

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 he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3:17, 18.

Please allow me to jump ahead in John's Gospel and refer you to the account of the woman caught¹ in the act of adultery.² The contrast between the woman and her accusers is stark. Jesus did not excuse her behavior, He forgave her. Her accusers thought they had set a trap from which Jesus could not extricate himself. As it turned out it was a wonderful example of our passage here. The woman was forgiven of her sin because there were no accusers - they had all left because they had been accused by their own guilt - conscience. Salvation is like that. Sin has to be accounted for - that is the work of Jesus Christ in His finished work on the cross. What made the difference with her and her forgiveness was her response to Jesus' question, **"where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?"** Her answer says it all: **"She said, No man, Lord."**³ The woman had received Jesus Christ as her Lord and had received forgiveness.

In a nutshell - Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it - rather His mission was to save the world - the difference between the saved and the unsaved is that the saved responded to the call of the Gospel and the condemned are those who actively *refused* the call of the Gospel. A review of 1:11, 12 might be helpful:

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He came unto his own, and his own received him not. [12] But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: John 1:11, 12.

Jesus' Gospel was intended for *all* men including His own, the Jews. The tragedy was that they were condemned (hang onto your seatbelts!) not by their sinful behavior but by their rejection of Jesus as their Savior. Here's Jesus' condemnation of the Jewish leaders of the day ("his own" of our passage):

Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of

¹ Original, καταλαμβάνω, to seize hold - to capture and detain.

² Chapter 8:2 - 11.

³ My emphasis.

knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. Luke 11:52.

Not only had they rejected Jesus' Gospel but they were hindering those who would enter into a personal relationship with Him! That was their condemnation. Let's return to our passage in chapter 1. The Jews did not **receive** Jesus. The original παραλάμβανω (*paralambano*) is a compound word *para* + *lambano* has the same preposition used in ch 14:26 where the Holy Spirit is called our comforter - one called alongside.⁴ The preposition "para" lends a very close intimate flavor to its partner-word. Here para (alongside) + lambano means to welcome into one's life as an associate or friend - even a family member. For example, Joseph was told not to be afraid of scandal when Mary was found to be pregnant with the child, Jesus, but to **take her unto himself** as his wife - our word *paralambano*.⁵

So we see that the issue was not that "His own" were condemned for their sins, as such, but that they were condemned *by their own rejection of Jesus' Gospel - He, Himself*. So, the purpose of the Gospel is to save. The condemnation comes when the sinner sees in that moment of conviction by the Holy Spirit that he is, indeed, completely bankrupt of any good that would permit passage into the Son's kingdom. Indeed, he, in that moment of "coming to himself"⁶ sees his true condition

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as did Isaiah: **"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."**⁷ Isaiah, having seen the Glory of Jehovah, was completely ruined - a term not devoid of financial meaning - a term of total calamity - to be cut off from all that a person would hold dear to his well-being. Remember that Isaiah was a member of the court so this term had special significance to his confession. The Gospel is literally the Glory of God revealed to the sinner and as such does bring on this sense of bankruptcy but immediately offers the Person of Christ and His salvation. The true emphasis, however is not that of condemnation but of good news - that Christ died for the sinner's sins and that he need not stand in condemnation but that he can welcome - call alongside into his life, the Person of Jesus Christ - much in the same way as the

⁴ παράκλητος *para+kletos*, one called alongside.

⁵ Matt. 1:20.

⁶ As with the prodigal son of Luke 15.

⁷ Isaiah 6:5.

disciples experienced on the way to Emmaus⁸

The Pre-eminence of Jesus' Gospel.

He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:30.

We must remember the total ministry of John the baptizer. Yes, he was the voice that cried in the wilderness "behold the Lamb of God." But he also was very much involved in the ministry of revival of Judah. We covered that in our previous lesson "[John the Baptizer: Witness of the Light.](#)" It would have been quite natural for his disciples who, themselves, were caught up in the thrilling ministry (after they themselves were revived by John's ministry) of family renewal, of religious fervor for Jehovah to be concerned for what seemed to be a waning of their influence in revival in Judah: **"And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."**⁹ We need to read the context and we should see the legitimate concern that John's disciples had about their waning ministry. There is a lesson for us here. It is easy to get caught up in our own agenda - our own idea of our mission for Christ. John's mission was coming to a close - he knew that but his disciples did not. Self-examination is the order of the day for us all. Is our mission for Christian service in line with that of Jesus' mission? Whole Christian denominations were founded on missions - doctrinal distinctives that became a quagmire for the organization after the initial excitement and drive became the "fog of war." We as a church need to be aware of this "fog" and stay on track with Christ's Gospel - His mission: **"Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] Teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you all the days (perpetually, uniformly, and on every occasion), to the [very] close and consummation of the age. Amen (so let it be)."** Matt. 28:19, 20, AMP, footnote links removed. John Debrine pointed this out in a recent letter he sent to me that the command is not just to evangelize the world but that we should go into the world and *make disciples*. This is His Gospel - that He died for the sins of the world and that He desires a personal relationship with us and that our lives set aside unto Himself. Circling back to our earlier comments - this is the true meaning of receiving Jesus Christ into our lives.

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John, Friend of the Bridegroom.

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but

⁸ Luke 24:13:53.

⁹ John 3:26.

that I am sent before him. [29] He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:28 - 30.

May we as a church never forget that Jesus is the Bridegroom. What a man of God was John. He knew what God had apportioned to him. It would have been easy for him to become protective of his "turf" but he stated it quite succinctly here - he was just the friend of the Bridegroom - he had to step aside and let the Bridegroom have his day. May we never forget our role in the church - yes, I'm mixing metaphors here - we are at once the friend of the Bridegroom and the Bride (as a church) but the lesson is clear - our mission is to declare the Gospel of Christ - not to carve out a ministry niche for ourselves with an attitude of self-importance.

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John's declaration of Christ and His Gospel.

He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. [32] And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. [33] He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. [34] For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. [35] The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. [36] He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:31 - 36.

Oh this is so profound and a perfect abstract of Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Let's outline it:

- Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God (v 31).
- Jesus speaks that which the Father has given to Him (v 32).
- Jesus truly represents God (v 33).
- Jesus literally speaks the words of His Father and is given the Holy Spirit without measure (v 34).
- Jesus has been given all things into His hand by the Father - He is ruler over all creation (v 35).
- All sinners may share in the Life of Jesus Christ as His intimate associates forever.
- Those sinners who reject the Son, reject life. Indeed, **they receive the wrath of God upon this rejection.** Until then, they are candidates for the Words of Life.

So we close this most important section of John's Gospel. We could have spend much more time with it - it is so profound but in the interest of retaining our survey of the Gospel of John, we move on. I promise you that some day I will return to this chapter and treat it with the same detail that I did the Prologue - it is that important to me.

The message is clear: Jesus is literally the center of the issue of eternal life. We learn later that He is the only way to the Father. Yet the call is so clear and inviting. As the adulterous woman found her meeting with her Lord so comforting and such a relief - so may all sinners. There is no rational reason for any sinner to carry around the weight of his guilt of sin. There is no rational reason for any sinner to be alone in his groping after God. God is nearby as close as the opening of his heart to the Lord.¹⁰ This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is the Bridegroom calling unto Himself his Bride, the Church.

¹⁰ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; Acts 17:27, AMP footnote links removed.