

John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

John 3:2 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.

John 3:3 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.

Now we meet Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin. The Pharisees were the men responsible for interpreting the scripture with authority. He came to Jesus at night. This seems to imply that he came at night to protect his reputation with the other Pharisees. Nicodemus addressed Jesus with respect—Rabbi (teacher). He told Jesus that he knew He was a teacher from God because the miracles He was performing could only be done with God's help. Jesus tells him that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. The Greek for "again" states "from above." This learned man should have known this was not a reference to physical rebirth.

I think Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he can't really make judgments regarding what is of God until he is part of the kingdom of God, and the only way to become part of the kingdom of God is to be born "from above." This is obviously a reference to spiritual birth (cf comment at 1:13).

John 3:4 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?

This didn't make sense to Nicodemus. He was an adult. He couldn't get back into his mother's womb and be born again! This seems to verify the fact that spiritual truth can only be discerned by those who are spiritually alive. Nicodemus didn't understand because he was spiritually dead.

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."

John 3:5 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.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Then Jesus tells him that to enter the kingdom of God, you must be born of water (earthly birth through mom from her waters) and the Spirit (supernaturally from above). Flesh gives birth to flesh; Spirit gives birth to spirit. You can't experience spiritual rebirth without first experiencing physical birth. This is a simple fact. Nicodemus (one who was in a position of spiritual leadership) should not have been surprised at Jesus' statement that he must be born again. He had been born in the flesh; now he needed to be born spiritually (again, supernaturally from above).

John 3:8 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.

Then Jesus went on to explain that you wouldn't be able to see this birth any more than you can see the wind. You know it is there because of the effects produced by its presence. It's the same with someone who is born of the Spirit. You will see the effects of the new birth in their life.

John 3:9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

John 3:10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

John 3:11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

John 3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Nicodemus still didn't understand. I think Jesus was being a bit sarcastic with His next statement. "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" The Pharisees prided themselves in their knowledge and understanding. Then Jesus refers to Himself using "We." I think this is referring to the Trinity; He is the human mouthpiece for The Three in One. Everything "We" say concerns things "We" know (truth); "We" testify (give witness to) what "We" have seen. Still, you (I think this includes the Pharisees in general) don't believe "Our" testimony.

Then Jesus speaks in the person of the Son of God—"I" have told you. Jesus, the Son, God in flesh, declares—I have told you earthly things you do not believe, so how can you expect to believe Me if I tell you heavenly things? I think the Lord was telling him that He has explained in terms that men on earth should be able to understand; He can't explain things any further without using "heavenly" language that Nicodemus for sure wouldn't understand.

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.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

John 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Verse 13 poses a question. It indicates that no man hath ascended up to heaven except the one that came down from heaven—Jesus, the Son of God. What about Enoch and Elijah?

I decided to look for a little further help with this statement. The Believer's Bible Commentary contained a good observation. "He did not mean that Old Testament saints such as Enoch and Elijah had not gone to heaven, but they had been *taken up* whereas He [Jesus] ascended to heaven by His own power."

Then Jesus makes a reference to His death on the cross and compares His hanging on the cross to the time that Moses lifted up the bronze snake on the pole (Numbers 21). The Israelites had made God angry, and He had sent venomous/poisonous snakes to attack them. Anyone who was bitten and looked at this serpent on the pole would be healed. The serpent on the pole represented the sin of the people, and the Son of God on the cross represented our sin.

2Corinthians 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

We have all been bitten and infected with sin and only by looking to the sacrifice of the Savior on the cross can we be healed. I think it is interesting that it was a serpent since Satan approached Eve and Adam in the form of a serpent. He thought he had "bitten them" with a poisonous bite of death by getting them to sin—but God would have the victory "in his face." Anyone who believes on the finished work of Jesus will gain eternal life!

Pastor Bob: "lifted up" has a double meaning—crucified and glorified.

John 3:16 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" – the eternal, Almighty Creator, truth, righteousness, merciful, always the same, knowledge, etc. The Supreme Divinity—omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, self-existent.

"so loved" – cared about our welfare so much that He made a provision for eternal life for us at great cost to Himself knowing that many would reject His gift of salvation.

"the world" – each and every human being on this earth from creation until now and yet to come.

"that He gave His only begotten Son" – He willingly provided His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. Just like Abraham's willingness to give Isaac showed his love for God, so God shows His love to each of us. Abraham didn't have to follow through; being willing was enough. If God hadn't followed through, we would be damned for eternity.

"that whosoever" – any of the each and every human beings talked about above.

"believeth" – puts faith/confidence in the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and that His sacrifice is sufficient. This reflects heart relationship as evidenced by a changed life and not just head knowledge.

"in Him" – Jesus, the Son of God, God in flesh

“should not perish” – shall not die without confidence of eternal fellowship with the Savior.

“but have everlasting life”—life in a glorified body, forever, in the presence of God.

“only begotten” – In reading “The Case for Christ,” by Lee Strobel, I found this quote from D. A. Carson regarding further insight on this phrase that I felt was important: “It really means ‘unique one.’ The way it was usually said in the first century is ‘unique and beloved.’ So John 3:16 is simply saying that Jesus is the unique and beloved Son—or as the New International Version translates it, ‘the one and only Son’—rather than saying that He’s ontologically begotten in time.”

Note: Ontology explores the principles and causes of beings.

John 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 3:18 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.

The whole purpose of Jesus becoming God in flesh, becoming human—the single reason—was to provide salvation for mankind. Since the sin in the garden, we are born condemned, guilty, without hope. The only way to escape this condemnation is to believe in Jesus as God’s Son and His sacrifice for our sin.

As stated in my article “Why Would God Allow _____?,” God sees only two groups of people on earth—the saved and the condemned; those who accept Him as Lord and Savior by faith and those who reject Him.

JVMcGee – “Jesus first came as Savior. His second coming will be in judgment.”

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

John 3:20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

John 3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Next John compares Jesus to light. Darkness is the absence of light. John’s conclusion is that men (in general) prefer the darkness because they enjoy their evil deeds. If they recognize “The Light” and admit who He is, then that means they must change their evil ways. The light exposes what is done in darkness. Men who live by the truth welcome the light; they are not afraid of their deeds being exposed. They realize that their goodness can only be accomplished with God’s enablement.

Seems to be a real sad commentary on our day and age to realize that more and more people seem to be proud of their sin and want people to know about it. They flaunt their homosexuality. People no longer fear public censure for their

wicked deeds, and the justice system is becoming more and more ineffective in deterring crime. There is a major shift in the public thinking regarding the right to life of the unborn and the infirm and elderly. Even our own president (Clinton) feels he can break the law and should be allowed to continue in his office as if nothing happened; there should be no consequence for sin. Even worse—most of the public agrees. It has now reached the point that our laws are being changed to legalize and promote sin. We are becoming a nation almost enveloped in darkness.

John 3:22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

Next Jesus goes into the Judean countryside to spend some time with His disciples. It also says “and baptized” (4:2 clarifies that it was His disciples that baptized). The word for baptize means to “immerse or submerge for religious purposes.” (See topical study Notes on Baptism.)

John 3:23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

John 3:24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

John the Baptist was also still baptizing, and evidently there were a lot of people coming to be baptized. We’re reminded that this was before John was put into prison. All baptism at this point was a public declaration of the individual’s need to repent of his/her sin.

John 3:25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying.

John 3:26 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.

Eventually a discussion developed between some of John’s followers and other Jews regarding *purification*. This would seem to be a reference to baptism as an accepted ritual of cleansing. So they came to John and complained that Jesus, “he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness,” was baptizing too, and everyone was starting to go to Him. Evidently, they didn’t really understand what John had told them about Jesus, or they would have been with Jesus too.

John 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

John 3:28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

John 3:29 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.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

John patiently tried to explain again. (We each have a purpose in life, a special assignment from heaven.) You heard me say that I'm not the Christ—I was sent ahead of Him. For example, the bride belongs to the bridegroom. The best man to the bridegroom is made happy to know that his friend is happy and with his bride. It is the same for me. I'm happy that the Christ has come and can become the center of attention and have His message accepted and the people recognize Him and believe in Him. It is time for Him to become greater and for me to drop into the background.

David Guzik had a wonderful comment concerning verse 30, "This should be the motto of every Christian, especially the leaders among God's people."

John 3:31 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.

John 3:32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

John 3:33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

John 3:34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.

"He that cometh from above" is Jesus.

"is above all" – I think this refers to His position in comparison to the rest of humanity.

"he that is of the earth" = John.

Then he adds that Jesus is from heaven. He is teaching what He has seen and heard—in heaven—and most people don't believe Him. The ones who do believe are confident of God's truth. They know that Jesus was sent by God and speaks the words of God—that God's provision for Jesus through the Holy Spirit is without limit.

We are gifted in accordance with the will of the Spirit for the edification of the church and the benefit of its ministry. Jesus possessed every gift of the Spirit in its fullness.

John 3:35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

John 3:36 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.

"The Father" – God

"loveth the Son" – Jesus

"and hath given all things into His hand" – Jesus has all power and authority and knowledge.

Whoever believes in the Son (Jesus) has everlasting (never ending) life (a relationship and existence of joy and peace and new experiences with the Savior). Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath (condemnation because of one's sin) remains on him. Verse 36 shows me that there is a choice involved; we are not robots.