



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO **JOHN** **LESSON 4**



## Chapter 3

### Introduction

Thus far in John's Gospel, we have watched the Apostle carefully build his case that Jesus is the promised Messiah and the eternal Son of God. We have seen the preexistent Logos become flesh, the witness of John the Baptist, the calling of the first disciples, Jesus' first public miracle at Cana, and His cleansing of the Temple—each revealing another facet of His divine identity and authority.



Now John brings us to one of the most important conversations in all of Scripture. In the quiet of the night, a respected Pharisee named Nicodemus comes to Jesus seeking answers, only to discover that entrance into God's Kingdom cannot be earned through religion, heritage, or good works. It requires an entirely new birth—a work of God Himself. From this remarkable encounter come some of the Bible's greatest truths, including the necessity of being born again, the lifting up of the Son of Man, and the incomparable promise of John 3:16.

### The Bronze Serpent

Before we begin John chapter 3, Jesus Himself points us back to an event recorded nearly fifteen centuries earlier. To understand why Jesus compares His coming crucifixion to a bronze serpent lifted upon a pole, we first need to revisit one of Israel's most unusual experiences during the wilderness journey. What seemed like an isolated incident in the days of Moses becomes one of the clearest prophetic pictures of the Cross found anywhere in the Old Testament.

 **Numbers 21:4]** *"And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."*

 **Numbers 21:5]** *"And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread"*

 **Numbers 21:6]** *"And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died."*



**Numbers 21:7]** *“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.”*



**Numbers 21:8]** *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.”*



**Numbers 21:9]** *“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”*



At first glance, this account seems **paradoxical**. Throughout Scripture, **the serpent is the emblem of sin, rebellion, and Satan himself**, yet God instructs Moses to fashion a bronze serpent and lift it upon a pole. The answer lies in what the serpent represented. It was not an object of healing in itself; it represented the very judgment that had fallen upon the people because of their sin.

Please Notice This



Notice also that the bronze serpent did not remove the snakes from the camp. The serpents remained, but God provided a single means of deliverance. Anyone who had been bitten could simply look in faith at God's appointed provision and live.



Bronze (fiery), throughout the Tabernacle, and scripture is consistently associated with judgment. The bronze altar was the place where sin was judged by sacrifice. Here again, the bronze serpent became a visible picture of judgment already executed.



Where else, in the **Old Testament**, is this strange remedy explained? A brass serpent... on a pole...just looking at the bronze serpent rendered the snake bites harmless. **Why?** We will answer that in a minute, in a fascinating connection (Remez).

By the way... centuries later, the bronze serpent itself became an object of pagan idolatry. What God had originally given as a picture of His saving grace had been transformed by the people into an object of worship. King Hezekiah rightly destroyed it during his religious reforms.



**2 Kings 18:4]** *“He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it **Nehushtan**.”*

Hezekiah's action reminds us that God never intended people to worship the symbol. Once the symbol itself became the focus instead of the God who gave it, it had become nothing more than **Nehushtan**—literally, "a piece of bronze." Hezekiah was saying, "This isn't some sacred relic. It's just a piece of brass." It is a timeless warning that even good things can become idols when they replace the One to whom they were meant to point.



**A Brief Historical Aside:** The image of a serpent coiled around a staff has recurred throughout history. In Greek mythology, the **Rod of Asclepius**—a single serpent entwined around a staff—became associated with healing and medicine and remains the symbol used by many medical organizations today. It is often connected with the Caduceus, the staff of Hermes, which bears two intertwined serpents and wings and originally symbolized commerce, negotiation, and messengers rather than healing. Many scholars believe they have a distant cultural connection to the bronze serpent Moses lifted in the wilderness.



**John 3:1]** *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*

The **Pharisees** were regarded as the conservative guardians of the Jewish faith. They believed the Old Testament Scriptures, the coming Messiah, miracles, angels, and the resurrection. However, by Jesus' time, they had drifted off course. **Jesus frequently rebuked their legalism and religious traditions.** Despite this, ironically, they were far closer to biblical truth than the Sadducees (liberals), who denied the supernatural and the resurrection (Matt. 23:1-36; Acts 23:6-8).



Nicodemus

**Nicodemus** was not an ordinary Pharisee. Unlike many unnamed individuals in the Gospel, Nicodemus reappears later in John's narrative. He first comes seeking answers in private, later cautiously defends Jesus before the Sanhedrin, and finally joins Joseph of Arimathea in preparing Jesus' body for burial. (John 7:50-52; John 19:39-42).

John identifies him as "...**a ruler of the Jews**," which indicates that Nicodemus was a member of the **Sanhedrin**, the seventy-member ruling council that served as Israel's highest religious and judicial authority under Roman rule. As one of Israel's teachers, Nicodemus possessed exceptional knowledge of the Scriptures, yet he was about to discover that religious education alone could never bring someone into the Kingdom of God.



**LESSON**

Nicodemus reminds us that sincere religion and genuine salvation are not the same. A person may possess biblical knowledge, moral character, and years of religious experience and active service, and still need the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. The Gospel first changes the heart before it changes the life (Ezek. 36:26-27; Titus 3:5).



**John 3:2]** *"The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."*

Nicodemus came to Jesus "**by night**." It may simply have provided privacy, allowing an influential member of the Sanhedrin to speak freely without attracting attention. It also afforded uninterrupted time for a serious theological discussion. However, **darkness often carries a symbolic meaning**, and Nicodemus arrives while still walking in spiritual darkness, seeking the Light of the world (John 1:5; John 8:12).

**"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God..."** Nicodemus says. Calling Jesus "**Rabbi**" was an acknowledgment of His authority as a respected teacher. More interesting is the phrase, "**we know**." The Greek is plural, suggesting that Nicodemus was not only speaking for himself but also representing a group within the Jewish leadership.

The Sanhedrin would have quietly concluded that Jesus' miracles could not be ignored, not yet accepting Him as the Messiah, but recognizing that God was working through Him. The miracles had accomplished one of John's primary purposes—they **pointed beyond themselves to the identity of Jesus**. Nicodemus concluded the signs authenticate Jesus as One sent from God, but he did not understand that Jesus is the eternal Son of God (John 20:30-31).

 **John 3:3]** *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

"**Verily, verily...**" Literally, "**Amen, amen.**" Whenever Jesus repeats this phrase, He is emphasizing a truth of the highest importance. What follows is not merely advice—it is an absolute declaration.

Jesus then makes one of the most famous statements in all of Scripture: "**...Except a man be born again...**" The Greek phrase translated "**born again**" (anōthen) means "again," "anew," or "from above." While "born again" is a perfectly legitimate translation, the broader idea is that this **birth originates with God**. Jesus is not speaking of a second physical birth, but of a spiritual birth that comes from Heaven through the work of the Holy Spirit.



Birth is the natural means by which we enter this physical world. In the same way, spiritual birth is the means by which we enter the Kingdom of God. Just as no one can produce his own physical birth, no one can produce his own spiritual birth. **It is a creative work of God.**

Jesus concludes that without this spiritual birth, "**...he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" The word "**see**" means far more than merely going to heaven or observing with the eyes. It carries the idea of **perceiving, understanding, and experiencing**. Apart from spiritual rebirth, a person cannot truly comprehend the things of God because spiritual **truth is spiritually discerned** (1 Cor. 2:14).

 **John 3:4]** *"Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"*

Nicodemus completely misses Jesus' meaning because he is still thinking in terms of the natural man. Jesus is describing a birth **from above**, while Nicodemus is trying to fit His words into the realm of physical experience. This misunderstanding provides Jesus the opportunity to explain one of the greatest doctrines in Scripture—the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

 **John 3:5-6]** *"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

Jesus again begins "**Verily, verily...**" This phrase has generated considerable discussion throughout church history. Some have understood "**water**" as baptism, while others have suggested it refers to physical birth. However, the connection is found in **Ezekiel 36:25-27**, where God promised Israel that He would **sprinkle clean water** upon them, cleanse them from their uncleanness, give them a **new heart**, and place **His Spirit** within them. As "the teacher of Israel" (John 3:10), Nicodemus should have recognized this promise of national and spiritual renewal immediately. Context here **IS** important.

In verse 3, Jesus said a person could not even **see** the Kingdom of God. Here, He intensifies the statement: apart from this spiritual birth, one cannot **enter** it. Why?

Because *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* Fallen humanity naturally produces more fallen humanity. Spiritual life, however, can only be imparted by the Holy Spirit. No amount of education, morality, religious ceremony, or self-effort can transform the fallen nature into a spiritual one. A new birth requires a new source of life.

 **John 3:7-8]** *"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."*

Nicodemus should not have been surprised at Jesus' words. This was foretold in the Old Testament, and as one of Israel's foremost teachers, he should have recognized that Jesus was describing the fulfillment of promises already revealed through the prophets (Ezek. 11:19-20; Ezek. 36:25-27; Jer. 31:31-34).

Jesus then gives an illustration: *"The wind bloweth where it listeth..."* The Greek word *pneuma* can mean wind, breath, or spirit, making this a beautiful wordplay. Like the wind, the Holy Spirit cannot be seen or controlled. We cannot determine where He begins His work or predict every movement, but His presence is unmistakable in His effects.



### **A Closer Look: Is Baptism Essential for Salvation?**

One of the most common questions arising from John 3:5 is whether Jesus was teaching that water baptism is **necessary** for salvation. Scripture must interpret Scripture, and we should look at the Bible as a whole rather than build a doctrine from a single phrase.



The New Testament consistently teaches that salvation is received **by grace through faith**, apart from works or religious ceremonies. Baptism is presented as an act of obedience that follows salvation rather than the means by which salvation is obtained (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:28; Titus 3:5). Several passages make this distinction clear:

- **The thief on the cross** was promised Paradise without having the opportunity to be baptized. Luke 23:39-43.
- **Cornelius and his household** received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized, demonstrating that God had already accepted them by faith. Acts 10:44-48.
- Paul declared, **"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel,"** a statement that would be difficult to understand if baptism itself were essential for salvation. 1 Cor. 1:17.

So what did Jesus mean by being *"born of water and of the Spirit"*? **Jesus is not introducing a new doctrine.** He is reminding Nicodemus of a promise already revealed in the Old Testament—that God Himself would cleanse His people and give them new spiritual life through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Today, Baptism is the public testimony of an inward transformation. It identifies the believer with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and serves as the first act of obedience after conversion. Every Christian should be baptized, if possible, not to be saved, but because they **have been saved** (Matt. 28:19-20; Rom. 6:3-4).



**John 3:9-10]** *"Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"*

Nicodemus then asks: **"How can these things be?"** His question reveals genuine bewilderment. He is not resisting Jesus' teaching—he simply cannot fit it within the theological framework he has inherited. Jesus responds: **"Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?"** Nicodemus was a recognized authority in the Scriptures. If anyone should have understood the promises of a new heart, spiritual cleansing, and the indwelling Spirit, it was Nicodemus. **Jesus was not introducing a new doctrine** but unveiling the fulfillment of promises Nicodemus had studied for years (Ezek. 11:19–20; Ezek. 36:25–27; Jer. 31:31–34).

Jesus holds Nicodemus accountable for knowing the Scriptures. Nicodemus should have connected Jesus' words with Ezekiel's prophecy of cleansing, regeneration, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. This knowledge was firmly rooted in the Old Testament, not in a later Christian ordinance.



**John 3:11-12]** *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"*

Jesus again begins with His familiar declaration, **"Verily, verily..."** as the conversation now becomes more solemn. He moves from Nicodemus' inability to understand to the deeper issue of unbelief. The problem is no longer a lack of information but a reluctance to accept the testimony already given. If Nicodemus cannot grasp the truths revealed in the Old Testament and illustrated by earthly examples, how will he understand the greater heavenly realities Jesus came to reveal?

**Spiritual understanding is progressive.** God often reveals deeper truths only after we respond to the light we have already received. A willing heart opens the door to greater understanding, while persistent unbelief hardens the heart and obscures even the truth already revealed (Prov. 4:18; Luke 8:18).



**John 3:13-14]** *"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:"*

Jesus now reveals why He alone is qualified to speak of heavenly things. As the One who came down from Heaven, He possesses firsthand knowledge of the Father's purposes.

Jesus then makes an extraordinary connection: **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."**



**PATTERN**

The bronze serpent forms one of the clearest Messianic types in the Old Testament. Long before it occurred, the bronze serpent was more than a historical miracle—it was a prophetic shadow embedded centuries before Calvary. What appeared to be an isolated wilderness event was actually part of God's integrated design, revealing His plan of redemption long before the Messiah came into the world. Those who had been poisoned by the serpent could not save themselves. God's remedy required only that they look in faith to His appointed provision. **In the same way, fallen humanity receives eternal life by looking in faith to Christ, who was lifted up on the Cross** (Num. 21:8–9).

The Bronze Serpent story shows that **salvation requires neither personal merit nor religious ceremony**—it requires believing God's promise. Here, Jesus identifies this event as a prophetic foreshadowing of His own crucifixion, explained nowhere else but here in John 3. On the Cross, Christ did not become sinful, but He became the judicial bearer of our sin and the object of God's righteous judgment on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13).



**John 3:15-16]** *"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

Jesus explains the purpose of His being "**lifted up**." ***That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*** Just as every Israelite who looked upon the bronze serpent in faith received physical life, every person who looks to Christ in faith receives eternal life. The emphasis is not on the act of looking itself but on trusting God's appointed provision. Salvation has always been by faith in what God has provided. (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:1–5).



John then records one of the greatest declarations in all of Scripture: "**For God so loved the world...**" God's love is demonstrated by what He did. He did not merely express compassion toward a fallen world—He acted decisively by giving His Son.

Jesus continues: "**...that he gave his only begotten Son...**" The phrase "**only begotten**" translates the Greek word *monogenēs*, emphasizing Christ's unique relationship with the Father. Jesus is not one Son among many; He is the one-of-a-kind, eternal Son who shares the very nature of the Father. John 1:14, 18. Finally, Jesus repeats the invitation: "**...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**"

John 3:16 summarizes the entire Gospel in a single verse. Every major element is present: the love of God, the gift of the Father, the uniqueness of the Son, the necessity of faith, the reality of judgment, and the promise of eternal life. He also notes that the invitation is intentionally unrestricted. The Gospel is offered to "**whosoever**," making salvation available to every person who believes.



**PATTERN**

The connection to Numbers 21 remains unmistakable. In both accounts, death has already entered because of sin. God provides one remedy, and that remedy must be received by faith. The bronze serpent pointed forward to the Cross; the Cross fulfills what the bronze serpent could only foreshadow (Num. 21:8–9).



**LESSON**

John 3:16 reminds us that salvation begins with God's initiative, not ours. We do not persuade God to love us by our goodness or religious performance. The Cross is the evidence that God's love preceded our response. Our part is simply to believe and receive the gift He has freely provided (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:8–9).



**John 3:17]** *"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."*



**John 3:18]** *"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."*



**John 3:19]** *"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

Having declared God's love for the world, Jesus now explains His mission. His first coming was not to condemn the world but to provide its only means of salvation. Yet every person must respond to that offer. The dividing line is not God's willingness to save, but humanity's response to the Light that has entered the world.

Condemnation is not God's arbitrary decision but the inevitable result of rejecting His provision for salvation. Christ did not come to make men condemnable—they already were. The Cross stands as God's offer of pardon. Those who reject that offer simply remain under the judgment from which Christ came to deliver them.



**PATTERN**

John's theme of **Light versus darkness** reaches back to the opening chapter. The Light entered a world already darkened by sin, yet darkness rejected the Light. The imagery also recalls Genesis, where God's first creative act was to bring light into darkness. Here, God's redemptive work begins by shining the Light of His Son into a fallen world. Gen. 1:3; John 1:4–9.



Modern culture often insists that truth is relative and that all spiritual paths are equally valid. **Jesus leaves no room for such neutrality.** Every person must respond to the Light of Jesus. The question is not whether Christ has come, but whether we will receive Him or remain in the darkness. Our eternal destiny is determined by what we do with the Son of God.



**John 3:20]** *"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."*



**John 3:21]** *"But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."*

Jesus concludes this section by describing the two possible responses to the Light. Those who love sin naturally avoid Christ because His presence exposes what they wish to keep hidden. Those who seek God's truth, however, willingly come into the Light because they desire to glorify God in their lives. Christ's purpose is not simply to expose sin for the sake of condemnation, but to reveal it so that forgiveness and restoration may follow. Yet many refuse the Light because they love their sin more than the truth.



**John 3:22]** *"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized."*

The conversation with Nicodemus has ended, and John's narrative now shifts from a private discussion to a period of public ministry in the rural regions of Judea. The word "**tarried**" indicates that Jesus remained there for a period of time rather than simply passing through. This season allowed the disciples to spend extended time with Him, learning not only through His teaching but by observing His daily life and ministry. Finally, John says: "...and baptized."

John 4:2 later clarifies that **Jesus Himself did not personally administer the baptisms; His disciples did.** Christian baptism had not yet been instituted as Jesus had not yet died, risen from the dead, or commissioned His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These baptisms, therefore, were preparatory in nature (Matt. 28:19-20; John 4:1-2).



**John 3:23]** *"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized."*

John now shifts the focus back to John the Baptist. Although Jesus' public ministry is expanding, John continues to faithfully carry out the work God has given him. His ministry has not ended abruptly but overlaps briefly with Jesus' ministry, allowing one final witness to Israel before the forerunner steps aside.



John the Baptist

John identifies the location: **"...in Aenon near to Salim..."** The exact location is uncertain today, but the name Aenon is derived from a Hebrew word meaning "springs" or "fountains." It was evidently an area supplied by numerous natural springs, making it well suited for John's baptismal ministry.



**John 3:24-25]** *"For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying."*



**John 3:26]** *"And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."*

The Synoptic Gospels record Jesus' Galilean ministry largely after John the Baptist's imprisonment. John includes this detail to show that the ministries of Jesus and John overlapped for a brief period before Herod arrested John (Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:19–20).

As Jesus' ministry continues to grow, some of John the Baptist's disciples become concerned that the crowds are beginning to follow Jesus instead of their own teacher and perceive Jesus' growing popularity as a threat.



**John 3:27-28]** *"John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him."*



**John 3:29]** *"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."*

John the Baptist responds to his disciples with remarkable humility. Rather than becoming jealous of Jesus' growing popularity, he rejoices because his God-given mission is being fulfilled. Using the imagery of the Jewish wedding, John identifies himself as the friend of the Bridegroom, whose greatest joy is seeing the Bride united with the Bridegroom.

John's use of wedding imagery introduces one of the great themes that runs throughout Scripture. God frequently portrays His relationship with His people as that of a bridegroom and bride. John the Baptist understands his role perfectly. He is not the bridegroom, nor is the bride his. His joy comes from faithfully introducing the Bride to her rightful Bridegroom.



**PATTERN**

John's wedding imagery reaches back into the Old Testament, where Israel is repeatedly portrayed as the wife or bride of Jehovah (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 3:14; Hos. 2:19–20). It also anticipates the New Testament revelation of Christ and His Church, culminating in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Eph. 5:25–32; Rev. 19:7–9).



**John 3:30-31]** *"He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all."*

John makes one of the most memorable statements in Scripture: **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** This is a joyful surrender. John understands that his ministry was never about building a following for himself. His purpose was to prepare the way for Christ, and now that the Messiah has come, it is both necessary and proper for all attention to be directed toward Him.



John then explains why Jesus must increase. **"He that cometh from above is above all..."** Because of who He is, His authority surpasses every earthly authority. Though John was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets (Matt. 11:11), he remained a man **"of the earth"**. His knowledge was received by revelation. Jesus, however, speaks from firsthand knowledge because He eternally dwells with the Father.



**John 3:32-33]** *"And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."*

Jesus' testimony is unique because it originates in Heaven itself. Every other witness speaks from revelation received; Jesus speaks from firsthand knowledge. Accepting Christ's testimony is ultimately accepting God's own testimony concerning His Son.



**John 3:34-35]** *"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."*



**John 3:36]** *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

John concludes this chapter by summarizing Jesus Christ's **absolute supremacy**. The Father has sent the Son, filled Him with the Spirit without measure, entrusted all things into His hands, and declared that eternal life is found **only through Him**. The chapter closes with a clear choice: **believe the Son and receive eternal life, or reject Him and remain under God's judgment.**

Unbelief ("believeth not") is active, not passive; it is a willful disobedience against God. This is the only place in John's Gospel where he uses the word "wrath" (he uses it six times in Revelation).

Please Notice This



**"Everlasting Life"** does not simply mean eternity (later) in heaven. The believer, once he places his trust in Jesus Christ, already possesses eternal life. It is the life of God in every believer.



**PATTERN**

John's closing words echo Deuteronomy's great covenant choice: **life or death, blessing or cursing**. Throughout Scripture, God presents mankind with a decision. Here, that decision is focused entirely upon His Son. To receive the Son is to receive life; to reject Him is to remain under judgment. Deut. 30:19–20.



#### LESSON

The Gospel always demands a response. Admiring Jesus, respecting His teaching, or acknowledging His miracles is not enough. Every person must decide whether to trust Him as Savior and Lord. Neutrality is not an option, for refusing to believe is itself a decision. Acts 16:30–31; Rom. 10:9–10.



Our world increasingly presents Jesus as only one spiritual option among many. Neither John nor the rest of Scripture leaves room for such a conclusion. The



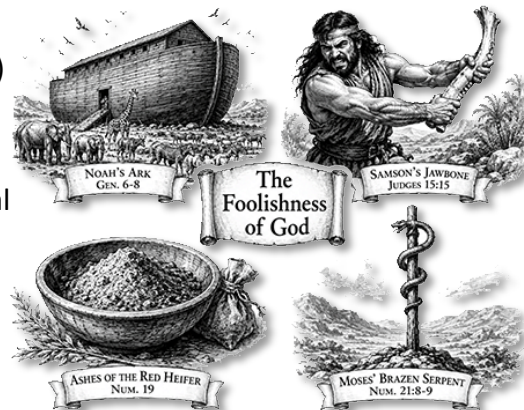
Father has entrusted **all things** into the hands of His Son, and eternal life is found in Him alone. The most important decision any person will ever make is what they do with Jesus Christ, for that decision determines not only life today but eternity itself (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

### A Closing Thought: The Foolishness of God?

Nicodemus came to Jesus as one of the most educated religious scholars in Israel. Yet all of his learning could not reveal the Kingdom of God **apart from divine revelation**. That truth remains just as relevant today. The Gospel often appears foolish to a world that prizes intellect, human achievement, and self-sufficiency. God resorts to strange means (not understandable by natural man):

- Noah's Ark (Gen. 6-8)
- Samson's jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:15)
- Ashes of the red heifer (Num. 19)
- Moses' Brazen Serpent

God's plan of salvation—a crucified Messiah, eternal life by faith, and spiritual rebirth through the Holy Spirit—**cannot be discovered by human wisdom alone**. As Paul reminds us, God's wisdom far surpasses the greatest wisdom of man, and His plan deliberately humbles human pride so that no one may boast before Him.



**1 Cor. 1:19-21]** *"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made **foolish** the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the **foolishness** of preaching to save them that believe."*



**1 Cor. 1:25-29]** *"Because the **foolishness** of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the **foolish things** of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."*

However, the **ultimate** "foolishness"...is a wooden cross in Judea...



**1 Cor. 1:18]** *"For the preaching of the cross is to **them that perish** foolishness; but unto **us which are saved** it is the power of God."*

There are **only two** categories: "**them that perish**" and "**us who are saved.**" For us who are saved, we are to...



**Philippians 2:12-13]** *"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

Paul does **not** say, "Work **for** your salvation." He says: "Work **out** your salvation." The idea is that something already present is brought to its full expression. God wants you to become "self-feeders" on the Word. How? → Through the whole counsel of God. Learn the whole counsel of God and test ALL things by that measure. Do not trust your salvation from men, no matter how influential they may be. **Your eternity depends on your diligence...not theirs. We must cultivate biblical discernment in an age of increasing deception.**

John ends the chapter exactly where it began—with the necessity of believing the Son. Nicodemus entered the chapter as Israel's teacher, seeking answers. John concludes by reminding every reader that the decisive issue is not religious knowledge, heritage, or position, but one's response to Jesus Christ. Eternal life and eternal judgment are determined by what a person does with the Son.

**Next Lesson:** Read John Chapters 4 & 5. We will explore three healings, four witnesses, and two resurrections. | Lesson materials available at <https://www.trustingin grace.com>

### JOHN CHAPTER THREE

|                                 |         |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| T H G I N T L E V R A M W M I H | AGAIN   | NAMED   |
| N H I E P S D A S M S E A O S W | BLOWETH | NATION  |
| D T T E A H E U S L T E A R M N | BORN    | NIGHT   |
| D E C E A M S C I A H G E D A B | CANNOT  | PERISH  |
| R X E N T E I G O C L H H T U T | DEEDS   | RABBI   |
| E A Y D J S H N I N T I I A T J | EXCEPT  | RATHER  |
| T O T N S T I H R O D O M S A N | ISRAEL  | RULER   |
| S W M H I I W L M U N H T U I O | JESUS   | SALIM   |
| A H T R E I W R H D L I N A A M | JUDAEA  | SECOND  |
| M I I M R R E H Y T B E G B E Y | LIFTED  | SOUND   |
| C P D E O H A D H B E A R M E L | LIGHT   | SPIRIT  |
| S A T R C S E E A S W W S G E I | LISTETH | TEACHER |
| B A N A N M E R I H I T O A L R | MARVEL  | VERILY  |
| W O E N A L A S D O G R R L H E | MASTER  | WATER   |
| T T R N O I D N U O S S E W B V | MOSES   | WHICH   |
| G N I N N T D E T F I L N P I G | MOTHERS | WOMB    |