

***“Truth-Seekers and Light-Haters”***

April 28, 2013

Text: John 3:17-21

**Our text this morning is John 3:17-21.**

Charles Spurgeon called this text “the whole Bible in miniature,”  
and he said, “It is the essence of the Gospel.”

In it we will find that Jesus’ coming into the world has divided all  
mankind into 2 (and only 2) kinds of people=>  
Those who believe in Him, & those who don’t.

This great dividing of humanity will someday culminate and be  
finalized in a formal division, when X returns to earth to  
judge the nations.

Matt 25 tells us=> *“When the Son of Man comes in His  
glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on  
His glorious throne. / All the nations will be gathered  
before Him; and He will **separate** [divide] them from  
one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep  
from the goats” (25:31-32).*

Although that will be the formal/final division, Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> Advent  
has already divided fallen mankind, by regenerating the  
souls of some, who have then come to believe in Him;  
And leaving those who don’t, in the unregenerate condition,  
into which they were born.

This has resulted in the only eternally significant division  
among the men/women who populate this earth.

Other divisions along lines of race, language, intelligence, education, wealth, social status, or even sex, are insignificant as far as the Judge of this world is concerned, who will someday determine each person's eternal destiny, in one of only two places—heaven or hell, w/ an uncrossable gulf between them, making the division permanent.

The only distinction that will ultimately matter to Him is whether a person belongs in the camp of those who have placed their faith in Him, or the camp of those who have not done so.

To the one He will say, "*Come, you who are blessed of My Father,*" but to the other, "*Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire*" (Mt 25:34, 41).

**Everyone in this city, in fact everyone in this room right now, belongs to one camp or the other.**

If you have not become born again through faith in Jesus X, may God grant you the faith to do so this morning, changing the judgment of condemnation on you into one of justification. And changing you from a lover of darkness & a hater of light, to a seeker/doer of truth and a lover of the Light of God.

**In today's text Jesus asks Nicodemus and He asks us to consider four aspects of this great division within the human race=>**

- \* God's Gracious Initiative (which created the division)
- \* The Resultant Division (into believers & nonbelievers)
- \* The Nature of Nonbelievers
- \* The Nature of Believers

\* **God's Gracious Initiative**

Although we examined John 3:16 last time at length, verses 16 & 17 are so closely connected in the flow of Jesus' thoughts here, that I'm going to begin by reading both verses together.

**[John 3:16-17]**=> *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. / For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”*

**This is God's great/gracious initiative on behalf of mankind.**

As we saw last time, this phrase *“the world”* here means mankind (the human race).

God so loved the human race, that He gave His only begotten Son, sending Him into the world of mankind so that every one of us who believed in Him would be saved.

If God hadn't sent Jesus, our entire species would have disappeared in hell, condemned because of Adam's sin. Adam's original sin brought the effects of sin (including death) into our world, & passed those effects down to his posterity.

For that reason, every man/woman is born w/ a sin nature that is poised to rebel against God from the first moment of its life.

Each one of us ratifies Adam's original sin, w/ our own sins.

This means each one of us is born under the condemnation of God's holy Law, & is therefore subject to God's wrath.

If Jesus hadn't come to provide a means by which we could be forgiven of our sins, & get out from under that condemnation, we would have been hopelessly lost.

Praise God, He took the initiative, sending His Son to die for our sins to satisfy the Law, & in the process preventing the extinction of our race.

X literally came to save the world, of mankind.

**God's plan involved saving mankind one person at a time.**

But as we saw in verse 16 last time, He determined that only those who believed in His Son were to be saved.

Only they were promised forgiveness of their sins, and guaranteed that the damage done by Adam's fall would be corrected, so they would not perish in hell, but would receive eternal life.

Now in verse 17, Jesus says that God did not send His Son to judge the world, but to save it.

X would save the "*world*" (the human race) by saving the individual members of that race who placed their faith in Him.

He said (Jn 5:24)=> *“He [singular] who hears My word, and **believes** Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does **not** come into **judgment**, but has passed out of death into life.”*

The world of mankind was already under condemnation because of its sin, but X came to provide a means of lifting away that condemnation for everyone/anyone who would believe in Him unto salvation, having received eternal life.

Thus, through individual believers, He would save our race.

This was God’s gracious/blessed initiative on our behalf.

\* **The Resultant Division** (of mankind into believers/unbelievers)

[Verse 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 Son of God.”*

**To really understand this, it’s important to understand the verb tenses, which can be well translated like this=>**

“He who is believing in X in an ongoing sense, is not being judged; but he who is not believing has been judged already in the past, and that judgment against him continues to stand.”

The default position is judgment—not judicial neutrality and not innocence.

Q: When in the past was he judged?

A: When Adam sinned, & drug all mankind into his sin, and its consequences.

God had told Adam, “*From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*” (Gen 2:17).

Adam ate of the tree, & the result was that he experienced death both physically (as his body began to die), and spiritually (as his relationship w/ God was severed).

These became permanent conditions/characteristics of Adam’s life, which he then passed onto all his descendants—us.

So from the moment of our conception, we were partakers in Adam’s sin, a/w/a his condemnation/death, resulting from that sin.

\* Rom 5 says we inherited death from Adam=> “*By the transgression of the one the many **died***” (Rom 5:15).

\* It also says we inherited Adam’s condemnation=> “*Through one transgression there resulted **condemnation to all men***” (Rom 5:18).

This is every man/woman’s heritage and starting place in life.

And this is where we will remain until/unless we believe in Jesus X for the forgiveness of our sin, & the salvation of our souls.

**This theological truth is interesting to know, but it’s far more important for each of us to ask, “Have I believed in X?”**

Notice that I’m not merely talking about “believing Jesus.”

He claimed to be the Son of God & the Messiah.

If we don’t believe these truths, we cannot be saved.

But we can believe them and still not be saved, unless we “believe on/upon” Him, or as Jesus Himself says it in our text, “believe into” Him—resting on Him, trusting Him alone for our souls’ salvation—then we’re saved.

\* Believing upon X is wholeheartedly trusting Him to save our souls, as the Israelites trusted God to save their lives from snakebite, when they looked at the bronze serpent.

It is unreservedly casting our soul’s eternal welfare on the saving efficacy of X’s death for our sins.

\* Believing in/into Jesus is coming into spiritual union w/ X, as Moses did when he entered into the pillar of cloud/fire on Mt. Sinai.

So the real question becomes this=> Have you believed in X?

And more importantly, how have you believed in X?

Have you merely “believed Him” (which would mean you’re not necessarily born again), or have you “believed upon Him” (fully resting your soul’s destiny on His grace/forgiveness), & “believed into Him” (forming a personal-relationship/spiritual-unity w/ Him, by faith).

**The division of all mankind into these 2 groups (those who believe in Jesus & those who don’t) has powerful implications.**

**1<sup>st</sup>, those who believe are not judged.**

As we read earlier in Jn 5:24, they have eternal life, and they do-not/will-not come into judgment/condemnation—ever!

Rom 8:1=> *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>*

In addition, they have passed out of Adam’s death, into life.

They are also justified, which means that God views them as having no sin, but only the perfect righteousness, imputed to them by their Savior.

What peace/joy this should bring to the heart of every Xn, knowing that we once stood before the Law condemned, our hands scarlet w/ our own sins, but now we are white as snow.

We didn’t wait for the Law to condemn us, but freely admitted our own guilt, acknowledging that we had violated the Law and deserved the full/crushing penalty for our sin—death.

But then we entered our only plea—the blood of Jesus X, who had died on our behalf, to satisfy the Law’s penalty for our sin.

God’s justice was satisfied, so it actually demanded that we be set free, & protected from any further condemnation/punishment.

The believer is-not judged, & he/she never will be—ever again.

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What a wonderful/joyful confidence!

**On the other hand, those who do not believe in Jesus have been judged already, because the condemnation under which they were born, has never been removed by X.**

Not only were they born in sin, & have sinned all their lives;

Even worse, they have not believed in Jesus X, God's only begotten Son, & their unbelief persists to this day.

Because of this, they are only 1 heartbeat away from hell at any moment in time.

Refusing to believe in Jesus, they are abominable to God.

His wrath abides on them for that refusal.

The Father once turned His back on His own beloved Son, as He hung on the cross, to provide man a remedy for his sin.

But here stands a sinner persistently turning down X's offer of salvation from sin, for which God's own Son died!

God takes great offense at such stubborn arrogance that thoughtlessly dismisses His costly, gracious offer.

As Jesus said of Judas, it would have been good for such a man if he had not been born (Mt 26:24).

If you have not truly believed in Jesus, I pray that you will today.

**The unbeliever's ultimate sin is his not believing "*in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*"**

If you ask, "What name?" the answer is "Jesus" (meaning Savior).

He is the One sent by God to save the world of man.

Someone: “Jesus was just beginning His ministry at that time, so how could He say that those who didn’t believe in Him for salvation were condemned already because of their unbelief? “How was Nicodemus or anyone else to know they were supposed to believe in God’s only begotten Son?”

Ans: Man is born w/ an intuitive knowledge that he is a sinner, in need of forgiveness, & in need of a Savior.

Rom 2 says of Gentiles who do not have the Law, that they:

*“...do instinctively the things of the Law.”*

Then it adds=> *“They show the work of the Law **written in their hearts**, their **conscience** bearing witness and their thoughts alternately **accusing** or else **defending** them, / on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus”*  
(2:14-16).

Man knows instinctively/intuitively that he is sinner, rebelling against God.

From the very beginning in the Garden, God has always promised man a Savior from sin who would bruise Satan’s head, & in the process, receive a bruise on His own heel.

Throughout the OT, the sacrificial system pointed to a Lamb God would someday send to die for men’s sins.

It had always been true, that he who looked by faith to that promised Lamb would be spared God’s judgment.

But he who refused to do so, was judged already, based on the condemnation he had inherited as a result of Adam’s fall, and ratified w/ his own sin.

Every man/woman in the world belongs to one group or the other=>

\* Those who, by believing in Jesus X, have escaped judgment;

\* And those who have refused to believe in Him, and remain under judgment, w/ the rest of this fallen/sinful world.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> aspect of this great division between believers and nonbelievers which Jesus describes in our text is=>

\* **The Nature of Nonbelievers**

This involves both the cause/consequence of their unbelief, which, as we'll see, are both interlinked w/ their nature.

[Verse 19]=> *“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.”*

**The cause of their judgment is that the Light has come into the world and they have rejected it, preferring moral/spiritual darkness over Light.**

But that is also the consequence of God's divine/sovereign judgment on them & their sin=> Their own corrupt love for, choice of, and commitment to, darkness rather than light.

They “*loved*” the darkness with *agapao* love—love that evaluates, takes delight in, chooses/commits-to, moral/spiritual darkness.

Because men's deeds are evil, they have come to delight in the darkness of evil & spiritual deception;

They love it, w/ the same *agape* love by which God loved the world.

Do you see the implications of this?

Sinful men are locked, in a self-destructive cycle in which sin is embraced, leading to deeper sin, and eternal separation from God & everything good/upright.

Under that judgment their own twisted love for darkness provides an environment in which their evil deeds can flourish more/more.

It's like an addictive drug which progressively destroys them, but which they cannot give up.

Their judgment is their own evil choice, based on their love of darkness, and the desire to hide their evil deeds.

This is sin having its most profound/devastating effect at the very core of human nature/character.

It is man embracing the ways of Satan==> darkness/death.

**Unbelievers had always avoided the light of God's revelation, but when Jesus came (who enlightens every man), they couldn't avoid it, and they hated Him for it.**

His purity/holiness made the shame of their own wickedness all the more apparent/obvious.

Rejecting the Light of God from heaven, they rejected the only One who could have saved them from the darkness, and they sealed their own condemnation.

They damned themselves by their preference for the  
darkness of sin, over the light of truth/righteousness.

They didn't want X to deliver them from the sins they  
loved.

They wanted their sins more than they wanted life.

No one is doomed to hell because he isn't one of God's elect.

He is doomed to hell because his own inherited nature is so  
corrupt that when he encounters the Light of X, he  
rejects Him out of hand in favor of his own moral  
corruption.

He loves the darkness w/ *agape* love, and someday he will  
inherit outer darkness, which will  
overwhelm/consume him.

The next verse shows, that beyond merely avoiding the Light,  
sinners actually hate the Light.

[Verse 20]=> *“For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and  
does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be  
exposed.”*

**Evil doers hate the Light & avoid it because of its power to  
expose their evil deeds.**

Sin turns them into Light-haters.

Jesus being the personification/embodiment of Light  
(everything that is truthful/righteous), they hate Him  
most of all.

They want nothing to do with the light, which is why they don't  
read Scripture & don't want to hear preachers teach about it.

It goads their conscience, points out their sin, and therefore offends them.

It creates feelings of shame/conviction in their hearts.

Inwardly they react as Felix did when Paul preached to him about righteousness, self-control, and judgment.

Act 24:25—“*Felix became frightened & said, 'Go away.'*”

People who say they want to hear the truth & listen to the gospel, but who never become saved, die in their sins knowing the light will change their nature—something they don't want.

Their deeds are evil, they like it that way, and regardless of what they may claim, they have never really allowed the Light of God's truth to penetrate their hearts.

**This is the pathetic spiritual condition of the nonbeliever.**

\* He is condemned by God, but refuses Jesus, who could save him.

\* He thinks, “If there actually is a judgment after this life, I can defend myself & so I will not stoop to asking for pardon/grace.

“I will seek no favors from God.”

To him I would say, “Friend, if you ask for justice/judgment instead of grace, you'll have it, & it will be inescapable ruin for you.”

\* **The Nature of Believers**

[Verse 21]=> “*But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.*”

**In contrast to Light-haters, those who practice the truth seek out the Light in order to ascertain that their deeds have truly been wrought/shaped by God.**

They are always practicing the truth, & always coming to the light.

They are attracted to the light, like a plant to sunshine, because there is life w/i them, received through God's regeneration of their souls.

This is a person who is no longer hiding his sin in darkness, but seeks to have it exposed so he can confess/repent-of-it and repudiate it.

He says w/ David=> *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; / And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way”* (Psa 139:23-24).

The person Jesus is describing here hasn't become a Xn by practicing the truth in his life.

He practices truth because he has become born again, & in doing so, he has been transformed from a Light-hater, to a Light-seeker and a practicer-of-truth, whose life manifests the holy influence of God's Spirit w/i him, shaping his life.

This Xn convert now has a heart that is honest/open, & that doesn't keep a secret chamber w/i it reserved for hiding sin.

If there were such a chamber, he would fling it open and flood it with the light of God's truth/righteousness. He sincerely wants to know his own character=> whether his deeds reveal God's truth w/i him, or whether he is self-deceived, & they are motivated by his own flesh.

Applying this principle to you/me=> If we are true-hearted because God has done His saving work in our hearts, we will always seek out the truth; but if not, we will avoid it.

**Light-seekers have a joy which light-haters can never know.**

It begins w/ the assurance that we have escaped condemnation because our Savior has taken away all our sin/guilt.

Then there's also the peace that comes w/ no longer hiding the truth about our sin, but rather coming to the Truth/Light of God, desirous that our sins be exposed, so that we can confess/repudiate them, and rid them from our lives.

We now have a hunger/thirst for righteousness.

There was once a time when we loved our sin.

But now we're glad to realize that God, by His Spirit, is creating new/holy desires and emotions w/i us.

Though we still sin at times, we now mourn over our sin.

But that very mourning gives us a confidence of our salvation, because we can say w/ Paul, "*No longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.*" As for me, "*I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man*" (Rom 7:17, 22).

We can truthfully say, "Now my soul desires holiness."

We seek to live more/more in the light of God's presence,  
in our hearts—the light of truth/knowledge, not of  
ignorance; the light of holiness, not unrighteousness.

We desire that others may be able to look at us & recognize  
that our deeds are being shaped by God, to His glory.

And we desire that our lives glorify our Savior/God.

Nothing in this life gives us as believers more peace/joy than to  
be able to say w/ sincerity to our Creator/Savior=>

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my hands & let them move at the impulse of Thy love;  
Take my will & make it Thine—It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my love—my Lord, I pour, at Thy feet its treasure store.

***“Truth-Seekers and Light-Haters”***

April 28, 2013

Text: John 3:17-21

1. Jesus’ coming into the world has divided all mankind into two kinds of people: those who believe in Him and those who [12 don’t].

Mt 25:31-32

2. The only distinction that will ultimately matter to Him is whether a person belongs in the camp of those who have placed their faith in Him or the camp of those who have [8 not] done so.

Mt 25:34, 41

**Today’s text asks us to consider four aspects of this great division within the human race...**

**\* God’s Gracious Initiative**

**[John 3:16-17]**

3. Adam’s original sin brought the effects of sin (including death) into our world and passed those effects down to his [20 posterity].
4. God did not send His Son to judge the world but to save it; Christ would save the human race by saving the members of that race who placed their [12 faith] in Him.

Jn 5:24

**\* The Resultant Division**

**[Verse 18]**

Gen 2:17

5. From the moment of our conception, we were partakers in Adam’s sin as well as his condemnation and [12 death], resulting from that sin.
6. The division of all mankind into two groups (those who believe in Jesus and those who don’t) has powerful implications: those who believe are [8 not] judged.

Rom 5:15, 18

7. On the other hand, those who do not believe in Jesus have been judged already because the condemnation under which they were born has [12 never] been removed by Christ.

Mt 26:24

8. The unbeliever's ultimate sin is his not [20 believing] in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

### **The Nature of Nonbelievers**

#### **[Verse 19]**

9. The cause of their judgment is that the Light has come into the world and they have rejected it preferring moral and spiritual [20 darkness] over Light.
10. Unbelievers had always avoided the light of God's revelation, but when Jesus came (who enlightens every man), they could not avoid it, and they [12 hated] Him for it.

#### **[Verse 20]**

11. Evil doers hate the Light and avoid it because of its power to [14 expose] their evil deeds.

Acts 24:25

### **\* The Nature of Believers**

#### **[Verse 21]**

12. In contrast to Light-haters, those who practice the truth seek out the Light in order to ascertain that their deeds have truly been wrought and shaped by [8 God].

Psa 139:23-24

13. Light-seekers have a joy which light-haters can [12 never] know.

Rom 7:17, 22

14. We desire that others may be able to look at us and recognize that our deeds are being shaped by God to His [12 glory].