

Home Group Leader's Notes
Week of February 14, 2021
John 3:14-21

LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

We are walking through the amazing book of "John," an account of Jesus' life.

Our setting is a meeting at night with Jesus and Nicodemus, an expert in the Old Testament. Jesus told him that he must be born again, born from above, to see and enter the kingdom of God. In this passage, Jesus continues in the theme of who enters the kingdom and who remains condemned.

Read John 3:14-21. This is a very significant and loaded passage. Summarize the statements made in each verse.

14 Jesus must be lifted up

15 everyone who believes may have eternal life

16 Out of God's love, He sent His Son that people would have eternal life

17 God sent His Son to save the world through Him

18 Whoever believes is not condemned; whoever does not stands condemned

19 Light came into the world, but people chose darkness because of their evil deeds.

20 All who do evil hate and avoid the light so that their evil deeds will not be exposed

21 All who live by the truth come into the light to be seen by God

Read the passage about the serpent in the wilderness in Numbers 21:4-9. Why did God send snakes? What saved the people?

God sent venomous snakes because the people were grumbling against God and Moses. God told Moses to make a bronze snake, put it on a pole, and lift it up. When people were struck, they would live if they looked up at the symbol. (Later, the bronze snake would have to be destroyed because people made it into an idol that they worshiped.)

In verse 14, Jesus said "even so must the Son of Man [Jesus] be lifted up." What do we learn from the following references?

John 5:26; 11:25

Life, eternal life, is found in Jesus.

John 12:32

Jesus will be lifted up, put to death on the cross. The cross of Christ inaugurates judgment -some to eternal life because they trust in Jesus and His substitutionary provision on the cross and others to face their condemnation in a final place apart from God. Thus, all people will in one way or another stand before Christ.

Mark 8:31; 10:45

Jesus came to die, to be lifted up, to give His life as a ransom.

What is the purpose of Jesus being “lifted up?” (15-16)

That His death on the cross would make it possible for us to have eternal life through believing in Him.

STUDY NOTE: In verse 15, the writer, John, uses the phrase, “eternal life,” a phrase that John employs sixteen times. A literal translation could be, “life of the age to come.” That “age to come” begins once someone has been “born again” (v. 3) and will continue forever.

What we do learn about God’s character, plans, and mission in vs. 14-17.

He was motivated by love to send His Son

God is our judge

God seeks for us to experience eternal life with Him

His master plan was always to send His Son that we might have eternal life with Him

(There’s more)

How does verse 16 summarize the good news of Jesus?

The good news begins with our God of love. In sacrificial love, He sent His only Son so that we might not perish. Without the Son, we stand in condemnation. But through the Son, though belief in Him, we will not perish but instead have eternal life.

STUDY NOTE: Jesus is the “light” that has come into the world; He reveals God, our current standing, and His mission to save.

Summarize the fate and the practices of those who “believe” and those who do “not believe” in verses 18-21. (Include why some prefer darkness)

“Believe”: **Not judged, practices the truth, comes to the light that their deeds may be manifested as from God.**

“Do not believe”: **judged already, love darkness and hates the light because their deeds are evil, and they don’t want to be exposed**

What might be the purposes of John including these statements (18-21)? How is this still important to understand today? (Perhaps also see 1 John 1:5-10)

Harkening back to the conversation with Nicodemus, John explains more about what it means to be born again. In brief, those who believe in Jesus, the Son of God, are born again. These will live (though snake bit by sin) and will not face judgment or condemnation.

For today, people need to understand that they are already guilty, already condemned, and already facing the wrath of God. By believing in the Son of God and what He did by being lifted up (the cross), they can have eternal life instead of facing judgment.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

What do we learn about the heart of God from this week's passage?

We see that God, motivated by love, sacrificed Himself that we might have eternal life with Him. This reveals that God wants us to be with Him forever.

If we were reading John 3:16 with a friend, why might it be important to continue reading through verse 21 or even the end of the chapter (verse 36)?

We all need to understand that we already stand to be judged; we are snake bit and going to die. Therefore, without the provision of Jesus being "lifted up" (the cross), we have no alternative but to face the judgment and the wrath of God. (See also 3:36)

Discuss the contrast of those who prefer darkness or light. What might this passage indicate about us or people that we know? How are deeds involved? How is this connected with what it means to "believe?"

This is a challenging discussion in our day. We hate being judged and being exposed. It is out of love that this passage is included. We all need to know that to reject the Son of God is to reject God and therefore to face the wrath of God. Not an easy subject. It is out of love that God sent Jesus and calls us into His light. He does not want us to live in eternal darkness. It is out of this same love that we inform people, that without Christ, they stand condemned. But with Christ, they can have eternal life without shame or guilt, open to be in the sight of God without condemnation.

May our Father encourage you with His AMAZING GOOD NEWS of sending His Son,

Steve Springsted