



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

**#C4 - The Light of The World**  
**John 3:1-21**

**PICTURES NEEDED**

C4-1 Capitol Christmas tree

C4-2 Nicodemus with Jesus

C4-3 Moses and bronze snake on pole

C4-4 Jesus visual

C4-5 Wise men following the star

Optional: A small treat for each student

**REVIEW (Before Teaching Lesson)**

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:** (Included in lesson)
- **Bible Verse Review:** 1 Peter 1:18-19  
How is Jesus the Lamb of God? Jesus lived a perfect life and shed his blood to take away our sin.

*<sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

## LESSON CONTENT

In this Christmas study, we have been looking at who Jesus is. We saw that “the Word became flesh.” What does it mean that Jesus is the Word? Jesus is the expression of God’s mind or thoughts. He makes the reality of who God is visible and real to people.

What does it mean that the Word became flesh? Jesus was a man. The God who is infinite, eternal and spiritual became a finite, temporal physical being, so that people could see God and enter a relationship with him.

In the last lesson, we looked at the fact that Jesus is “the Lamb of God.” What does it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God? Jesus lived a perfect life; he was without sin. He came to give his life as a sacrifice to cover the sins of men so they could have a relationship with God who is holy and perfect.

In this lesson, we are going to look at the truth that Jesus is “the Light of the World.” **(picture C4-1)** This Christmas tree was put up in front of the Capitol Building in Washington DC. Why does this Christmas tree, like so many others, have a star on top? The star reminds us at Christmas how God led the wise men to Jesus. However, more than that it should remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World. In John 8:12 Jesus said this about himself, “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*”

In this lesson we are going to look at what the Light does for people. John 3:1-21 relates a story of Jesus talking to a man named Nicodemus, who was an important Jewish religious leader. **(picture C4-2)**

### John 3:1-2

*<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”*

Who was Nicodemus? He was an important Jewish leader.

Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus at night? He probably didn’t want others to know what he was doing. Most of the other religious leaders were very opposed to Jesus.

What motivated Nicodemus to come to Jesus? He knew Jesus was doing miracles and that fact caused him to believe that Jesus was sent by God. He wanted to know and understand more about Jesus and what he was doing.

### John 3:3-8

*<sup>3</sup>In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”*

*<sup>4</sup>“How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!”*

*<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup>You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup>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."*

What does it mean that flesh gives birth to flesh? Physical life is referred to as flesh. Physical life only comes from physical life. You are alive physically because your mother, who is also a physical being, gave birth to you.

What does it mean that the Spirit gives birth to spirit? Spiritual life is of a different nature than physical life. It has to come from the Spirit; it doesn't come from the physical realm.

What does it mean to be born again? First, a person is born physically. When a person comes to understand who Jesus is and puts his faith in him then he undergoes a second, spiritual birth.

What is the result of being born again? A person comes alive spiritually and can enter the kingdom of God.

What does it mean to enter the kingdom of God? To be in the kingdom of heaven, a person comes under God's rule or dominion. He puts himself under God's authority. He can live in God's presence both here on earth and for all eternity.

Even though he was a religious leader and a teacher of the people, Nicodemus didn't understand what Jesus was saying.

### **John 3:9-15**

*<sup>9</sup>"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.*

*<sup>10</sup>"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup>I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*

Do you know what the reference of Moses lifting up the snake in the desert refers to? **(picture C4-3)** When the people of Israel were wandering in the desert, they spoke against God and Moses. Because of that God sent venomous snakes among them and many of them died. When they went to Moses and confessed their sin, God told Moses what to do for them. Numbers 21:8-9 says, <sup>8</sup> *The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."* <sup>9</sup> *So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.*

How does that reference relate to Jesus being lifted up? Jesus was hung on a cross to make payment for our sins. When we look up to him, confess our sin and believe in his name we will be saved from death; we come into God's eternal kingdom.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus more fully what he meant.

## John 3:16-21

*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. 17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18Whoever 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. 19This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."*

What caused God to send his Son? God loves all people and wants them to come into a relationship with him. He won't reject anyone who is humble, sees his need for forgiveness and believes in what Jesus has done.

What does it mean to be condemned? If you are condemned, then you have been found guilty of some criminal act for which you must be punished.

What condemns us? Our own sin condemns us. We are all guilty in the eyes of God and deserve punishment. Because God is holy, he can't be in the presence of sinful people who are guilty and condemned.

What happens to a person who believes in Jesus? If we put our faith in Jesus, we are no longer condemned. The perfect Lamb of God paid the price for our sin by dying on the cross. Jesus took on our punishment, paying the penalty for our sin, so God's sees us as innocent, not guilty. This is the state of having been made perfect (justification) that we talked about in the last lesson.

What happens to people who don't believe in Jesus? They remain in their condemned state. They don't receive the benefit of what Christ did for them. Their sins aren't covered.

What is Jesus described as being in this passage? Light

What does physical light do for us? Light enables us to see the world around us and what is real about things. It enables us to live.

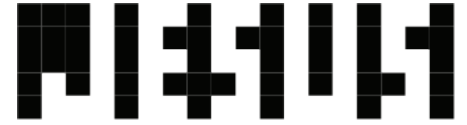
What does the light of Jesus do for us? The light of Jesus reveals the condition of our hearts. If we want to be clean we come into the light so we can see what is in our hearts and needs to be cleaned out. It enables us to live spiritually.

Why do people reject Jesus? They love darkness more than light.

What does that mean? They want the things of the physical world more than what is of God and the spiritual world. They are focused on material things that won't last, rather than the truth of God and the eternal. If we stay in the darkness, we will never experience the abundant life that Christ wants to give us.

What happens when we walk in darkness? To see what exists and is real we have to have light. If we want to continue doing things that are not of God and therefore evil then we resist the light and stay in the darkness. In the darkness we can't see what is in our hearts and needs to be cleansed.

What did Jesus come to do? Jesus came to reveal the condition of our hearts and make a way for us to come out of the darkness and truly live. The evil condition of our hearts and the bad things we think and do condemn us. Jesus wants to save us from that condemned state and give us new life. That new life isn't physical, it is spiritual. That is why we have to be born again to become children of God.



**(picture C4-4)** (Use the Jesus visual for the questions and explanation that follow.)

If in looking at this visual image of black and white shapes you focus on the dark shapes, what do you see? You see just a meaningless pattern of black shapes.

If you focus on the white space what do you see? You see the word Jesus. Once you see the word Jesus you can't see the shapes any other way.

What does the illustration mean in terms of seeing the real Jesus, the one and only Son of God? If we focus on the world and what is dark and not of God then we will miss seeing Jesus. If we focus on the light and what is of God then we can see Jesus. People miss seeing who Jesus is, not because he isn't there, but because they can't see him where they are looking. If we are born again, then we are alive spiritually and can see who God is. We don't miss seeing the things of God.

Illustration: Tell the students you have a special treat for them. Have them close their eyes tightly and keep them closed as you put the treat in front of them. Once you have put the treat out tell them they can have it if they can tell you exactly what it is without opening their eyes or touching it. Explain that the treasures of God are like that; they are there but people who are in darkness can't see them and don't know what they are. They are spiritual and can't be touched physically. Only through the light of Christ can you see what the treasures are and recognize their value. Let the students open their eyes so they can discover and enjoy the treat.

To be able to see and receive the treasures and truth of God, we have to want Jesus more than the things of the world. How do you know what it is you really want? Whatever you think about and whomever you want to please show what is in your heart. Your actions will reveal what you really desire.

How do we know we love Jesus? Our love for Jesus is shown by our obedience to him. John 14:21 says, *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.* If you love Jesus you will obey him because you want to do what is right, not because your parents are forcing you or you want to look good, but because you really want to please him.

Challenge: Pray and be led by the Spirit in the way you should challenge the students in your class as you complete the Christmas study with this lesson.

Sample Challenge: The first challenge as we wrap up the study this Christmas is: "Have you put your faith in the Lamb of God so that you are not condemned and can enter the kingdom of God?" For those of you who have put their faith in Jesus, the challenge for you is a daily one: "Do you want the light of Jesus to shine in your life and show you your sin?" "Is the Holy Spirit at work in your life making you holy or are you following the ways of the world?" "Are you daily walking in Jesus' light or do you like the darkness more?"

## LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** Who was Nicodemus? (1) What did he recognize about Jesus? (2) What did Jesus say must happen for a person to enter the kingdom of God? (3) What did he mean by that? (5-7) Why did God send his son into the world? (16) What does it mean to be condemned? Why are men already condemned? (18) What does it take to be saved from condemnation? (18)
- **Thought Questions:** How is Jesus the light of the world? What are the two ways people respond to the light? What does the light enable us to see about ourselves? What happens when we walk in darkness? Why do people resist coming into the light?
- **Prayer:** Thank God for the gift of eternal life that comes through Jesus. Pray that you would want to walk in the light as he is in the light and be cleansed of any desire to live in darkness. Thank Jesus that he came to save you and give you life. Pray that you would live in obedience to Jesus out of love for him.
- **The Big Question: Why do people reject Jesus?**  
Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: John 3:19-20**  
People reject Jesus because they love darkness instead of light.

*(<sup>19</sup>This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.) <sup>20</sup>Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

## ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: Nicodemus came to Jesus to learn more from him and Jesus taught him important truths.

1. To be saved a person has to be born again of the Spirit.
2. If a person is born again by believing in Jesus, he/she will gain spiritual life and become a child of God.
3. People reject Jesus because they love darkness rather than light and don't want their evil deeds exposed for what they are.

- ★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the class notes and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse.

- ★ **Activity Page:** Maze

Instructions: Help the wise men find their way through the maze to the star.

- ★ **Further Understanding:** What does the light of God do?  
Instructions: Have the students look up the following verses, which refer to God's light. For each verse, have the students fill in the missing word to summarize what God's light does for us.

Psalms 4:6 – Shows what is good

Psalms 18:28 – Turns darkness into light

Psalms 27:1 – Overcomes fear

Psalms 36:9 – Enables us to see

Psalms 76:4 – Reveals God's majesty

Psalms 89:15 – Makes God's presence real

Isaiah 2:5 – Leads us in God's way

Luke 2:30-32 – Brings salvation

John 8:12 – Overcomes darkness

1 John 1:5 – Reflects God's essence

2 Corinthians 4:6 – Gives knowledge of God

Ephesians 5:8-10 – Produces good fruit in us

The journal is passed out at the end of class for the students to complete at home. It has six readings that answer a digging deeper question. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

## Digging Deeper: What happened after Jesus' Birth?

### Reading 1: Matt. 2:1-8 – Wise Men: Seeking the Savior

Where did the Magi come from? (1) (Although we can't be certain, the Magi were probably astrologers who studied the stars and were advisors to the King of Persia.) Why did they come to Jerusalem? (2) How did Herod determine where the baby was? (3-5) What did Herod tell the Magi to do? (8) What can we learn from the Magi? How does the reading relate to Isaiah 55:6-7?

### Reading 2: Matt. 2:9-12 – The Star: Leading to the Savior

How did the Magi find Jesus? (9-10) Where was Jesus? (11) What were the gifts they gave Jesus? (11) Why didn't they go back to Herod? (12) How do you know the Magi thought Jesus was a king? How do you think the Magi felt finding a king in an ordinary house? What do you think is the significance of the gifts they brought?

(Myrrh was an aromatic gum extracted from the leaves of a special plant. It was used in beauty treatments (Ester 2:12). It was mixed with wine and offered to Jesus on the cross as a pain reliever (Mark 15:23). It was also applied to Jesus' body after his death. (John 19:39-40) Incense is an aromatic compound burned on special occasions. People all over the world have used it in religious rituals. The Israelites burned it in the temple. (Jeremiah 6:19-20) The burning of incense in scripture is often a symbol of prayer. (Psalm 141:2) Gold is a precious metal and has been used throughout history as a standard of exchange. The tabernacle and temple in Jerusalem were decorated with gold in honor of God.

### Reading 3: Matt. 2:13-15 – Egypt: Calling out of captivity

Why did Joseph take Jesus and Mary to Egypt? (13) How long did they stay? (15) What do you see as the significance of Jesus being taken to Egypt and then brought back? (Egypt was a place of refuge for the Israelites when God led Jacob and his family there to escape a famine. It later became a place of captivity as the people were made slaves. God had to send Moses to lead them out of slavery. Jesus came out of Egypt and leads us out of our captivity and slavery to our own sin.)

### Reading 4: Herod: Demonstrating man's evil

What did Herod do when he realized the Magi had outwitted him? (16) What had Jeremiah the prophet said about this? (18) (Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife. She was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. From Joseph came the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which were the two most prominent and powerful tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. The use of the name Rachel would personify the nation of Israel.) Can you think of other rulers throughout history who were cruel like Herod? What drives men like Herod? What happened to him when he faced God in judgment? How can you relate what Herod was like as a person to the reason Jesus came to earth?



Reading 5: Matt. 2:19-23, 1 Cor. 1:26-31 – Nazareth: Being despised and rejected  
Why did Joseph take Jesus to Nazareth? What things does God choose? Why?  
Why do you think God selected a despised town to be the place where his son was raised? (At the time of Jesus to call someone a Nazarene (meaning from Nazareth) was the same as saying they were “despised.” Read John 1:45-46. The Old Testament never says that the Savior would be called “a Nazarene” but it does say that the Savior would be despised and rejected. See Isaiah 53:3.)

Reading 6: Isaiah 9:1-7 – The Child: Given to us  
Who would God honor? (1) What would the people walking in darkness see? (2)  
What would be shattered? (4) Who would be born? (6) What would be the names by which the child is called? (6) What would there be no end to? (7) How did Jesus fulfill this prophecy from Isaiah?