

MAN'S CONDEMNATION

JOHN 03:18–21

Introduction

God sent His Son into the world to save the world, but this does not mean that everyone is automatically saved. In fact, some are condemned and doomed. Jesus reveals man's condemnation.

- I. Who is condemned? Not the believer, but the unbeliever (v. 18).
- II. When is he condemned? Already (v. 18).
- III. Why is he condemned? (vv. 18-20).
- IV. Who escapes condemnation? (v. 21).

I. *John 03:18 Freedom from Condemnation*

Who is condemned? Not the believer, but the unbeliever.

1. The believer is not condemned. Note three facts.
 - a. The critical importance of belief cannot be overstressed. Belief stays, prevents, arrests, and stops judgment. The person who *believes in Christ*..
 - is acquitted as though he never sinned
 - is released
 - is not to be captivated again (by guilt, fear, bondage, shame)
 - is not to be condemned (judged)
 - is not to be dealt with in justice
 - b. The believer is saved. He is as guilty as the unbeliever, but there is one critical difference: the believer believes in Jesus Christ and has committed his life to Him. The believer is actively and diligently seeking Christ (Heb. 11:6). God will save any man who will believe and seek and honour His Son (Jn. 12:26; See *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2:24).
 - c. The believer is released from condemnation because he believes in Christ. The believer believes that Christ died for his sins, in his place, as his substitute, paying the penalty for his sins (which was death).
2. The unbeliever is condemned. Note two critical points.

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

Rom 8:1 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Rom 8:34 *Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

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2. The unbeliever is condemned. Note two critical points.

- a. Note who the unbeliever is. He is the person who “has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” God has one and only one Son. The man who *has not already* believed on God’s Son is the unbeliever. It does not matter who the man is or where he is; he is an unbeliever if he *has not already* believed in the one and only Son of God.
- b. Note what it means to be condemned or judged. (See *Perish*, Jn. 3:16.)

II. *John 03:18 Condemnation of Unbelief*

When is the unbeliever condemned? Already, right now. It is not that he is to be condemned; he is already condemned. At least three things are meant by being *condemned already* (ede kekritai).

1. Condemnation is a sure fact. The unbeliever’s judgment is sure, so sure it is as though he has already been condemned. Nothing can change or stop the judgment from coming upon the unbeliever. Ignoring, denying, and struggling against the great day of judgment will not change one detail of the day. It is coming, and every single unbeliever will be judged.
2. The unbeliever is *already* under the present curse of sin. He is...
 - separate from Christ
 - excluded from citizenship with the people of God
 - a foreigner to the promises of God
 - without hope
 - without God in the world (Eph. 2:12)

Perishing means to be in a lost state in this world. It means to be...

- aging, deteriorating, decaying, dying. (Mt. 8:17; 1 Cor. 15:50)
 - without life (purpose, meaning, significance). (Jn. 1:4; 10:10)
 - without peace (assurance, confidence, security in God’s keeping).
 - without hope (of living forever). (2 Tim. 4:18.)
3. The unbeliever already stands guilty of all the sins he has ever committed; he is already condemned. The law of God already exists. Every time a man breaks the law of God, he immediately becomes guilty and is condemned. The judgment is already pronounced. The unbeliever must pay the penalty for every transgression of God’s law. He is already *under the curse, the full force* of the law.

Gal 3:10 *All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”*

Gal 3:12 *The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.”*

III. *John 03:18–20 Reasons for Condemnation*

Why is the unbeliever condemned? Four reasons are given.

1. The unbeliever has not believed. The great sin of unbelief is that it neglects, ignores, denies, abuses, and rejects God's Son.

=> The dignity of God's Son is ignored.

Christ is eternal. Note three profound statements made about Christ, the Word (Jn. 1:1-2).

- a. Christ was pre-existent. This means He was there before creation. He has always existed. The testimony of John was that Jesus Christ was the *Word*, the One who has always existed. He is the Son of the living God. (Phil. 2:5-8.)
- b. Christ was coexistent. He was and is face-to-face with God forever. The word *with* (pros) has the idea of both *being with* and *acting toward*. Jesus Christ (the Word) was both with God and acting with God.

The testimony of John was that Jesus Christ was the *Word*, the One who has always coexisted with God. Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.

- c. John did not say that "the Word" was *the God* (ho Theos). He says "the Word" was *God* (Theos). He omits the definite article. John was saying that "the Word," Jesus Christ...
 - is of the very nature and character of God the Father, but He is not identical to the person of God the Father.
 - is a distinct person from God the Father, but He is of the very being and essence (perfection) of God the Father.

When a man sees Christ, he sees a *distinct person*, but he sees a person who is of the *very substance and character* of God in all of His perfect being.

=> The truth of God's Son is not believed. Christ became flesh. The Incarnation did take place. The Son of God was actually made flesh. He came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. There is no doubt about John's meaning here.

The word "flesh" (sarx) is the same word that Paul used to describe man's nature with all of its weakness and tendency to sin. This is a staggering thought. Jesus Christ is God — fully God, yet Jesus Christ is man — fully man. (1 Jn. 4:2-3.) The word "seen" (theasthai) means actually seeing with the human eye. It is used about twenty times in the New Testament. There is no room whatsoever for saying that God's becoming a man was merely a vision of some man's mind or imagination. John was saying that he and others actually saw the Word become flesh. Jesus Christ was beyond question God Himself who became man, who partook of the very same flesh as all other men. (1 Jn. 1:1-4.)

=> The goodness of God's Son is not embraced (Jn. 1:14).

=> The dearest thing to God's heart is denied (Jn. 3:16).

=> The name that is above every name is abused and cursed (Phil. 2:9).

=> The one and only Son of God is rejected (Jn. 3:16-19).

Christ is the great remedy for man's sins. Therefore, unbelief — rejecting and refusing to believe Him — is the great damning sin.

John 3:36 *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”*

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

2. The unbeliever is condemned because Light has come into the world. The Light came into the world to give light to men, to enable men to walk out of the darkness of a sinful and perishing world. The Light came to show men the way, the truth, and the life:

=> The Light shows man the way God intends for him to live.

=> The Light shows man the truth of life, that is, the truth of God and of man and of the world that surrounds man.

=> The Light shows man the life, that is, how to save his life and avoid the things that cause him to stumble and lose his life.

The point is this: the life of Jesus Christ now stands in the world to give Light. Any man who does not turn and walk in the Light is naturally in the dark. He is condemned to the darkness and to all that happens to those who walk in the darkness. (See *Light*, Jn. 8:12)

3. The unbeliever is condemned because he loves darkness. Why would he love darkness? Because his deeds are evil, and to turn and walk in the Light would expose his evil deeds for what they are: immoral, unrighteous, and disobedient to God. There are at least four reasons why man prefers to walk in darkness and prefer to hang on to his sins.

a. The unbeliever loves his sin and does not want to turn and face the conviction of the Light. If he turned to the Light, he would have to give up his sin; and he loves the feeling, the stimulation, the comfort, the ease, the challenge, the recognition, the power, the fame, the possessions, the things which the sin brings. He loves it all too much to give it up.

b. The unbeliever is full of pride. He does not want to confess his sin, the fact that he is in darkness and short of what God demands. He denies he is in darkness, refusing to turn to the Light (Christ).

c. The unbeliever is enslaved, in bondage to sin and gripped by the darkness; he has been in darkness so long that he does not have the strength to break the enslavement.

d. The unbeliever fears the shame, embarrassment, and consequence of his sin. In some cases he would like to confess his evil and correct it, but fear keeps him from coming out and facing the Light (Christ).

Eph 5:3-6, 11 *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

1 Th 5:4, 6-7 *But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.*

1 John 1:6 *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*

Psa 82:5 *They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*

Prov 4:19 *But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.*

4. The unbeliever is condemned because he does not come to the Light. Whatever his reasons, the unbeliever refuses to come to the Light; therefore, he is condemned.

Rom 13:12 *The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.*

Mat 15:14 *“Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”*

Jer 23:12 *“Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished,” declares the Lord.*

Zep 1:17 *I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth.*

Thought 1. The unbeliever is uncomfortable in the Light. Therefore, he shuns everything that presents the Light to him: the church, believers, the Bible, prayer and spiritual conversation.

Note that unbelievers are said to hate the Light. They ignore, reject, deny, and fight the Light. They speak and write against it, ridicule and curse it, persecute and seek to stamp it out.

John 1:4-5 *In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 12:35 *Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going."*

John 12:46 *"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."*

2 Cor 4:6 *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

Eph 5:14 *For it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper; rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

Isa 9:2 *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.*

JOHN 08:12 JESUS THE LIGHT

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." **John 08:12***

Jesus is said to be the *Light of men* (Jn. 1:4) and the *Light of the world* (Jn. 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). It is possible for the Light, Jesus Himself, to be in men (Jn. 11:10; see Col. 1:27) and for men to become children of Light (Jn. 12:34-36).

Apparently, Jesus used the word *light* often. John uses the word twenty-four times. What is meant by calling Jesus the Light?

1. Jesus, the Light, is light by nature. Light is what He is within Himself, within His being. His nature, His essence, His character. Scripture says...
 - that "God is Light" (1 Jn. 1:5);
 - that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15);
 - therefore, "Jesus is Light." He is "the Light of the world."
2. Jesus, the Light, tells us that He is holy, righteous, and pure. Light is the symbol of purity and holiness. Light means the absence of darkness and blindness; it has no spots of darkness or blackness, nor of sin and shame.
3. Jesus, the Light, reveals. His light shows clearly the nature, the meaning, and the destiny of all things. His light shines in, spots, opens up, identifies, illuminates,

and shows things as they really are. The light of Jesus Christ shows the truth about the world and man and God. The light of Jesus Christ reveals that He loves and cares for man and wants man to love and care for Him.

4. Jesus, the Light, guides. His light allows a man to walk out of darkness. Man no longer has to grope, grasp, and stumble about trying to find his way through life. The path of life can now be clearly seen.
5. Jesus, the Light, does away with darkness and with chaos. His light routes, wipes out, strips away, and erases the darkness. The empty chaos of creation was routed by the light given by God (Gen. 1:3). Jesus Christ is the Light that can save man from chaos (Jn. 14:1, 17; 12:46; 16:33).

Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Light of the world at the great Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:2). The very first ceremony of the Feast holds great significance for Jesus' claim. It was called "The Illumination of the Temple" and was held in the Court of the Women. The centre of the Court was surrounded by large sections of stadium-like seats. In the open space of the Court sat four huge candelabra. When darkness fell the candelabra were lit, and the elders danced and led the people in singing psalms before the Lord all night. The brilliance and glow from the burning flames of the huge candelabra were said to be so bright that the light could be seen throughout the whole city. It was against this background that Jesus cried out, "I am the Light of the world." □

JOHN 08:12 DARKNESS (SKOTOS, SKOTIA)

The word is used in Scripture to describe both the state and the works of man. Darkness is very real in Scripture.

1. The darkness refers to the world of the natural man who does not know Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:12). The natural man walks in ignorance...
 - of Jesus Christ
 - of God as revealed by Jesus Christ
 - of the real purpose and destiny of life as shown by Jesus Christ

The natural man stumbles and gropes about in this world. He knows nothing other than the things of this world as he sees them. His only hope is the hope of living a long life before death overtakes him. He walks in darkness, ignorant of real life now and hereafter (see Jn. 12:35, 46).

2. The darkness symbolizes unpreparedness and unwatchfulness. It symbolizes the time when evil occurs (1 Th. 5:4-8).

3. The darkness is loved by men. Sinful men do their evil deeds under the cover of darkness. Men therefore hate the light because the light uncovers their evil behaviour (Jn. 3:19-20).
4. The darkness is hostile to light. □

JOHN 08:45–47 JESUS CHRIST, WITHOUT SIN

The third proof of man's depravity is the sinlessness of Jesus. Jesus made the most staggering claim: no man could prove Him to be a sinner. No person could prove a single sin in Him. He was sinless and perfect. He was in the closest imaginable relationship with God, of the very same nature as God: sinless, holy, righteous, pure — perfectly so. Jesus claimed to be the Perfect Man.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.

Heb 7:26 Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

1 Pet 2:22 “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

1 John 3:5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

Note the all important question: Since He was sinless, why do men not believe Him? He was telling the truth. Therefore, men should believe Him. Jesus answered His own question.

=> He who “belongs to God” hears what God says.

=> He who does not “belong to God” does not hear what God says. The person who does not belong to God does not hear and believe because he is not a child of God. He is a child of the father of lies, the devil.

Mat 13:15 ‘For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’

2 Tim 4:4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Zec 7:11 “But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears.” □

IV. *John 03:21 Escape from Condemnation*

Who escapes condemnation? The man who does three things.

1. The man who practices truth and lives righteously escapes condemnation. He knows what is right and he does it. The verb is continuous action. He practices truth, continually and habitually. Note two things about this man.
 - a. This does not mean he lives perfectly, without ever sinning. No man is or can be perfect. It means that the man who directs his life toward truth diligently seeks the truth and seeks to be truthful. He may slip and sin, but he immediately turns back to God, repenting and hanging on to his integrity.
 - b. Christ said that the man who is truthful hears His voice (Jn. 18:37; 1 Jn. 1:6). Only the man who desires truth is saved, and every man who comes to the truth is saved. Christ is truth.

John 8:32 *“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

1 John 1:6-7 *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

2 John 1:4 *It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.*

3 John 1:3 *It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth.*

Psa 26:3 *For your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth.*

Psa 86:11 *Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.*

2. The man who comes to the Light escapes condemnation. Only the Light (Christ) can dispel the darkness in a man's life.
3. The man whose works are done through God escapes condemnation. The words *done through* (*eirgasmena*) mean to work, produce, perform, originate, manufacture, and fashion from something. The idea is that the man *comes to Christ* (the Light) so that his works will be done through, originated, and worked in and of God. The man who comes to Christ lives close to God. He walks and talks and listens to God (His Word), and he does what God says (2 Cor. 1:12).

Mat 5:16 *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

John 14:21 *“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”*

1 Tim 6:17-18 *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

Titus 2:7 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

Heb 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased*

James 2:17 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ■*