

# GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

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## ***“God So Loved”*** (Part 2)

John 3:16-21

Open your Bibles to John Chapter 3. We are going to finish the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus at this time. Remember this **“teacher of Israel,”** who was both a religious and political leader, had come by night to meet with the Lord. He was wondering, maybe even hoping, that Jesus was the Messiah he had been looking for. And as we talked about last time, He was and He wasn’t.

Jesus was Messiah, but He was not what Nicodemus and much of the nation of Israel was looking for. They were hoping that this Chosen One would come and release them from the bondage they were in to the Roman Empire. But Jesus came to seek and save the lost from their bondage to sin and death. The Jews wanted an earthly Savior who would restore the kingdom of Israel. Jesus came to save the *kosmos*, the world, from eternal damnation. That is why He said this to Nicodemus (beginning at verse 16):

**<sup>16</sup>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.**

**<sup>17</sup>For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

**<sup>18</sup>“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. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”**

Picture a guy floating downstream on a tube in the heat on a hot summer day. He is having the time of his life, enjoying the ride as the cool water gently splashes on him. You are on the shore and you know that not too far downstream there are intense rapids, followed by a deadly waterfall. This guy is floating blissfully toward certain destruction.

What do you do?

You call out to him. You try to throw him a rope. You do everything short of diving into the water and trying to drag him out. But he rejects you and keeps on floating toward certain death.

## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

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Why won't he listen?

Why won't he grab the life preserver?

Because he loves what he is doing and that causes him to doubt your warning.

Why do people reject God's gracious, free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ?

You would think that they would eagerly *cling* on to Him.

Remember last time we said that the word John used for "**believe**" could be translated as such. Look how much God loves people (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.**

Why would anyone reject such a wonderful offer?

God gave His Beloved Son as a sacrifice so that we do not have to perish. All you have to do is to **believe**, and you will receive everlasting life in Heaven. All you have to do is trust that God loves you so much He is willing to die for you. Simple. Maybe too simple for many people. In our text John shows us why people will not *cling* to Jesus. It is not so much that they don't want everlasting life. They just don't want to give up what they have on earth to get it. People reject Christ because they love their sin, and they hate having it exposed by the Light that Jesus brings. People don't want God to interfere in the "good time" they are having. And they really don't believe the warnings in the Bible that tell them they are under God's judgment now and will face it for eternity when they die.

How many times have you tried to witness to someone and they *cling* to the belief that because they are a good person, they will be okay?

They believe that God will overlook their faults and give them credit for their good deeds on judgment day. After all, they are not as bad as most people. So they don't repent of their sins and **believe** in Jesus Christ to save them from the judgment they deserve. They think it is about them, and not Him. And they are wrong—dead wrong. Look at verse 17:

**For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

The motive for God sending His only Son into the world to save it was love. **God SO loved the world...**

Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it. He did not come in judgment. He came as a Savior—to save you and me. But here is the truth:

## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

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At His Second Coming, He will come in judgment. I believe He is coming soon, first to take His bride home, and then....

The first time He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). But when He returns, it will be as King of kings and Lord of lords. As we said last time, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:11). Listen to this quote from *Got Questions* about the two comings of Jesus:

*The second coming of Jesus Christ is the hope of believers that God is in control of all things, and is faithful to the promises and prophecies in His Word. In His first coming, Jesus Christ came to earth as a baby in a manger in Bethlehem, just as prophesied. Jesus fulfilled many of the prophecies of the Messiah during His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection. However, there are some prophecies regarding the Messiah that Jesus has not yet fulfilled. The second coming of Christ will be the return of Christ to fulfill these remaining prophecies. In His first coming, Jesus was the suffering Servant. In His second coming, Jesus will be the conquering King. In His first coming, Jesus arrived in the most humble of circumstances. In His second coming, Jesus will arrive with the armies of heaven at His side.*

That is why this next verse is so important. Listen carefully as I read verse 18:

**“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.**

Listen again as I read this, **“but he who does not believe is condemned *already*.”**

The word **“already”** is the key. Jesus came the first time in love because God the Father sent Him to save. God is, by nature, a Savior, as is Jesus. And all you have to do to get saved is to **believe** in what Jesus did for you, *what God sent Him to do*.

**Believe**—that is all it takes. If you do, then your sin is placed on Christ’s account and His righteousness is placed on yours. The Bible says that your status in the eyes of God can be defined this way, as quoted by John MacArthur:

*No condemnation, full pardon, rescued from the curse of the Law, cleared from all guilt, declared righteous, granted eternal life, never to be removed.*

This is called grace, and it is poured out alongside God’s mercy and love. If you **believe**, all of this belongs to you; and nothing can take it away.

## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

---

On the other hand, if you don't believe, you have been judged **ALREADY**. If you reject the unique Son of God's provision for you, your destiny is also secure. For those who think that their good outweighs their bad, this is bad news. They have been judged **already**.

Do you know when the verdict was made on your life?

Do you know when the gavel fell?

The moment you took your first breath.

You arrived here on Earth as an unbelieving sinner, not trusting in Jesus for salvation. By the way, so did I, and everyone else in this room and on the planet. Ever since Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden, this has been the case. The Bible says that all **have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God**. There is no one counting to see if your good works outweigh the bad. You have been judged **already**. And that judgment was based on the fact that you had never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. It is true that God knows everything. He is well aware of all the crimes you committed against Him. But that has nothing to do with His verdict against you. The Divine Judge had already ruled—even before you did anything.

And this is a big problem for many people. They think they are in the process of accumulating a record. They are counting on a favorable ruling in the end. Unfortunately for them, there will be no further verdict. The Judge of the Universe has already passed judgment long ago.

What caused this?

You did not **believe** in the name of His “**only Begotten Son**.”

You are going to be sent to Hell, not for something you did. Your eternity is secure because of something you did not do. You did not trust in Jesus.

Every sinner is **already** condemned. And the only way that this verdict can be reversed and the slate cleaned is for you to **believe**. You must accept the sacrifice that Jesus made on your behalf.

Are you tracking with me here?

People do not go to Hell because of some divine decree made by God. They don't perish because there is some deficiency in the provision of the sacrifice Jesus made. It is also not because they sin and break God's Law. We all do that, even believers. What causes people to go to Hell is that they choose not to **believe** in Jesus Christ. He alone has purchased their pardon.

## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

---

God so loved....

Now all you have to do is **believe** and receive. But many, even most (by a long shot), do not. This is why John writes this (verse 19):

**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.**

If you don't believe that the deeds of men are evil, you have your eyes closed. Look at some recent statistics (from Gene Pensiero's commentary):

*In the year 2021 there were more than 40 million abortions in the world (in one year).*

Can you wrap your mind around that number?!

And then they allow people from who knows where to flood across our borders—most of them from socialist countries. You do the math.

How about this one—Chicago is your kind of town, if you are a murderer. Cook County recorded over 1,000 murders in the same year! In fact, murder records were set in 12 U.S. cities in 2021.

Each year some 600,000–800,000 men, women and children are trafficked worldwide into the sex trade or some other form of slavery. Twenty-two countries are currently at war (I think it is 30 now). In July of 2021 the U.S. named seven nations committing genocide or other atrocities. And recently, we all know what is going on with the gender issues and how we are mutilating our children. So it is easy to see why the world needs to be condemned.

You might say, “*Bad things have always happened in the world.*” But it is more than that in our time. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote at the end of chapter 1 in his letter to the Romans (you can turn there if you like), beginning at verse 28:

**<sup>28</sup>And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; <sup>29</sup>being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, <sup>30</sup>backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; <sup>32</sup>who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those**

## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

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**who practice such things are deserving of death, *not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.***

Does this sound familiar?

This was in Paul's time!

How much worse is it now?

Let me tell you. Or better yet, let Jan Markell tell you. This is a quote from an article she wrote called, *The Spirit of the Antichrist Inspires the Glorification of Darkness*. She first writes about all the recent festivals, halftime shows and Hollywood galas that have had Satanic songs and dances performed at them. Then she writes about this:

*The largest Satanic gathering in history will take place April 28-30 in Boston, MA. Attendees are promised a "weekend of blasphemy and remembrance." Years ago, maybe a few fringe weirdos would get together for something like that. But this year's "SatanCon" was completely sold out six weeks in advance. This event reflects the tremendous evil that is rapidly growing all around us. Hundreds, if not thousands, will gather to celebrate darkness and Satan.*

By the way, people love it. Here is what I am getting at:

In verse 32 Paul says that people **"not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."**

Has there ever been a time in history where people were so accepting of evil deeds and the people who engage in them?

Has there ever been a time such as now where good is evil and evil is good?

Not in my lifetime. You all know how close I believe we are to the return of Jesus. Listen to how Paul describes the last days and tell me if it sounds like our time (2 Timothy 3:1-7):

**<sup>1</sup>But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! <sup>6</sup>For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded**

## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

---

**down with sins, led away by various lusts,<sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Sandy Adams quipped in his commentary that our sin has turned us into moles. Sin causes us to love darkness, lest the light expose our rebellion. As the world spirals down toward the end of time, it becomes darker and darker. Never before, in my opinion, has there been such a need for Light. Folks, Jesus is that Light. Remember in chapter 1 of this Gospel, John wrote this (1:4-5):

**<sup>4</sup>In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**

Think about our friend Nicodemus. His legalism and bigotry caused him to not comprehend the light—even though Jesus, the Light, was sitting next to him. Yes, he was a bigot. He believed that only the Jews could be saved. So when Jesus mentioned that God so loved the *kosmos*, Nicodemus shut down. He couldn't see the Light. Or, better yet, he didn't want to see the Light. That is how men are. They love the darkness. So much so that, during the Tribulation, even though they know it is God who is pouring out His wrath on the world, they choose not to repent. Instead, they hide in the caves and rocks and shake their fists at Him. I think this is why:

In the Bible, *light* is used symbolically in two main ways:

First, *light* refers to God's absolute holiness and, by extension, the holiness of His people. Darkness, on the other hand, symbolizes Satan's domain and sin. It is where *those who dwell upon the earth*—that is what the fist shakers are called—like to hang out.

What is darkness?

It is the absence of *light*. That is why the apostle declares this in 1 John 1:5:

**This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is *light* (emphasis added) and in Him is no darkness at all.**

Those who walk with God walk in His *light*. Those who do not walk in darkness and are headed for the outer darkness where, according to Jesus, there is “**weeping and gnashing of teeth.**”

Second, *light* refers to the spiritual illumination, or understanding, we get when we are born again. Darkness, in this case, refers to our natural spiritual blindness before we are saved. Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians about spiritual darkness (2 Corinthians 4:3-6):



## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

---

<sup>3</sup>But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup>whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. <sup>5</sup>For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The “**god of this age,**” Satan, has blinded people so effectively that they will not listen to the Gospel. Thus, we need to pray that the Lord will expose the darkness they are walking in so that the *light* of Jesus Christ will shine on them. The only way they can understand spiritual truth is to be exposed to the Light. That is why I think we should rely on the written Word of God when we witness to people. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. I am not saying that we should pound people over the head with our Bibles. But we do need to point to the truth that God has written in His Word. Then they have to argue with God and not with us.

The darkness hates it when the *light* shines upon it. Look at verse 20:

**For everyone practicing evil hates the *light* and does not come to the *light*, lest his deeds should be exposed.**

I really love what John MacArthur says about this verse in his commentary. He says to stop appealing to sinners psychologically. We do that when we say that Jesus will give them purpose in their life, or that Jesus will make them happy and solve all their problems. That kind of talk produces false converts.

Why?

Because Jesus promised that if we walk with Him in the truth, we would have tribulation in this world. True, He said to be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. But His promise is not to keep us from experiencing trouble. It is that He will be there for us when trouble comes. If we promise these people that if they come to the *Light*, they will never experience darkness, we are not speaking the truth. And when tribulation comes, they will have nothing on which to stand.

So what should we do?

Shine the *light* of Jesus Christ on them as brightly as we can. Tell them, in love, what their sin is doing to them and where it will take them. Always be ready to tell them about the hope we have.



## GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

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What is that hope?

That one day Jesus will take us out of this dark world and we will live forever in His kingdom—the Kingdom of the Sun of God’s love. Look at verse 21:

**But he who does the truth comes to the *light*, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”**

Believers have been born of God, born again, born from above. That dead spirit we talked about at the beginning of chapter 3 has been brought to life. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us, guiding us into all truth. Thus, we can see spiritually, and respond Biblically. Because of this, people can see how God has moved in our lives. Hopefully, when others see this, they are drawn to the *Light* just as we were. Folks, you and I should preach John 3:16 every day. For God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to save us.

Now Jesus has sent us to be His witnesses to a lost and dying world. We are the salt and *light* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As we walk in the *light*, others (hopefully) see not us, but Christ in us. That is the hope of glory that we share.

God desires to do a good work in the lives of the least, the last and the lost. He wants to save them from the clutches of the dark one. He wants to be their “**everlasting light**” (Isaiah 60:20).

May we glorify Him in all we do!

Let’s pray.