

I heard the voice of Jesus say [Light]

'Sing and Study' Bible Study Series | compiled by Rev. Irene Bom

LENT 4B | Study 4 of 6

SING

I HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS SAY / CH4 540

by Horatius N. Bonar (1808-1889)

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Come unto Me, and rest;
lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon My breast.'
I came to Jesus as I was, so weary, worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place, and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give
the living water: thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in Him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found in Him my Star, my Sun;
and in that Light of life I'll walk till travelling days are done.

ICE BREAKER (allow 20 minutes)

Prep: Sing the song (or listen to a recording) and have someone read out the DID YOU KNOW? column.

Song: What connections, memories or feelings does the song evoke for you? Is there a verse, phrase or image that is particularly meaningful?

Theme: Have someone read out the quotation below. Note how 'Light' features in the song.

LIGHT

source: <https://jesusway4you.com/2016/03/18/bible-signs-and-symbols-light/>

Throughout Scripture, light imagery is consistently used to symbolize life itself, particularly life lived in a way that pleases God.

Beyond the physical element, *light* in the Bible stands for spiritual illumination and truth. It encompasses all that is pure, good, and holy, as opposed to the darkness of evil.

Light also characterizes God himself, the source of all truth.

DID YOU KNOW?

Horatius Bonar was a Scottish minister and respected hymn writer, writing over 600 hymns during his career. *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say* is perhaps his finest.

As with most of his hymns, Horatius wrote this one with children in mind, concerned that they learn and sing the great truths about the person and work of Christ in Sunday School. (Only psalms were permitted to be sung in church services in his denomination in those days.)

Each verse is based on a saying of Jesus (from Matt 11:28, John 4:14, and John 8:12), followed by a personal response.

Just as bringing light into a dark room changes the atmosphere and enables one to see, so the presence of Christ changes one's heart and illuminates all aspects of life. Christians ... we carry [Jesus'] light within us and are responsible to illumine the truth of Christ to others.

In summary the context is:

1. Jesus is in conversation Nicodemus, a leading Jew and teacher in Israel as member of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin - a man with both political and religious responsibilities.
2. Nicodemus came to see the young Rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth, looking for answers.
3. He came by night, probably because he didn't want anyone, especially his religious colleagues, to know.

Read John 3:14-21

DISCUSSION

Listening & Learning Questions

1. What verse jumps out at you? Why?
2. Why mention Moses and the serpent in the wilderness, do you think?
3. What do we learn about Jesus' mission from this passage?
4. Two distinct realities are presented side by side: salvation and condemnation, life and death, light and darkness. Discuss.
5. How are light and truth connected?

Heart & Healing Questions

1. How and why is believing in Jesus so all important?
2. How do you feel about the word 'condemnation'?
3. M.S. Mills writes, 'worldly cares and pleasures, things not evil in themselves but which are worthless from an eternal perspective, are the main hindrance which hold [people] from turning to the Light (Jesus).' Discuss.
4. How would your life change if Jesus flooded it with more light?
5. What word or phrase from the passage (or the song) will you carry with you this week?

CLOSING (allow 5-10 minutes)

Sing the first (or third) verse of *I heard the voice of Jesus say* (or listen to a recording) and end with the closing prayer.

COMMENTARY

v.14 Moses was a Hebrew prophet and leader who delivered his people from slavery in Egypt in the 13th century BCE. **v.14** after God sent fiery serpents against the Israelites as punishment for their grumbling and unbelief, he instructed Moses to raise a bronze snake on a pole so anyone who was bitten could look at it and live. **v.14** *lifted up* can also be translated as 'exalted'. **v.15** *eternal life* is a metaphor for living now in the unending presence of God. **v.16** *world* refers to the whole of God's creation. **v.19** the Greek word for *evil* here denotes the evil which causes pain and sorrow. **v.20** here a different Greek word for *evil* is used, meaning 'trivial, blown about by every wind, worthless, like chaff, belonging to a low order of things'. **v.20** the Greek word for *exposed* means 'convince someone of his fault or error, show something up for what it is'. **v.21** *truth* can also mean 'right motives'.

Note

Later Nicodemus would encourage his religious colleagues to treat Jesus with fairness (John 7:50-52), and, after Jesus' death, he and his colleague, Joseph of Aramathea, graciously took care of Jesus' body (John 19:38-40).

JOHN 3:14-21

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¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness (Num 21:4-9), so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.'

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. ¹⁷ 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 they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

CLOSING PRAYER

by J. Philip Newell, from *The Book of a Thousand Prayers* by Angela Ashwin, #131

O Christ
You are a bright flame before me
You are a guiding star above me
You are the light and love I see in other's eyes.
Keep me, O Christ, in a love that is tender
Keep me, O Christ, in a love that is true
Keep me, O Christ, in a love that is strong
Tonight, tomorrow and always.