

A 40-DAY FAITH EXPERIENCE

LIGHT

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

What qualities of a nation and its citizenry are usually associated with Darkness?

- Anger
- Hatred
- Racism
- Cheating
- Violence
- Dishonesty
- Conflict

What qualities of a nation and its citizenry are usually associated with Light?

- Kindness
- Truthfulness
- Honesty
- Compassion
- Trust
- Communication
- Cooperation

That is why we need a series on Light

Why 40 Days?

Number “forty” + (time period) is mentioned 146 times in Scripture.

It symbolizes trial and testing, probation, or the fulfillment of promises.

40 Days in the Bible

- Spies spent 40 days searching out the Promised Land. (Numbers 13:25)
- The Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness, one year for each day they explored the Promised Land. (Exodus 16:35 & Numbers 14:33-34)
- Israel was led by judges for 40 years each by Eli, Othniel, Barak, Gideon.
- King Saul reigned for 40 years. (Acts 13:21)

Last week...

Where it all begins

Genesis 1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

God is not bound by time... Bereshit ("in the beginning") begins time

Then God said, “Let there be **light**”; and there was **light**. Genesis 1:3

בַּיּוֹמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי-אוֹר

First recorded words spoken by the Creator God are “Yehi Ohr” יְהִי אוֹר .

Lessons during 40 Days of LIGHT

January 10 Where it all begins

January 17 **L** Learn

January 24 **I**

January 31 **G**

February 7 **H**

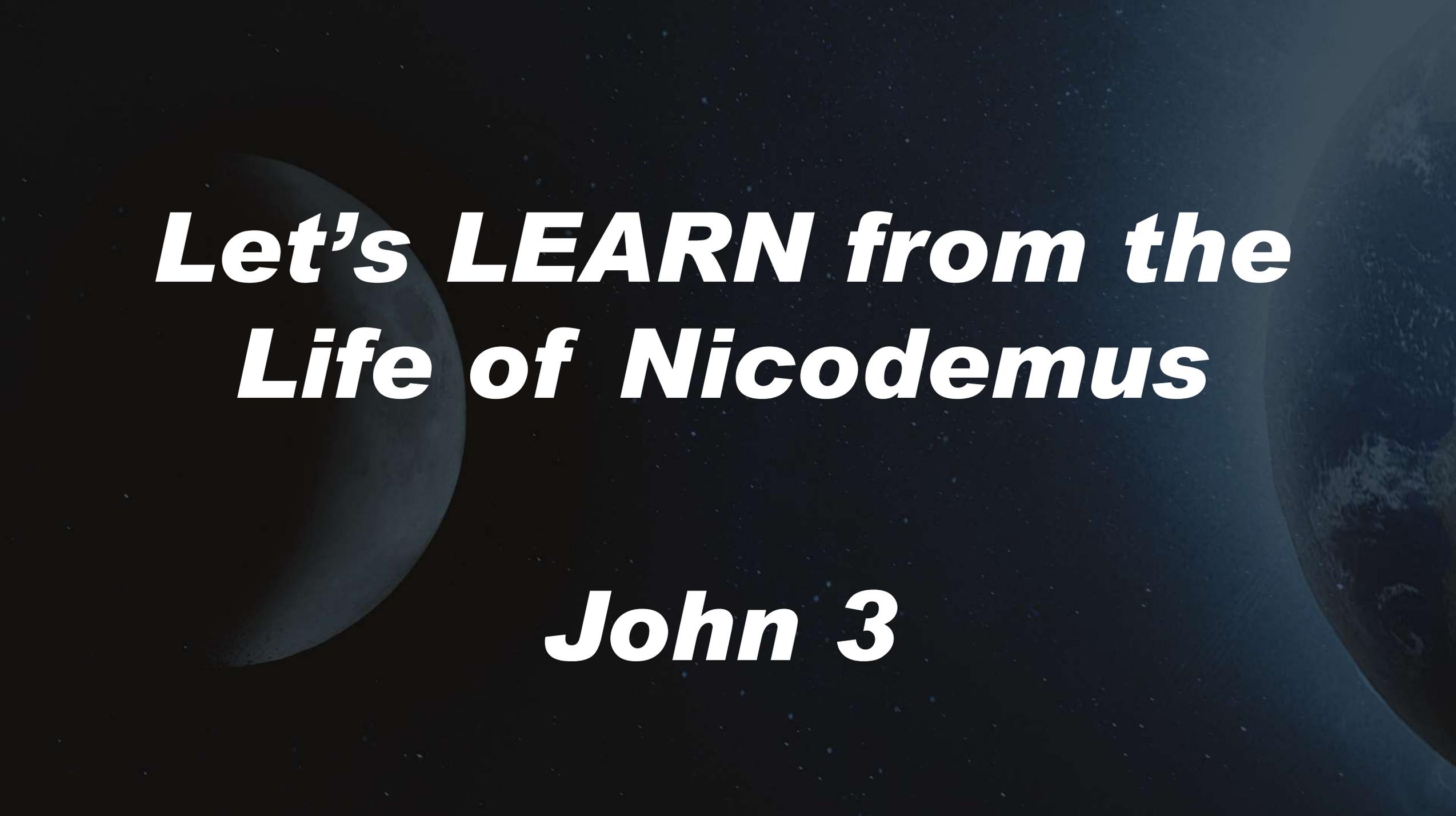
February 14 **T**

First Melissa's passion is to make disciples of Jesus who:

REACH INTENTIONALLY
CONNECT AUTHENTICALLY
EQUIP
CONTINUOUSLY
LIVE PASSIONATELY



Learn

The background of the slide is a dark, deep blue space filled with numerous small, white stars. On the left side, a large, dark, circular shape represents the Moon, partially visible. On the right side, a large, curved portion of the Earth is visible, showing the blue oceans and white clouds of the planet. The overall scene is a serene and vast cosmic landscape.

***Let's LEARN from the
Life of Nicodemus***

John 3

Now there was a man of the
Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler
of the Jews; John 3:1

What if you had all the world could offer, yet
still felt spiritually empty?

Spiritual Light \neq Earthly Success

Who was Nicodemus?

- A Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. (Easton's Bible Dictionary)
- A Pharisee, a teacher of Israel, and a ruler of the Jews as described in the Gospel of John. (Harper's Bible Dictionary)

Who were the Pharisees?

Name means “separatists.” Successors of the Assideans who originated in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes in revolt against his heathenizing policy. The first mention of them is in a description by Josephus of the three sects or schools into which the Jews were divided (BC 145). The other two sects were the Essenes and the Sadducees. In the time of Jesus, they were the popular party (John 7:48). Extremely accurate in all matters appertaining to the law of Moses (Matthew 9:14; 23:15; Luke 11:39; 18:12). Paul, before the council of Jerusalem, professed himself a Pharisee (Acts 23:6–8; 26:4, 5). (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

What was the Sanhedrin?

- Name means “a sitting together,” or a “council.” Used in the New Testament (Matt. 5:22; 26:59; Mark 15:1, etc.) to denote the supreme judicial and administrative council of the Jews, which was first instituted by Moses and was composed of 70 men (Num. 11:16, 17). But that seems to have been only a temporary arrangement which Moses made. This council is with greater probability supposed to have originated among the Jews when they were under the domination of the Syrian kings in the time of the Maccabees. The name is first employed by the Jewish historian Josephus. This “council” is referred to simply as the “chief priests and elders of the people” (Matt. 26:3, 47, 57, 59; 27:1, 3, 12, 20, etc.), before whom Christ was tried on the charge of claiming to be the Messiah. Peter and John were also brought before it for promulgating heresy (Acts. 4:1–23; 5:17–41); as was also Stephen on a charge of blasphemy (6:12–15), and Paul for violating a temple by-law (22:30; 23:1–10).
- Said to have consisted of 71 members, the high priest being president. They were of three classes: (1) the chief priests, or heads of the 24 priestly courses (1 Chr. 24), (2) the scribes, and (3) the elders. As the highest court of judicature, “in all causes and over all persons, ecclesiastical and civil, supreme,” its decrees were binding, not only on the Jews in Israel, but on all Jews wherever scattered abroad. Its jurisdiction was greatly curtailed by Herod, and afterwards by the Romans. Its usual place of meeting was within the precincts of the Temple, in the hall “Gazith,” but it sometimes met also in the house of the high priest (Matt. 26:3), who was assisted by two vice-presidents. (Easton’s Bible Dictionary)

this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him,
“Rabbi, we know (οἶδα *oida* – to perceive by the senses)
that You have come from God as a teacher; for no
one can do these signs that You do unless God is
with him.” John 3:2

People who live in spiritual Darkness can observe the Light from afar.

Nicodemus was rich, he was highly educated, he was interested in
spiritual matters, he had a solid grasp of Old Testament Scripture—
but he knew something was missing in his life. (Kenneth Gangel)

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see (οἶδα *oida* – to perceive by the senses) the kingdom of God.” John 3:3

“Born again” is not a political or sports or demographic term, it is a spiritual term as taught by Jesus.

How can you “see” the kingdom of God?

Because Light is always distinguishable from Darkness

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” John 3:4

- Have you ever hoped to know God but could not find the path to meet Him?
- Have you ever been confused about spiritual things?
- Have you ever felt something was missing in life?
- Have you ever tired of the darkness and longed for the Light?

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You [plural] must be born again.’ The wind (πνεῦμα pneuma) blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit (πνεῦμα pneuma).” John 3:5-8

What does “born again” look like?

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14

People can have knowledge without Light

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?” John 3:9-10

Spiritual birth was not a new concept

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” Ezekiel 36:25-27

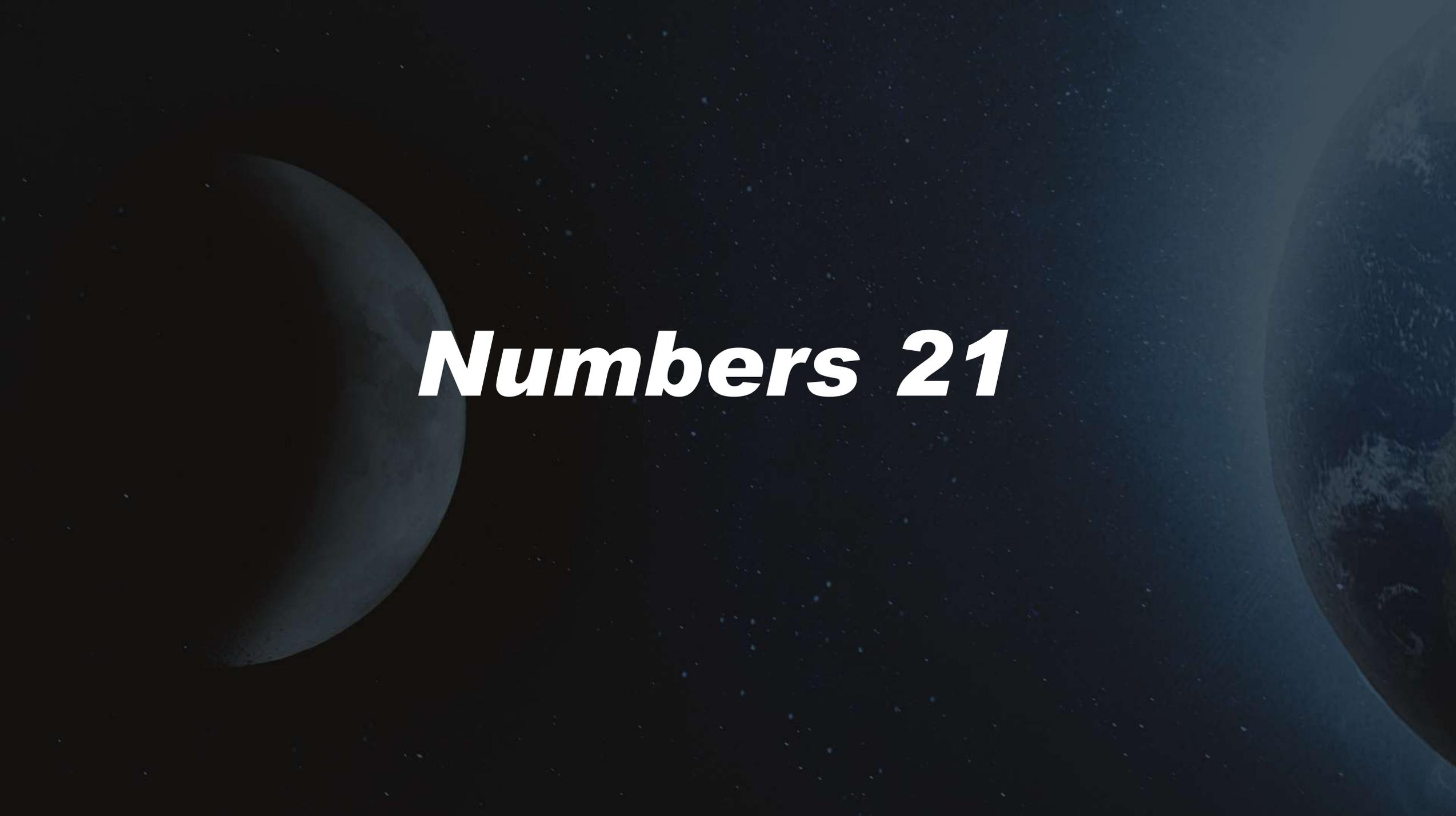
Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.”

John 3:11-13

- Where are you looking to find the Light?
- Who is giving you spiritual directions?

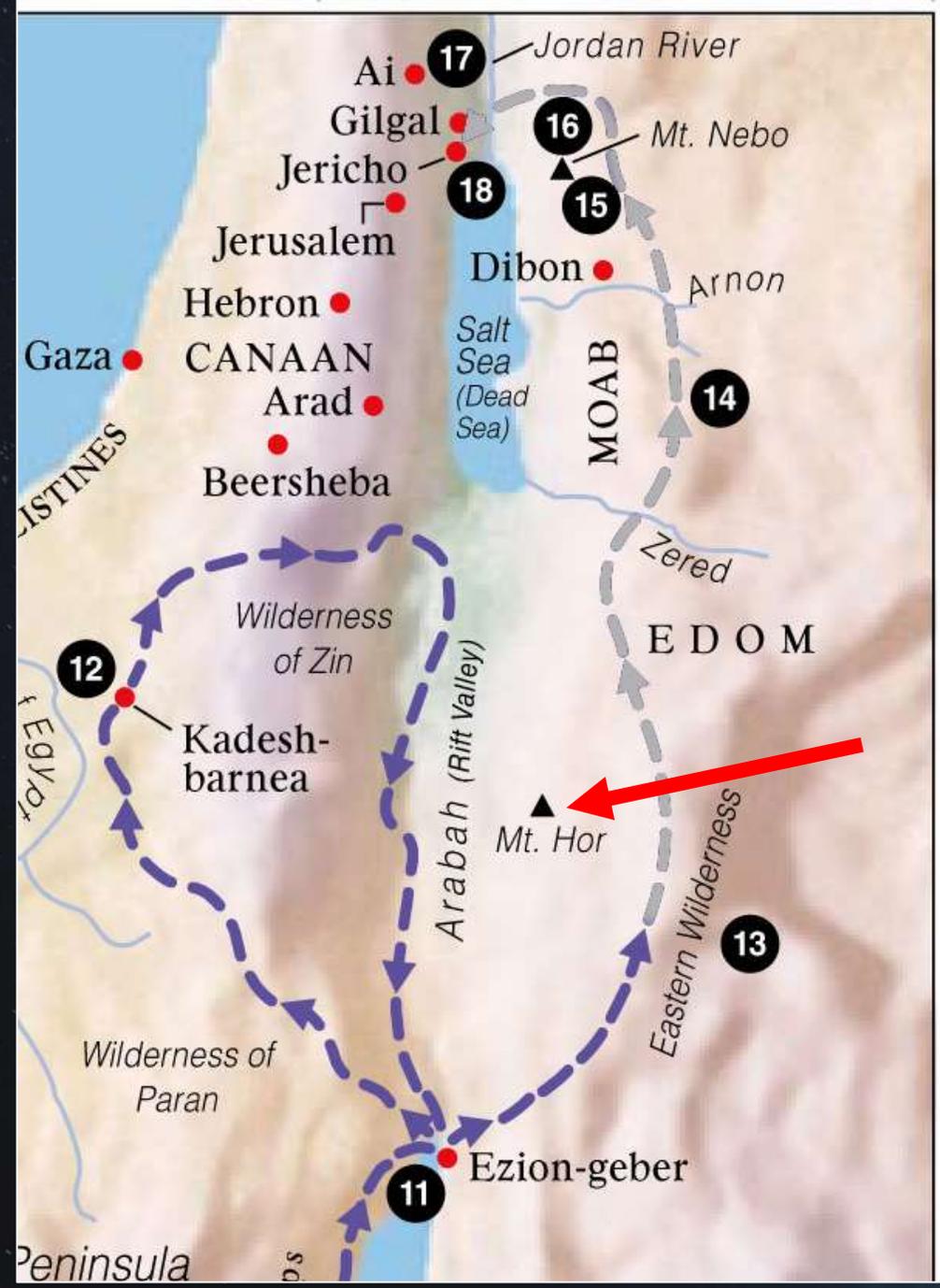
Jesus said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” John 3:14-15

This is a call to believe even when you don't understand

A dark blue space background featuring the Earth on the right and the Moon on the left. The text "Numbers 21" is centered in a white, bold, italicized font.

Numbers 21

Then they [people of Israel] set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food.” Numbers 21:4-5



The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and you; intercede with the Lord, that He may remove the serpents from us.” And Moses interceded for the people. Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.” And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

Numbers 21:7-9

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” John 3:14-15

**The passion of First Melissa
is to make disciples of Jesus...
lifting up the Son of Man**

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world...” John 3:16

What does true love [ἀγάπη agape] look like?

- It is open to all people no matter their background
- It is unconditional
- It is free to the recipient
- It is costly to the giver
- It is patient
- It is life-changing

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world [κόσμος kosmos], that He gave His only begotten Son [reminding Nicodemus of the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac], that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:16

- When we come to faith in Jesus, we are not offered earthly riches or business success or perfect health, we are offered ETERNAL LIFE
- “Perish” (Greek apolētai) means not annihilation but rather a final and eternal destiny apart from God who is life, truth, and joy
- Eternal life is a new quality of life, which a believer has now as a present possession and will possess forever (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- We can find and experience the Light of God on earth

This perhaps most quoted of verses in the New Testament epitomizes the truth of God that has come to Jews and Gentiles alike in Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah.

It teaches that:

- (1) God loves His creation, the world;
- (2) To love is to give, to love much is to give much, and God loves the world so much that He gave what is most precious to Him;
- (3) Yeshua was fully aware in advance that He would die as God's own sacrifice;
- (4) Yeshua knew that He was uniquely God's Son;
- (5) The destiny of man when he relies on himself and does not trust in Yeshua is total destruction (Greek *apollumi*, "be ruined, destroyed, lost")—not cessation of conscious existence, but the eternal suffering that is the inevitable consequence of sin; and
- (6) The destiny of an individual who trusts in Yeshua is everlasting life—not only in the future but right now—not just survival beyond the grave, which everyone has (John 5:28–29; Rev. 20:4–5, 12–15), but positive life "in" Yeshua (John 1:4, 11:25–26). Trusting in Yeshua is not mere intellectual acknowledgement but adherence to, commitment to, trust in, faith in, reliance upon Yeshua as fully human, completely identified with us, and at the same time fully divine, completely identified with God. (Jewish New Testament Commentary)

Jesus said, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” John 3:17

- For many followers of Jesus, their desire is to curse the Darkness
- For Jesus, His desire is to offer Light as comfort and hope
- The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

Jesus said, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:17-18

My eternity is determined by my response to the saving work of Jesus on the Cross

Finding the Light is an act of Faith

Jesus said, “This is the judgment, that the Light [φῶς phos] has come into the world, and men loved the darkness [σκότος skotos] rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.” John 3:19

Why would people prefer Darkness over Light?

*People love darkness not for its own sake but because of what it hides. They want to continue undisturbed in their evil deeds. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

*This implies a deliberate decision to do acts which in God’s sight were evil. This explains why such people hate the light, because it means that the true nature of their deeds will be seen. (New Bible Commentary)

*People love darkness because that is their very nature. (Kenneth Gangel)

Jesus said, “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” John 3:20

He fears that if he comes to the light his deeds will be seen as worthless, and he would need to turn from them.

(Bible Knowledge Commentary)

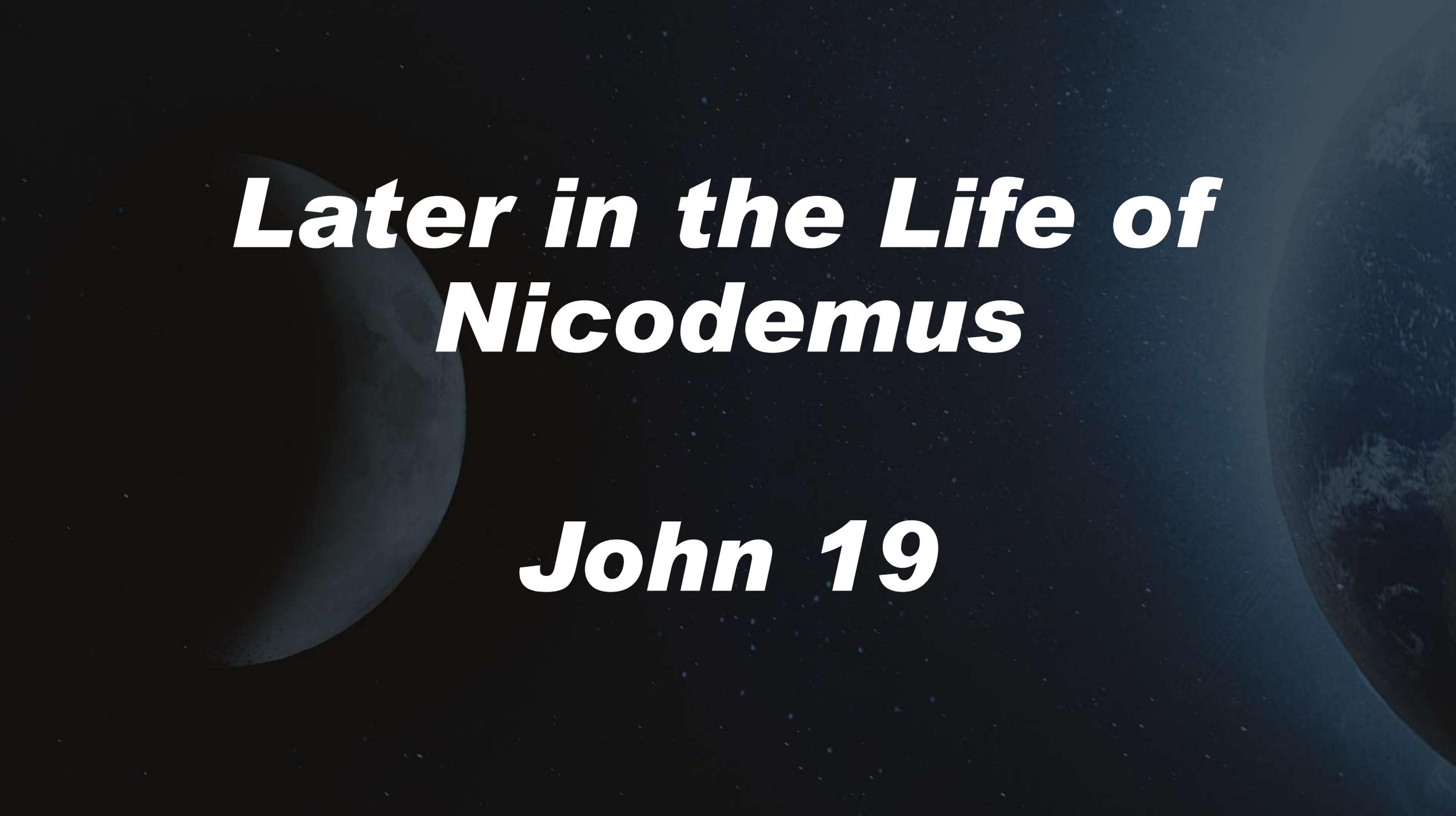
People choose to remain in Darkness in order to hide from the Light, hoping that Darkness will eventually satisfy.

Jesus said, "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." John 3:21

Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
John 14:6

Light is also Truth and Wisdom

God delights to shine truth into the darkness of ignorance, and wisdom into the murk of foolishness. Christianity is not a philosophy, a useful way of looking at the world that will get us through. It is not a system of rituals, following a set of sacred acts to manipulate God's favor. Nor is it essentially a system of morality: doing this and not doing that in order to win the prize of heaven. The beating heart of Genesis and the Bible and Jesus and Christianity is *truth*. The truth about who God is. The truth about what God has done and what He is doing. The truth about humanity. The truth about the new heaven and earth that lies ahead. The luminous truth of the Bible delivers us from ignorance, superstition, obscurity, wishful thinking, and lies. Whereas human religions grope for God, in the Bible God confronts humanity with the bright light of truth.

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***Later in the Life of
Nicodemus***

John 19

Therefore
when Jesus
had received
the sour
wine, He said,
“It is
finished!”
And He
bowed His
head and
gave up His
spirit.
John 19:30



After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. John 19:38

Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. John 19:39-42

How does a person live who has found the Light of God?

People who have experienced the amazing grace of Jesus...

- have new priorities
- have a new mission
- care more about the opinion of God than other people
- are ready to be open and public about their devotion to Jesus
- seek to spread God's Light

What can we Learn today?

- **When** does the search begin? When all that life offers still seems dark
- **Where** does the search begin? The place of spiritual humility
- **Where** does the search end? At the cross
- **How** is light given? By the sacrificial death of the Savior
- **How** is light received? By receiving new life (being “born again”)
- **Who** can give light? God, the Creator of light
- **Who** can receive light? Those living in darkness looking for light
- **Why** was light given? For God so loved the world

Where is Light found?

The life of Nicodemus shows us that you can have Wealth, Education, Influence, Religious Curiosity and Scriptural Knowledge but not have the Light.

The Light of God is given to those “born again” by faith in Messiah Jesus.

Have you met the Savior?