

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## JOHN 2-3

Ole Lester was running moonshine across state lines. One day he was drinking some of the contraband. A policeman saw his truck weaving and pulled him over. *“Son, what’s in the jug?”* Lester told him, *“Water, Sir. I’m going to church to worship Jesus.”*

The policeman grabbed the bottle and took a whiff. *“Son, that’s not water, that’s white lightning.”* Lester shouted, *“Well, praise the Lord! He’s done it again!”*

He was referring to the story we find in John 2...

Verse 1, *“On the third day...”* Apparently, this was the third day after Jesus and His new disciples left John, baptizing on the Jordan, and moved north to Galilee.

*“There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there...”* Wedding feasts in first century Israel lasted a whole week... I’ve actually paid for one wedding, and it was mega-expensive to cater a single meal - *imagine throwing a party for seven days!*

This particular bride and groom must’ve known Mary and her family. Mary was attending the wedding, *and the couple had made a very important decision, probably without realizing its significance...* *“Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.”*

Let me say to all married couples, *here’s the best thing you can do for a marriage... invite Jesus to the wedding!* Include Him in your marriage from the start.

Marriage is God's idea, and who better to help you with yours than God made flesh. Here's a question for all couples... *Have you invited Jesus to your marriage?*

When you invite Jesus to your marriage here's what you get... He's a *pastor* who'll remind you of your vows... a *wedding director* who'll keep you in step... a *counselor* who'll help you make adjustments and arbitrate disputes.... a *family planner* to give wisdom for decisions... a *motivator* to keep you enthused...

Jesus is everything a married couple needs!

It's significant that Jesus' first miracle occurred at a wedding; for every marriage needs a miracle from time to time. And over the years Jesus has proven nothing's changed, **He still likes to work miracles in marriages!**

And like most weddings this one was an exuberant, happy occasion... *that is, until the wine ran out...*

Verse 3 **"And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."** Hospitality was the supreme priority in the first century. To run dry at a party was the ultimate social embarrassment.

Here Mary's statement implies she believes Jesus can do something about the problem... But in verse 4 **"Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."**

On the surface, this seems like a stern way for Jesus to address his mother. But the word He uses - that gets translated **"woman"** - isn't as crude as it sounds.

It was a neutral term. Not as degrading as "broad or dame," but neither did it conjure up affection, like "mom." It was a generic word. Like the term, "female."

And I believe Jesus was making a point. The time had come for Him to begin to redefine His relationship with Mary. He's letting His mom know that the *eternal plan of God* won't cater to the *maternal needs of Mary*.

Author, Mary Zoba writes of Jesus' treatment here of Mary, "Why, at the wedding, did Jesus push His mother away? Why couldn't He call her 'mom' in front of the throng? A mother needs to know these things. But then a mother - even Jesus' mother - needs to know the Savior more. And how else could she have found her Savior without first losing Him as her son?"

For 30-plus years Jesus had been Mary's boy. Since Joseph died early in Jesus' life, He had taken over the carpenter's shop, and probably the role as the head of household. Mary leaned on Jesus during those years.

For three decades Mary had Jesus to herself, but He belonged to God and *His* will. It was time to let Him go. Their relationship had to change. Jesus is about to go from **son** to **Savior**. He has to become Mary's **Lord**.

And there comes a time when every mother has to let go of her child. The transition of turning loose of *a child* and getting back *a friend* is a difficult one, but it's necessary... *Mom, never forget your son or daughter is a loaner! He or she is on loan from God, and one day God expects you to give that child back to Him.*

Verse 5, "His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Here is the last recorded statement of Mary in all the Scriptures. Rather than focus on or exalt herself, she pointed people to Jesus.

Roman Catholics teach people to pray to Mary thinking she has clout with Jesus. That's a false assumption. If Mary appeared today her message would be the same, "*Whatever (Jesus) says, do it.*"

The last thing Mary would want us to do is worship, or serve, or pray to her. She would tell us all to look to Jesus and obey Him!... "*Whatever He says... do it.*"

Verse 6, "Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing 20 or 30 gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine..." A molecular miracle had occurred. What went into the pots as water came out as wine. *Jesus is a handy guy to have around!*

"And (the host) did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"

This story presents a problem for teetotalers who like to say that the Bible forbids all consumption of alcoholic beverages.

That's a hard case to make when here the Lord of glory serves wine at a wedding.

Growing up Baptist, I was taught the “*wine*” Jesus served was nothing more than a stiff glass of Welch's grape juice. It is true the Hebrews diluted their wine, *but it's obvious this wine had some alcoholic content.*

Look at the host's reaction. He says usually the best wine is poured first; then later you bring out the cheap stuff. Implied is that once the crowd is a little tipsy they won't notice that the quality of wine has diminished.

The host of the party was shocked the bridegroom had saved the best wine to last. It's obvious that what Jesus miraculously created in the pots was real wine!

Which means there's nothing wrong with wine per se' as long as you don't get drunk! The NT is clear, a Christian can drink in moderation, as long as he or she is not dominated by anything other than Jesus.

**The truth is Jesus turned real water into real wine... and He's still busy turning water into wine.**

He can take the mundane, boring, drab duties of life, and suddenly make them sweet and intoxicating.

*Has your life been infected with boredom, drabness?*

Once a flight attendant announced to the plane's passengers, “*For lunch today, you'll have a choice of chicken Marengo, beef burritos, or fruit salad.*” Then she added, “*And if you don't get your first choice, don't worry. All our entrees taste very much the same.*”

After a while that's what happens in life - everything starts to taste the same. Experiences become blah. Pleasures taste bland. It's the same ole same ole.

Life tastes like water. But Jesus turns the water into wine by fermenting our lives with the Holy Spirit. Jesus spiritually spikes the punch of everyday life.

Jesus can lift us out of the rut and turn our lives into an adventure. He replaces our blahs, with supernatural bubbly. Jesus can restore the sparkle and flavor to life.

And recall where this miracle first took place - at *a wedding*. Perhaps you feel stuck in a boring marriage. Your *Holy matrimony* has turned into *holy monotony*.

It's been said, "Marriage is like a violin - after the music stops the strings are still attached." *Is there any hope for a boring marriage?* You bet there is!

Jesus can spice up your marriage!

Here's what you need to do... *you and your spouse should get on your knees together and invite Jesus to your marriage - then open your Bibles and do whatever He tells you to do...* Do your part, and Jesus will do a miracle in your marriage and turn your water into wine.

Verse 11 "This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." Remember what John wrote in 1:17, "The law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Here it's fascinating to compare Jesus' first miracle with Moses' first miracle.

Moses turned water into blood. Jesus turned water into wine. Moses brought *judgment* on Egypt... Jesus brought *joy* to a wedding. And we represent Jesus, not Moses. Our message is good news! Today, the Lord comes with joy! He wants to better us, not judge us.

“After this He went down to Capernaum (a city on the Sea of Galilee that was Jesus’ home base for much of His ministry), He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business.” The Jewish hierarchy had turned the *temple* into a *Target*.

A worshipper could only sacrifice a priestly-approved lamb... and these lambs were only available from Temple-sanctioned outlets where the sacrifices were sold at exorbitant prices. Kickbacks went to the priests.

It was a scam, as was the Temple tax...

When you gave your offering the priest wouldn’t accept Roman or Gentile coins. They first had to be exchanged for Temple tokens. And of course, this was done for a fee, at an outrageous exchange rate. *Sadly the leaders of the Temple were making a buck off God.*

*And how did Jesus react to their antics?* “When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables.

I use to think Jesus just got caught up in the moment. He reached for whatever happened to be within reach. It could've been a broom, or stick - it just happened to be *a whip*. But that's not what went down.

Notice John's wording, He ***“made a whip of cords.”*** I picture Jesus crouched in the corner of the Temple. His eyes are on these crooked priests... He's watching as He's weaving... His blood is boiling! His hands are clinching. Hot molten rage is bubbling up within Him.

*Jesus is angry.* He knows He's about to go ballistic. This is going to turn ugly... Realize, Jesus cleansed the Jewish Temple in a premeditated act of aggression.

So much for ***“gentle Jesus meek and mild.”*** Folks like to see Jesus as a *Mr. Rogers*. Here he's more like a *Conor McGregor*. Jesus wasn't afraid to get violent when necessary. He tosses the crooks out on their ear.

Jesus was a carpenter by trade. He worked with his hands. He had a grip and strong forearms. He was a man's man. His contemporaries would've never referred to Jesus as just a ***“nice, well-mannered guy.”***

***“Nice guys”*** don't pick up whips and go on slashing rampages. People who upset the status quo aren't usually referred to as ***“nice.”*** They're called by other terms, like ***bother, pest, meddler*** - but not ***“nice guy.”***

The Jewish hierarchy labeled Jesus a *troublemaker*. In one sense, that's what ended up getting Him killed. Jesus was bold, and daring, and manly. He lived in the moment and did the *righteous thing* at the *right time*. Hey, ***Jesus was the straw that stirred the drink.***

Verse 16 “And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!” These so-called *prophets* were only concerned about monetary *profits*.

And it's equally sad to go into a church today, and the constant preoccupation is all about money...

Realize, what made the Temple racket so disgusting to Jesus was not just **what** was happening, but **where** it was occurring... in **the Court of the Gentiles**.

If you were a Roman or a foreigner this was as deep into the Temple as you could go. This meant your one exposure to God was more greediness than godliness.

I think today **the media** - internet, TV, radio - are the equivalent of the Court of the Gentiles. It's as far as some folks look into the things of God. It's shameful that some ministries portray God as broke and greedy.

If Jesus came to our churches today I'm sure He'd again be brandishing His whip. He would whip the church into shape. Again, He'd cleanse the Temple.

In the aftermath of this cleansing, verse 17 tells us, “**His disciples remembered that it was written** (the quote is of Psalm 69:9), “**Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.**” The psalmist predicted Messiah's zeal.

Jesus was passionate about the worship of God. He was consumed with zeal for pure and sincere worship.

“So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Jesus had just cleansed the Temple. I assume He’s still standing in the hallways of this colossal structure as He utters these words.

Herod's Temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.... *This was a stunning statement...*

“Then the Jews said, “It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”

The first Temple was demolished by the Babylonians in 586 BC. The second Temple was rebuilt seventy years later by the Jews who returned from Babylon.

In the beginning, the Second Temple was nothing like the former. It was a shack in comparison to the glory and grandeur of Solomon’s Temple. Thus, when Herod came to power in 40 BC he appeased the Jews with a massive Temple expansion and renovation.

Construction on the Temple had been going on for 46 years. *Now Jesus says His sign to the people is to tear down God’s Temple and raise it up in three days?*

The Jews listening to Jesus were scratching their heads only because they didn’t have the right Temple.

John explains in verse 21, “**But He was speaking of the temple of His body.**” The sign Jesus would give the Jews was His death and bodily resurrection.

The Temple was God’s residence on Earth, but if the Jews had been perceptive they would’ve realized God had never

revealed His presence in Herod's Temple. He was waiting on another Temple - a new Temple.

The active Temple at the time was Jesus. This is where God's presence rested - in *flesh and blood, not brick and mortar*. Thus, Jesus' resurrection was the ultimate sign to Israel. The disciples remembered this truth later... Verse 22 tells us, "Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said."

"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." Notice, these intriguing words, Jesus "*didn't commit Himself to them.*" At the time lots of people followed Jesus, but for the wrong reasons.

And Jesus had no confidence in their affections and loyalties. Thus, He kept the crowds at arms distance.

They were after miracles not a Messiah... *Hey, it's one thing to say you're committed to Jesus, but the relationship isn't real until He commits Himself to you.*

In Chapter 3 we tune in to the original, "[Nick at Nite!](#)"

Rabbi Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness - in pursuit of more light. "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews." This was a very important person. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court.

Nicodemus had a reserved parking space outside the Hall of Hewn Stones where the Sanhedrin held their assemblies. This rabbi was somebody - an Israeli VIP. Verse 10 calls him not just “a teacher of Israel” but “*the teacher of Israel.*” People yielded to Nicodemus.

His opinion carried clout. Nicodemus was a rabbi of the rabbis. He was a *scholar*, a *statesman* - but as we'll learn, most importantly, he was a *seeker of the truth*.

“This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Nicodemus saw Jesus’ miracles and authority. It was a no-brainer that God was with Him.

*Yet why does Nicodemus come in secrecy - why an after-hours visit?* Remember, when Jesus cleansed the Temple He threw down the gauntlet. He declared war on priestly corruption and hypocrisy. This upset the establishment. A line in the sand had been drawn.

Apparently, despite his respect for Jesus, Nicodemus still wasn't ready to be seen stepping over that line.

So he comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness and the two of them - **the respected rabbi** and **the itinerate teacher** engage in a moonlight conversation.

Verse 3. “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Remember what we're told at the end of Chapter 2, “Jesus knew what was in man.” This is how He

recognized what was on Nicodemus' mind before he ever opened his mouth.

For like all Jews at the time, Nicodemus hated the Roman occupation. He longed for Israel's former glory. He wanted Messiah to come and bring God's Kingdom.

Understand too, Nicodemus was a Jewish scholar, schooled in the OT. He had read the promises God made to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and to the Jews who came back from Babylon. We call it [the New Covenant](#).

It consisted of three promises: [return](#) the Jews to their land, [regenerate](#) or revive their hearts, [reestablish](#) God's kingdom to Israel. [Return them logistically. Regenerate them spiritually. Restore them politically.](#)

Now, in Nicodemus' mind the first two promises of the NC had been fulfilled. **First**, the Jews had returned from Babylon. And **second**, there was a revival of sorts occurring in Judaism. At the time the sect known as the Pharisees consisted of 6000 rabbis all across Israel. And they were showing a renewed zeal for the Law.

But here was Nicodemus' mistake. He interpreted the Pharisees' legalism as a revival. *Thus, in his thinking Promise Three was next - the coming of the kingdom!*

This is why in verse 3 Jesus slows him down. Yes, the Jews have returned, but they still lack *a new heart*.

Jesus challenges Nicodemus' understanding in verse 3 *"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Legalism cleansed a person's conduct. Only the Holy

Spirit can birth a new heart. To be part of God's kingdom you have to be *"born again."*

In other words, Step 2 of the New Covenant comes before Step 3. To participate in God's kingdom you first have to be **regenerated** - made alive spiritually.

The term Jesus used, *"born again,"* at first confused Nicodemus. He thought of a natural, physical birth.

Notice his response, verse 4, *Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* He's confused. *What does "born again" mean?*

*"Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* To be born again is to be *"born of the Spirit"* - God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit shocks the dead spirit of a man back to life with God.

But what does Jesus mean by *"born of water?"* This is where the discussion can get controversial.

Some Bible teachers interpret *"water"* as the ministry of John the Baptist or **repentance**. You have to repent and the Holy Spirit will spark new life. Repentance precedes regeneration. *This is true and a possibility.*

Others say *"water"* speaks of **natural birth** - *the amniotic fluids of the mother*. In other words, to be born again spiritually, you first have to be born physically.

**But to me Jesus is saying much more...**

Still others believe “*water*” means **God's Word**. Ephesians 5:26 speaks of “*the washing of water by the Word...*” Just as it takes two parents to produce a child it takes the *Word of God* and *Spirit of God* to produce a *child of God*. This interpretation is also a possibility.

What is NOT a possible translation of the phrase “*born of water*” is **baptism**. People who claim baptism is essential for salvation often justify it with this verse.

But recall the thief on the cross. He wasn't baptized, yet was born again and entered God's Kingdom. A host of verses teach, though baptism is significant, it's not mandatory. It's not what is meant by “*born of water.*”

I believe when Jesus used the phrase “*born of water*” He was taking Nicodemus to Ezekiel 36:25-27, and the New Covenant. God promised His people to replace their hard heart with a heart sensitive to Him.

And guess what imagery Ezekiel uses? He describes the NC (this new birth) as *sprinkling clean water* - and a *new spirit*. Note the two idioms: “*water and Spirit.*”

To a Jewish rabbi “*water and Spirit*” were shorthand for the spiritual transformation promised by the NC. In essence, Jesus is telling Nicodemus to study Ezekiel.

In fact, in verse 10 Jesus rebukes Nicodemus. He should've known these truths. “*Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?*” Nicodemus would not have known about Christian baptism, but he was very familiar with the “*water and Spirit*” in Ezekiel.

Verse 6 continues, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” It takes a work of the Holy Spirit to renew us spiritually.

Pharisaism or legalism was a work of the flesh. It was man's attempt to be good enough for God. You can clean up on the outside - yet still be dirty on the inside. *Looking good* isn't the same as *being good*.

Take a pig... dress it in a child's clothes... no matter, he's still an oinker! He's just hamming it up. He's still a stinker at heart. His instincts, his nature is swine-like.

Likewise you can put the “*spit and polish*” on a sinner, yet it doesn't change the sin that's in his heart. **Righteousness is an inside job - a work of God's Spirit.**

Thus, Jesus states, “Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' Salvation is a work of God's Spirit. *And in verse 8 He talks more about the Spirit...*

**"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."**

In ancient Finland supposed holy men sold the wind to gullible sailors. The wind came in a length of rope tied with three knots. Each time a sailor untied a knot it was suppose to release a stronger wind. Of course, this was a scam. Nobody controls the wind, but God.

Watch the flags flap at Wrigley Field on a spring afternoon. The wind gusts off Lake Michigan. One moment it's blowing in - *the pitcher's friend*. The next moment it's blowing out - *it's*

*the hitter's helper.* But you can never predict? The wind has a mind of its own.

And so does the Holy Spirit.

The wind is sovereign - and so is God's Spirit.

He has a will of His own. This is why the new birth is not a formula you follow - or a prayer you plug in and out drops salvation. Spiritual life is nothing less than a supernatural miracle dispensed by God's Holy Spirit.

Verse 9 "Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Nicodemus came by *night* and wanted more *light*, but he's still in the dark...

"Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"

This upstart prophet from backwoods Galilee has just given Israel's best Bible teacher a vital Bible lesson in the New Covenant that he had overlooked.

Nicodemus needs to think this through. In the weeks ahead he will, and he'll become a believer in Jesus.

In verse 11 Jesus continues to speak to Nicodemus.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? Jesus used the *human* to explain the *heavenly* - *earthly illustrations* taught *spiritual realities*.

Jesus had spoken figuratively about being "*born again*," but Nicodemus had been thinking literally.

He needs to be more spiritually minded, *as do we!*

Jesus says, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” This is the first of many verses where Jesus says He’s “come down from heaven.”

This is a powerful proof-text for His deity. Human beings are not pre-existent. Our existence begins at conception, but Jesus existed from eternity past.

He “*came down from heaven!*”

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” This is from Numbers 21. *Have you heard the expression “snake bit”?* Here’s its origin.

When the Israelites in the wilderness rebelled against God they were bitten by poisonous snakes.

But God gave Moses a cure. He was to construct a bronze serpent, set it on a pole, and put it in the middle of the camp. When a person looked at the bronze serpent they would be healed. A look of faith proved to be the antidote to the poison. *This was symbolic...*

In the OT brass spoke of judgment. The serpent was a reminder of sin and its poisonous effects. It was on the cross of Jesus, that God judged sin by becoming sin for us. Now a gaze of faith at the crucified Christ is all it takes for us to be healed from the poison of sin.

Verse 16 - **John 3:16** is music to our ears. “**For God so loved the world** (not just a special few, but the whole world)

that He gave (real love gives) His only begotten Son, ("*begotten Son*" speaks of Jesus' deity. *Dogs beget dogs. Humans beget humans. God begets God.*)

To be God's "*begotten*" means Jesus has God's nature. To be God's "*only begotten*" means there's only one God-man, Jesus. No other human being was born with this dual nature. Jesus alone is God and man.

God gave His Son "*that whoever believes in Him* (The key is faith, not deeds or rituals) *should not perish but have everlasting life.*" (Not just really long life, but an eternal quality of life) "*Everlasting life*" begins not just when you die, but the moment you receive Jesus.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Someone suggested that to really appreciate John 3:16 when you come to the words "*world*" and "*whoever*" you should substitute your name... "For God so loved Sandy that He gave His only begotten Son, that if Sandy believes in Him Sandy should not perish but have everlasting life."

*Why don't you try it with your own name...*

Here's a final thought on John 3:16...

Love is always best measured by what a person is willing to give up on behalf of the one he or she loves.

Based on that yardstick there has never been a more extreme love than God's love for you. That God sacrificed His One and Only Son in your place should prove to you once and for all just how much He cares!

Verse 17 “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” Did you know it’s estimated that every year in America, 100,000 people die from diseases that are preventable with the proper vaccines and medicines. That’s 100,000 needless deaths.

But the same phenomenon occurs spiritually - and to an even greater degree. God provides us the anecdote for sin. The only reason a person dies in sin is because they’re too stubborn or prideful to receive the remedy.

Verse 18, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Notice, Jesus doesn’t condemn anyone. He’s not a prosecutor.

The Bible is clear, **Jesus works for the defense.**

He’s obtained for us a pardon, but it’s up to us to receive that pardon... You can reject it, but if you do, don’t blame Jesus for your judgment. We condemn ourselves. Nobody goes to hell because Jesus rejected them. They go to hell because they rejected Jesus.

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” The fellow who’s up to his elbows in sin isn’t the first person in line for the Bible Study. Sin turns us into moles

- creatures that love the dark. The light exposes our sin and evil.

It's not that people *can't believe* - it's that they *won't believe*.

*“Men loved darkness rather than light.”* As long as you're in the dark you believe your own lies. But in God's light, you're forced to deal with the truth.

This is what Jesus says in verse 21, *“He who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*

Verse 22, *“After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.”* Later in 4:2 we learn it wasn't actually Jesus baptizing, but His disciples baptizing for Him. But folks were baptized as followers of Jesus.

*“Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.”* This location was further north of the Dead Sea from where Jesus was baptized. Aenon paralleled the hills of Samaria.

In the fall of the year, the dry season, the Jordan River can be a trickle. John the Baptist needed deeper water, so he moved his headquarters upstream.

And the people still found him! *“And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison. Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.”* The term *“purification”* referred to the outward, ceremonial washings that were so integral to Orthodox Judaism.

“And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified (that is, Jesus) - behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!” John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.” Here the Jews try to fan the flame of even and competition in the heart of John. They point out that Jesus is moving in on his turf and taking away disciples. Satan is trying to stir up jealousy in his heart.

And here’s the key to combating jealousy - it’s realizing all true spiritual authority and blessing comes directly from God. To be jealous of another man’s ministry is to question the wisdom and plan of God.

John the Baptist says in verse 28 “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ John knew who he was, and even more importantly, he knew who he was not.

John had no visions of grandeur. He knew he wasn’t the Messiah - just His advance man. He says, “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.” John was Jesus’ best man.

And the best man doesn’t cut in on the groom and put a move on the bride. He doesn’t compete for her attention. The best man’s job is to *hold the ring, hand the license to the pastor, make sure the groom is on time...* But when the couple says “*I do*” his job is done.

Jesus is the groom. The church is the bride. John was just the best man. And now that Jesus' ministry is moving in full force it's time for John to phase out.

He says in verse 30, "He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease." It's been said, "Another name for a wedding ring is a one-man band." In other words, there's no need for two grooms. Some pastors forget this truth. They draw attention to themselves instead of Jesus. They flirt with His bride. *Shame on such pride!*

I'm a "*friend of the bridegroom.*" My job is to point the bride to Jesus, not woo her myself. Let's have John's attitude, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*"

Notice in Chapter 3, the three "**musts.**" First, the must of the **sinner**, verse 7, "**You must be born again.**" Verse 14, the must of the **Savior**, "**the Son of Man must be lifted up.**" And verse 30, the must of the Lord's **servant**, "**He must increase. I must decrease.**"

Verse 31 "**He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth.**

**He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.**" In other words, the person who follows Jesus is the one who's looking up - who's mind is on heavenly things - who's not distracted by earthly concerns. Jesus came from above, thus if you're looking down you'll miss Him.

I'll never forget my warehouse blunder. I once drove a forklift for a living. I'd roll in and out of a medal cold room all day. My job was to wheel pallet after pallet through an 8 foot high door; then lift the pallets up to a 20 foot shelf. One trip, I raised-up the forks, inserted the pallet, then backed up forgetting to lower the forks.

I was too busy looking down to focus on above, and I rammed the back of those forks right into the medal wall above the doorway. *I'll never know why my boss didn't fire me right there on the spot...* But here's the moral of the story - **we need to be in the habit of *looking up*, lest we miss what God is *bringing down*.**

Verse 34, **“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.”** Ephesians 4:7 tells us, **“To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.”** God gives to every Christian certain spiritual gifts.

We're all entrusted with a measure or portion of the Spirit's endowment. But to Jesus, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. Unlike us, He wasn't given one or two spiritual gifts, our Lord Jesus received them all.

God knows **we** need to be kept on a leash. If God gave us spiritual power without restriction it would go to our heads. We'd go nuts. We'd use God's power selfishly. Whereas, Jesus could be trusted to use the Father's power only to accomplish the Father's will.

Jesus became the depot of all spiritual power.

Verse 35, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand." All God's wisdom and power was given to Jesus. He put all His eggs in one basket.

That's why we need to *believe in the right basket!*

The chapter closes, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."