

God's Light Sent to Save a World in Darkness

John 3.17-21

Jesus has led Nicodemus to understand that eternal life is through faith in Him (15), and that this is because of God's love for the world (16). There is more Jesus wants him to know. John has recorded it for us: What Jesus did and didn't come to do, and how He impacts the life of every person.

- Jesus came to SAVE, not to CONDEMN. (17)

The proof of God's love is why He sent Jesus to the world.

- BELIEVING makes all the difference. (18)

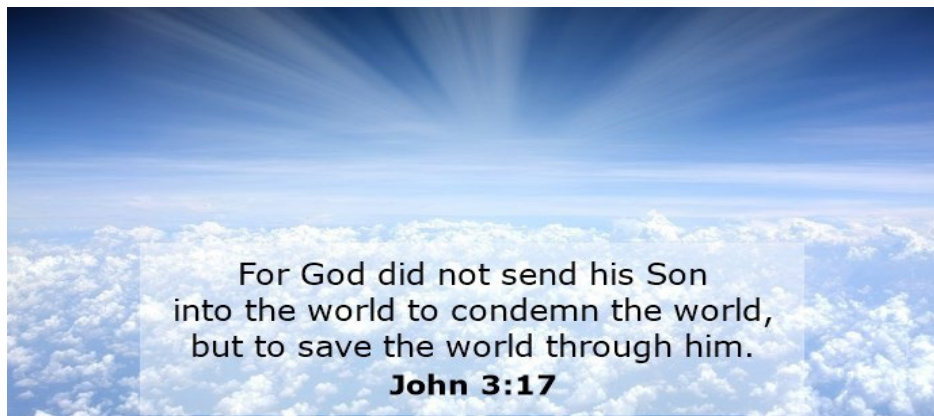
Fast forward: The 'sin question' and the 'Son question'!

- Those who love DARKNESS (and hate the LIGHT) (19-20)

The power of darkness, and how Satan blinds unbelievers.

- Those who come to the LIGHT (works done in God) (21)

Live courageously for God!



1. John 3.1-21 is the first of seven “discourses” of Jesus in John 1-12 (“The Book of Signs” – there are seven ‘signs’ or miracles in these chapters as well). It is driven by three questions from Nicodemus, a Pharisee (verses 2, 4, and 9). Jesus, after bringing Nicodemus to an understanding of the way to eternal life (v15), continues to elaborate on this in verses 16-21. This is why verses 16 and 17 begin with the word “For”; they are explaining God’s plan for saving the world. What is God’s motivation for saving the world in verse 16? What does verse 17 reveal about God’s reason for sending Jesus?
2. It is common for people to think of God as a ‘cosmic policeman’ or a ‘celestial judge,’ just waiting for us to slip up or step out of line, so He can condemn us to eternal hell. What, instead, is the conception of God we get from verses 17-18? Far from being a vindictive deity just waiting to come down on us, what has God done to rescue lost sinners? What is the *only thing* a person needs to do to be saved?
3. In verses 19-20, Jesus is characterized as “Light” coming into the world. This imagery is used throughout John’s Gospel; see 1.4-9; 8.12; 9.5 (with the healing of the man born blind); 12.35-36, 44-50. Notice that Jesus’ describing Himself as the Light is often combined with the idea of judgment, and the importance of believing in Him. People who are spiritually blind and in darkness cannot see, but now that the Light has come into the world, each person chooses whether to believe or not. What does this reveal about God’s desire for each person, and the ‘free will’ He has given to us?
4. John 3.21 is confusing to many: Jesus has declared that eternal life is for all who believe in Him (3.15, 16, 18), but now says a person who “practices the truth comes to the Light.” Some say this means Jesus is adding ‘good deeds’ as a requirement to be saved. Consider this: The discourse with Nicodemus begins with him coming to Jesus at night (a ‘secret believer,’ afraid to be known as a follower of Jesus). Both believers and unbelievers can do evil deeds, and fear exposure. But those who openly follow Jesus “come to the Light,” recognize and confess their sin (see 1 John 1.9), and live obediently to God.