

## John, Part 9: Love, Condemnation, and Judgement

**John 3:14 ESV** “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. **16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. **19** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. **21** But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

- I. A few weeks ago we started a journey through John chapter 3. You’ll recall that in it, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council known as the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus under cover of darkness, to speak with him.
  - A. We can’t be sure exactly what Nicodemus was seeking, because as he begins by attempting to flatter Christ, Jesus stops him, having none of it.
  - B. Instead, Christ quickly redirects their conversation, telling Nicodemus that in order to participate in the Kingdom of God, he must undergo a deeply spiritual transformation that Jesus describes as being “born again”.
    1. Though this truth is a foreign concept to Nicodemus, whom Jesus refers to as THE teacher of Israel, Christ patiently insists that he is presenting heavenly truths that have originated in the Father above.
    2. By verse 14, Christ has brought the conversation full circle, showing that He is always the point in understanding God’s purposes for saving the earth. **John 3:14 ESV** “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.
  - C. While the concept of being born-again, and the fact that Moses’ bronze serpent in the wilderness was a symbol of Christ’s ministry are mind blowing revelations to Nicodemus, Jesus is about to drop another bombshell on him that will revolutionize how he will understand God’s dealings with man.
- II. **John 3:16 ESV** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
  - A. That first verse is without a doubt the most well-known in all of scripture. Many church people can quote it without a problem, having memorized it in childhood. And what would televised football be without the familiar “John 3:16” sign, held in the in the end zone by faithful, sports-loving evangelists during every point-after attempt and field goal try?
    1. But as I’ve said about many other passages, could it be that our familiarity has inadvertently bred contempt towards the powerful truth resonating from this verse?

2. Have we become like Forrest Gump's friend Bubba, saying, "I know everything they is to know 'bout John 3:16."
- B. That kind of familiarity could have also been what Nicodemus felt as he spoke with Jesus that night. Remember he was, in Christ's words, THE teacher of Israel! And his theology (which he naturally would have assumed Jesus shared, being a good Jew) could have been boiled down to a few simple conclusions:
1. Jews good. Gentiles Bad. Jews will be saved; the nations of the world will be overthrown. God loves Israel; but his wrath burns towards all others. Israel will inherit the kingdom; but the pagans, gentiles, and heathen nations will be judged. Israel is God's people, and he is their king; all others are outside of the commonwealth.
  2. He could have even pointed Christ to Psalm 59:5 (among other passages) that seemed to confirm what he had been taught and fully believed... **Psalm 59:5 ESV** You, Lord God of hosts, **are God of Israel**. Rouse yourself to **punish all the nations**; spare **none** of those who treacherously plot evil.
  3. Although there were many Old Testament passages that indicated that the Gentiles nations would one day come streaming to Israel's God, it was understood by the Rabbis that they would come as subjugated to "God's true people", the Jews, having been conquered by God's earthly representative, the Jewish Messiah
    - a) And Nicodemus was just itching for that day when God would raise up this Messiah to give Rome and every other godless, uncircumcised gentile nation their just desserts, at the edge of a sword!
    - b) Perhaps he had come to Jesus to investigate whether he was, in fact, that Messiah, and if so, to humbly sign on to be one of his generals!
- C. But Jesus, knowing full well what Nicodemus wanted, tells of how God's intention was to raise up Christ as the only healing prescription, like the way Moses raised up the Bronze serpent in Numbers 21. But why would God freely give such a remedy to men and women? **"For God so loved the world..."**
1. Nicodemus was hearing something of a game-changer! God didn't love just his people, the Jews, though he indeed loved them and brought his message first to them. And He certainly didn't desire only destruction for other nations!
  2. On the contrary, God so loved **the world** (the entire world, every nation, every tribe, every tongue)! He loved Romans, Assyrians and Cannibalistic tribes in the Amazon basin! He loved black Africans and white Europeans! "Surprise Nicodemus, Red and Yellow, Black and White, they are precious in his sight!"
- D. Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus again used the terminology of being "lifted up", as he did with Nicodemus...
1. **John 12:31 ESV** "Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."
    - a) Nicodemus was waiting for the judgement of the world, and along with it, the exaltation of his people alone. But Jesus says here that the judgment of this world has come with his crucifixion, and yet it is not designed yet to

deal wrath upon gentile nations, but upon the ruler of the of the dark powers behind this world system; the devil.

- b) Jesus says that as the devil and his power is broken, and Jesus is lifted up, he will draw “all people” to himself, “For God so loved the world”...
  2. The Greek word translated “all people” is “Pas”. When it is used collectively like this, it means “some of all types” or a representation of every group.
    - a) We know that not every human being has been or will be saved, the Bible is clear about that.
    - b) But what this word indicates is that no nation will be left out the Kingdom of God! But that every people group on earth will one day will get the Gospel message and that some will respond and follow the true King of the earth!
  3. **Revelation 7:9 ESV** After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, **10** and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”
  4. Through the giving of his Son, and the Son’s being lifted up, some will not perish, and will have eternal life! Thus God has demonstrated his love for the world!
- III. Jesus tells Nicodemus in verse 17 that God’s plan does not include the condemnation of the world, but rather a rescue plan! **John 3:17 ESV** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- A. No, Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save it; and yet, he says that in verse 18, that some are “condemned already”. What can he mean by this?
  - B. Think about the implications of Christ’s word. They are “condemned already”.
    1. Could it be that there are people walking around, right now, in 2017, that that have not died and stood before God, yet are “condemned already”?
    2. Doesn’t the Bible teach that **Hebrews 9:27 ESV** “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and **after that** comes judgment...” How then can living men be “condemned already”?
  - C. Jesus gives us the answer in the word that he uses as his central theme in our text this morning...”believe”. He uses it 5 times. Let’s review those again...
    1. “whoever **believes** in him may have eternal life” (v. 15)
    2. “whoever **believes** in him should not perish but have eternal life” (v.16)
    3. “Whoever **believes** in him is not condemned” (v. 18)
    4. “whoever **does not believe** is condemned already” (v. 18)
    5. “because **he has not believed** in the name of the only Son of God” (v. 18)
  - D. The radical thing that Jesus is saying to Nicodemus is that the rules have changed. Being a circumcised, pedigreed, Law-abiding Jew doesn’t buy you anything anymore, (and in fact it never did!), but only trusting in, clinging to, and relying on Jesus!

1. Paul makes this same point in Romans 4 and Galatians 3, and other places. Stating that faith alone matters; and one's national, political, or religious identity has nothing to do with God's salvation.
  2. **Galatians 3:7 ESV** Know then that it is *those of faith* who are the sons of Abraham.
- IV. Now I ask you, does this message have any application for a West Texas, Bible belt, audience? Yes! In every way! Why? Because believing in Jesus is the only way we can escape condemnation and experience eternal life! To fully appreciate this truth we have to slow down and discover what it actually means to believe.
- A. This is of the utmost importance in 2017, because culturally, anything marginally better than outright atheism qualifies as belief! Don't believe me? Start asking people around you if they believe in the only Son of God and just watch the answers you'll get in response!
    1. They will range from "I go to such and such church" to "I recycle"; from "I try to be a good person" to "I vote Republican (or Democrat)"; from "I know a more of the Bible than you do!" to "I believe that all religions are basically the same".
    2. None of these things have anything to do with the question, "Do you believe in the only Son of God?"!
  - B. To believe in Jesus, or to "have faith" in Jesus, requires you to believe that...
    1. You are completely naked, exposed for all to see and mock, and he's the only one who can cover you...
    2. You are falling from a 1000 foot precipice, rushing toward certain destruction, and he's the only one who can catch you...
    3. You are desperately diseased and sick, wasting your last few minutes in a burning fever, and he's the only one who can heal you...
    4. You are blind, walking in darkness, with no ability to perceive reality, and he's the only one who can give you sight...
    5. You are deaf, unable to receive direction, correction, or encouragement from the truth, and he's the only one who can make you hear...
    6. You are lame and completely immobile, and he's the only one who can carry you where you need to go...
    7. You are undeniably guilty, sentenced to prison and death, and out of appeals, and he's the only one who can pardon you...
    8. You are cold and dead, rotting and stinking, and he's the only one who can raise you to life!
  - C. But what does Gospel belief look like in action? How can you know that biblically, you really believe in Jesus?
    1. Gospel belief always insists on obedience to what God has said in scripture.
      - a) **Luke 6:46 ESV** "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"
      - b) If you are standing in defiance to what God has clearly said in his word, you cannot pretend to be a believer in Jesus.
    2. Gospel belief always requires making Christ our highest treasure.

- a) More than relationships - **Matthew 10:37 ESV** Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
  - b) More than your stuff - **Luke 14:33 ESV** So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.
  - c) More than your reputation - **Philippians 2:3 ESV** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
  - d) More than your plans - **James 4:13 ESV** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— **14** yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. **15** Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." **16** As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.
  - e) If you treasure anything more than Christ, you cannot say that you really believe in Christ.
- D. But for those who have ears to hear, the kind of belief in Jesus we're talking about results in eternal life! In other words, you lose nothing and gain everything! But those who do not believe, or who believe on their own terms are "condemned already", because they have "not believed in the name of the only Son of God".
- V. But is it too dogmatic to say that? Isn't Jesus just a God of peace that woos us and begs us to open the door so that he can have supper with us? Listen to Jesus words again from John 3...
- A. **John 3:19 ESV** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.
1. Jesus says that light has come flooding into the world, and it is impossible to be indifferent to it. That's how the Gospel works. We all must respond to the emergence of light!
    - a) Imagine that you're in a home infested with cockroaches. You come into a dark kitchen. Perhaps you can barely make out some movement on the countertops. Perhaps you feel something crawl across your foot. But what happens when you flip on the lights?
      - (1) All of those nasty vermin scatter for the corners and head for every crack and crevice as fast as they can!
      - (2) Why? Because cockroaches love darkness! It's in their nature! it keeps them from being discovered, and subsequently destroyed! They embrace the darkness, supposing it will spare their lives!
- B. The devil's grand scheme in the Garden of Eden was to turn that which was created in the very image of God into mere cockroaches, scurrying around in the dark, thinking they're happy, afraid of what they'd lose in the light!
1. But through his incarnation, Jesus flipped the light switch, turning on the lights again and forever!

2. **John 8:12 ESV** Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- C. But when his light shone, the people scattered! They thought that their lives were in jeopardy! In the darkness they could feel safe and satisfied.
1. In darkness, they didn't have to think about how they were naked, falling, sick, blind, deaf, lame, guilty, and dead! They could embrace a delusion of knowing what was right for them, and having some sense of control over their lives.
  2. It never occurred to them that the devil had reduced them to slaves and vermin; even though Christ came offering freedom and real life!
- D. Jesus says in John 3, that this is their self-chosen judgement! That though light has come, they have loved and chosen darkness. They don't have to wait until judgement day (although that day is certainly coming!); they stand condemned already and judged, loving darkness, and hating light; and they have proven it by not believing in the name of the only Son of God.
- E. Want to know how serious you are about Jesus? How serious are you about the light? Are there habits, attitudes, grudges or offenses that you are unwilling to let go of? Does it cause you to fear, or become angry or depressed that your deeds would be exposed by the light?
- VI. Can I let you in on a secret? There is nothing to fear or fight in the light! Though you may panic at the thought of exposure, you can rest assured that we serve a God who covers our nakedness!
- A. When Adam and Eve sinned, God shed the blood of an innocent animal to cover their nakedness and the exposure of their guilt. For you, God has shed blood that is infinitely more precious so that you would never have to be exposed again.
- B. Come to the light! Be washed in it's warm rays and feel it's healing, freedom and resurrection! Jesus is the Light! Jesus says...
- C. **John 3:21 ESV** But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.
- D. Are you ready to believe in the Son of God and receive eternal life? I'm simply not talking about “the sweet by and by” off in the distance “someday”, but a beautiful, all-satisfying life that begins right now!
1. Can you believe him with the evidence of belief and sacrifice?
  2. Can you risk bringing all of your deeds into the light so that he can deliver you from the burden of them?
  3. Do you believe that he is your only hope and all you need?