

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SESSION 3

Review: Last time we went through chapter 2 where the first miracle of Jesus is recorded at the marriage of Cana. Mary came to him for help when the wedding party was out of wine and he plainly said that his hour had not come (meaning his time to reveal himself to Israel). Yet he turned water into wine in such a fashion as to answer his mother's request and still conceal himself to the guests. He also purged the temple of the moneychangers and their livestock that they were using to gouge the people coming for Passover. He turned their tables over and drove them all out with scourge made of small cords. The chapter ends with many in Jerusalem believing in his name, yet he did not commit himself to them because their faith was based on miracles instead of the man.

John 3:1-3 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. *Nicodemus is called here "a ruler of the Jews" meaning he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council, a religious court and a governing body that included the high priest. He was held in high esteem among the people and was a strict observer of the law. He comes to Jesus by night because he is torn, the Pharisees detest Jesus, yet Nicodemus can't reconcile how a man could do the things Jesus was doing if he were a deceiver.*

The Lord, knowing his heart, "cut right to the chase" and explains why he can't understand it..."Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God". The kingdom of God is SPIRITUAL not natural, it cannot be perceived with the five senses or understood without the help of the Holy Spirit.

John 3:4-7 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of 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. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. *The new birth is a spiritual message that Nicodemus had never heard before and he could not comprehend it. Jesus explains it by saying "Except a man be born of water (first birth, natural) and of the Spirit (second birth, spiritual) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is spiritual and must be entered like this physical world, by a birth. Flesh and spirit are not the*

same and never will be. Flesh can't become spirit and spirit is what is necessary to relate to God who also is Spirit.

John 3:8-9 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? *Jesus uses a natural illustration to explain a spiritual truth. The wind is invisible, yet it can be heard and felt. You don't know where it came from and you don't know where it goes when it's gone. You can see the effects of the wind blowing but not the wind itself. The same is true of born-again people, they can't see the Holy Spirit, but they can see his effects on things, can feel his presence and hear his voice. We can't make him move but we can't stop him from moving either. Sometimes he moves in us like a wind gust, and we can't explain how or why. Nicodemus was totally lost in this conversation.*

John 3:10-12 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? *The Lord calls Nicodemus a qualified teacher and expert in the law and yet he can't grasp these things because the natural man cannot understand spiritual things.* **1 Corinthians 2:14** But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness" The Pharisees, scribes and lawyers discussed and taught the law like philosophers who interjected their opinions of it. Jesus is completely contrasting that by saying that we (himself, John the Baptist, his disciples) speak and testify of the things we KNOW and have SEEN. In other words, they spoke with authority about things they were sure about and the ruling religious class did not receive their witness. They all refused John's baptism which he was commissioned to do by God. He told Nicodemus if he couldn't understand this message, how would he understand if he told him straight spiritual truths without natural illustrations?

John 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. *Jesus is telling Nicodemus who he is by revealing where he came from. He also is saying that no earthly man could talk of heavenly things because he'd never been there, but Jesus could because he is from there.*

John 3:14-15 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Jews require a sign to believe. Jesus could see that Nicodemus was sincere in his quest to understand all of this and that he was not trying to do him any harm. So, he refers Nicodemus to an obscure story in Numbers 21 where poisonous serpents were sent by God as a judgment on the people for complaining. People were bitten and dying everywhere. Moses cried to the Lord and He gave him a solution. Make a brass serpent and put it on a pole and lift it up. Anyone who had been bitten could look at the brass serpent and live because they looked by faith. Brass is a symbol of judgment because it withstands fire. The serpent was a type of sin so by looking at the brass serpent, they were looking at their sin being judged. Christ knew that Nicodemus would know the story even if he didn't understand the spiritual truth behind it. When Jesus was lifted up on the cross, Nicodemus was there and I believe made the connection. Looking at Christ on the cross is looking at our sin being judged.

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. *Agape love is defined as selfless and sacrificial giving. God's love for the world is measure by what He gave for it, His only begotten Son. "Only begotten" means not another like him. He's only one of a kind. God displayed his love for us by who He gave up to get us. Christ was not sent into the world to condemn it because it was already condemned under the law. Christ was not sent for damnation but for salvation. God grants those who believe savingly in Jesus Christ everlasting life!*

John 3:18-21 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. *God only has one savior, if you will not have him as your savior there is no hope for you. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, but to those who aren't, there's nothing but condemnation. The only reason an individual that was condemned wouldn't come to Christ for salvation is because they love their sin. People who love darkness hate the light, so they won't come to the light because it would expose their evil deeds. Those that obey the truth will come to the light to make sure their deeds are right in God's sight. Jesus Christ is the True Light!*

John 3:22-26 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in AEnon near to

Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. *The ministry of Jesus is now taking off so that many are now coming to him for baptism. His disciples are now baptizing as well as John. This causes a dispute between the Jews and John's disciples over purification. The Jews are used to ceremonial religious washings imposed on them by the law and tradition to the point they miss the spiritual significance of baptism. The draw of so many to Jesus moves John's disciples to jealousy "all men come to him". This prompts John to explain his role to them and why this must be in the next verses.*

John 3:27-30 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. *John calls to their remembrance how that from the very beginning he made it clear that he was not the Christ. He is his forerunner. The best man at a wedding is not the one getting all the attention. The focus is on the bridegroom and his bride. Then John says that he (Christ) must increase, but he (John) must decrease meaning that the shift will now be all to Jesus.*

John 3:31-33 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. *John wants them to know who Christ is and where he came from. Even though John was full of the Holy Ghost, he was still just a man from the earth. But Jesus is the Christ come down from heaven and deserves all preeminence. He spoke of his divine authority to speak the truth which was given him from heaven. "No man receiveth his testimony" is a general statement about the widespread rejection of his messages and unbelief across the country, not meaning that absolutely no one believed because the next verse says, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true". That means that individuals like the disciples had heard him and believed on him, and to those individuals they accepted that what they heard had come from God.*

John 3:34-36 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son

shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. *John emphasizes four things about Jesus:*

- **He is the Christ**
- **He is from heaven**
- **He is God's Son**
- **Eternal life is believing in Him**

Tonight's application: In this day where the gospel message and salvation have been so "watered down", it's important to be reminded that the entrance into the kingdom of God is not through agreeing with scripture, baptism, good works, being a good person, repeating a prayer etc. You must be born again! Too many people today make claims like "they've always been a Christian" or "I don't remember when I was saved" but every person who has experienced the new birth remembers it.