jn 16:4, 32; Acts 2:20; 3:19, Lk 23:29; Jn 4:35; 9:4; fullness of time came = Gal 4:4, Heb. 8:8; "before the evil days come" = Eccl 12:1; "days are coming," = Jer 30:3, 31:27, Amos 4:2, 8:11, 9:13; "a day is coming" = Zech 14:1; coming of the great day... of the Lord = Mal 4:5). **Erchomai** can speak of coming in the **future** (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; John 16:13; Sept.: Is. 44:7; Acts 18:21), Of Judgment of Babylon - "For in one hour your judgment **has come.**" (Rev 18:10).

- of the **kingdom of God** coming or being established (Mt. 6:10; Mk 11:10),
- of **good or evil** coming (Ro 3:8);
- of **circumstances** (Phil. 1:12),
- of **peace** (Mt. 10:13);
- of **evil**, (Jn 18:4),
- of **wrath** (Eph 5:6, 1Th 1:10),
- of **guilt** (Mt. 23:35);
- of **stumbling block** (Mt. 18:7), of a **voice** (Mk 9:7);
- of a **star** (Mt. 2:9);
- of **floods** (Mt. 7:25, 27);
- of **rain** (Lk 12:54; Heb. 6:7);
- of **wind** (Jn 3:8);
- of **utensils**, to be brought (Mk 4:21);
- of a **law** (Ro 7:9), of **faith** (Gal. 3:23).
- To "come to light = come into the open (Mk 4:22).
- "When the perfect comes" (is established = 1 Cor. 13:10).
- All who are to come = be born (Ps 71:18, Ps 22:30).
- To come to pass = "All this has come upon us" (Psalm 44:17)

**Wayne Detzler** on general uses of **erchomai** - The most significant coming in the New Testament is the **coming of Jesus to people**. He **came** to proclaim the kingdom of God (Mk 1:38). He also **came** calling sinners to repentance (Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32). He **came** in God's will as the Messiah (Jn 8:42), and this means salvation for many in a doomed world (Jn 12:47). After Zaccheus was turned around by the Lord, Jesus asserted that He had "**come** to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:10).

Closely connected with Christ's coming to people is **the coming of people to Him**. At His birth the shepherds **came** to worship Him (Lk 2:16). Later the wise men also **came** (Mt. 2:2). Throughout the Gospels people were always **coming** to Jesus, just to be near Him and be helped by Him (Mt 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; Mk 5:33). **Coming** to Jesus marks the beginning of a life of discipleship (Mt. 16:24; Lk 9:23). The greatest decision in human life is seen in the experience of the Prodigal Son who got up and **came** to his father (Lk 15:20). Thus the Lord is a Host, bidding guests to come to His richly laden table (Lk 14:17).

There is a third emphasis in the NT, **the second coming of Christ**. Connected with it are a myriad of meanings. He will **come** in power and glory (Mt. 16:27). The agenda for His **coming** is hidden in the councils of God, and it will occur when no one expects it (Mt 24:42). For the Christian this **coming** is a personal hope, for he shall be snatched away to be with the Lord (Jn 14:2-3)... **Andrew Blackwood**, a professor of preaching, pointed to Christ's return with these words: "He may come any time. He's sure to come sometime. Let's be ready when He does come."... **Corrie ten Boom** loved to talk about the return of Christ. Someone asked her about the generation in which we live, and her answer was wonderful: "We are not a postwar generation but a pre-peace generation. Jesus is coming."... Martin Luther had the same hope: "Christ designed that the day of His coming should be hid from us, that being in suspense, we might be, as it were, upon the watch." (New Testament Words in Today's Language)

In classic Greek **erchomai** is used of persons, birds, ships, spears, wind, storms, stars, time, events, feelings, sounds, danger, commands, etc. One of the uses of **erchomai** in the papyri was to express the coming of the end.

In the **Septuagint** **erchomai** is often used in reference to the coming of the Messiah (Psalm 118:26; Da 7:13).

**Erchomai** is a root word of a number of derivatives - **anerchomai** (424) = to go up; **antiparerchomai** (492) pass by on opposite side; **aperchomai** (565) = to come away or from; **dierchomai** (1330) = to come or go through; **eiserchomai** (1525), to come into; **eleusis** (1660) = advent, coming; **exerchomai** (1831) = to come out; **eperchomai** (1904) = to come or go upon; **katerchomai** (2718) = to come down; **parerchomai** (3928) = to pass by; **periéerchomai** (4022) = to come or go all around; **proerchomai** (4281) = to go before, precede; **proserchomai** (4334) = to come or go near; **sunerchomai** (4905) = to come together.

**Erchomai** - 632x in 595v - **NAS Usage**: arrival(1), arrived(1), brought(1), came(225), come(222), comes(64), coming(87), entered(2), expected(3), fall(2), falls(1), give(1), go(1), going(2), grown(1), lighting(1), next(1), turned(1), went(18).

**MATTHEW** - Matt 2:2, 8f, 11, 23; 3:7, 11, 14, 16; 4:13; 5:17, 24; 6:10; 7:15, 25, 27; 8:7, 9, 14, 28f; 9:1, 10, 13, 15, 18, 23, 28; 10:13, 23, 34f; 11:3, 14, 18f; 12:9, 42, 44; 13:4, 19, 25, 32, 36, 54; 14:12, 25, 28f, 34; 15:25, 29, 39; 16:5, 13, 24, 27f; 17:10ff, 14, 24f; 18:7, 31; 19:1, 14; 20:9f, 28; 21:1, 5, 9, 19, 23, 32, 40; 22:3; 23:35, 39; 24:5, 30, 39, 42ff, 46; 25:10f, 19, 27, 31, 36, 39; 26:36, 40, 43, 45, 47, 64; 27:33, 49, 57, 64; 28:1, 11, 13;

**MARK** - Mark 1:7, 9, 14, 24, 29, 39f, 45; 2:3, 13, 17f, 20; 3:8, 20, 31; 4:4, 15, 21f; 5:1, 14f, 22f, 26f, 33, 35, 38; 6:1, 29, 31, 48, 53; 7:1, 25, 31; 8:10, 22, 38; 9:1, 11ff, 33; 10:1, 14, 30, 45f, 50; 11:9f, 13, 15, 27; 12:9, 14, 18, 42; 13:6, 26, 35f; 14:3, 16f, 32, 37f, 40f, 45, 62, 66; 15:21, 36, 43; 16:1f;

**LUKE** - Luke 1:43, 59; 2:16, 27, 44, 51; 3:3, 12, 16; 4:16, 34, 42; 5:7, 17, 32, 35; 6:18, 47; 7:3, 7f, 19f, 33f; 8:12, 17, 35, 41, 47, 49, 51; 9:23, 26; 10:1, 32f; 11:2, 25, 31; 12:36ff, 43, 45, 49, 54; 13:6f, 14, 35; 14:1, 9f, 17, 20, 26f, 31; 15:6, 17, 20, 25, 30; 16:21, 28; 17:1, 20, 22, 27; 18:3, 5, 8, 16, 30; 19:5, 10, 13, 18, 20, 23, 38; 20:16; 21:6, 8, 27; 22:7, 18, 45; 23:26, 29, 33, 42; 24:1, 23;

**JOHN** - John 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 27, 29ff, 39, 46f; 3:2, 8, 19ff, 26, 31; 4:5, 7, 16, 21, 23, 25, 27, 30, 35, 40, 45f, 54; 5:7, 24f, 28, 40, 43; 6:5, 14f, 17, 23f, 35, 37, 44f, 65; 7:27f, 30f, 34, 36f, 41f, 45, 50; 8:2, 14, 20ff, 42; 9:4, 7, 39; 10:8, 10, 12, 41; 11:17, 19f, 27, 29f, 32, 34, 38, 45, 48, 56; 12:1, 9, 12f, 15, 22f, 27f, 46f; 13:1, 6, 33; 14:3, 6, 18, 23, 28, 30; 15:22, 26; 16:2, 4, 7f, 13, 21, 25, 28, 32; 17:1, 11, 13; 18:3f, 37; 19:3, 32f, 38f; 20:1ff, 6, 8, 18f, 24, 26; 21:3, 8, 13, 22f;

**ACTS** - Acts 1:11; 2:20; 3:20; 4:23; 5:15; 7:11; 8:27, 36, 40; 9:17, 21; 10:29; 11:5, 12, 20; 12:10, 12; 13:13, 25, 44, 51; 14:24; 16:7, 37, 39; 17:1, 13, 15; 18:1f; 19:4, 6, 18, 27; 20:2, 6, 14f; 21:1, 8, 11, 22; 22:11, 13; 25:23; 27:8; 28:13ff, 23;

**PAULINE EPISTLES** - Ro 1:10, 13; 3:8; 7:9; 9:9; 15:22f, 29, 32; 1Cor 2:1; 4:5, 18f, 21; 11:26, 34; 13:10; 14:6; 15:35; 16:2, 5, 10-12; 2Cor 1:15f, 23; 2:1, 3, 12; 7:5; 9:4; 11:4, 9; 12:1, 14, 20f; 13:1f; Gal 1:21; 2:11f; 3:19, 23, 25; 4:4; Eph 2:17; 5:6; Phil 1:12, 27; 2:24; Col 3:6; 4:10; 1Th 1:10; 2:18; 3:6; 5:2; 2Th 1:10; 2:3; 1 Tim 1:15; 2:4; 3:14; 4:13; 2 Tim 3:7; 4:9, 13, 21; Titus 3:12;

**HEBREWS** - Heb 6:7; 8:8; 10:37; 11:8; 13:23;

2 Pet 3:3; 1 John 2:18; 4:2f; 5:6; 2 John 1:7, 10; 3 John 1:3, 10; Jude 1:14;

**REVELATION** - Rev 1:4, 7f; 2:5, 16; 3:10f; 4:8; 5:7; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 17; 7:13f; 8:3; 9:12; 11:14, 18; 14:7, 15; 16:15; 17:1, 10; 18:10; Rev 19:7; 21:9; 22:7, 12, 17, 20

Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time **came**, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law

**Spurgeon** comments on the first coming of Christ - "Christ is the great central fact in the world's history. To Him everything looks forward or backward. All the lines of history converge upon Him. All the great purposes of God culminate in Him. The greatest and most momentous fact which the history of the world records is the fact of His birth."

Over 800 uses of **erchomai** in the **Septuagint** -

Gen 10:19, 30; 11:31; 12:5; 13:3, 10, 18; 14:5, 7; 16:8; 18:21f; 19:1, 9; 22:3, 9; 23:2; 24:30, 41f, 63; 25:18, 29; 26:27; 27:30, 33, 35; 29:6, 9; 30:38; 31:24; 32:6, 8, 11; 33:1, 14, 18; 34:5, 7, 20; 35:6, 16, 27; 37:10, 14, 19, 23, 25, 35; 39:16; 41:14, 29, 35, 50, 54, 57; 42:5f, 10, 12, 15, 29; 43:21, 25; 44:12; 45:25; 46:1; 47:1, 5, 15, 18; 48:1f, 5, 7; 49:6, 10; 50:18;

Exod 2:8, 15; 3:1, 13, 16; 5:20; 8:25; 10:26; 15:23, 27; 16:1, 35; 17:8; 18:16; 19:1f, 7; 22:9; 35:10; Lev 13:16; 25:22, 25; 27:32; Num 11:26; 13:22f, 26f; 20:1, 6; 21:1, 23, 27; 22:7, 9, 14, 16, 20, 37, 39; 25:6; 31:14, 21; 33:9; Deut 1:19f, 24, 31; 9:7; 11:5; 13:2; 14:29; 17:3, 9; 26:3; 28:15, 45; 29:7, 22; 30:1; 33:16; Josh 2:22; 3:1; 8:11, 19; 9:4, 6, 17; 11:7, 21; 16:7; 17:12; 18:4; 22:10; Judg 2:6; 3:27; 4:20; 5:19, 23; 6:4f, 11, 18; 7:13; 8:4; 9:26, 31, 37, 46, 52; 11:7, 12, 16, 18, 33f; 13:6, 8f, 17; 14:5; 15:14; 17:8f; 18:2, 7f, 10, 13, 20, 27; 19:10f, 16f, 26; 20:3f, 10, 26, 34; 21:2, 8, 22; Ruth 1:2; 2:4, 7, 12; 3:4, 7, 14; 1 Sam 2:13ff, 27, 31; 3:10; 4:3, 5, 12f; 7:1; 9:5, 15f; 10:8f, 13, 22; 11:4f, 9; 12:12; 14:5, 20; 15:5; 16:4, 11; 17:34, 43, 45; 19:16, 22f; 20:1, 9, 24, 37; 21:1, 10; 22:1, 5; 23:10, 27; 24:3; 25:9, 12, 26, 33, 40; 26:1, 10; 27:9; 28:4, 8; 29:4, 8; 30:3, 9, 17, 26; 31:4, 7f; 2 Sam 1:2; 2:4, 23, 29; 3:20, 24, 35; 4:4; 5:3, 13, 20; 7:14; 11:10; 12:4; 13:5f, 24, 30, 36; 14:3, 15, 29, 31f; 15:2, 4, 18, 28, 32; 16:5, 14, 16; 17:20, 27; 18:27; 19:10f, 15, 20; 20:12, 14; 23:13, 19, 23; 24:6f, 13, 18, 21; 1 Kgs 1:22, 42; 2:28, 30; 8:18, 31; 9:15, 28; 10:1f, 10, 12f; 11:18, 43; 12:1, 24; 13:10f, 14; 18:7; 19:3f; 20:43; 21:13; 22:15, 37; 2 Kgs 1:9, 13; 2:2f, 15; 3:20; 4:1, 7, 25, 27; 5:6, 8f, 15, 22, 24; 6:4, 14, 23, 32; 7:5f; 8:1, 3, 7, 9; 9:18f, 30; 10:2, 7f, 21; 13:20; 14:13; 15:14, 29; 16:6; 18:17, 32; 19:3, 5, 23, 28, 33; 20:17; 24:10; 25:1f, 8, 23, 25; 1 Chr 2:24, 55; 4:39, 41; 5:9; 7:22; 10:4, 7f; 11:1, 3, 18, 21, 25; 12:1, 16, 19, 22f, 38; 13:9; 14:9; 15:29; 16:33; 17:16; 18:5; 19:2f, 5, 7, 9, 15, 17; 20:1; 21:4, 11, 21; 2 Chr 1:13; 5:4; 6:22, 32; 8:3, 18; 9:1, 6, 21; 10:1, 3, 5, 12; 11:1, 16; 12:3ff; 13:13; 14:9, 11; 16:7; 18:14; 19:10; 20:1f, 4, 12, 24f; 21:12, 19; 22:7; 23:2; 24:11, 23; 25:7, 10, 14, 18; 28:9, 12, 20; 30:1, 5, 11f, 25, 27; 31:8; 32:1, 4, 21; 34:9; 35:22; 36:5; Ezra 2:2, 68; 3:8; 4:12; 5:3, 16; 7:8f; 8:15, 18, 31f, 35; 9:13; 10:8, 14; Neh 1:2; 2:7, 9, 11, 19; 4:3, 8, 11f; 5:17; 6:10, 17; 9:33; 13:6f, 21f; Esth 1:12; 4:2; 5:4, 8; 8:12; 10:3; Job 1:6, 14f; 2:1f; 3:4, 7, 9, 25f; 5:21, 26; 6:8; 9:32; 18:9, 11; 19:12; 23:3; 27:13; 29:13; 31:32; 33:28; 38:11, 16, 22; 42:11, 17; Ps 22:30; 35:8; 36:11; 44:17; 48:4; 51:1; 52:1; 54:1; 55:5, 15; 69:2; 71:18; 79:1; 80:2; 96:13; 102:1; 105:19, 31, 34, 40; 118:26; 119:41, 77; 126:6; Prov 1:11, 26f; 2:10; 6:15; 7:18; 9:5; 14:12f, 15; 18:3; 23:35; Eccl 1:4; 2:16; 6:4; 9:14; 11:8; 12:1; Song 2:10, 13f; 4:8, 16; 6:13; 7:11; Isa 1:12; 5:19, 26; 7:19; 9:8; 13:3, 5, 9, 22; 14:31; 21:1f, 9; 23:1, 10; 27:6, 11; 28:15; 30:27; 32:10; 36:17; 37:5, 29, 34; 38:1; 39:3, 6; 40:10; 41:5, 25; 44:7; 47:13; 48:5; 49:12, 18; 50:2; 66:7, 18; Jer 4:16; 6:22; 7:10, 32; 9:17, 25; 10:22; 12:9, 12; 13:20; 14:3; 16:14; 17:6, 8, 15; 19:6, 14; 22:23; 23:5, 7; 25:32; 26:2; 27:3; 28:9; 30:3; 31:27, 31, 38; 32:7f; 36:6; 37:4, 16, 19; 38:25, 27; 40:4, 6, 8, 10, 12f; 41:1, 5; 46:13, 20f; 47:4; 48:12, 16, 21; 49:2, 9; 50:26, 41; 51:52, 56, 61; 52:4f, 12; Lam 1:4; 5:4; Ezek 1:4; 2:2; 3:24; 9:2; 14:1, 4, 7; 16:33; 17:12; 19:9; 20:1, 3; 21:7, 27; 22:3; 23:17, 40; 24:24; 33:3, 6, 21f, 31, 33; 36:8; 37:9; 38:8, 13, 18; 39:17; 43:2; 47:8; Dan 1:1; 2:2, 24; 3:2; 4:8, 34, 36; 6:19; 7:13, 22; 8:5f, 17; 9:13, 23, 26; 10:12f, 20; 11:2, 10; Hos 10:10, 12; Joel 2:31; Amos 4:2; 6:3; 7:1; 8:11; 9:13; Jonah 1:8; 2:7; Mic 1:9; Hab 2:3; Zech 1:21; 2:10; 9:9; 14:1, 16, 18; Mal 3:1; 4:1, 5-6;

Psalm 96:13 Before the LORD, for He is **coming (present tense)**, For He is **coming (present tense)** to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, days are **coming (present tense)**," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

Ezekiel 43:2 and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was **coming** (imperfect) from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.

Zechariah 2:10 "Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am **coming** and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is **coming** to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zech 14:1 Behold, a day is **coming** for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.

Mal 3:1 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is **coming (present tense)**," says the LORD of hosts.

Mal 4:1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is **coming (present tense)** will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch."

Mal 4:5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the **coming** of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

Mal 4:6 "And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I **come** and smite the land with a curse."

## INTO THE WORLD

**Into the world** - Some interpret **the world** in this context to refer to the physical universe ([Kostenberger](#)) or to the world in rebellion against God (Constable). In a sense, both of these interpretations are true, so John as is his practice might intend a double meaning.

**Kosmos** "can mean "physical universe" (Jn 1:9, 10) or "a large number of people" (Jn 12:19). Most characteristically, however, the term refers to sinful humanity (e.g., Jn 3:16)." ([Kostenberger](#))

**Constable** on the meaning of **world** in this context - John usually used the word '**world**' (Gr. kosmos) in a negative sense in this Gospel (cf. John 1:10; John 7:7; John 14:17; John 14:22; John 14:27; John 14:30; John 15:18-19; John 16:8; John 16:20; John 16:33; John 17:6; John 17:9; John 17:14). It does not refer to this planet as a planet but to the inhabited earth fallen in sin and in rebellion against God. It is the world of humanity darkened by sin.

**World** ([2889](#))(**kosmos**) refers to an ordered system or a system where order prevails. John uses kosmos 78x compare to 8x in Matthew, 3x in Mark and 3x in Luke. The majority of John's uses are in a negative sense (the kosmos as opposed to God = Jn 1:10, 7:7; 14:17, 22, 27, 30; 15:18-19; 16:8, 20, 33; 17:6, 9, 14). In other words when John uses kosmos "it does not refer to this planet as a planet but to the inhabited earth fallen in sin and in rebellion against God. It is a world darkened by sin." (Constable)

**Bochert** on **world** - Although the Greek term literally refers to the results of "ordering" or "adorning" and was applied to the ordered universe or the world in general, for John the basic sense of "world" is to be understood as the realm where human beings live. Sometimes the emphasis is more on the realm as in v. 9, and sometimes it is more on the people in the realm as in v. 10c and in 3:16. But in this Gospel "world" does not refer to the earth apart from people. (New American Commentary)

## ENLIGHTENS EVERY MAN

**Enlightens every man** is a difficult verse that has produced a variety of interpretations.

**Steven Cole** has an excellent summary of how the phrase **enlightens every man** has been interpreted...

(1) Some argue that this refers to the light of **general** (natural) **revelation** that God gives through creation (Ro. 1:20). Included in this may be the light of conscience that bears witness of God (Calvin's view; Ro 2:14-16).

(2) The Quakers say that this refers to an "**inner light**" that God gives to all people.

(3) Some (Augustine) say that "**every man**" only refers to those who have been born again.

(4) Others say that it means that Jesus would "give the light of truth to all whom his ministry would affect, whether in greater or lesser degree" (Merrill Tenney, Expositor's Bible Commentary; also Colin Kruse).

(5) Wesleyans argue that this verse teaches that God has given all people "prevenient grace," which gives them the ability to choose or reject salvation. But that view contradicts the many verses that declare fallen man's inability to choose God (Luke 10:22; John 8:43; Ro. 3:10-18; 8:7-8; 9:16; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4; see Thomas Schreiner, Still Sovereign [Baker], ed. by Thomas Schreiner & Bruce Ware, pp. 229-246).

(6) The best view is that John 1:9 refers to the exposure that light brings when it shines on something. The Greek verb (**photizo**) means to shed light upon or to make visible. This isn't referring to inner illumination, but to the objective revelation or light that came into the world through the incarnation (**Ed**: But what about natural revelation and even special revelation of Yeshua prior to His incarnation? I address this question below)

([Carson](#), p. 124; Schreiner, p. 240). **Carson** explains (ibid.), - *It shines on every man, and divides the race: those who hate the light respond as the world does (Jn 1:10): they flee lest their deeds should be exposed by this light (Jn 3:19-21). But some receive this revelation (Jn 1:12-13), and thereby testify that their deeds have been done through God (Jn 3:21). In John's Gospel it is repeatedly the case that the light shines on all, and forces a distinction (e.g. Jn 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:39-41).*" John's point here is that the witness that comes from the Light (Jesus) demands a response. When the Light exposes the corruption and sin that's in everyone's heart, some will react like cockroaches when the light is flipped on: they run for cover to hide their evil deeds. But others welcome the light, knowing that it's for their healing and good. John goes on to show these opposite responses in Jn 1:10-13. ([John 1:6-13 God's Witness. Your Verdict](#))

## COMMENTARIES NOT FAVORING NATURAL REVELATION

See [Steven Cole's interpretation above](#).

I like **John Piper's** analysis of enlightens every man (he seems to favor explanation #6 above): the enlightenment of every man is probably not universal reason or intellect or the common grace of knowledge because (1) the next verse shows people unknowing and blind to the light; (2) light in this gospel comes as judgment into the world and causes people either to approach or reject; (3) the meaning of photizo 1 Corinthians 4:5 and 2 Timothy 1:10 is "**shed light on so as to bring out the true quality of:**" This is probably the meaning here. ([How to Become a Child of God - Desiring God](#))

**Edwin Blum** - This does not mean universal salvation or general revelation or even inner illumination (ED: LIKE QUAKERS). Instead, it means that Christ as the Light shines (phōtizei) on each person either in salvation or in illuminating him with regard to his sin and coming judgment (Jn 3:18–21; 9:39–41; cf. Jn 16:8–11). (See [Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Lange on enlightens every man** - Christ gives sufficient light to every man to leave him without excuse, but not sufficient to save (Arrowsmith, Ryle). ([John 1 Lange Commentary](#))

**Chuck Swindoll** explains it this way - "Now that the Source of light has come to earth and has illumined the minds of humanity, no one can legitimately claim ignorance. **All who do not believe are without excuse.** (Ed: cf Paul's logic in Ro 1:20-note, Ro 2:1-note) Before His arrest, Jesus told His disciples: "*If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, "They hated Me without a cause."* (John 15:22–25) Let me illustrate John's point another way. Every modern house connects to an electric grid, which provides all the energy necessary to illumine every dark corner. The people living in these homes, however, can choose to live in the dark. The light is available but it isn't compulsory. Although the Source of light has come to the world and has illumined all minds, many choose to draw the shades and shun the light. Now that Christ has come, belief or unbelief is no longer a crisis of the intellect (if it ever was); it is a crisis of the will. When a darkened mind chooses to remain in darkness, no one is to blame but the individual making that choice." (See [Insights on John](#))

**Robert Gundry on enlightens every man** - John 1:9 says that the Word **enlightens every** human being. But the context deals with the incarnate ministry of Christ as providing light, and John later shows awareness that the disciples need to be sent in order for the saving effects of that light to be felt (John 20:21–23). Furthermore, the gaining of Christ's light links with believing in Christ (John 1:9–13; 3:16–21; 8:12–30). We do better to say that John jumps from the old creation at the beginning (Jn 1:1–3) to the new creation, dating from the incarnation (Jn 1:4–18), than to think that he writes concerning a preincarnate and continuing general ministry of the Word through the light of reason and conscience (ED: OR THRU NATURAL REVELATION OF WHICH HE WAS THE CREATOR). Therefore, John 1:9 means that Jesus the Word as preached in the gospel brings the light of salvation to everyone who hears and believes (ED: BUT THAT SAME LIGHT DIVIDES EVERY MAN, FOR MOST WILL CHOOSE TO REJECT HIS LIGHT). ([Themelios - The Hopelessness of the Unevangelized](#))

**J M Boice on enlightens every man** - The second important teaching in this verse is that today the light of the Lord Jesus Christ shines on *every man*. Here we are helped by realizing that John is writing out of a definite historical situation. John was writing toward the end of the apostolic era, and he had known the conflicts that had come about as the result of preaching the gospel to the Jews. The Jews, like some modern American Christians, thought that because God had blessed them in a certain historical way they were therefore the only ones whom God could be blessing. They looked back to their religious heritage and boasted in it. They considered the light that God had shed abroad to be their property exclusively. John writes that Jesus came to shine upon all men so that Greeks and Romans, as well as Jews, might share in his kingdom. That is glorious, of course. But it also has a somber side. For we ask ourselves, "**What does the light do when it shines, as it does, on every man?**" We must answer, "**It brings the works of darkness to light.**" When Jesus Christ came into the world he was a light such as the world had never seen before, and men hated

him for existing simply because he revealed how dirty and vile their lives were morally. He did that then and he does that today. Hence, if you will allow his light to shine upon you, the first thing you will discover is that you are at heart a child of the darkness. ([Gospel of John, James Montgomery Boice](#))

**Bob Deffinbaugh** - Jesus is the true light that gives light to all mankind. Does this mean that Jesus placed an understanding of Himself in every person? No. It is the idea that Christ came and shined His light upon all people. This forced humanity to make a decision about who He was. This is a key theme in John's Gospel—that Jesus' light forces people to come to grips with their sin. John uses the imagery of light more than twenty times to refer to Jesus. He continues to draw a distinction between the world in darkness and the light of Jesus. (Layman's Bible Commentary)

**Charles Ryrie on enlightens every man** - Not that **every man** is redeemed automatically, for redemption comes through faith in the Savior (Jn 1:12). But this light is available to all men (**ED**: WELL, YES, IF THE LIGHT OF HIS GOSPEL IS TAKEN TO THEM. AT THAT POINT HIS LIGHT ENLIGHTENS EVERY MAN IN SOME DARK JUNGLE TRIBE. SOME MAY RECEIVE AND SOME MAY NOT RECEIVE, BUT IN BOTH CASES HIS LIGHT EXPOSES THE DARKNESS OF THEIR SIN).

**William Hendriksen** feels that **enlightens every man** refers "to the light of... the life of God in Christ—and therefore Christ himself—made manifest to the world by the preaching of the Gospel." (**ED**: AGAIN FOR HIM TO ENLIGHTEN EVERY MAN, THE GOSPEL MUST BE TAKEN TO EVERY MAN) ([New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Gospel According to John](#))

**A T Robertson on enlightens every man** - This true Light **had been on hand all the time in the darkness...** The Quakers (erroneously) appeal to this phrase for their belief that to every man there is given an inner light that is a sufficient guide, the "**Quaker's text**" it is called. But it may only mean that all the real light that men receive comes from Christ, not necessarily that each one receives a special revelation.

**Keener** - God did provide the light for all humanity in Jesus' incarnation [for instance, T. Levi 14:4 says that the law was given to 'enlighten every person'] just as in the Jewish tradition he provided the light of Torah to all nations at Sinai. But just as the nations rejected Torah, so the world rejected God's Word made flesh."

**Thomas Constable** - The Quakers... use this verse to support their doctrine of the "inner light." They believe that God has placed some revelation in the heart of every person. A person can elicit that revelation by meditation. This is not general but special revelation. Their view is very close to the charismatic belief that God gives new revelation today. Non-Charismatics see no basis in Scripture for this view. We believe that while God now illuminates the revelation that He has previously given He does not give new revelation now.

**Blaise Pascal** said "There is enough light for those who only desire to see the light, and enough darkness for those who only desire the contrary."

## COMMENTARIES FAVORING NATURAL REVELATION

The **Westminster Confession of Faith** begins by saying that 'the lights of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God as to leave men inexcusable'. (Barclay)

**Westcott** explains **enlightens every man** - Describes the universal extent of its action. The words must be taken simply as they stand. No man is wholly destitute of the illumination of "**the Light**." In **nature**, and **life**, and **conscience** it makes itself felt in various degrees to all. **The Word** is the spiritual Sun (**Ed**: so to speak): Jn 8:12 (Jn 11:9). ([Ibid](#))

**John Wesley on enlightens every man** - By what is vulgarly termed natural conscience, pointing out at least the general lines of good and evil.

Job alludes to natural revelation asking "Is there any number to His troops? **And upon whom does His light not rise?**" (Job 25:3)

**J M McGarvey** says that "All men are enlightened in some degree and enlightened in Christ; some by nature, some by conscience, and some by Bible revelation."

**Leon Morris** - His giving light "**to every man**" is not closely defined. There is a sense in which the Word gives light only to those who believe, for those who do not believe in him are yet in darkness (Jn 3:19–20). But, as James tells us, "Every good and perfect gift is from above" (Jas. 1:17). There is a general illumination of the whole race, and it is the common teaching of the New Testament writers that God has revealed something of Himself to all people (Rom. 1:20), sufficient at least for them to be blameworthy when they take the wrong way instead of the right way. John attributes this general illumination to the activity of the Word. ([The Gospel of John The New International Commentary on the New Testament](#)) The **Holman Apologetics Commentary** disputes **Morris** -

"John does not speak here of internal illumination in the sense of general revelation (*contra* Morris 1995, 84), but of external illumination in the sense of objective revelation requiring a response (Brown 1966, 9). The rest of the Gospel illustrates clearly that not all did in fact receive the light, though it was available to all through Jesus' presence and teaching. In the present verse, John is emphasizing the universal scope of Jesus' coming and the potential spiritual enlightenment available to all who believe, an enlightenment available not only to Jews but to all people (cf. 1:12-13; 3:16; 10:16; 12:32; cf. 1:10; 3:19-21).

**Spurgeon** - The light of Christ shone many times amid the darkness that enshrouded the world before His coming to live here in the flesh, yet comparatively few recognized that light, and rejoiced in it. Christ's light shines more brightly now, but the dark, benighted soul of man perceives not the brightness of our spiritual Lord until the Holy Spirit works the mighty miracle of regeneration, and so gives sight to those who have been blind.

**John MacArthur** alludes to natural revelation in explaining that **enlightens every man** "could mean that the Word incarnate is none other than the fullest revelation of God Who has **already revealed Himself** in every human soul, a truth Paul expressed to the Romans (Ro 1:18-21; cf. Eph. 4:18) The phrase (**enlightens every man**) could also mean that Jesus is God's self-disclosure in the most glorious way for every man who has seen Him or heard about Him or read His story. Some would narrow the idea to restrict **every man** to only those who receive Him. The first interpretation seems best in the context, since it refers to those in the world who do not receive Him, as well as those who do. Even those who never become children of God are accountable for the knowledge of God and His light revealed in Christ. Though all men are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-3) and blind, **they are accountable for the knowledge of God revealed in creation and conscience** (Ro 2:14-15). The tragic reality is that sinners reject the "Light of the world" (John 8:12) "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (John 3:19-20) People refuse to come to the light of Jesus Christ because they love their sin and do not want it exposed; they are willfully blind. (See [John 1-11 MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

In his study Bible, **MacArthur** writes "Through God's sovereign power, every man has enough light to be responsible. God has planted His knowledge in man through **general revelation** in creation and conscience. The result of general revelation, however, does not produce salvation but either leads to the complete light of Jesus Christ or produces condemnation in those who reject such "light" (see Ro 1:19, 20; 2:12-16). The coming of Jesus Christ was the fulfillment and embodiment of the light that God had placed inside the heart of man. (BORROW [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Jon Courson** - At the end of time, no one will be able to say that he didn't have an opportunity to know that there is a God. The Light has come, and it lights every man who comes into the world. Romans 1:19-22 tells us that creation around us is a testimony to God's reality and that our conscience within us verifies His truth. Psalm 19:1-2 states that the heavens declare the glory of God, and that there is no place on earth where their voice is not heard. Thus, whether a man looks up to the sky, around at creation, or within his own heart, he is left without excuse regarding the existence of his Creator. Every man knows innately, intuitively that there is a God. I firmly believe that if there is someone in the most remote corner of the earth who is hungering and thirsting after a saving knowledge of God, God will do whatever it takes to contact that one. He may choose to speak to him through an angel, a miracle, or through... you. If you're concerned about lost people and God's ability to reach them, don't stay here and discuss the ramifications of predestination. Go tell them Jesus died for them! You may be the very messenger the Lord uses to reach one who is waiting to hear the gospel. (SEE [Jon Courson's Application Commentary](#))

**Earl Radmacher** (et al) on **enlightens every man** - Jesus Christ gives light to every human being by being the Creator. Creation gives light to every one on the earth that there is a Creator in heaven (Ro 1:20-note). The **inclusion** of all people is in contrast to the **exclusivism** of the ancient world. (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary)

**Charles Simeon** addresses how the true Light **enlightens every man** - He was the only true light previous to his incarnation—As being the Creator of all things, it was He who said, "**Let there be light, and there was light.**" (Ge 1:3) As the Former both of angels and men, he gave to each their intellectual and moral powers. Men, the lower order of beings, he endued with reason and **conscience**; distinguishing them by these faculties from the brute creation, which possess only that which we call instinct. When man had fallen, and lost, to a considerable degree, the faculties with which he had been invested, the Lord Jesus, agreeably to the covenant he had entered into with the Father, undertook to restore to man such a measure of light as his necessities required. This he did, (1) By the republication of his law—It was the Son of God (**Ed**: The **Shekinah glory cloud** was the visible representation of the **true Light!**) who led his people out of Egypt through the wilderness: for that people, by their murmurings, we are told, "tempted Christ [1Cor 10:9]." The law, therefore, both moral and ceremonial, we suppose to have been given by Him. At all events, we are sure that they were, each of them in its place, **rays** emanating from Him; "he being the end of both [Ro 10:4.]," the end to which each looked, and the end by which both were fulfilled. The moral (Law) was "a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith [Gal 3:23-24.]" and the ceremonial (Law) shadowed him forth, in all his offices [Col 2:17]. (2) By a long train of prophecies—It was "by the Spirit of Christ" that all the prophets spoke, from the very beginning [1Pe 1:12.]. And thus, with progressive clearness (**Ed**: See [Progressive Revelation](#)), was the mind of God revealed, relative to the restoration of fallen man.



Whatever was made known respecting the Father and His eternal councils, it was all declared by the Lord Jesus Christ [Jn 1:18]. No information on these inscrutable subjects ever proceeded from any other quarter: **all the light that was in the world emanated from Christ alone.**

**H F Beecher** - Light before Christ came - We must not suppose that all light of faith, of hope, of justice, of purity, of truth, first dawned on the world when Christ came. God has been in the world ever since there was one, and whatever there is that is noble and good proceeded from the inspiration of the Divine mind working upon the human soul, on all nations, in every age, and under the ministrations of the truth as it is in Jesus. **He that brought life and immortality to light was neither supine nor slumbering, but was working everywhere before His appearance, and whatever light of truth there has been at any time has come from Him.** When, however, He came in bodily form, He came to interpret what only life and conduct can interpret.

**Matthew Henry** explains **enlightens every man** this way - (1.) By his creating power he enlightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the comfort it gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, are from Christ. (2.) By the publication of His Gospel to all nations He does in effect enlighten every man. John Baptist was a light, but he enlightened only Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about Jordan, like a candle that enlightens one room; but Christ is the true Light, for He is a light to enlighten the Gentiles. His everlasting Gospel is to be preached to every nation and language (Rev 14:6). Like the sun which enlightens every man that will open his eyes, and receive its light (Ps 19:6), to which the preaching of the Gospel is compared. See Ro 10:18. Divine revelation is not now to be confined, as it had been, to one people, but to be diffused to all people (Mt 5:15). (3.) By the operation of his Spirit and grace He enlightens all those that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by Him perish in darkness. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is said to be in the face of Jesus Christ (2Cor 4:6), and is compared with that light which was at the beginning commanded to shine out of darkness, and which enlightens every man.

I like **Matthew Henry's** summary statement - "Whatever light any man has, he is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural."

**Henry Morris** on **enlightens every man** - Even though some people live and die without ever hearing of Jesus, the witness imprinted by Him on His creation is such conclusive evidence that there is a Creator Who is omnipotent, omniscient, holy and loving, that those who reject or ignore it are "without excuse." See Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-6; etc. He has also placed the light of conscience in each person (Romans 2:14-15), but that too is rejected in most instances... In one way or another, all men could, and should, have been aware of the power of God in creation (Romans 1:20) and the grace of God in salvation (Acts 14:17), so that they are "without excuse" if they fail to seek Him. He is "the true Light, which coming into the world and enlightens every man" (John 1:9), but "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

**F B Meyer** on **enlightens every man** - The Word was the Light of unfallen man in Paradise.--In the glades of Eden two trees were planted; the one the tree of life, the other of the knowledge of good and evil. It is impossible not to see in these a lively representation of Him who is Life and Light, and who, from the first, must have been the organ and channel of Divine communication to mankind... The Word was Light in the World amid the long dark ages which preceded the Incarnation... There has never been an age in which the Divine Light has not shone over our world. Not Gospel light, not the light of revelation, not the light as we have it; but still, Light. And whatever light existed was due to the presence and working of the Lord Jesus. He shone in the good He did; giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and in the food and gladness with which He filled men's hearts, so that He left not Himself without witness (Acts 14:17). He shone in the clear testimony given since the creation, through the works of nature, to the everlasting power and divinity of God (Ro 1:20). He shone in the intuitions of truth, which we call conscience, and which are his voice in the human breast, and are so evidently referred to here as the true light, lightening every man coming into the world (Ro 2:14-15). He shone also in those great movements towards righteousness, which seem to have swept from time to time over the heathen world (Jonah 3:4-10). Whatever of truth there was in any of these must have been due to Him. It was of the heathen that the Apostle spoke when he said : "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them" (Ro 1:19) ... Finally, the Light became incarnate.--Too bright to be beheld, the Light of God curtailed Himself in human flesh, as the face of Moses beneath his veil, or the Shekinah beneath the folds of the tabernacle. Such is the direct force of the word translated *dwelt* in John 1:14. It might be better rendered *tabernacled*. But of this more afterwards. And it is not possible to do more than take one brief glance at that bright world which awaits us, when, in the ages of eternity, our blessed Lord will be still the Everlasting Light. For it is written that the heavenly city will not need sun nor moon to shine in it, because "its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev 21:23). And so, from the first creation of man till the new creation; from the garden of innocence to the city of matured and tested holiness; from the origin of the race in its lonely and single representative to the untold myriads of his progeny who shall stand in the unsullied purity of robes washed white--always and everywhere, the Word of God is the Light of men, the true light, that is the archetypal light, of which all other lights are types and illustrations. (John 1:9 The Word as Light - F B Meyer)

**John Phillips** on **every man** - **Every** person. **All** without distinction. **All** have some light. Those who have received no written revelation have the **light** of *creation* and *conscience*. God gave the Jews the added **light** of covenant and commandment. Now God

has given the world the **light** of Christ. No one escapes one or another of the sources of light God has made available. The Holy Spirit sees to that (**Ed**: Although His work in salvation in the OT is not clearly stated, there is little doubt that He was present and active in the salvation of OT saints!). God holds people responsible for the light they have. In lands that have known the full blaze of the light of Christ, people are without excuse (**Ed**: But frankly they are also without excuse in the deepest, darkest jungle for they have rejected the clear manifestation of God in [Natural Revelation](#), cf Ro 1:20, see also [general revelation and special revelation](#)). (BORROW [Exploring the Gospels. John](#)) (Bolding and italics added)

#### Related Resource -

- [Can a person be saved through general or natural revelation?](#)

**Bruce Barton** (et al) on **enlightens every man** - The word **everyone** (*every man*) here could be nationalistically inclusive, referring to both Jews and Gentiles, or it could refer to all individuals. Every person has life from God, thus they have some light; creation reveals God's power and divinity (John 1:3; Acts 14:17; Ro 1:19-20; 2:14-16); and our conscience also bears witness to God's existence. (Life Application New Testament Commentary)

One thing is absolutely certain and that is that "Spiritual blindness can be cured only by the Great Physician."

**Enlightens** (Illumine) (5461)(**photizo** from **phos** = light <> from **phao** = to shine) means to give light or to cause light to shine upon some object, in the sense of illuminating the object. Figuratively, it means to cause something to be fully known by revealing clearly and in some detail. It means to shed light upon or to illuminate. **Photizo** is in the **present tense** describing continuing illumination. This is John's only use of **photizo** in the Gospel.

**Photizo** - 11x in 11v - Luke 11:36; John 1:9; 1Cor 4:5; Eph 1:18; 3:9; 2Ti 1:10; Heb 6:4; 10:32; Rev 18:1; 21:23; 22:5

Paul speaking of Jesus' incarnation says that our holy calling which was granted to us in Christ before time began has "now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and **brought** life and immortality **to light** (**aorist tense**) through the gospel." (2Ti 1:10)

**Vine** - Primarily light is a luminous emanation, probably of force, from certain bodies, which enables the eye to discern form and color. Light requires an organ adapted for its reception (Mt 6:22). Where the eye is absent, or where it has become impaired from any cause, light is useless. Man, naturally, is incapable of receiving spiritual light inasmuch as he lacks the capacity for spiritual things, 1Co 2:14. Hence believers are called 'sons of light,' Luke 16:8, not merely because they have received a revelation from God, but because in the New Birth they have received the spiritual capacity for it.

**Marvin Vincent** quotes a line from Tennyson's "In Memoriam"...

Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

**Every** (3956)(**pas**) means each, each part of a totality, all in the sense of each part. Vine says pas "radically means "all." Used without the article it means "every," every kind or variety... Used with the article, it means the whole of one object. In the plural it signifies "the totality of the persons or things referred to." Used without a noun it virtually becomes a pronoun, meaning "everyone" or "anyone." In the plural with a noun it means "all." One form of the neuter plural (panta) signifies "wholly, together, in all ways, in all things," Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 9:25 . The neuter plural without the article signifies "all things severally," e.g., John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10; preceded by the article it denotes "all things," as constituting a whole, e.g., Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9."

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#### APPLICATION of John 1:9 (from **Charles Simeon**)

##### 1. What light you have received from the Lord Jesus Christ?—

I ask not what proficiency you have attained in worldly knowledge; for that, however excellent, can never save the soul. But I ask, "Has God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined in your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ [2Cor 4:6.]?"— his is saving knowledge: this alone can save you [Jn 17:3.]. And this can be obtained from none but the Lord Jesus Christ, whose office it is to "open the blind eyes [Isa 35:5-6. Mt 11:5.]," and to "make you wise unto salvation by faith in him." To every one amongst you, then, I say, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light [Eph 5:14.]"

## 2. How far you are reflecting around you the light you have received?—

This is done by all the planets, moving in their orbits: and this must be done by all who profess to receive their light from Christ. All must "**be as stars in his hands** [Rev 1:16.]:" all must "reflect his virtues ["proclaim the excellencies" =1Pe 2:9. manifest as letters of Christ = 2Cor 3:3.]:" and, though it must of necessity be, that "one star should differ from another star in glory," yet "must all shine as lights in a dark world [Php 2:15-16.];" and, in all who are truly and savingly enlightened, "their light will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day [Pr 4:18.]. Let it be seen then, my brethren, by your life and conversation, "Whose you are, and Whom you serve." Let Christ be your pattern in all things: endeavor to "walk in the light, as He is in the light [1Jn 1:7.]:" so shall you be found "children of the light and of the day [1Th 5:4-5.]" and "Christ shall be glorified in you," both in this world and in the world to come [2Th 1:12]. ([Christ the Only True Light - John 1:9](#))

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**Use of John 1:9 as a PROOF-TEXT for PREVENIENT GRACE** - DeWaay quotes Millard Erickson "Many Arminians, recognizing human inability as taught in Scripture, introduce the concept of **prevenient grace**, which is believed to have a universal effect nullifying the noetic results of sin [how thinking is affected], thus making belief possible. The problem is that there is no clear and adequate basis in Scripture for this concept of universal enablement. The theory, appealing though it is in many ways, simply is not taught explicitly in the Bible." ([Introducing Christian Doctrine - Millard J. Erickson](#))

This does not mean proponents of the concept do not look for **proof texts**. The most common one proposed is: "**There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man**" (John 1:9) Those who teach prevenient grace often prefer the King James translation: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (Jn 1:9KJV) **As some interpret this, Christ gives light to everyone at their birth.** The Greek could be translated as Christ coming into the world or every man coming into the world. But in the context of John 1, it is Christ Who is coming into the world in the Incarnation that is central. (Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John) Likewise, the context of John is not teaching that Christ enlightens every person at their birth. John 3:19 says this: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil." Since Jesus is the light that comes into the world, John 1:9 should be translated and interpreted accordingly. And, if Jesus actually enlightened every person at their birth, how is it that they love darkness? A much better interpretation is that Jesus, in His Incarnation, brought God's light into the dark world. The world is aware of this light through the fact that God displayed His saving purposes publicly. But in its sinfulness, the world preferred darkness. John 1:9 does not teach prevenient grace.

**Thomas Schreiner** also disagrees with the interpretation of John 1:9 that claims it teaches prevenient grace: "*The light that enlightens every person does not entail bestowment of grace, nor does it refer to the inward illumination of the heart by the Spirit of God. Rather, the light exposes and reveals the moral and spiritual state of one's heart. ... John 1:9 is not, therefore, suggesting that through Christ's coming each person is given the ability to choose salvation.*" (The Grace of God The Bondage of the Will)

**Schreiner** provides a good summary of various ways the passage has been interpreted and also discusses other passages sometimes used to support prevenient grace. His conclusion is that the concept of prevenient grace cannot be justified by Biblical exegesis. Schreiner is surprised at how little exegetical effort to justify it has been put forth by people who claim to believe this doctrine. ([Bob DeWaay - Critical Issues Commentary- Recovering Reformation Theology](#))

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**Max Lucado** on John 1:8-9 - Max Lucado, in his book [It's Not About Me- Rescue From the Life We Thought Would Make Us Happy](#) points out something true about the moon that should be true of all believers--it reflects the light of something greater. He says: "What does the moon do? She generates no light. Contrary to the lyrics of the song, this harvest moon cannot shine on. Apart from the sun, the moon is nothing more than a pitch-black, pockmarked rock. But properly positioned, the moon beams. Let her do what she was made to do, and a clod of dirt becomes a source of inspiration, yea, verily, romance. The moon reflects the greater light." (6) "Such a shift comes so stubbornly, however. We've been demanding our way and stamping our feet since infancy. Aren't we all born with a default drive set on selfishness? I want a spouse who makes me happy and coworkers who always ask my opinion. I want weather that suits me and traffic that helps me and a government that serves me. It is all about me." (7) Just as John the Baptist lived to testify to Christ (the light), so to should we.

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**Henry Morris** - A perennial question has to do with the possibility of salvation for such people, and Peter's testimony to Cornelius seems to suggest a possible answer. Almost three thousand years ago the prophet Hanani said that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). No one can ever be saved simply by working righteousness, for, as Solomon said: "There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46). Nevertheless, God so loved the world that He sent His Son! He would "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Consequently, God honors those who come to fear the true God of creation and sincerely try to "work

righteousness" in accord with the witness of God's law in their own conscience (Romans 2:15) and any other true light they may have received (note John 1:9). Although this in itself was not sufficient to attain salvation, in either the case of Cornelius or that of others in similar situations, nevertheless God in grace sent Peter to Cornelius to give him full understanding of the saving work of Christ, and Cornelius responded with true faith. Although it is not possible to be dogmatic, it may be that God will respond in similar fashion to others who respond to the light that God has provided for all men in nature (John 1:9; Romans 1:20), as well as conscience.

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**Jesus our Light** - A visitor went one cold day last spring to see a poor young girl, kept at home by a lame hip. The room was on the north side of a bleak house. It was not a pleasant prospect without, nor was there much that was pleasant or cheerful within. Poor girl I what a cheerless life she has of it, he thought, as he saw how she was situated; and he immediately said to himself, what a pity it was her room was on the north side of the house. "You never have any sun," he said; "not a ray comes in at these windows. That I call a misfortune. Sunshine is everything; I love the sun." "Oh," she answered, with the sweetest smile, "my sun pours in at every window, and even through the cracks." The visitor looked surprised. "The **Sun of Righteousness**," she said, softly--"Jesus. He shines in here and makes everything bright to me." Who could doubt her? She looked perfectly happy. Yes! Jesus shining in at the window can make any spot beautiful and any home happy.

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**Devotional from Dan Wilt - Enter Light** - Today, you will enter life again, and the Light of Christ will lead you to the doorway. John 1:9 is a shining thread in the rich, colorful tapestry that is the gospel. In this passage, we are told that at the fullness of time, the Light that will illuminate every soul was already coming into the world. The capacity of light to strike up against darkness and reveal its hidden features is a normal part of our daily lives. For we who live in a world of electricity, light bulbs, and artificial daylight, some of what it means for Christ to be the Light of our world loses its meaning. In the days of candlelight and oil lamps, the shadows ran stark and harsh when light poured into a room. The sunrise was more welcome; overcast skies more saddening. As you enter into today, light greets you, fills you, and welcomes you to live in the full, vivid presence of God. Prayer: Light of the world, I enter through the doorway of Your presence into the God-aware life that awaits me today. Illuminate every hidden space in my heart so I can live in Your freedom. (A Well Worn Path)

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**Herbert Lockyer** - He Is Light - "The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin." The sorrow is that men love such darkness, rather than light, because their deeds are evil (John 1:5; 3:19). But to those in total spiritual darkness, as natural men are, Christ offers Himself as the Light of the World (John 1:9; 9:5). And all receiving Him cease to walk in darkness, seeing they have the Light of life. Children of darkness become children of light, and as lights in the world, seek to bring others out of darkness into the **Kingdom of God's** dear son (Colossians 1:13).

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### **Iain Paisley - The Light Which Will Never Go Out**

"He promised to give a light to him and to his sons forever" 2Chronicles 21:7

"That is the true light." John 1:9

Man-lit lamps and lights all go out. They go out because of age, wear, difficulties, opposition, inadequacies and lack of supply. Not so with the true light. It is an everlasting light. It always shone and always will shine.

#### **The Promised Light = "He promised"**

The Light which will never go out is the promised light. Amid the darkness of the chaotic earth God said "Light be" and the Light was. To the earth in greater darkness than the chaotic earth, an earth plunged into the darkest of all possible nights by man's sin, God promised the Light. See its first glimmering in Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

And in the fullness of time that Light came. Yes, and for every day with its many darknesses we have the sure promise of that light which shineth more and more unto a perfect day.

The Light depends not on our performance but on God's promise. Solomon and his sons were fitful. God, to His promise, was faithful.

#### **The Proffered Light = "to give a light"**

The light is a proffered light. It is offered graciously, unconditionally and abundantly.

It is a burning and a shining light for all. It cannot be rented or purchased. It is freely offered. Let us bear our souls to its life giving rays.

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:6).

### **The Permanent Light - "forever"**

Christ the Light has been shining forever and will shine forever.

Christ's light is permanent. It is eternal. It is unchangeable. It is immutable. It will still shine when darkness has perished from the world of the saints and when night is forgotten in endless day. In this blessed Light may we see light. (A Text A Day Keeps the Devil Away)

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**TRUE LIGHT** - During World War II, some of America's cities ordered citywide blackouts because of the bomb threat. Windows were covered with black shades, cars drove without headlights, and men were not to smoke a cigarette outside—it was said a lighted match could be seen from the air miles away. One family was instructed to extinguish the fire in their fireplace because of the glow from the chimney. The block warden warned, "One small light could change everything." In the darkness of that long-ago night in Bethlehem, Jesus became that one small light. He changed everything!

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**DEVOTIONAL** - An artist was painting a winter scene. Snow covered the ground and blanketed the pine boughs. Night was falling, and the landscape was enveloped in semi-darkness. A log cabin was barely visible in the shadows. The whole scene was one of gloom. Then the artist, using some of the yellow tints, with a few skillful strokes of his brush put into one of the cabin windows the cheerful glow of a lamp. And that lone light, its golden rays reflecting on the snow, completely transformed the impression given by the painting. In contrast to the cold darkness of the surrounding forest, that light in the window created a warm feeling of love and security. What happened on that canvas is a striking portrayal of one of the most dramatic events of all history. When the Christ-child was born in Bethlehem's stable, a Light was placed in the window of this sin-darkened world. He is truly a Light in the darkness! Yes, He is "the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world" (John 1:9). —R. W DeHaan

### **CHRIST WAS BORN HERE BELOW THAT WE MIGHT BE BORN FROM ABOVE.**

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**A Great Light** - I was driving through the mountains of western Maryland on a cold December night. As I topped a ridge near Rocky Gap State Park, a brilliant sea of lights caught my attention. What in the world is that? I wondered as the exit road flashed past. It so aroused my curiosity that 5 miles down the interstate I turned around and drove back to see what it was—a local community's celebration in lights during the Christmas season. At noon, I wouldn't have noticed anything. But at night, the dazzling display couldn't be ignored. Strange, isn't it, that we complain about the moral and spiritual darkness of our world, yet it is the perfect setting for the radiance of the Lord Jesus Christ. At Christmas, we often read these prophetic words: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined" (Isaiah 9:2). Jesus said of Himself: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and to His disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14). In a dark world, people don't see a great light without wondering why it's there and what it means. We get to tell them.

O Holy One of glorious birth  
Who lives within our heart,  
May we to all men everywhere  
Your wondrous love impart. —Brandt

To lead others out of the darkness,  
let them see your light.  
(Ed: And let them *hear* the Gospel from your lips!)