

Read John 3:16-21

2. What is your understanding of "the world" that God so loved?
3. Which of John's themes are used in this passage?
4. What is John saying about judgment and condemnation, e.g. who does the judging, how or why are people being judged?
5. How does the idea that Jesus came 'not to condemn the world, but to save the world' impact how you see God?"
6. What do these verses tell us about God's motive? What do they tell us about God's mission?

This story then turns to John the Baptist to reframe, or shed more light on what Jesus has been saying. Of note: throughout John's Gospel, a passage will begin with a dialogue, but end in a sermon. There are two instances in chapter three. Where do the quotation marks go, verse 15, or 21? The situation in the following passage is similar. We do not know if John the Baptist's response ends at verse 30 or 36.

Read John 3:22-36

1. Describe the narrative's situation (who, where, what).
2. How does John's author convey John the Baptists' confidence in his own ministry (vv28-30)?
3. Compare John the Baptist's responses and Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

a. 3:27 & 3:2 _____

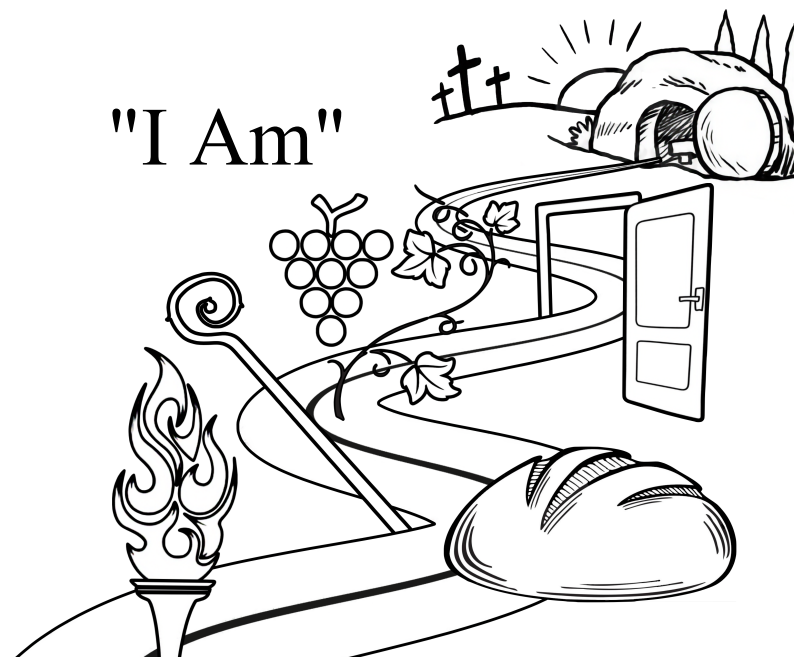
b. 3:31-32 & 3:11-12 _____

c. 3:34 & 3:13 _____

d. 3:35 & 3:2 _____

e. 3:36 & 3:16-18 _____

✱ *What is Jesus' word for you from today's encounter with Him?* ✱



a study of The Gospel According to John

Summer 2025

Lesson 4

John 3:1-36

"I Am the Light, Even at Night"

REVIEW:

Our study of John's Gospel reveals a carefully designed book of discipleship training. The author presents his doctrinal understanding of Jesus's life, including his teachings, healing, suffering, death, and resurrection, much like a tutorial for believers. Each event in the narrative highlights essential qualities of being a disciple of Jesus. The Gospel's introduction tells us Jesus was not *created* but was *the creator* of the cosmos. He was and is God, and he came to live among us. John's themes are light vs. darkness, spirit vs. flesh, heaven vs. earth, belief vs. sin, etc. Disciples recognize Jesus as the bearer of light and truth, life and salvation. Next, we encounter the witnesses to Jesus: John the Baptist and his disciples who followed Jesus. Disciples are called to share the good news about Jesus. The second chapter begins at a wedding. Jesus teaches us of God's abundant generosity, and the life Jesus gives is an abundance of joy and love. Disciples understand Jesus is the Bridegroom of his followers. Following that, Jesus cleanses the temple of the unholy commerce taking place. Disciples know Jesus is the new temple and dwelling place of God. So, what is this week's lesson from John's author?

VOCABULARY:

John 3:3 **Born again, or Born from above** (*Anōthen* - ἀνωθεν)

1. Something coming from above, a higher place, heaven,
2. From the beginning, or first,
3. Again, or anew

John 3:14 **Lifted up** (*Hypsōsen* - ὑψώσεν)

1. Exalted,
2. Lifted up

John 3:16 **World** (*Cosmon* - κόσμον)

1. Cosmos,
2. World

John 3:16 **Believe** (*Pisteuon* - πιστεύον)

1. Believing in,
2. trusting in,
3. clinging to

BRIEF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:

John's Gospel is not only revealing Jesus to the reader/hearer, but is also informing disciples how to understand this new movement of "the Way" or "Jesus Followers." Consider its timing in late first century CE when the rift between the Jewish faith and faith in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah is becoming irreconcilable. The synoptic gospels have most likely circulated by this time. The Temple has been destroyed and countless thousand Jews have been taken as prisoners and slaves. The fledgling Christian communities are small pockets of house-churches, and are made up of Jews and Gentiles. They are having to learn to live in a new family since for many following Jesus can get you banned from your former community and family.

John's author is putting together a tutorial of sorts for the followers of Jesus, who already know the basics of his life, death and resurrection, but are most likely in need of deeper instruction into what it all means.

Beginning in chapter 3, after John has established some background as to Jesus' identity, we will find Jesus having one-on-one encounters with various individuals. Not only are these events rich with nuggets of spiritual truth for a follower of Jesus, but they also remind us of our importance to Jesus as individuals. Some encounters are instigated by Jesus, some by the seeker. John makes us privvy to private conversations between seekers and the Savior, answering Jesus' first words in this Gospel, "What are you looking for?"

Lastly, we see a literary technique woven into these events, that help disciples grow in faith: 1. The stories show how an encounter with Jesus can be transformative. 2. Transformation is a process that takes some time. This technique functions to elicit faith and to show us who Jesus really is.

Read John 3:1-8

1. How is Nicodemus introduced?
2. Why might John's author have placed this visit at night?
3. What is Nicodemus' opening sentence?
 - a. How does he address Jesus?
 - b. What are his assumptions about Jesus? (question, or statement?)
4. How does Jesus respond in a way that mimics Nicodemus' assertion? (*write the final sentence of v.2, below that, write Jesus' response in v.3.*)
5. Noting the various meanings of the vocabulary *Anōthen*, discuss the conversational a play on words; Nicodemus' take vs. Jesus' meaning.
6. What is Jesus saying to you about the Spirit in vv. 5-8?
7. How, exactly, is one *born from above*?

Read John 3:9-15

1. What comparisons are being made by Jesus?
2. To which story of Moses and Israel does he refer in v. 14 (*Numbers 21:4-9*)?
3. Noting the translation for "lifted up" in our vocabulary, how does that relate to Jesus? (Consider an exalted snake.)
4. Discuss your idea of "eternal life."
5. In John's first chapter Jesus is introduced as the Lamb of God, referencing Moses and the Exodus story. Recall the purpose for the sacrificial lamb. From what was God delivering the Israelites, and how does that relate to the snake story?