

# John 3:11-21

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Open up your copy of God's Word to John chapter 3. Last week we started John chapter 3 and worked our way through a little bit more of it today.

And then next week we will finish it. Thank you for the music and leading us in that beautiful, directing our hearts toward God. Today we will be in John 3, 11 through 21.

Just by way of reminder, the Gospel of John is one of the clearest portraits of Jesus Christ, one of the best clear visions we can have of Him as the Son of God incarnate who came to dwell among us.

And John focuses not just on the identity of who Jesus is, but he also does it in such a way where he demands a response to it, to either receive or reject the Son of God.

And last week we picked it up with this conversation that he has with Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees. He's in Jerusalem. He has just commenced with the cleaning out of the temple and his righteous anger.

[1:14] And Nicodemus, it says a little earlier, came to Jesus by night, hoping probably to avoid the dangerous implications of other people, particularly of his own order, the Pharisees, seeing him interact with Jesus.

But Nicodemus seems to be actually intrigued. He wants to hear Jesus out, take a closer look at who he is and his claims. And we learn a lot of very serious things that you cannot miss if you want to be saved, if you want to have a relationship with God through Christ.

A lot in this interaction. But the one we looked at last week is how can a fallen, dead sinner enter into God's kingdom? How can the rebels of the king actually be at peace with him and then enter into God's presence?

And we looked at this last week, but the answer simply is you must be born again from above to see the kingdom of God. And Jesus goes at length to explain that to him.

But clearly Nicodemus picks up on some things he's saying, but he still is confused. He doesn't quite know exactly what Jesus is saying. He gives him analogies from this world, talking about birth and how that connects to a spiritual birth that we must have.

[2:38] Then we go on in verse 11 today. Let's pick it up in verse 11. Let's read our text together. This is Jesus going on, but verse 11. And truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen.

But you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe me, how can you believe me if I tell you heavenly things?

No one has ascended into heaven except he who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 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.

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.

[3:53] And this is the judgment, that light has come into the world. And people love darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not

come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

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. Join me in another quick word of prayer.

Father, we just put this text before you and ask that you would work in our hearts and our hearing, that your Holy Spirit would apply the word in the right way to each individual this year.

In Christ's name, amen. So, we see now in this text, sort of a turning away from just the conversation with Nicodemus to our Lord's discourse on the true meaning of what salvation actually is.

And this is the news of the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation. And a lot of you have grown up hearing a lot of this stuff for most of your life, especially from John chapter 3.

[5:06] And so, lest you be tempted to be too familiar, you know, John 3.16, blah, blah, blah. Don't do that. Refuse to do that. And why do we need to hear the gospel daily?

Why do we need to be reminded of the gospel daily? As it has been said, because we forget it almost daily. And our lives reflect that very often.

Like, how many of us could actually sit down with someone who doesn't know and explain the true Christian gospel? How many of you are convinced that you believe the gospel, but your life and what you love and what you chase after doesn't really reflect that belief?

It contradicts it. And how many of you could be thinking that this is sort of just going back over something that you already know? Don't be tempted. The important thing is if you actually have believed the gospel and you attend church Bible studies and meetings and learn from God's word, you might try to be a better person and have an adequate understanding of what the gospel message is.

But for some reason, you begin to think, is this all there is to it? Is there more to being a follower of Jesus? But your life simultaneously is characterized by a lack of joy and a lack of peace that's promised to those who do believe the gospel.

[6:34] A lack of consistent spiritual growth. It seems like the Christian life is reduced to a bunch of do's and don'ts. Trying to be good and trying not to be bad.

And this is a failure to actually understand what the gospel is. This one man said the gospel is not just the ABC of Christianity. It is the A to Z of Christianity.

Paul refers to the gospel in a lot of rich language. Romans 1.9, he calls it the good news of his son. Romans 15.16, the good news of God.

1 Corinthians 9.12, the good news of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4.4, the glorious good news. Ephesians 6.15, the good news of peace.

And then, of course, Revelation 14.6, the everlasting gospel or the everlasting good news. But just a reminder before we start to unpack this, David Pryor wrote this.

[7:34] He says, we never move on from the cross. Only into a more profound understanding of the cross. And if you're growing spiritually, your sin that is making you feel small, a greater understanding of your need for salvation, you get smaller and God's salvation and God gets bigger.

And so, we're going to look at this through three points today, walking through our text. Point number one, it's all just right out of the text.

The Son of Man has come from the Father. The Son of Man has come from the Father. This may be one of the most important ones for us to understand, all that's important, but we have to understand who Jesus is.

And we see this very clearly in verses 11 through 13. We just read it. In verse 11, you see that Jesus hones in on the idea of one's belief is tied to their spiritual ignorance.

Nicodemus is missing the heart of the matter. He fails to understand Jesus' teaching. He's failed to believe in Jesus' witness, what Jesus is saying.

[8:50] And if you look at the verses, verses 11 through 13, the word you, the pronoun you, used four times is actually in the plural.

So, he's not just saying you, Nicodemus, but he's speaking about a characteristic of the nation of Israel in general. Y'all, you do not believe in what I am saying.

And he is supposed to be this great teacher of the nation of Israel. He is the top of the line. He is a Pharisee. And Jesus is saying, look, if you don't understand this, what your own scriptures teach, and I'm using earthly analogies here, if you can't understand this, how will you understand a greater teaching about heavenly things that are pertaining to God's glorious kingdom and that no one can enter into it except through new birth, new spiritual birth?

So, he's laying this out very clearly. But one verse he really looked closely at, he tells Nicodemus something astonishing. All right? He says this in verse 13.

Look at verse 13. No one has ascended into heaven except he who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man. So, no one, absolutely no one has ascended to heaven or descended from heaven in such a way as to come back and talk about what heaven is like other than Jesus.

[10:19] He has come from the Father. Heaven is his true home. There he dwelt eternally with the Father and the Spirit, which is in John 17.

Totally content in the Godhead. Jesus absolutely insisted that no one, no one has ascended to heaven in such a matter as to come back and talk about these things.

He's saying, there isn't anybody, like I'm it. He alone was in heaven prior to his incarnation. And the wisdom writer, something really, a great connection to this, the wisdom writer in Proverbs 30, verses 3 and 4, he says, I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.

He's saying, I don't really understand God. Like, he is so lofty. Then he makes this point, who has ascended to heaven and come down? And in his mind, like, yeah, no one has. Like, no one has actually dwelt with God.

But, Jesus is saying, yes, actually, I have, the Son of God. Therefore, Jesus alone possesses true knowledge and wisdom of God.

[11:31] He makes these exclusive claims all throughout the Gospel of John. Many exclusive claims. Let's just look at a few of them together. He says, no one has ever even seen God.

No one has, except the Son. John 1, 18, which we read about earlier. No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.

There's one. Also, everyone, it says in John 6, 45, 46, everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, Jesus says, comes to me.

Not that anyone has ever seen the Father, except He who is from God. Talking about Himself. He has seen the Father. If you want to honor the Father, Jesus says, whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

That's John 5, 23. If we claim to love the Father, you must love Christ whom the Father sent. John 8, 42, if God were your Father.

[12:42] He's talking to a group of Jews and leaders that don't believe in Him. He's saying, if you love the Father, you would love me. For I came from God and I am here.

I cannot do this on my own accord, but He sent me. And if we want to come into the Father's presence one day, if we want to enter into the realms of eternal glory to be with Him, Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And no one comes to the Father except through me. John 14, 6. He also says in John 14, 9, do you want to see God? Do you want to see God?

He says, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. So if Jesus is the only one who has come from God, then His authority on all things and matters pertaining to God, He holds absolute authority.

And so we have to listen to Him. We have to trust Him if we are to be saved and if we are to know God. It's a very exclusive claim He makes before going on in this passage.

[13:54] So what are we going to do with that reality that He is the true Son of God? There's two options. This is the next two points. But number two is receive the Son, be saved, and have eternal life.

Receive the Son, be saved, and have eternal life. And this goes on from verses 14 to 18. And He gives, Jesus gives this veiled prediction in verse 14.

He refers back to Moses and the children of Israel when they were wandering in the desert. So He's going back to the Scriptures. He's saying, I love this just like Jesus to teach us something from the Scriptures to help make a point in the Scriptures.

And when they are wandering in the wilderness in such a barren land, God graciously feeds them manna from heaven. And instead of being grateful for His provision from them, instead, they are ungrateful and they begin grumbling and complaining against God.

And as an act of judgment and ingratitude, God sends fiery serpents, poisonous snakes, among them, in which many perish. Realizing the error of their way, they cry to Moses and say, hey, like we repent, we repent, like, you know, we beg you to intercede for us to God, for Him to lift His judgment in which Moses does and God does.

[15:21] But a brief verse or two out of Numbers 21, this is Jesus referring back to what happened. Numbers 21, verse 8, the Lord said to Moses, make a fiery serpent, set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.

So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it up on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he could look at the bronze serpent and live. So they had to, by faith, trust in what God had said, gaze upon this fiery serpent, this bronze serpent, by faith, believing that God would heal them if they looked upon the serpent on the pole and then they would live physically.

So Jesus is saying, those who look upon Christ, the connection word here is lifted up, as Moses lifted this bronze serpent up. Those who look upon Christ, who would be lifted up on the cross, for the sins of many would have eternal life.

So Jesus builds out from this to explain the true meaning of salvation. And that gives us to verse 16, one of the most well-known in the world, probably.

So much so that WWE wrestlers and baseball players have it on their, you know, tattoos and stuff, but very, not implied what that meaning is. But verse 16, let's read it, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[16:56] All right? So God was moved by his love for a sinful world of humanity. And really quickly, I didn't come up with this.

It was more, I heard it from Sinclair Ferguson. But just three really good points on what love actually is. He implies, the greater the lover, the greater the love.

And so, there is no being in all existence that has the capacity for love with such immensity and vastness as God. God, indeed, is the definition of love.

As it says in 1 John, God is love. And he demonstrates his great love for us. So there's no greater lover than God himself. The second principle was, the lesser the object, the greater the love.

It's relatively easy for us to love people who love us. That's what Jesus said. Like, yeah, of course you're going to love people who love you back. But, not that so with God.

[18:03] We have wrongly turned God's love, often, as an echo of our own excellence. God loved me so much because I was so important. I was so valuable and he couldn't spare me.

That's not the case. The truth is that his sin had made us unlovable. If everything in the Scripture is true, then we were rebels against God. We were depraved in our minds and our hearts.

And we sought to overthrow his rightful rule in our lives. So, he chose to set his love on the most less of objects possible, following humanity.

And then lastly, the greater the expression of that love, the more marvelous the love. And what was the expression of God's love? It wasn't just sentiment, it was action. He sent his only son to die on a blood-stained cross for us.

So, those three things what we see here, God's love has expressed his desire to welcome sinners, embracing them, cherishing them, and giving eternally of himself to them.

[19:13] And he did so, again, not because we were lovable. We were not lovable. 1 John 4, for this is from God because God is love.

Not that we have loved God, but that God loved us, right? And he sent his son to die for us. So, it magnifies God's great love to lavish it on lesser deserving rebels and sinners that have been against his good rule.

It shows us how great his love is because he loved his enemies. That's the point. Not because we were valuable, but because we were enemies. It magnifies God's love. God's love for the world. We see this in the next part of the verse. In the context, for Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and for other Jews to hear, the phrase that God loved the world would have been a shocking and astonishing statement for any Jew to hear because many of them, most of them maybe, wrongly interpreted the

Old Testament and other Jewish writings.

They thought that God's love was exclusively just for the nation of Israel. And one time when you read in the scriptures the term the world or all men, it was often used by the New Testament writers to correct the false notion that God's love was only for the people of Israel.

[20:47] So they use such phrases to show that Christ died for all men without distinction, Jews and Gentiles, people from every nation and tongue, not just for all men without exception, meaning each and every single individual walking the planet.

But, again, this can't be overemphasized. Nicodemus would have been like, whoa, stop, wait a minute, what are you talking about? It would have been a mind-boggling thing for him to hear. But as we know, the scripture teaches from the Abrahamic covenant all the way to the end of Revelation that God desires to collect a people for himself from every language, every nation, every tribe, every ethnic group, every tongue, and he will do it.

That's his promise. He's going to do it. And so, that is his love for the world, this terrible world that we live in.

What was the expression of that love? We see in the next part of this, that he gave his only son. Not mere sentiment, again, but he actually did something.

[21:56] He sent his only son. This implies, like, his only unique son. God gave us his most treasured possession, his son.

It says in John 5, 20, that the father loves his son and shows him all that he is doing. And before all creation and eternity past, when the son dwelt perfectly alone with the spirit and the father, John 17, 5, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

And then, at Jesus' baptism, we read, that a voice came from heaven. This is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased. Listen to him.

So, the father loves and cherishes the son. His most valued possession. This is what he gave for a fallen humanity. When it says that God so loved the world, it's saying, in what way did God love the world?

How so? That he gave his one only unique son for us. And then, the next part of this, that whoever believes in him. It just simply says whoever believes in him, not how does one believe, how does this take place, but just saying whoever does will be saved.

[23:22] So, the word believed here is a key word that we can't miss. It's used seven times in this context to emphasize our reaction or our response to what God has done.

All right? It's our response to God's great love and sending Christ. But, the Greek word here means a deep confidence to be fully persuaded, fully entrust.

It means to be fully persuaded in such a way that it affects how you live. So, it's not just a mental ascent to knowledge. It changes how you live.

Right? So, here's an analogy. I hate to use this analogy. There's so many analogies out there that relate to airplanes and parachutes and jumping, but, I don't know.

Here we go. I think it's probably one of the best ones, but, let's say that you were going to go skydiving and you had the best instructor on the planet with you, the skydiving instructor. And he says to you, do you believe the parachute will work?

[24:27] You say, I guess it will. Yeah, I've done what I'm supposed to do. And, do you entrust yourself to me? Do you believe in me as your instructor? Absolutely.

You're the best. All right, let's jump. And then you go, whoa, not quite ready, not so fast. This is, I'm not ready. And then he goes, well, it's okay.

Look, I'll be jumping with you. But, but then you say, what if I mess up and I descend down into a death spiral? And he goes, don't worry.

Like, I promise I'll be with you and I'll make it right. Like, you'll be fine. I promise. Don't worry. I will make it right and I'll save your life. And then you say, I'm sure you'll try your best, but just to be safe, I'm going to sit down.

Do you really trust me? He says, and well, apparently not. Right? And the difference is between this mentally agreeing that the parachute and the instructor will save your life no matter what, and then

actually doing it.

[25:27] And so, what we're saying is that true believing in the skydiving and structure will save your life. You have to actually believe that and you have to actually do it. Not just have a mental agreement like, yeah, I think so.

It's actually trusting in him to do it. Fully being persuaded. Not blind faith. And so, the results of us truly believing in Christ, the results of that are that we will not perish but have eternal life. Not perishing as opposed to having eternal judgment. Right? That's what we're talking about. This is first of ten references in John's Gospel where he used the phrase eternal life.

That is not just the quantity of life but the quality of our spiritual life with God. Life that we can experience now and one day fully embrace when we go into his presence.

A lot of people, you know, when you ask the question what is eternal life? What is it? They'll say things like it means not going to hell. It means not perishing.

[26:33] It means to live forever. And all those things are true but they're the overflow of something else which is knowing God. Jesus himself defines it in John 17 verse 3.

Jesus says, this is eternal life. I'm about to define it for you. That they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. So this sweet, glorious sharing of everlasting life and intimacy with the Godhead.

If you have that, yes, you will be spared. And then we go on to verse 17. Alright? Verse 17 here. We're pulling it together and we understand that if we reject the son we will not be saved. But, sorry, I got my notes mixed up. So, whoever believes in him will not perish.

But then we see him move to courtroom language in the rest of the text. Verse 17. God did not send his son into the world to condemn or to judge the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

[27:39] So here's this courtroom language of being condemned and not being condemned. So the point here is not that God won't ever judge the world. He will. But, that the time has not yet come for final judgment.

So listen, all of us are under threat of judgment already before Jesus came. Our sin had put us in a perilous position before God. So in one way we already all stand condemned.

Do you see that in the text? We already all stand condemned and the way to not be is to put our full trust in the Savior. Then it says if you believe in him in such a way where it changes your life, right, then you will be spared.

So the moment that we are born again, the result of that is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ that we truly have believed. Jesus says, in John 5, 24, like something actually happened when you were saved.

This is one of those things like if you have been truly born again, God will finish this work in you. Jesus said, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life.

[28:55] They have it like right now. Then he says, he does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. An actual thing that happens as a result of being born again.

So Jesus is talking about yet his first coming here, like in this, his first incarnation where he came to walk among us and die on the cross for us. He didn't come to judge then, but he will one day.

In his second coming that will consummate. So when you see in verse 18, whoever believes in him is not condemned. So if we've truly been born again and placed our saving faith in Christ, we won't be condemned.

So the conclusion of the suffering and death of Jesus is Romans 8.1. Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and to be in Christ and to have a relationship with him by faith.

Faith in Christ unites us to Christ so that his death became our death and his life is now our life. That's what our faith does.

[30:05] It unites us to Christ. He took the punishment that we could not bear and he became the perfection that we could not perform. All those things are what happened when we received the Son.

We are saved and not condemned. But then he gives you the contrast in verses 18 to 21. This is the last point. Reject the Son.

Point number three. Reject the Son. Be condemned and perish. Do you see the either or language here? Like the Bible, particularly Gospel of John, doesn't leave that room for us.

We see this in verses 18 through 21. Verse 18 is just a restating of what he already has said in verse 16. He sets up for what Jesus is going to say next.

So on the other hand, if you refuse the Son of God, if you reject his peace offer, then you will not have eternal life and you will utterly perish.

[31:05] Chilling. If we do not believe or fully trust in Christ to save us, we are condemned already. Meaning people, all of us, already stood guilty before God because of our sin and our rebellion.

But that final sentencing will come later when Christ returns and he will consummate that judgment. Unbelievers, those who reject Christ, that I once was and many of you once were, we were condemned in that moment.

We are condemned already before God because of the sin of not trusting. You see that? Because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. So our unbelief pretty much just is the high point of that rebellion.

We already were guilty but then we rejected God's only solution for our absolution of our sin before God. So unbelief in the Savior is that high point.

So John, then under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explains why some people do and some people don't. He gives us some insight here why some people receive and why both reject.

[32:15] But refusal to trust in Jesus as we read about is this cosmic battle between light and darkness. John does this a lot. He does it a lot in his letters as well.

The battle of truth versus error. Light versus darkness. Eternal life versus eternal judgment. And Jesus said later on in John that he is the light of the world and he has come into the world.

And his light exposes whether a person is righteous or not. And it drives them into darkness. So they don't only hate the light but they hate the one who is bringing the light.

It's a very simple thing. Most of us when we have committed sin we don't want we want to hide. It goes back to Genesis 3. We want to hide.

We want to run from the light. We don't want to be exposed. We run not just from the light but from Jesus himself who is the light. And in verse 19 look at verse 19 whoever does what is true comes to the light.

[33:21] On the other hand those who trust in him love him and obey him come to the light. Describing the kind of judgment that really does happen when light comes into the world.

And it turns some of us into lovers of the king. We run into his presence and others we run away from that light. Proving that we are condemned.

So it comes by way of what we love and what we hate. Do we love the light? Or do we hate the light? Flip over briefly to 1 John. This is John's letter.

The same one who wrote this gospel. Look at 1 John chapter 1 verses 5 through 10. You can see the language here. So some of us are wondering like most of us probably here in this church gathering have come into the light and we hate our sin even though we sin but we love the Savior and we treasure his blood and others of us still walk in darkness.

So 1 John 1 5 he says this is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

[34:35] If we say or if we claim we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness we lie and do not practice the truth but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin we have deceived ourselves and the truth is not in us. but on the other hand if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have not sin we make him a liar and his word is not in us. So go on and continue reading in 1 John and he just keeps flushing this out but very clearly Christ has come he is the son

of God he has said that I am the only way to have your sin forgiven.

I am the only way to the father listen to me. And then we have one or two responses we receive him and have eternal life or we reject him and we are condemned and we perish.

This is the gospel. This is it. This is the message that we carry forth from this building and carry forth to the nations that Jesus has come to give us life everlasting life and the motive of that was the love of God.

[36:01] The love of God that was lavished on sinful humanity that rebelled against him. I pray that you have trusted and looked at the son of God and believed in him that he saved your life.

So let's join me in a word of prayer for application of this word. Amen.