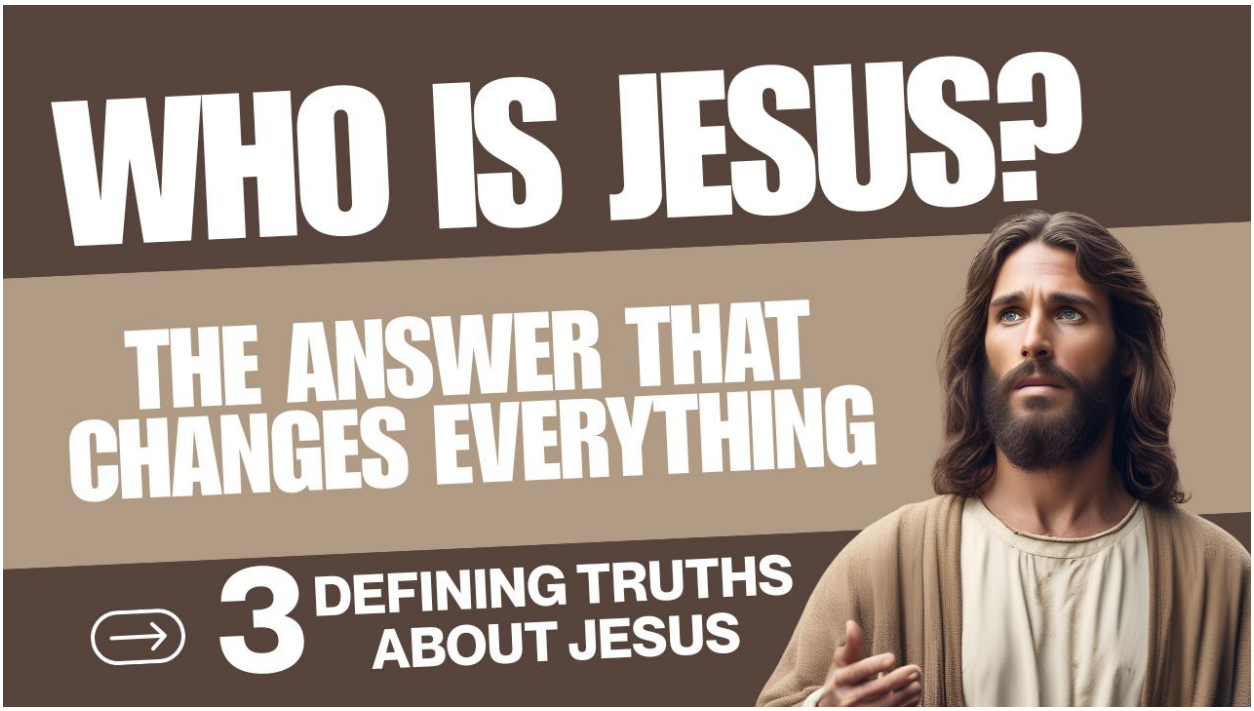

Good News in a Divided World
Part #2 – Who is Jesus?

Discussion Guide on John 3:16-21

This sermon's call to answer the question "Who is Jesus?" by looking at John 3:16–21—not as a cliché verse but as God's rescue message in miniature—echoes the heart of our mission as Christians. It challenges us to move beyond treating Jesus as a distant inspiration and instead surrender to Him as Savior, Deliverer, and Light of the world who changes our eternity and sends us back into a divided world with hope.

Section 1 – ENCOUNTER

Observing God's Word

Imagine a respected religious leader slipping through the streets at night—robes rustling softly, questions swirling loudly, heart heavy with a mixture of curiosity and fear. He has status, knowledge, and years of religious experience, yet something in him knows he is still missing the One truth that can quiet his restless soul. Under the cover of darkness, he finds Jesus, the carpenter's son turned miracle-working rabbi, and begins a conversation that will echo through history: What does it really mean to be born again, to be saved, to see the kingdom of God?

- In John 3:1–21, Nicodemus comes with questions, but Jesus comes with answers that cut through the fog: God loves the world, God sent His Son, there is real condemnation, and there is real rescue—but only in Him. These verses pull the curtain back on who Jesus truly is and why He came, showing that neutrality is not an option and that the answer to "Who is Jesus?" really does change everything.

Let's start our study by anchoring ourselves in Scripture. Read John 3:16–21 (ESV) as a group, family, or an individual, letting God's Word sink in.

Core Questions

- What do you notice about the words Jesus uses to describe God's love, the world, belief, condemnation, light, and darkness in John 3:16–21? Why is this relevant?
- What are key words, phrases, or themes that grab your attention in this text?
- What do you learn in these verses about the character of God, the identity of Jesus, and the condition of the human heart?

Section 2 – EXPLORE

As we dig deeper into John 3:16–21, we discover that Jesus is not simply offering a comforting verse to stitch on a pillow; He is unveiling God's rescue plan for a world that is already condemned without Him. John 3:16–21 shows us the heart of God, the mission of the Son, the necessity of genuine faith, and the uncomfortable truth that people often cling to darkness rather than step into the light.

The sermon reminds us that many people recognize John 3:16 and can quote it, yet still miss its meaning—treating Jesus as an inspiring figure rather than the unique Son of God who alone can save them from perishing. In a divided world where people want encouragement without surrender and spirituality without repentance, this passage confronts us with three defining truths about who Jesus really is.

> **Quote** – "You must make your choice…Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse." – **C.S. Lewis**, *Mere Christianity*

- What does this quote teach us today about the impossibility of staying neutral about Jesus?

Truth #1 – Jesus Christ "The Unique Son of God" is the Author and Giver of Eternal Life (John 3:16)

John 3:16 declares that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. The sermon highlights that this verse begins not with our search for God, but with God's great love for us—love so deep and costly that the Father gave His one and only Son for a world that had rejected Him.

This verse is broad enough to encompass the vilest sinner and yet narrow enough to exclude all who refuse to trust in Christ on His terms.

Discussion Questions

- How does starting with "For God so loved the world" reshape the way you think about salvation as God reaches down to you in love?
- In your own words, what is the difference between admiring Jesus from a distance and truly "believing into" Him with surrendered trust?
- How does understanding Jesus as the unique Son of God—the only One who can keep you from perishing—change the way you answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" in life?

Truth #2 – Jesus Christ "The Deliverer" Is the Only Savior Who Can Redeem You from Your Sin (John 3:17–18)

John 3:17–18 reveals that God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him, and that whoever does not believe is "condemned already." The sermon explains that the word "condemn" describes someone who has already been found guilty and now awaits the final judgment. Humanity is not neutral, waiting to see how things turn out—we stand guilty before a holy God and desperately need a Savior.

Jesus did not come to condemn a neutral world; He came to rescue a condemned world. Saving faith is more than agreeing with the facts of the Gospel; it is a surrender of the will, a self-denying trust that bows to Jesus as Lord and follows Him sacrificially. There is salvation in no one else.

Discussion Questions

- How does the picture of being "condemned already" challenge the idea that people are spiritually fine as they are, as long as they are sincere?
- In what ways have you seen people prefer "advice" or self-improvement instead of admitting the need for a true rescuer?

Truth #3 – Jesus Christ "The One Who Sets You Free" Is the Light of the World Who Has Defeated Death and Darkness Forever (John 3:19–21)

In John 3:19–21, Jesus explains that the light has come into the world, but people loved darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. The problem is not a lack of light; it is a love of darkness. People avoid the light because it exposes what they would rather hide, revealing that the human problem is not merely intellectual but moral and spiritual.

Jesus later declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." The Gospel offers mercy, forgiveness, cleansing, and eternal life, but it also exposes pride, hypocrisy, and unbelief. It is better to come to the light and live than to cling to the shadows and perish.

Discussion Questions

- According to Jesus, why do people often resist Him even when the light of the Gospel is clearly shining?
- Where have you seen the light of Christ expose something in your life that you would rather have kept hidden? How did stepping into the light ultimately lead to freedom?
- How does seeing Jesus as the Light of the world who has defeated darkness shape the way you live and witness in a divided, confused culture?

Section 3 – EMBRACE

Applying God's Word

Go deeper into the Word of God by applying what you've learned to your life today. Reflect on these action steps and discuss how you can live out the truths from John 3:16-21.

Examine Your Answer to "Who Is Jesus?"

Take time this week to write out your honest answer to the question, "Who is Jesus to me right now?" Are you treating Him more as inspiration, advisor, or distant example—or as the unique Son of God, Deliverer, and Light of the world?

- Identify one area where you have wanted encouragement without surrender or comfort without repentance, and ask the Lord to bring that area under His loving authority.

Move from Admiring to Trusting

Using John 3:16, write a brief personal confession of faith that moves beyond admiration into trust: "Because God so loved me that He gave His only Son, I will…" (fill in with one specific step of surrendered obedience).

Step Into the Light Intentionally

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one "dark corner" in your life where you have been hiding sin, fear, or shame from God and others.

- This week, choose to "come to the light" by confessing that area to the Lord and, if needed, to a mature believer who can walk with you. Pray specifically that Christ's light would bring cleansing and freedom rather than condemnation.

Share the Rescue with One Person

Jesus came for people who are perishing, not for those who think they can save themselves. Ask God to bring to mind one person in your life who is wondering if anything still makes sense.

- Pray for that person by name, then look for a natural opportunity this week to share John 3:16–18 with them, briefly explain who Jesus is, and invite them to consider placing their trust in Him.

Memorize and Reflect

Memorize the sermon's memory verse, John 3:16 (ESV): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

- Reflect on how this verse moves from God's heart ("God so loved"), to God's action ("He gave"), to your response ("whoever believes"), and to your destiny.

Closing Challenge and Prayer

The answer to "Who is Jesus?" is not merely a theological idea; it is the line that divides perishing from eternal life, darkness from light, and condemnation from rescue. As a group, pray for one another to surrender fully to Jesus as the unique Son of God, the only Deliverer, and the Light of the world. Ask the Lord to help you move beyond familiarity with John 3:16 into a fresh encounter with the Savior it proclaims.

- Father, thank You for loving this broken world—and broken people like us—so much that You gave Your one and only Son. Thank You that in Jesus, we do not have to perish, but can have eternal life. Forgive us for the times we have admired Jesus from a distance while clinging to our own way. Use our words, lives, and church to point a divided world to the only Savior who can rescue, redeem, and set us free. In Jesus' name, Amen.