

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: LESSON 4 "COME AND SEE"

This week we are privileged to study one of the greatest chapters in the New Testament. This chapter is said to record the world's greatest tragedy, the world's greatest truth, and the world's greatest text. John introduces us to the term "born again." Although this phrase has been abused and distorted over the years, the term is packed with powerful spiritual meaning. The world ridicules those "born-agains," seeing them as narrow-minded Jesus freaks. I like what Ray Stedman has to say about those words: "I love the words "born again" because of what those words have meant in my own life and experience. It is a beautiful word picture that was coined by Jesus Himself to describe a radical spiritual transformation that has taken place in my own life and in the lives of every person who has truly committed his or her total self to the Lordship of Jesus Christ." Amen to that!

I pray that this chapter gives you a deeper understanding of what happens in a life that is regenerated and transformed by having faith in Jesus Christ. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

# <u>First Day</u>

1. Read John 3:1-21. Observe and list the facts you find. (Who was Nicodemus? What did he say? Why did he say it?

2.	What is the main point or thought of this section? What would you choose as the key verse?
3.	Are there any repeated words or thoughts?
4.	How does this section relate to John's main theme: that Jesus is God?
5.	Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus "by night"?
6.	Do you think his coming had anything to do with the cleansing of the temple or the changing water into wine?
7.	How does this section speak to your heart specifically?
th	That's it for today. Meditate on the life changing truth found here in is chapter. I'm proud to be a "born-againer," aren't you?
on	emory Verse of the Week: "For God so loved the world that He gave His ly begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have erlasting life." John 3:16

## Second Day

# Study your memory verse. Do you believe in Him?

1. Read John 3:1-21 again. Describe Nicodemus' attitude as he came to Jesus. (Respectful? Rude? Cocky?) What did he call Jesus?

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. The name most likely came from a Hebrew word meaning "to separate." The Pharisees were a tight-knit group of religious leaders that stood together in their self-righteous smugness. They were very zealous for ritual and religious purity according to both the Mosaic Law and their own traditions. Each Pharisee had taken a solemn vow that he would devote every moment of his entire life to obeying the Ten Commandments as a way of pleasing God. They were rigid, legalistic, and usually ridiculous in their interpretation of the law and what pleased the Lord. They believed that their acceptance from God depended on their adherence to an unending list of rules and regulations. They were extrememly "religious," trying to reach God on their own works and efforts. They were dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and defending Jewish Law, which they forced on the people of Israel.

Nicodemus was also a part of the Sanhedrin, which was a group of 70 elders that were the main ruling body of Jews, similar to our supreme court. I'm sure the Pharisees were quite interested in this man Jesus. When Jesus cleared the Temple, I'm sure He offended the Sadducees, which were the group of priests that controlled the Temple. The Pharisees and the Sadducees didn't get along very well, so Jesus' act may have warmed the hearts of the Pharisees. They were obviously talking about it (vs 2). Hmmm... who is this man?

We know that Nicodemus was a ruler. The word "ruler" is used in rabbinic literature for "a great man" or "prince." Tradition tells us that Nicodemus was one of the three richest men in Jerusalem. In verse 10, Jesus calls him "the teacher."

2. How does Jesus answer his unspoken question in verse 3?

- 3. Describe Nicodemus' response. Do you think he recognized his need for a new birth? Did Nicodemus ask why, or how?
- 4. In your own words, explain what Jesus says in verses 5-8.

5. How is the Holy Spirit like the wind?

The word "born again" literally means "born from above." This is the first mention of this word in the Bible. This Greek word used by John means to do something a second time; to begin something in a radical and totally new way, to be born from above, from God. We get our word "regeneration" from the Latin rendering of the phrase "born again." Being "born again" includes repentance, which means to "rethink" or "to change one's mind." With repentance comes a change of action corresponding to the change of mind. As you repent and ask Jesus to come and live inside you, you will be regenerated, and given a new nature. You are then ... born again. We become partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4). Birth involves life, and when you are born again, you enter God's family (John 1:11-13).

There is some debate on what Jesus meant when He said, "born of water and the Spirit." We know He meant the Holy Spirit, but what water is He talking about? Here are a few suggestions:

- (1) Some believe this is a reference to when the bag of water breaks before a baby is born, and thus a reference to physical birth.
- (2) Some believe this is referring to John's baptism of repentance.
- (3) Some believe this is referring to the cleansing work of the Spirit when He comes into a person's life.

(4) Some believe this is an allusion to Old Testament imagery and the need for cleansing and purification.

(It is interesting to note that Christ never taught that baptism was essential for salvation, rather, an act of obedience once we are saved.)

The Holy Spirit is like the wind; you can't see it but you know it's there. The Spirit cannot be controlled or understood, but His effects can be seen.

- 6. Why do you think repentance is such a vital part of the new birth? Why is admitting you are a sinner so important?
- 7. What steps led to your new birth? Were you similar to Nicodemus?
- 8. Why are "religious" people often difficult to lead to Christ?
- 9. Many people think they can get to Heaven on their own merit. What does John 3 have to say about that?
- 10. The Pharisees thought their good works could earn God's acceptance. Many are saved, yet still try to "earn His favor" by doing good works. Does that describe you? (Read Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-10.)

See you tomorrow!

#### Third Day

Study your memory verse.

1. Read John 3:1-21 again. Explain Jesus' mild rebuke in verses 11-12.

Jesus speaks of His Incarnation in verse 13. He calls Himself the "Son of Man," which seems to be His favorite way of referring to Himself. Jesus Himself is a witness to the truth of God.

Now Jesus uses an illustration from the Old Testament that was probably very familiar to Nicodemus.

2. Jesus refers to an Old Testament story to help explain His point in verse 14. Read Numbers 21:4-9. Compare looking at the bronze image with believing in Jesus. How is it similar?

3. The emphasis in verses 14-21 is believing. Either you do or you don't. There is no middle ground. What are the blessings of believing? The results of unbelief?

Salvation comes through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Israelites, in Numbers 21, only had to look with faith at the remedy God provided. They didn't have to fight, or figure out another way to be healed, only to look to God in faith. That's still the answer today. Look to Him in faith.

4. Read John 3:16 with Romans 8:32. How did the Father "give" us His Son? How did He do it twice? What does this tell us about God the Father?

5.	Do you ever doubt God's love for you? How does this text encourage and comfort you?
6.	Verses 18-21 talk about our choice. What was Jesus saying?
7.	Although Nicodemus doesn't respond here, I believe there is a happy ending. Read John 7:50-52 and 19:38-42. How does the story of Nicodemus end?
8.	Nicodemus didn't really believe or understand the things he was hearing at first. His religious training got in the way. What are some other problems or barriers that hinder people from accepting Christ?
9.	What can we learn about evangelism from this story?

Charles Swindoll makes a great observation in his book, <u>Exalting Christ</u>
... The Son of God. He said, "Religion attempts to turn over new leaves;
regeneration transforms lives. Religion is man's efforts to reach God -- our
attempt to gain God's favor. Regeneration is God's effort to reach man -His demonstration of love based on grace, aside from any merit on our part."

10. Have you been practicing religion, hoping that your church attendance, giving, or service will gain you merit? Do you know someone in this category? What can you do to show them the truth?

## Fourth Day

## What's your memory verse? Do you know it?

We meet up with John the Baptist once again in this section. We discussed him a little bit in chapter 1. He was an interesting character. Charles Swindoll describes John's mission this way: to clear the way, removing obstacles from the minds and hearts of others so they would be ready for the Messiah; to prepare the way, promoting repentance on the part of the nation so He would be accepted; to get out of the way, stepping aside once the Messiah had been introduced.

1. Read John 3:22-36. Observe and list the facts in this section. Who is speaking? To whom? Where are they?

2. How does this section reinforce John's main theme: Jesus is the Son of God?

3.	Are there an	y rep	eated	words o	or thou	ghts	in	this	section	Ś

4. Did John the Baptist care if Jesus was baptizing? Was he jealous? Describe John's attitude.

5. What does this section tell us about John's character?

Some of John's disciples were getting a little hot over the fact that Jesus was not only baptizing, but some of John's disciples were following Him, and Jesus was getting close to their territory. The word "dispute" in verse 25 means "a prolonged discourse; a bitter and abusive speech." They were getting mad! They were looking at it like a competition. They saw John's ministry declining and didn't like it. It could have been tempting for John to get jealous, also. After all, he had spent many years of self-denial in the wilderness. He spent most of his entire life devoted to this ministry. But John didn't give in to that temptation. He kept his eyes on the One he was called to minister to, and for.

- 6. Do people in ministry ever compete with each other? How does this still happen today? (Are you guilty?)
- 7. John's response is awesome. In verses 27-28, who does John say is in charge?
- 8. Where does John's joy come from?

- 9. What does John call himself in verse 29? Who should be the main focus at a wedding?
- 10. How do we, as believers, sometimes try to steal the show? Give some examples. Ask the Lord to show you if you are guilty of this in any way.

John was like the best man of our day. In those days, the groom's friend would not only arrange details of the wedding, but guard the bridal chamber. The only one he would let enter would be the bride, who came to join the groom. After the union was consumated, the groom came out and announced the fact with a shout. Upon hearing the groom's voice, the friend of the brideroom would be happy and relieved. His job was done, and he could step out of the way. (Charles Swindoll, Exalting Christ, the Son of God.)

Tomorrow we will continue looking at John's humble attitude. I pray that we will follow his example of stepping back and allowing Jesus to be center stage.

# Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory. How did it impact your life?

1. Read John 3:22-36 again. Write John's statement in verse 30. What does it practically mean?

2.	How can you, personally, become less? In what way can you decrease?
3.	How can you make Jesus "increase" in your life?
4.	Is there any area that you struggle with trying to control? How does the example of John the Baptist speak to your heart?
5.	John's disciples were jealous, there's no way around it. Are you struggling with being jealous of anyone? Maybe it's a family member. Maybe it's a person at church that has the spiritual gifts you desire. Maybe it's a co-worker that got a raise. How is verse 30 the answer to this sin?
6.	James Denney, the Scottish theologian, once said, "You can never at the same time convince people that you are a great preacher and that Jesus is a great Savior." What did he mean by that?

7. In verses 31-36, John declares whom he believes Jesus to be. Summarize his words.

John ends with a bang in verse 36. This is the only place that John uses the word "wrath." "This phrase is used as an expression of the righteous judgement of God (Romans 1:18). It is used especially of the coming wrath of God soon to be poured out on a Christ-rejecting, Godhating, sin-loving world." (1 Thessalonians 2:16; Revelation 11:18, 16:19, 19:15) John Phillips, Exploring the Gospels.

We choose this wrath ourselves when we reject Jesus Christ. God has made it possible for us to escape the wrath and have life in His Son.

8. John uses the word "must" three times in this chapter: 3:7, 14, and 30. Why is each significant?

9. Write a prayer to the Lord, thanking Him for sending His Son to die for you so that you might have everlasting, eternal life. Thank Him for making you a new creature in Christ.

Meditate on this thought: John found joy in his Master's voice (vs 29).