

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

1st Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 4

Jesus and Nicodemus

Jesus and Nicodemus

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective This lesson will use the story of Jesus and Nicodemus to show what it means to be born again and why we need to be born again.

Key Verses

John 3:1-21—Main Teaching Passage

Numbers 21:4-9

John 7:45-52

John 19:39

Memory Verse - John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Hebrews 4:15.

Ask the students if any of them have lost teeth. Have any of them lost multiple teeth? Ask how many have been to the zoo. Have any been multiple times? Then ask if anyone in the class has been born more than once.

Some things in life can happen many times, but others only happen once. Today, Jesus tells us something surprising. Jesus says that we actually can be born again. Today we will find out what that means.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

One night, Jesus was approached by a Pharisee named Nicodemus (remind the students that Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders). While many of the other Pharisees did not like Jesus, Nicodemus was fascinated by Him. He went to Jesus at night and told Him that only a teacher from God's kingdom could be doing what Jesus was doing. Jesus responded by telling Nicodemus that only those who are born again can see God's kingdom. Nicodemus was confused, thinking that he needed to crawl back into his mother's womb, but Jesus explained that this is a spiritual rebirth. Jesus came down from heaven to tell us about the kingdom of God and show us how to get there. We are supposed to respond with belief and trust in Him, and thus are born again.

To illustrate what this meant, Jesus used an Old Testament story. In Numbers 21:4-9, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, snakes came and bit the people, causing many to die. God commanded the Israelites to construct a bronze serpent on a pole. Whenever the Israelites were bitten, they were told to look at this serpent, and they would survive. The same way, Jesus came to earth as the cure for our disease, sin. Whoever turns to Jesus in belief does not have to face the punishment of their sin, death, but will receive eternal life. Jesus ends by saying that He entered this world like light into darkness. Some people chose light and came to Him, but others loved darkness and rejected Him. Later in John, we find out how Nicodemus responded.

LOOK

Some of Jesus' teachings were very straightforward. Everyone understood what Jesus meant when He said to love your enemies (though not everyone obeyed or understood why). However, often Jesus' teachings were difficult. Today is one such example.

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, Nicodemus was naturally confused, as any of us would have been. Surely birth is something that can only take place once, right? However, the birth Jesus was talking about was not physical birth, but spiritual. Being born again means turning to Jesus in faith and trusting Him and Him alone to save you. When someone is born again, they recognize Jesus as the only cure for their problem, sin, which leads to death.

Jesus' Old Testament illustration helps us to understand what this new birth looks like. The poison snakes were causing death to spread all throughout the Israelite camp. The only chance the people had of a cure

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

was to look at the bronze serpent and be healed. It was just that simple, but in order to do that, the Israelites had to realize that they could not save themselves. They needed the bronze serpent. They also had to have faith in the bronze serpent (which was really faith in God). It may have been hard to believe that this method could heal them, so the Israelites needed to trust God's promise. To be born again, we need to realize that we have a problem (sin) and can do nothing to heal ourselves. We need to believe that Christ can heal and forgive us and trust Him to do that. When we exercise that kind of faith, we are born again, saved from our sins, and receive everlasting life.

So what happened to Nicodemus? The passage ends without saying what he thought of this teaching, but this is not the last we hear from him. In John 7:45-52, we discover that as the Pharisees were arguing about Jesus, Nicodemus urged the others that Jesus deserved a fair trial. In John 19:39 at Jesus' burial, we find out that Nicodemus anointed Jesus' body with an incredible amount of myrrh and aloes. It appears that Nicodemus allowed these words Jesus spoke to him to penetrate his heart. While there is no way to know for sure, it seems like Nicodemus was born again.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize John 3:16.

Offer the students a chance to be born again. Explain the Gospel and review the lesson to show the students what it means to be born again.

Pray: Thank Jesus for coming into the world so that we could be born again. Pray that every student and their family would be born again.

Parent Question: What does it mean to be born again?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on John 3:1-21 by David Guzik

THE NEW BIRTH

"If we were asked to read to a dying man who did not know the gospel, we should probably select this chapter as the most suitable one for such an occasion; and what is good for dying men is good for us all, for that is what we are; and how soon we may be actually at the gates of death, none of us can tell." (Spurgeon)

A. Nicodemus and the new birth.

1. ([John 3:1-3](#)) Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

a. **Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:** Nicodemus was one of those impressed by Jesus' signs ([John 2:23](#)), and a member of the ruling Sanhedrin. He was religious (**of the Pharisees**), educated (**Nicodemus** is a Greek name), influential (**a ruler**), and earnest enough to come **by night**. Nicodemus came to Jesus as a representative of *all men* ([John 2:23-25](#)), and in a sense he represented what is highest and best in men.

b. **This man came to Jesus by night:** Perhaps Nicodemus came **by night** because he was timid, or perhaps he wanted an uninterrupted interview with Jesus.

c. **We know that You are a teacher come from God:** It is difficult to know if Nicodemus spoke of himself, of the Sanhedrin, or of popular opinion. "It is possible, however, that *oidamen, we know*, signifies no more than, *it is known, it is generally acknowledged and allowed*, that thou art a teacher come from God." (Clarke)

d. **No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him:** We understand the sense in which Nicodemus meant this, but his statement was not entirely true. The Bible tells us that deceivers and false prophets can sometimes perform remarkable signs ([2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) and [Revelation 13:13-14](#)).

e. **Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:** Jesus' reply to Nicodemus shattered the Jewish assumption that their racial identity — their old birth — assured them a place in God's Kingdom. Jesus made it plain that a man's first birth does not assure him of the **kingdom**; only being **born again** gives this assurance.

i. It was taught widely among the Jews at that time that since they descended from Abraham, they were automatically assured of heaven. In fact, some Rabbis taught that Abraham stood watch at the gate of hell, just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally wandered in there.

ii. Most Jews of that time looked for the Messiah to bring in a *new world*, in which Israel and the Jewish people would be pre-eminent. But Jesus came to bring *new life*, in which *He* would be pre-eminent.

iii. Nicodemus addressed Jesus as a **rabbi** and **teacher**; Jesus responded to him as the one who announced new life. "Our Lord replies, It is not *learning*, but *life* that is wanted for in the Messiah's Kingdom; and *life* must begin by *birth*." (Alford)

f. **Born again:** The ancient Greek word translated **again** (*anōthen*) can be also translated "from above." This is the sense in which John used this word in [John 3:31](#) and in [John 19:11](#) and [19:23](#). Either way, the meaning is essentially the same. To be born *from above* is to be born again.

i. “The word rendered ‘anew’ might equally be translated by ‘from above’. Both senses are true, and in the Johannine manner it is likely that we should understand both here.” (Morris)

ii. Essentially, this means to *have new life*. A theological term for this is *regeneration*. It isn’t simply a moral or religious reform, but the bringing of new life. “To belong to the heavenly kingdom, one must be born into it.” (Tenney)

iii. Jesus clearly said that without this — that **unless one is born again** — he cannot enter or be part of (**see**) the **kingdom of God**. Moral or religious reform isn’t enough. One must be **born again**.

iv. This isn’t something that we can do to ourselves. If Jesus had said, “Unless you are washed, you cannot see the kingdom of God” then we might think, “I can wash myself.” A man might wash himself; but he could never *birth* himself.

v. “All over the New Testament this idea of *rebirth*, *re-creation* occurs.” (Barclay)

1 Peter speaks of being born anew by God’s great mercy ([1 Peter 1:3](#)).

1 Peter speaks of being born anew from an imperishable seed ([1 Peter 1:22-23](#)).

James speaks of God bringing us forth by the word of truth ([James 1:18](#)).

Titus speaks to us of the washing of regeneration ([Titus 3:5](#)).

Romans speaks of dying with Jesus and rising anew ([Romans 6:1-11](#)).

1 Corinthians speaks of new believers as new-born babes ([1 Corinthians 3:1-2](#)).

2 Corinthians speaks of us being a new creation in Jesus ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

Galatians says that in Jesus we are a new creation ([Galatians 6:15](#)).

Ephesians says the new man is created after God in righteousness ([Ephesians 4:22-24](#)).

Hebrews says that at the beginning of our Christian life we are like children ([Hebrews 5:12-14](#)).

2. ([John 3:4](#)) Nicodemus answers: How can this be?

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

a. **How can a man be born when he is old?** Nicodemus’ reply may not have been out of ignorance, but from thinking that Jesus meant a moral reformation. His question may be “How can you teach an old dog new tricks?” One way or another, Nicodemus clearly did not understand Jesus or the truth about the new birth.

i. “Had our Lord said: ‘Every Gentile must be born again,’ he would have understood.” (Dods)

b. **How can a man be born when he is old?** In His description of new birth, Jesus recalled a familiar theme from Old Testament promises of the New Covenant ([Deuteronomy 30:1-6](#), [Jeremiah 23:1-8](#), [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#), [Jeremiah 32:37-41](#), [Ezekiel 11:16-20](#), [Ezekiel 36:16-28](#), [Ezekiel 37:11-14](#), [37:21-28](#)). These passages essentially made three promises in the New Covenant:

- The gathering of Israel.
- The cleansing and spiritual transformation of God’s people.
- The reign of the Messiah over Israel and the whole world.

i. In Jesus’ day, the common teaching among the Jewish people was that the first two aspects of the New Covenant had been fulfilled. They saw Israel gathered — at least in part — after the Babylonian exile. They saw strong spiritual movements like the Pharisees, which they believed fulfilled the promise of spiritual transformation. All they waited for was the reign of the Messiah.

ii. That's why Jesus' statement about the new birth was so strange to Nicodemus. He *thought* that the Jewish people already had it; they certainly weren't looking for it. They only looked for a triumphant Messiah.

3. ([John 3:5-8](#)) Jesus explains the new birth.

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

a. **Most assuredly... you must be born again:** Jesus was emphatic in saying that man does not need *reformation*, but a radical conversion by the Spirit of God. We must be **born of water and the Spirit**.

i. "In [verse 3](#) Jesus has spoken of 'seeing' the kingdom of God, whereas here He speaks of 'entering' it. There is probably no great difference of meaning." (Morris)

ii. **Most assuredly:** "The words add solemnity to and underline the truth of what follows. The modern expressions, 'In truth I tell you', 'Believe me when I say', 'I do assure you', convey the meaning." (Tasker)

iii. **Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God:** If a nation passed a law that said no one could live there except those who were born in that nation, and someone wanted to live there who was not born there.

- It wouldn't matter if he took a name that was common in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if he spoke the language.
- It wouldn't matter if he observed some of the customs.
- It wouldn't matter if he dressed like those in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if he practiced some of the religious traditions of that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if his parents were born in that nation.
- It wouldn't matter if his children were born there.
- It wouldn't matter if he had many friends in that nation.
- All that would matter was if he was actually **born** there.

iv. "A man may cast away many vices, forsake many lusts in which he indulged, and conquer evil habits, but no man in the world can make himself to be born of God; though he should struggle never so much, he could never accomplish what is beyond his power. And, mark you, if he could make himself to be born again, still he would not enter heaven, because there is another point in the condition which he would have violated -- 'unless a man be born of the *Spirit*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **You must be born of water:** We know from [John 3:10](#) that whatever being **born of water** was, it should have been familiar to Nicodemus from the Old Testament.

i. Some have thought **born of water** means to be baptized. Water here may represent baptism, but there is no real Old Testament foundation for this.

ii. Some have thought that **born of water** refers to our physical birth, since we come forth from a sack of water. This approach is more attractive, but doesn't it simply state the obvious? However, it does make a good parallel with the idea of *that which is born of the flesh* in [John 3:6](#).

iii. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be born again by the Word of God. In other passages of Scripture, water represents the Word, as we are *washed by the water of the word* ([Ephesians 5:26](#)).

iv. Some have thought that **born of water** means to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the *living water* of [John 7:38-39](#).

v. Some have thought that **born of water** means to receive the water of cleansing prophesied in [Ezekiel 36:25-28](#) as part of the New Covenant. This is the approach that has the most weight (though it is a tough call), because of its firm connections to Old Testament prophecy — which Jesus says Nicodemus should have known to understand these things.

c. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh:** Without the new birth of the Spirit, the flesh taints all works of righteousness. Yet, everything that a Spirit-led man does can be pleasing to God.

i. “In this **flesh** is included *every part* of that which is born after the ordinary method of generation: even the spirit of man, which, receptive as it is of the Spirit of God, is yet in the natural birth *dead*, sunk in trespasses and sins.” (Alford)

d. **Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again”:** Again, Nicodemus *did* marvel at this statement, because he — like most all Jews of his time — believed they *already had* the inner transformation promised in the New Covenant. Jesus wants him to take hold of the fact that *he does not have it*, and **must be born again**.

i. We should not forget *whom* Jesus said this to. Nicodemus was a religious leader, a Pharisee, an educated man, and an earnest man. By all outward appearance, he was *already* transformed unto God — yet he was not.

ii. “These solemn words for ever exclude the possibility of salvation by human merit. Man’s nature is so gripped by sin that an activity of the very Spirit of God is a necessity of he is to be associated with God’s kingdom.” (Morris)

e. **The wind blows where it wishes:** Jesus’ idea to Nicodemus was “You don’t understand everything about the wind, but you see its effects. That is just how it is with the birth of the Spirit.” Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that he didn’t have to understand everything about the new birth before he experienced it.

i. Since we can’t control the Spirit, “It should lead us to be very tender and jealous in our conduct towards the Holy Ghost, so that we do not grieve him and cause him to depart from us.” (Spurgeon)

4. ([John 3:9-13](#)) Jesus responds to the question “how can these things be?”

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”

a. **How can these things be?** Nicodemus was confused. He was so set in his thinking that the new birth has already happened to him and all of faithful Israel, that he had a hard time thinking differently. Jesus had to keep explaining.

b. **Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?** Jesus chided Nicodemus for not being aware of the need and the promise of the new birth, because these were plainly laid out in the Old Testament. Nicodemus knew these passages well, but believed that they had been fulfilled in regard to the new birth. He should have known better.

i. **Are you the teacher of Israel:** “Nicodemus’s exact position in the theological circles of Israel is not defined, but the language suggests that he was a very important person. Jesus implies that as the outstanding teacher of the nation, Nicodemus should have been familiar with the teaching of the new birth.” (Tenney)

c. **If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** A simple look at **earthly things** — like the illustrations Jesus used, and even a look at his own life — should have made the point plain to Nicodemus. If he could not see that he needed this spiritual transfor-

mation, what more could Jesus tell him?

d. **No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven:** Jesus “makes it clear that He can speak authoritatively about things in heaven, though no one else can.” (Morris)

i. “In short, we have here the basis in Christ’s own words of the statement in the prologue that the Word was in the beginning with God, and became flesh to be a light to men.” (Dods)

ii. **No one has ascended to heaven:** “This seems a figurative expression for, *No man hath known the mysteries of the kingdom of God*; as in [Deuteronomy 30:12](#); [Psalm 73:17](#); [Proverbs 30:4](#); [Romans 11:34](#). And the expression is founded upon this generally received maxim: That to be perfectly acquainted with the concerns of a place, it is necessary for a person to be on the spot.” (Clarke)

5. ([John 3:14-15](#)) Jesus and the brazen serpent.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

a. **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness:** Jesus made a remarkable statement, explaining that the serpent of [Numbers 21:4-9](#) was a picture of the Messiah and His work.

i. Serpents are often used as pictures of evil in the Bible ([Genesis 3:1-5](#) and [Revelation 12:9](#)). However, Moses’ serpent in [Numbers 21](#) was made of bronze, and bronze is a metal associated with judgment in the Bible, because bronze is with fire, a picture of judgment.

ii. So, a *bronze* serpent does speak of sin, but of sin judged. In the same way Jesus, who knew no sin became sin for us on the cross, and our sin was judged in Him. A bronze serpent is a picture of sin judged and dealt with.

iii. We would have wanted to diminish our sense of sin, and put the image of a man up on the pole. Our image of man might represent “both good and bad” in man. But a serpent is more apparently sinful, and shows us our true nature and true need of salvation.

iv. In addition, if the serpent lay horizontally on the vertical pole, it is easy to see how this also was a *visual* representation of the cross. However, many traditions show the serpent being wrapped around the pole, and this is the source for the ancient figure of healing and medicine — a serpent, wrapped around a pole.

v. In the [Numbers 21:4-9](#) account, the people were saved not by *doing* anything, but by simply *looking* to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at such a thing would be sufficient to save them, and surely, some perished because they thought it too foolish to do such a thing.

vi. As it says in [Isaiah 45:22](#): *Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.* We might be willing to do a hundred things to earn our salvation, but God commands us to only trust in Him — to *look to Him*.

b. **Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up:** Even though Jesus bore our sins, He never *became* a sinner. Even His becoming sin for us was a holy, righteous, act of love. Jesus remained the *Holy One* throughout the entire ordeal of the cross.

i. “Nicodemus had failed to grasp the teaching about the new birth when it was presented to him in terms drawn from Ezekiel’s prophecy; now it is presented to him by means of an object-lesson, from a story with which he had been familiar since childhood.” (Bruce)

ii. **Must be lifted up:** “He *must* die because He *would* save, and He *would* save because He *did* love.” (Maclaren)

c. **Lifted up:** This is a term later used to describe both Jesus’ crucifixion ([John 12:32](#)) and His ascension ([Acts 2:33](#)). Both meanings are in view, His suffering *and* exaltation. Jesus was **lifted up** in both ways.

i. The Son of Man is to be lifted up. Yes, but not on a throne in Herod’s palace. He was to be conspicuous, but as

the brazen serpent had been conspicuous, hanging on a pole for the healing of the people.” (Dods)

d. **Should not perish but have eternal life:** The idea behind **eternal life** means much more than a *long or never ending* life. **Eternal life** does not mean that this life goes on forever. Instead, **eternal life** also has the idea of a certain *quality* of life, of God’s kind of life. It is the kind of life enjoyed in eternity.

i. “The nature of the belief is implied in the illustration of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. Belief consists of accepting something, not doing something.” (Tenney)

6. ([John 3:16](#)) God’s gift of salvation.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

a. **For God so loved the world:** [John 3:16](#) has long been celebrated as a powerful, succinct, declaration of the gospel. Of the 31,102 verses in the Bible, it may be the most popular single verse used in evangelism.

i. We learn the *object* of God’s love: **For God so loved the world**. God did not wait for the world to turn to Him before He loved the world. He loved and gave His only begotten Son to the world when it was *still* the **world!**

ii. What Jesus told Nicodemus in [John 3:7](#) (*You must be born again*) refuted the popular Jewish idea regarding the way to salvation. Now Jesus refuted the popular Jewish idea regarding the *scope* of salvation: **for God so loved the world**.

iii. The Jews of that day rarely thought that God **loved the world**. Many of them thought that God only loved *Israel*. The universal offer of salvation and life in Jesus was revolutionary.

iv. “The Jew was ready enough to think of God as loving Israel, but no passage appears to be cited in which any Jewish writer maintains that God loved the world. It is a distinctively Christian idea that God’s love is wide enough to embrace all mankind.” (Morris)

v. Morrison suggested that there are three centers of love:

God so loved the world ([John 3:16](#)).

Christ also loved the church ([Ephesians 5:25](#)).

The Son of God, who loved me ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

b. **He gave His only begotten Son:** This describes both the *expression* and the *gift* of God’s love. God’s love didn’t just *feel* for the plight of a fallen world. God *did* something about it, and He **gave** the most precious thing to give: **His only begotten Son**.

i. **He gave his only begotten Son:** “These words seem to carry a reference to the offering of Isaac; and Nicodemus in that case would at once be reminded by them of the love *there required*, the *substitution there made*, and the *prophecy there uttered to Abraham*.” (Alford)

c. **Whoever believes in Him:** This describes the *recipient* of God’s love. God loves the world, but the world does not receive or benefit from that love until it **believes in** Jesus, the gift that the Father gave. **Believes in** means much more than intellectual awareness or agreement. It means to *trust in*, to *rely on*, and to *cling to*.

d. **Should not perish:** This describes the *intention* of God’s love. God’s love *actually saves* man from eternal destruction. God looks at fallen humanity, does not want it to **perish**, and so in His love He extends the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

e. **Everlasting life:** This describes the *duration* of God’s love. The love we receive among people may fade or turn, but God’s love will never change. He will never stop loving His people, even unto the furthest distance of eternity.

i. We may say there are Seven Wonders in [John 3:16](#).

<i>God</i>	The Almighty Authority
<i>So loved the world</i>	The Mightiest Motive
<i>That He gave His only begotten Son</i>	The Greatest Gift
<i>That whoever</i>	The Widest Welcome
<i>Believes in Him</i>	The Easiest Escape
<i>Should not perish</i>	The Divine Deliverance
<i>But have everlasting life</i>	The Priceless Possession

ii. “If there is one sentence more than another which sums up the message of the Fourth Gospel, it is this. The love of God is limitless; it embraces all mankind. No sacrifice was too great to bring its unmeasured intensity home to men and women: the best that God had to give, he gave — his only Son, his well-beloved.” (Bruce)

7. ([John 3:17-21](#)) Sin’s condemnation.

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

a. **God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world:** Jesus revealed the heart of God the Father in sending God the Son; to bring *salvation* — rescue, hope, healing — to the world **through Him**.

i. “Some men will, in fact, be condemned, and that as the result of Christ’s coming into the world ([John 3:19](#)). But the purpose of His coming was not this.” (Morris)

b. **He who does not believe is condemned already:** [John 3:16](#) is the most gracious, wonderful offer conceivable — eternal life for all who believe. Yet the offer has inherent consequences, for any who reject, who refuse to **believe**. Their refusal makes their condemnation certain.

i. A significant issue regarding those who do **not believe** is, “What about those who never had the opportunity to believe because they never heard the good news of Jesus Christ?” This is an important but separate question, addressed best by the Apostle Paul in [Romans 1](#) and [2](#). Here, the focus seems to be on those who *deliberately reject the message*, as those who heard and encountered Jesus in the first century had opportunity to do.

ii. “No explicit mention is made here of those who have never had the opportunity of believing in Christ, those on whom the light in its fullness has never shone. But John’s words probably unfold the principle of their judgment too. As the eternal Word came to men and women before becoming incarnate in Christ, so it is with the light of God. If men and women are judged by their response to the light, they are judged by their response to such light as is available to them.” (Bruce)

c. **This is the condemnation:** Jesus came to bring salvation, but those who reject that salvation condemn themselves. We never need to leave the *reason* for anyone’s **condemnation** at God’s door. The responsibility is theirs alone.

i. “Heaven is too hot to hold unregenerate persons; no such dirty dog ever trampled on that golden pavement, it is an undefiled inheritance.” (Trapp)

d. **Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil:** Jesus explained what keeps peo-

ple from faith and rescue in Him. It is because they are drawn to darkness, and love it more than the light. There is a critical *moral* dimension to unbelief that is often denied or ignored.

i. Those who consciously reject Jesus often present themselves as heroic characters who bravely put away superstition and deal honestly with deep philosophical problems. It is far more often true that there is a *moral* compromise at the root of their rejection.

ii. Many opponents of Christianity have a vested interest in fighting against the truth of Jesus, because they love their sin and don't want to face it, or face a God who will judge their sin.

iii. When we think of the *love of sin* that sends people to hell, we often other think of notorious sin. But the simple demand to be lord of my own life is enough of a sin to deserve condemnation before God.

e. **Everyone practicing evil hates the light:** Some express their hatred of the truth by actively fighting against it, and others express their hatred by ignoring God's truth — by saying to Jesus "You are not worth my time." In contrast, **he who does the truth comes to the light.**

i. **He who does the truth:** "To do the truth' is at any rate to live up to what one knows; to live an honest, conscientious life." (Dods)

ii. "They chose to walk in the darkness, that they might do the works of darkness—they broke the Divine law, refused the mercy offered to them, are arrested by Divine justice, convicted, condemned, and punished. Whence, then, does their damnation proceed? From THEMSELVES." (Clarke)