

Before finishing **John 3:1-21**, let's look at how one can become a Christian and then share God's Good News with others. Let's use our own testimony + **Jn. 3:16, Gal. 2:16, Rom. 3:21-28, 10:9-15, 2 Cor. 5:17-21**, + 4 symbols:

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What is sin? Sin literally means to miss the mark. It is anything other than authentic Christianity, which is (1) walking in line with God's Word, (2) by the power of God's Spirit, (3) for the purpose of God's glory.

The Good News is that on the cross, Jesus dealt with all the sin issues. Now it's a **Son** issue. However, if one refuses the Son, it's still a sin issue.

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? What have you done with Jesus, who loves you, who died for you and your sins, and who wants to reign in your life as Lord? **Rom. 10:9-15.**

If you would like to recognize Jesus as Lord of your life, pray a prayer similar to this: "God, I realize that I'm a sinner—in many ways. But Your Son Jesus died on the cross to deal with: my sins SO I could be forgiven, my sinful nature SO I could become a holy one by nature, sin in the flesh SO I could walk pleasing to You by the Spirit, and my sinful representative Adam SO I could become part of Your family. Thank You, Jesus, for doing that for me! By faith in You and Your work, I choose to turn my life over to You, to follow You wherever You lead, to let You be in control of my life. Thank You for being willing to be my living Savior and Lord. I confess You as Lord with my mouth and believe in my heart that God the Father raised You from the dead. Thank You for the changes You'll make in me. You are a wonderful God. Amen."

**Read 3:1-21.** Jesus is dealing with a legalist, someone who thinks he/she can keep God's laws, and that will get him/her 'right/just' with God. In **:14-21**, Jesus will give Nicodemus the Father's only plan of salvation/deliverance.

**:14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; :15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life (or believes in Him will have eternal life).** Remember, Nicodemus knows the OT.

**:14a** Jesus refers to an incident recorded in **Num. 21:4-9 (read)**. Rebellion against God and Moses was dealt with by Yahweh sending fiery serpents among the people. Many died! The people confessed their sin, and Yahweh provided deliverance. "Take a pole; put on it a brass serpent, and tell the people to look at it in belief." God provided a way of deliverance. It was only a symbol/sign to turn their thoughts to God, to trust Him and His words. That bronze serpent later became an idol (**2 Kings 18:4**) and had to be destroyed.

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referring to Jesus' crucifixion) to die for sins, sinners by heredity and nature, and sin in the flesh." Jesus the Son of Man **must** be 'made sin on our behalf' (**2 Cor. 5:21**). Jesus' death was a necessary part of the Father's plan of salvation. See **1 Cor. 15:3-4, Acts 2:23, Heb. 9:22, 1 Jn. 4:9-10**. Only in this way could the demands of God's holiness, righteousness, and love be met.

**:15** In both cases it was God who provided a remedy, and those who believed God's solution were delivered. According to Jesus, what I think about Him and how I respond will determine where I spend eternity (lit. life of the age to come). **Eternal life** is described in **17:3 read. We must stake everything on the fact that who Jesus is and what He says is true. Will we by faith follow Him?**

**:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten (or unique, one and only, only one of His kind, 1:14, 3:16,18, 1 Jn. 4:9) Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

**For God so loved.** God is love (**1 Jn. 4:16**). God looks at our world, but "His reaction is not one of anger, hatred, or ruthless justice." God's reaction is love (agape) showing that "God's love, reaching back to eternity and coming to fruition in Bethlehem and at Calvary, is viewed as one, great, central fact." God determined to love us (**1 Jn. 4:10,19**) and showed that love at the cross.

**The world.** All humanity. God's redemptive purpose was not confined to the Jews but embraces the world (see **1:9,29, 4:42**). Can you imagine how this statement would sound to a Jew!? Beginning at conception, each human is precious, because (1) he/she bears the likeness of his/her Creator & (2) because each is loved by God Himself. **That He gave.** It was God who out of His love sent **His one and only Son**. His Son alone would be and provide mankind's deliverance/salvation. Jesus' death was determined by the will and love of God. Jesus took our place and our sins, and His death accomplished the Father's purpose and demonstrated His love (**Rom. 5:8**). **Rom. 8:3** says, "**God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin.**" The gift of the life of God Himself, and this gift can only be ours by the descent of Jesus Himself to pour out His life in death for the life of the world.

**That whoever** (you can write your name here) **believes in Him.** Anyone can be born again if he/she will acknowledge his/her need and believe in and receive and follow Jesus. We can 'come and see' just as we are. Salvation consists of accepting and believing in God's one and only Son. "His love does not coerce. It is addressed to men and women who must receive by a willing belief, and who can also withhold that belief and therefore choose death rather than life. The gift of life must be accepted and can be refused."

Each person has a choice: either to believe or not believe the truth he/she has received. And your choice has eternal consequences. **Shall not perish.** If you choose to reject/don't believe, you perish (fully, utterly destroyed). **Read 2 Th. 1:9.** Yet if you accept/believe, **you have eternal life.** Eternal life is a quality of life as well as a quantity of life. It becomes a present reality (**3:36, 5:24, 6:47, 17:3, 1 Jn. 5:13**). It's a life that is different in quality from the death which characterizes the present age. If you truly want God's kind of life, you must be born again. Life became a reality for us with Jesus' death on the cross.

**:17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.** God did not give and send His one and only Son to judge (separate, distinguish, be of opinion) our world. Out of His love He sent His Son that the world might be saved through Him!! Jesus came into a world that was already lost, dead, condemned, living in darkness, and dealing with God's wrath. God wasn't looking for an excuse to condemn humanity but to save it (deliver out of danger and into safety). Jesus, the Light, has always been shining. He still is! What love! What full provision! So...

Just like Jesus at His first coming, the Church is not God's instrument to judge the world. We are here to offer salvation, eternal life. When anyone comes to a gathering of Christians, they should not be made by the group to feel condemned and guilty. They should be so attracted to the life of Jesus because they see Him on display through His Body. Just present not judgment but God's wonderful plan of salvation!

**:18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten (or unique, only one of His kind) Son of God.** The contrast between belief and unbelief is increasingly stressed. If we want to know God, be part of His kingdom, we must believe in the Person and work of the Biblical Jesus. To believe in Jesus is to put one's trust, confidence, in His Person and work. To those who have come to this place of by faith knowing Jesus, you're not judged. Your judgment was carried out on Jesus when He died in your place.

Those who are not in Christ are already judged. Mankind judges him/herself! These verses are not telling a person that he/she is on trial; he/she is already judged. By the fact that people are stubbornly unbelieving, he/she has been and stands judged. It is not God who has judged you; God loves you and has made salvation available. And the Good News of Jesus tells us salvation is offered to all. The object of saving faith is the unique Son of God.

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**:19** "The appearance of Jesus in human flesh constitutes a crisis in the life of the world." Jesus is the Light, the always-shining Light, from all eternity. Yet the reaction to the Light has mostly been rejection (**see 1:11**), not receiving Him, not turning to Him by faith as Lord, Savior, Light, God, Life, Creator, Truth. The majority has preferred darkness, evil, death, error.

Why do they refuse to come to the Light? They love darkness rather than Jesus; they fear exposure. They "create an area of darkness where evil deeds can be done without being recognized as evil." Their deeds were (habitually, continually) evil. They don't want to change. They are not ignorant of truth or revelation; their deeds are evil and they want to hide them! The difference between believers and unbelievers is the attitude they have toward the Light. In Jesus, Light has come into the world (**1 Jn. 1:5**). He has enlightened every person (**1:9**). Jesus is the concrete criterion by which all human actions are to be judged. Come to the Light, or continue on in darkness, evil. It's each individual's choice. There's not a third option.

That judgment is the consequence of sinners rejecting Him. The lost are condemned because they have not believed in (lit. believed into) the name.

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**:21 But he who practices (present active) the truth comes (present) to the Light, so that (hina) his deeds may be manifested (aorist passive) as having been wrought (worked, labored, perfect passive participle) in God.** "True saving faith invariably manifests itself in deeds... wrought in God." Those who 'have come to the Light' will be those who 'do the truth'. As Jesus meets us where we are and we begin to respond to Him, as we begin to believe and act on truth at whatever level we find it, we will "find ourselves like a magnet, continually being drawn to Jesus." What have you done with Him? Although Jesus did all the work, it's your choice!

This ends Jesus' interview with Nicodemus. "Nicodemus had come for a quiet discussion about 'heavenly things.' He is left—and the reader is left—face to face with the final judgment, with the alternative of life and death, of light and darkness, of truth and error, and with the final reminder that it is only he who 'practices the truth' who has come to the Light." The saved bring forth God's fruit.

As a result of these words, what should Nicodemus do? According to Jesus, he should leave the realm of darkness and unbelief and error and should embrace Jesus, the true Light. What should you do as a result of Jesus meeting you where you are, understanding Jesus' words? What have you been counting on to be right/just with God? How do Jesus' words turn your world upside down? Another way of dealing with this passage: Having God's heart and perspective means aching for those who live in that darkness, and offering them Jesus, the Savior, Light contrasted with darkness, Life as contrasted with death, and Truth as contrasted with error/falsehood. Let's share Jesus boldly!

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**:14a** Jesus refers to an incident recorded in **Num. 21:4-9 (read)**. Rebellion against God and Moses was dealt with by Yahweh sending fiery serpents among the people. Many died! The people confessed their sin, and Yahweh provided deliverance. "Take a pole; put on it a brass serpent, and tell the people to look at it in belief." God provided a way of deliverance. It was only a symbol/sign to turn their thoughts to God, to trust Him and His words. That bronze serpent later became an idol (**2 Kings 18:4**) and had to be destroyed.

**:14b "I too must be lifted up** (lifted up is used elsewhere in **8:28, 12:32-33**,

referring to Jesus' crucifixion) to die for sins, sinners by heredity and nature, and sin in the flesh." Jesus the Son of Man **must** be 'made sin on our behalf' (**2 Cor. 5:21**). Jesus' death was a necessary part of the Father's plan of salvation. See **1 Cor. 15:3-4, Acts 2:23, Heb. 9:22, 1 Jn. 4:9-10**. Only in this way could the demands of God's holiness, righteousness, and love be met.

**:15** In both cases it was God who provided a remedy, and those who believed God's solution were delivered. According to Jesus, what I think about Him and how I respond will determine where I spend eternity (lit. life of the age to come). **Eternal life** is described in **17:3 read. We must stake everything on the fact that who Jesus is and what He says is true. Will we by faith follow Him?**

**:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten (or unique, one and only, only one of His kind, 1:14, 3:16,18, 1 Jn. 4:9) Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

**For God so loved.** God is love (**1 Jn. 4:16**). God looks at our world, but "His reaction is not one of anger, hatred, or ruthless justice." God's reaction is love (aorist) showing that "God's love, reaching back to eternity and coming to fruition in Bethlehem and at Calvary, is viewed as one, great, central fact." God determined to love us (**1 Jn. 4:10,19**) and showed that love at the cross.

**The world.** All humanity. God's redemptive purpose was not confined to the Jews but embraces the world (see **1:9,29, 4:42**). Beginning at conception, each human is precious, because he/she bears the likeness of his/her Creator & because each is loved by God Himself. **That He gave.** It was God who out of His love sent **His one and only Son**. His Son alone would be and provide mankind's deliverance/salvation. Jesus' death was determined by the will and love of God. Jesus took our place and our sins, and His death accomplished the Father's purpose and demonstrated His love (**Rom. 5:8**). **Rom. 8:3** says, "God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin." The gift of the life of God Himself, and this gift can only be ours by the descent of Jesus Himself to pour out His life in death for the life of the world.

**That whoever** (you can write your name here) **believes in Him**. Anyone can be born again if he/she will acknowledge his/her need and believe in and receive and follow Jesus. We can 'come and see' just as we are. Salvation consists of accepting and believing in God's one and only Son. "His love does not coerce. It is addressed to men and women who must receive by a willing belief, and who can also withhold that belief and therefore choose death rather than life. The gift of life must be accepted and can be refused."

Each person has a choice: either to believe or not believe the truth he/she has received. And your choice has eternal consequences. **Shall not perish**. If you choose to reject/don't believe, you perish (fully, utterly destroyed). **Read 2 Th. 1:9**. Yet if you accept/believe, **you have eternal life**. Eternal life is a quality of life as well as a quantity of life. It becomes a present reality (**3:36, 5:24, 6:47, 17:3, 1 Jn. 5:13**). It's a life that is different in quality from the death which characterizes the present age. If you truly want God's kind of life, you must be born again. Life became a reality for us with Jesus' death on the cross.

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**:17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.** God did not give and send His one and only Son to judge (separate, distinguish, be of opinion) our world. Out of His love He sent His Son that the world might be saved through Him. Wow! Jesus came into a world that was already lost, dead, condemned, and dealing with God's wrath. God wasn't looking for an excuse to condemn humanity but to save it (deliver out of danger and into safety). Jesus, the Light, has always been shining. He still is! What love! What full provision! So...

Just like Jesus at His first coming, the Church is not God's instrument to judge the world. We are here to offer salvation, eternal life. When anyone comes to a gathering of Christians, they should not be made by the group to feel condemned and guilty. They should be so attracted to the life of Jesus because they see Him on display through His Body. Just present not judgment but God's wonderful plan of salvation!

**:18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten (or unique, only one of His kind) Son of God.** The contrast between belief and unbelief is increasingly stressed. If we want to know God, be part of His kingdom, we must believe in the Person and work of the Biblical Jesus. To believe in Jesus is to put one's trust, confidence, in His Person and work. To those who have come to this place of by faith knowing Jesus, you're not judged. Your judgment was carried out on Jesus when He died in your place.

Those who are not in Christ are already judged. Mankind judges him/herself! These verses are not telling a person that he/she is on trial; he/she is already judged. By the fact that people are stubbornly unbelieving, he/she has been and stands judged. It is not God who has judged you; God loves you and has made salvation available. And the Good News of Jesus tells us salvation is offered to all. The object of saving faith is the unique Son of God.

**Read :19-21. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.**

**:19** "The appearance of Jesus in human flesh constitutes a crisis in the life of the world." Jesus is the Light, the always-shining Light, from all eternity. Yet the reaction to the Light has mostly been rejection (**see 1:11**), not receiving Him, not turning to Him by faith as Lord, Savior, Light, God, Life, Creator, Truth. The majority has preferred darkness, evil, death, error.

Why do they refuse to come to the Light? They love darkness rather than Jesus; they fear exposure. They "create an area of darkness where evil deeds can be done without being recognized as evil." Their deeds were (habitually, continually) evil. They don't want to change. They are not ignorant of truth or revelation; their deeds are evil and they want to hide them! The difference between believers and unbelievers is the attitude they have toward the Light. In Jesus, Light has come into the world (**1 Jn. 1:5**). He has enlightened every person (**1:9**). Jesus is the concrete criterion by which all human actions are to be judged. Come to the Light, or continue on in darkness, evil. It's each individual's choice. There's not a third option.

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That judgment is the consequence of sinners rejecting Him. The lost are condemned because they have not believed in (lit. believed into) the name.

**:20 For everyone who does evil (worthless, bad) hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed (convicted with evidence, proven wrong).** Whoever habitually practices what is wrong: such a person is continually hating, detesting (present active), the Light. Such a person wants nothing to do with Jesus. They don't want to be exposed, like insects that hide themselves beneath logs, terribly frightened whenever they are exposed to light. By Jesus' coming, the right of judgment has been taken out of our hands, and we are required to acknowledge that He alone is the Judge because He is the Light. Remember Newbigin's question: "What if Jesus is in fact the primal truth by which all else has to be confronted and questioned?" The unbeliever refuses to trust in Jesus and His work. How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation (**Heb. 2:3**)?

**:21 But he who practices (present active) the truth comes (present) to the Light, so that (hina) his deeds may be manifested (aorist passive) as having been wrought (worked, labored, perfect passive participle) in God.** "True saving faith invariably manifests itself in deeds... wrought in God." Those who 'have come to the Light' will be those who 'do the truth'. As Jesus meets us where we are and we begin to respond to Him, as we begin to believe and act on truth at whatever level we find it, we will "find ourselves like a magnet, continually being drawn to Jesus." What have you done with Him? Although Jesus did all the work, it's your choice!

This ends Jesus' interview with Nicodemus. "Nicodemus had come for a quiet discussion about 'heavenly things.' He is left—and the reader is left—face to face with the final judgment, with the alternative of life and death, of light and darkness, and with the final reminder that it is only he who 'practices the truth' who has come to the Light." The saved bring forth God's fruit.

As a result of these words, what should Nicodemus do? According to Jesus, he should leave the realm of darkness and unbelief and error and should embrace Jesus, the true Light. What should you do as a result of Jesus meeting you where you are, understanding Jesus' words? What have you been counting on to be right/just with God? How do Jesus' words turn your world upside down? Another way of dealing with this passage: Having God's heart and perspective means aching for those who live in that darkness, and offering them Jesus, the Light and Life and Truth and Savior.

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