

The Word

one to one

*A guided read through
John's Gospel
Chapters 2-3*

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Here comes God's promised bridegroom!

JOHN 2:1-12

*In the previous episode:
Jesus announces that He
is the gateway to heaven,
inviting us to come and
see for ourselves.*

*In this episode:
A wedding feast
in Cana... with an
unexpected bridegroom.*

Episode 4

¹ On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,

² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'

A wedding disaster

As we read, we'll see that this section of John is organised around two miracles (signs) which take place at Cana in Galilee.

They are like bookends:

- Starting in chapter 2: the miracle at the wedding...
- ...and closing in chapter 4: saving the official's son from death.

Everything between these two miracles is on the same theme. This is sophisticated writing by someone with a point to make.

Jesus, His friends and His mum are all guests at a wedding. It should be a happy occasion. But there's a problem: the wine has run out. **(v. 3)**

In Jesus' day, the wine running out at a wedding was a big deal. It meant that the bridegroom hadn't done his job properly.

What does Jesus' mother expect Him to do?

- We're not told why or how but she seems to think Jesus will fix it. But will He?

⁴ ‘Woman, why do you involve me?’ Jesus replied. ‘My hour has not yet come.’

⁵ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Woman: the word Jesus uses was a normal way to address a married woman and doesn't suggest any disrespect.

There's a plan!

Jesus keeps referring to His 'hour' throughout the three years of His public life. John refers to it in chapters 2, 12 and 17.

John records Jesus saying that *'the hour has come'* just before He is arrested, tried and crucified. *'When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you."' (John 17:1)*

The hour is Jesus' death and resurrection. Right from the start, this is the plan.

Why does Jesus talk about His 'hour'?

- Jesus wants His mum to know that He's here for something far more important than party tricks.

As we'll see, the wedding party is a picture of what is to come – a perfect relationship with God through Jesus.

⁷Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water'; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.'

They did so, ⁹and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.'

Let the party begin!

Jesus acts, and water is miraculously turned into wine, lots of it.

What is special about this wine?

- Huge quantity! Around 1,000 bottles of wine – way more than any wedding would need. **(v. 7)**
- Excellent quality! The very finest wine – and provided by Jesus, not by the bridegroom. **(v. 10)**

At first glance, it looks like Jesus has simply done a huge favour for a man who failed to properly organise a party.

But there's more to it than that.

Let's flash back
700 years before
Jesus was born to
the prophet Isaiah

Isaiah 25:6, 9a

⁶ On this mountain the
LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for
all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine –
the best of meats and
the finest of wines.

⁹ ...In that day they will say,
‘Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him,
and he saved us...’

Marriage in the Bible is set up as a brilliant picture of the perfect relationship God wants with His people.

The Old Testament refers to God's coming Messiah as the ultimate 'Bridegroom', and to God providing an unmatched wedding banquet.

This was predicted 700 years before Jesus' arrival, by the prophet Isaiah.

What does Jesus do?

- He provides a great feast of wine. **(Isaiah 25:6)**

Why does He do this?

- To let everyone know He's the One they're waiting for, the One who will save them. **(Isaiah 25:9)**

News of this miracle would have spread, announcing the arrival of the promised Messiah.

*Jesus is the long-awaited
Bridegroom who comes to offer
a perfect relationship with God.*

Now back
to John

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

Glory: greatness, majesty.

Signs: miracles performed by Jesus that confirm Him as the Son of God. These miracles are called signs... but what do they point to? John has arranged his material carefully and he tells us towards the end of his book:

'Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.' (John 20:30-31)

Follow the sign

This miracle is public and unmistakable. It takes place in a town at the crossroads of an international trading route. We will soon be reading of Jesus' fame as a miracle worker across the entire country.

What is this story all about?
Glory and belief.

- Revealing the glory of Jesus... (v. 11)
- So that the disciples believe.

The amazing quantity and quality of the wine fulfil the Old Testament promises of the Bridegroom and announce Jesus' greatness, His glory.

But who would have expected the glorious Son of God's plan to be all about His death? That will be His planned-for 'hour'!

*How do the disciples respond?
They get it! Believing in Jesus,
they put their trust in Him.*

Summary

A wedding that points to so much more.

- Jesus, His mum and the disciples are all at a wedding. But there's trouble: the wine runs out. (v. 3)
- Although it's not yet Jesus' 'hour' (the time of His death and resurrection) He steps in, turning water into wine. (v. 7)
- This isn't just any wine. It is the finest quality and in huge quantity – far more than any wedding could have needed. The promised Bridegroom of the Old Testament has announced His arrival. (v. 10)
- John tells us that this was the first of Jesus' signs, showing His glory, who He really is. (v. 11)
- It's enough for the disciples. They believe in Jesus immediately, putting their trust in Him. (v. 11)

What a promise! Like a neon sign, this miracle shows that Jesus is the long-awaited Bridegroom, offering us a perfect relationship with God.

³ ‘They have no more wine.’

⁷ ‘Fill the jars with water.’

¹⁰ ‘...you have saved the best till now.’

¹¹ ...the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory...

¹¹ ...and his disciples believed in him.

Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

John 2:1–12

¹ On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." ⁴ "Woman,^a why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.^b

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

What comes next? We arrive at the temple in Jerusalem, and Jesus acts as if He owns the place.

^a John 2:4 The Greek for *Woman* does not denote any disrespect.

^b John 2:6 Or from about 75 to about 115 liters



Episode 5

Jesus in action

JOHN 2:13-22

*In the previous episode:
Jesus turns water
into wine; His glory
is revealed and the
disciples believe.*

*In this episode:
God's Son causes
chaos in the temple in
Jerusalem... and outrages
the religious leaders.*

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.

Clearing out the rubbish

For the Jews, the temple in Jerusalem was at the heart of their religion: it was the place where they thought God was present and where they could come to be forgiven.

They had to change their money into temple money to buy animals to be offered on their behalf by the priests.

At Passover, the most important festival of the year, the temple would have been full of people.

Imagine the noise: animals bleating; traders shouting; crowds packed in...

What do you make of this violent scene?

- Jesus is rightly furious. The temple, God's house, has been turned into a money-making machine. (v. 15)

¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!'

¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

1,000 years before this happened, King David wrote: *'zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me'* (Psalm 69:9)

King David was desperately concerned for God's glory... he was not put off by those who opposed him.

Why is it okay for Jesus to do this?

- Like King David before Him, Jesus is God's King.
- He is the Son of the 'owner' – it is His house. **(v. 16)**
- He is clearing out the people who have made huge amounts of money taking advantage of God's worshippers.
- Jesus is acting as God's judge.

Isn't it interesting that they don't arrest Jesus for His actions?

King David: the most important Old Testament king of Israel, who ruled in around 1000 BC.

Does this change your picture of Jesus?

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, 'What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?'

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.'

²⁰ They replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?'

²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

Under new orders

In other words – 'Who on earth do you think you are?!'

What does Jesus mean in verse 19?

- The Jews simply don't understand!
- They are thinking of a building that has taken them forty-six years to finish and where God is meant to live. (v. 20)
- Jesus is talking about His physical body, God's presence on earth. (v. 21)

By His death and His resurrection Jesus would achieve everything the temple pointed towards: being right with God and living with Him.

His resurrection will prove His authority.

Jesus' death and resurrection are the proof that He is God's King and has God's authority to judge.

²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said.

Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

True faith

John records a number of Jesus' signs throughout his book, building up to the greatest sign of all: Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Only then do the disciples finally understand and believe Jesus' words, fulfilling all that God said and promised in the Old Testament (the Scriptures).

How does real faith come about?
It comes through:

- Understanding Jesus' works – signs that include His death and resurrection.
- Believing God's Word, the Bible (Scripture).
- Trusting Jesus' words.

Summary

If you ever thought Jesus was just a good teacher, this episode shows that He is so much more.

- This episode takes us to the temple at Passover; the holiest place in the Jewish nation at the busiest time of the year. (v. 13)
- The temple is packed with traders making money from the worshippers. But immediately, Jesus drives them out. (v. 15)
- His reason? These people have turned God's house into a market. (v. 16)
- Jesus' disciples are reminded of David, God's great Old Testament king. Jesus is claiming to be God's King, with God's authority to judge. (v. 17)
- Questioned, Jesus says that His authority will be proved by His death and resurrection. (v. 19)
- John (the writer) tells us that after His resurrection, Jesus' disciples remembered what Jesus had said and they believed. (v. 22)

¹³ ...it was almost time for the Jewish Passover...

¹⁵ ...he made a whip out of cords...

¹⁶ 'Stop turning my Father's house into a market!'

¹⁷ 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

¹⁹ 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.'

²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said.

*How do we come to believe this?
Look at the Bible, listen to Jesus and
understand His death and resurrection.*

Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

John 2:13–22

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!’

¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’ ^a

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, ‘What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’

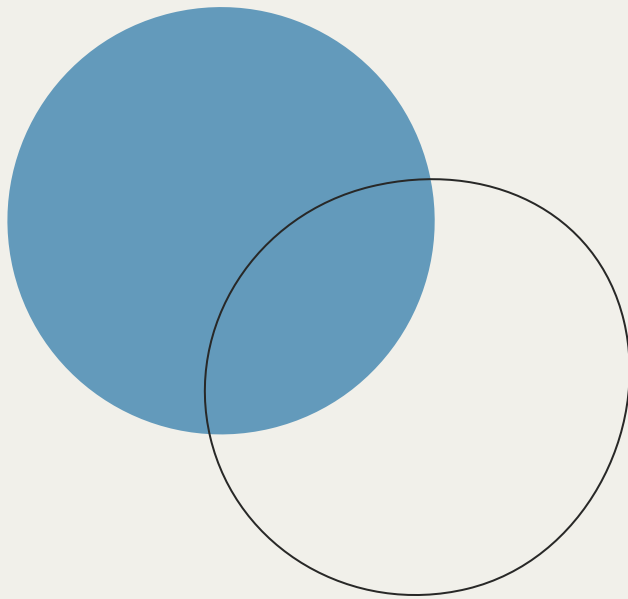
¹⁹ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’

²⁰ They replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

*What comes next?
In walks a senior Jewish leader for a secret one-to-one with Jesus at night.*

^a John 2:17 Psalm 69:9

Episode 6



Coming into God's kingdom

JOHN 2:23 – 3:15

*In the previous episodes:
Jesus turned water
into wine and cleared
the temple. He is
proving to be the long-
awaited Messiah.*

*In this episode:
Two questions
answered... Who gets
into God's kingdom?
And how do we get in?*

²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people.

²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

Perfect knowledge

Remember the theme for this section?

From chapter 2 to chapter 4 we see Jesus' arrival as God's Messiah (King), bringing God's perfect kingdom as He fulfils Old Testament prophecy.

Clearly there was a positive response to Jesus:

- The crowds like the miracles and many '*believed in His name!*' (v. 23)

Does Jesus' response surprise you?

If He was just a self-promoting celebrity, He would love the crowd's praise. He doesn't. Instead, He draws back from them. (v. 24)

Why won't Jesus allow the crowds to take Him as their leader? Because He knows what people are truly like. (v. 25)

¹ Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

² He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.’

³ Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’

Kingdom: God’s kingdom is the place where the Messiah rules for ever. To be in the kingdom is to be in God’s family.

No entry... No matter how religious

Meet Nicodemus:

- He is a Pharisee, a respected religious leader. (v. 1)
- He has political power as a member of the Jewish ruling council.
- He loves the miracles and knows there is something special about Jesus. (v. 2)

What needs to happen to Nicodemus?

- Jesus isn’t impressed with his religious qualifications. To enter God’s kingdom he needs to be born again. (v. 3)
- There is only one way into the kingdom of God, even for the super-religious. No one can enter any other way.

Remember: ‘Very truly’ is Jesus saying ‘Pay attention. This is important!’

Jesus makes clear that belief in God or even believing the miracles isn’t enough to enter His kingdom.

Being religious doesn’t interest God. Even if you’re the Chief Rabbi, something different is needed!

But what does it mean to be born again?

Let's go
back to the Old
Testament again

Ezekiel 36:25–27a

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you...

No entry... Except by new birth

Let's look at the Old Testament to see what Nicodemus should have known.

Ezekiel was a prophet sent by God around 600 BC, a time when God's people faced exile for rejecting Him.

Ezekiel's prophecy shows that God will restore His people by bringing:

- Forgiveness – symbolised by washing with water. (**Ezekiel 36:25**)
- God's presence – by the Holy Spirit within them. (**Ezekiel 36:27**)

The Jewish people had been longing for the fulfilment of God's promises, which they would have known from childhood.

Nicodemus should have known:

- That no one can enter God's kingdom without God's forgiveness.
- That God Himself was coming to bring a new heart and new spirit.

Now back
to John

⁴ ‘How can someone be born when they are old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!’

⁵ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

What does it mean to ‘be born of water’?

- To receive the spiritual washing away of our sin. (v. 5)

What does it mean to ‘be born of the Spirit’?

- To receive a fresh start; a heart transplant from God by His Spirit. (v. 6)

Here are the water and the Spirit of Ezekiel’s prophecy.

John the Baptist had said that his washing was symbolising something much bigger.

Jesus would come and baptise with the Holy Spirit.

Flesh: means human. Humans give human life.

Spirit: means from God. God gives spiritual life.

⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.”

⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.’

Why does it have to be like this?

- First, because God does things His way. It’s not us who are in charge of entry into God’s kingdom. **(v. 8)**
- Secondly, because we humans are only ‘flesh’ – we need God to work to make us something more.

⁹ ‘How can this be?’
Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ ‘You are Israel’s teacher,’
said Jesus, ‘and do you not
understand these things?’

¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we
speak of what we know, and
we testify to what we have
seen, but still you people do
not accept our testimony.

¹² I have spoken to you of
earthly things and you do
not believe; how then will
you believe if I speak of
heavenly things?

No entry... Except by faith

Nicodemus is confused...

- He just doesn’t get it! (v. 9)
- As Jesus points out, Israel’s top teacher should have understood that doing lots of religious stuff isn’t what gets a person into God’s kingdom. (v. 10)
- The real problem? Nicodemus doesn’t yet accept that Jesus has come from God. (v. 11)

What does Jesus tell Nicodemus to do?

- He needs to believe and accept what Jesus is saying about Himself if he is to understand all this.

How can a person be born again? No human can ever get to God, or understand God unless God steps down from heaven to meet us.

*Jesus confronts Nicodemus
with the stunning news that
He is God, standing right in
front of him.*

How do we get
to the point of
accepting such an
outrageous claim?

¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.

¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'

Jesus takes us back to the Bible book of Numbers, written in about 1300 BC.

- Despite God's goodness, His people had rebelled against Him.
- So He judged them by sending deadly snakes (the punishment for sin and rebellion in the Bible is always death).
- But God also provided a way they could be rescued from His judgement.
- A bronze snake was lifted up on a pole. If the people trusted God and looked at the snake (looking death in the face), God removed His punishment, and the people were saved.

Why does Jesus tell this strange story?

- He is telling Nicodemus that He has come to be lifted up on the cross, to die so that we can all be saved. (v. 14)
- Just as Israel needed to look to the bronze snake to be saved, so we need to look to the cross. (v. 15)
- We need to trust God that He will remove His punishment for our sin through Jesus.

The cross is the only way into God's kingdom and the way to eternal life.

Summary

Who would expect that being right with God is not about religious things we try to do?

- Israel's top religious teacher, Nicodemus, comes to Jesus for a secret one-to-one. (v. 1)
- Jesus isn't impressed with how religious Nicodemus is. He needs to be born again. (v. 3)
- In fact we need to be born of water and the Spirit. That means we need a new heart from God Himself. (v. 5)
- This shouldn't have surprised Nicodemus. Ezekiel had predicted a time when God would do exactly this. (v. 7)
- Nicodemus doesn't understand. But the real problem is that he doesn't yet believe. (v. 11)
- Like the snake in the wilderness, Jesus is to be 'lifted up' on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. (v. 14)
- Believing in Jesus is the only way into God's kingdom. (v. 15)

¹ He came to Jesus at night...

³ '...no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.'

⁵ '...no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit...

⁷ 'You should not be surprised...'

¹¹ '...still you people do not accept our testimony...'

¹⁴ '...just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.'

¹⁵ '...everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.'

However good or religious we try to be, new life can only come through Jesus.

Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

a John 2:23 Or in him

b John 3:3 The Greek for *again* also means *from above*; also in verse 7.

c John 3:6 Or but spirit

d John 3:7 The Greek is plural.

e John 3:8 The Greek for *Spirit* is the same as that for *wind*.

f John 3:13 Some manuscripts *Man, who is in heaven*

g John 3:14 The Greek for *lifted up* also means *exalted*.

h John 3:15 Some interpreters end the quotation with verse 21.

John 2:23 – 3:15

²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. ^a ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. ²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

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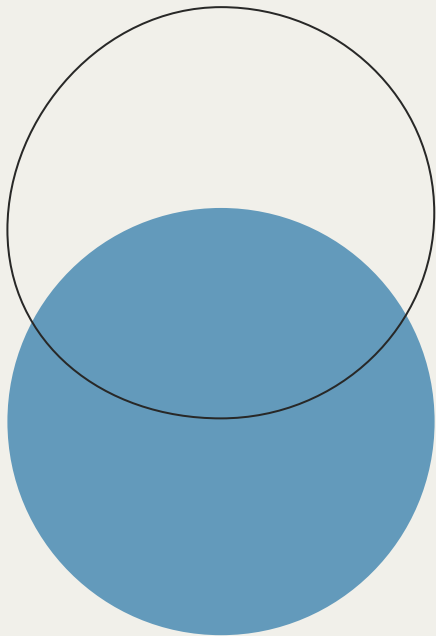
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*What comes next?
We get the best-known
verse in the Bible...*

Episode 7



No entry except through Jesus

JOHN 3:16-36

*In the previous episode:
Jesus explained that a
person can only enter
God's kingdom if God
gives them a fresh start.*

*In this episode:
God's rescue and
God's rescuer.*

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

The world: in John's Gospel this means all people ignoring God, living in darkness, trying to go through life without having Him in charge.

Perish: to die and face God's judgement for refusing to recognise Him for who He is.

God's rescue

This is often said to be the most famous verse in the whole Bible.

What do these verses tell us about God?

- God loves us (the world). **(v. 16)**
- His love is so great that He gives His Son to die for the sin of the world.
- This is our only hope. Without believing in God's Son we perish but believing in His Son brings eternal life.

Why did God send His Son?

- To bring eternal life. **(v. 16)**
- To save, not condemn. **(v. 17)**

God loves and wants to save the world through His Son.

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

¹⁹ This is the verdict: light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

What is our current position before God?

- It is clear: whoever does not believe in Jesus is condemned. (v. 18)

Judgement is the result of how we have treated God in this world.

Jesus came to change this:

- Light comes into this dark world as Jesus shows us what God is like, what we are like, and how to be saved. (v. 19)
- Sadly not everyone will listen – even as Jesus appears many will choose to stay in the dark to cover up their evil.

If we reject Jesus we stay condemned, choosing to stay in the 'darkness', rather than coming to Jesus, the light.

Condemn: a legal term, meaning 'guilty verdict', 'sent down.'

²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

If we reject Jesus what does this tell us about ourselves?

- We hate the light and prefer the dark! (v. 20)
- We'd rather cover up our evil than come to Jesus.

If we come to Jesus?

- We are responding to the truth about Him as we step into the light. (v. 21)
- Even though we will still fail – we are adopted into God's family, living life with Him.

These are huge claims being made about Jesus. John the Baptist comes back to tell us more...

²² After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptised.

²³ Now John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptised. ²⁴ (This was before John was put in prison.)

²⁵ An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing.

²⁶ They came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan – the one you testified about – look, he is baptising, and everyone is going to him.'

God's Rescuer

The story moves on:

- Jesus and His disciples are baptising people in the countryside. (v. 22)
- John and his disciples are also baptising. (v. 23)
- This starts an argument... (v. 25)
- ...and the followers of John the Baptist aren't happy. Jesus is baptising like John did and getting all the attention. (v. 26)

John the Baptist now comes back centre stage to underline what Jesus has been saying about Himself... and about us...

²⁷ To this John replied, 'A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.'

²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, "I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him."

²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less.'

John's reply is very humble:

- He sees His work, which has had such an impact, as a gift from God. (v. 27)
- He's been saying it from the start – He is simply preparing the way for the Messiah. (v. 28)

John says Jesus is 'the Bridegroom.' As we saw at the wedding in Cana in episode 4, this means He is God's long-promised Messiah, who comes to bring us into a perfect relationship with God Himself.

And John's role?

- He is like a best man (the friend of the bridegroom). (v. 29)
- His God-given job, to point people to Jesus, is done. (v. 30)
- No wonder he is happy. Jesus is now the centre of attention.

John wants everyone to come to Jesus.

³¹ The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.

³³ Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.

³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

Why should we listen to Jesus?

- Jesus is above all – He alone is from heaven. (v. 31)
- When He speaks He is telling us what He has seen and heard from God. (v. 32)

But will we accept what He tells us?

When we listen to Jesus our life shows (has certified) that He is who He says He is. (v. 33)

Jesus is filled with God's Spirit and speaks the words of God. (v. 34)

*When we listen to Jesus,
we listen to God.*

³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

So how important is Jesus?

- God the Father has given everything, His whole rescue plan, to Jesus. (v. 35)

Why?

- Because the Father loves the Son. (v. 36)

Jesus has the right to speak the way He does. The consequences of listening to Him are life-changing.

- Believe in Jesus = eternal life. (v. 36)
- Reject Jesus = the wrath (judgement) of God remains on us.

Do you see how John says 'whoever'?

Eternal life is open to everyone, depending on how we respond to Jesus.

When it comes to the words of Jesus, our response to Him is the difference between life and death.

Summary

How does new birth come about? It takes an amazing rescue plan.

- Because God loves us, Jesus came to die, so that we need not perish under God's right judgement. (v. 16)
- As things stand, we're condemned. (v. 18)
- But those who accept Jesus come into the light and are rescued. (v. 21)
- Although John's disciples are puzzled that Jesus is getting all the attention, John is happy. His work is done. The Bridegroom is here. (v. 29)
- There are good reasons to listen to Jesus: He can tell us about God because He's the only One who has seen God. (v. 32)
- Everything turns on how we respond to Jesus. If we believe, we have eternal life; if we reject Him, God's judgement of our sin stays on us. (v. 36)

To be right with God, how we respond to God's Son is everything.

¹⁶ '...that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

¹⁸ '...whoever does not believe stands condemned...'

²¹ 'Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light...'

²⁹ 'That joy is mine...'

³² 'He testifies to what he has seen and heard...'

³⁶ 'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.'

Why not find a moment
to re-read what we've
looked at in this episode?

a John 3:30 Some interpreters end
the quotation with verse 36.

b John 3:34 Greek *he*

John 3:16–36

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

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Chapters 1 – 3: recap

Chapter 1:

Jesus, the King, is God on earth.

Chapter 2:

The kingdom has arrived!

- **Episode 4:** God's glory – seen at the wedding feast.
- **Episode 5:** God's judgement on empty religion – seen as Jesus threw out the money-changers from the temple.

Chapter 3:

How do we get into the kingdom?

- **Episode 6:** Everyone needs to be 'born again' – even the most religious man, the teacher of Israel, Nicodemus. And this new birth can only come through God.
- **Episode 7:** Jesus' death brings eternal life and freedom from the wrath of God. We too can have this if we believe in what God has done through Jesus.

*What comes next?
Prepare for a shock, as we see
just how far God's love reaches.*



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