

# John 3:1-21 – 22 February 2026

## “An Approach That Saves”

### Introduction

\*Jesus has just completed the Passover during His 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 years of public ministry

\*Many are starting to come to Jesus & His disciples

\*Today we have this famous meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus – we’ll call him Nico

\*Nico approaches Jesus with sincerity and will walk away as a changed man – a believer in Jesus

**Today, we’ll 4 characteristics of an approach to God that has the result of salvation**

**#1 – Nonresistance to change (Vs 1-3)**

Read 3:1-2a

1. Nicodemus’ name means *ruler of the people*

- a. Likely his folks were an influential family & cultivated him to be in the Sanhedrin
  - b. Sanhedrin: Jewish ruling council of priests (Sadducees), elders (laymen) & scribes (Pharisees)
  - c. Pharisees ran the Synagogues in each town
2. There're 3 options for how to approach Jesus
- a. Many come openly & flatter Him – To trap Him (Unbelievers)
  - b. Some come at night – To ask sincerely but they're unwilling to have it effect their current life (Inquirers like Nicodemus)
  - c. Some come openly & support Him – To honor Him (Believers like Zacchaeus)
  - d. How are you approaching Jesus today?

Read 3:2b

1. Nico says, 'we know You're from God & God is w/ You now b/c of the miracles You're doing'
  - a. This is the only part of the whole night in which Nico initiates – Jesus takes over now
  - b. It actually shows that Nico was there to listen, receive and believe

- c. Let God take your study time in the direction He wants to take it
2. Understand that Nico was wrong in his assumption regarding miracles
  - a. Miracles = supernatural, not always God
  - b. Deut 13-after miracles, find what they teach
  - c. Anti-Christ will work miracles & signs (II The 2:9 & Rev 13:13-14)
  - d. You may have come to Jesus b/c of the supernatural but *must transfer* our wonder from experiences to the concrete Word of God

Read 3:3

1. “Verily” or “Truly” is the word *amen*
  - a. Doesn’t mean Jesus is agreeing with him; it means what He’s about to say is firm or reliable
2. Jesus is explaining that Nico cannot now understand the work of the Kingdom of God...yet
  - a. Jesus sees Nico has sincerely come to learn
3. Jesus goes to what matters – conversion, new life, seeing w/ new eyes, being born again

4. To be born “again” is to be born *from above*
  - a. Same word as used in vs 31
  - b. We need a birth that is from heaven
  - c. This isn’t like our first birth, so this shows that it will be a second birth – to be born again
  - d. If we want the term ‘born again’ that’s used in (Read) Tit 3:4-6
5. We’ll see Nico isn’t surprised to hear there’s a kingdom, he knew that
  - a. He’s overlooking the need to be born again
  - b. Jews were awaiting Messiah to rule Kingdom
    - i. Read Dan 7:13-14 – In John 3:13 Jesus will even refer to Himself as “the Son of Man”
6. Many Jews would be appalled to hear of a barrier between them and the Kingdom
  - a. B/c they’re Jews, they thought wrongly that they’re already ‘in’ (John 8:33 – we are Abraham’s seed)
  - b. Nico wasn’t appalled again **showing sincerity** to come to God

## #2 – Inquisitiveness in the Spirit (Vs 4-8)

Read 3:4

1. Nico's willing to accept it, but doesn't know how
  - a. This is different than Zacharias in Luke 1:18 – 'How can I know this' doubting
2. Nico already knew he couldn't enter his mom's womb again, but giving this detail shows he's interested *in the process* of being born again
3. Example: A little boy wants a new treehouse & his dad tells him they're going to get one
  - a. If boy said, "How can this be?" – It shows desperation and doubt
  - b. If boy said, "How can this be since I don't have the supply or the knowledge to do it?" – It shows desire and faith

Read 3:5-6

1. Water here in vs 5 compares to the flesh in vs 6 and the Spirit in vs 5 compares to the Spirit in vs 6
  - a. Born naturally of the water of the womb, then we need to be born of and by the Spirit

2. Could being born of water mean something else?
  - a. No reason to think it means water baptism
    - i. Many are baptized that never truly believed
  - b. Is it the work of God's Word in salvation?
    - i. Could refer to this as well as natural birth
    - ii. Tit 3:5 – Washing & renewing of H.S.
    - iii. Read Eph 5:26 Word sanctifying once saved

Read 3:7-8

1. “Marvel not” means don't get caught on this part; there's another part I want you to consider
2. H.S.'s job in salvation is compared to the wind
  - a. We don't see the Spirit, we see His effects
3. Don't be mentally hung up on the step-by-step process of being born again
  - a. Spirit can come from anywhere to work
  - b. Look for the effects of the Spirit of God in a life *showing* they're born again

### #3 – Commitment to the Word (Vs 9-15)

Read 3:9-11

1. Jesus won't answer his question until vs 14
2. Nico had a common problem – He read the Word for what **God** would do for them, but overlooked knowing **his** part
  - a. Deut 30:4-6 – God will purify their hearts
  - b. Jer 31:31-33 – Law placed on the inside
  - c. Eze 36:26-28 – New heart & spirit within
3. These verses speak of Israel's gathering, cleansing and reign of Messiah
  - a. They thought they were waiting for the 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - b. Showing they aren't cleansed; they'll reject Messiah & all 3 steps will have to start over
  - c. The need for a new birth has been said from the start of the OT
4. Come to the Word looking to give our response
5. Jesus is speaking of things He knows – for sure
  - a. This is a rebuke to Nico for not knowing the Scriptures and this places Jesus above Nico
  - b. Yet they all had ability to know the Bible

## Read 3:12-13

1. Jesus gave earthly comparisons of being born naturally & the wind representing the Spirit & Nico struggled to understand it
2. Jesus wants to speak of heavenly things, and He can b/c He came from heaven
  - a. No one can speak of the things of God unless the **God** reveals them (Heb 1:1-2)

## Read 3:14-15

1. This answers Nico's question, 'how can the Spirit cause someone to be born again'
2. Jesus shows that the serpent on the pole in Moses' day was always meant to speak of Jesus
  - a. Bronze represents judgement consistently
  - b. Serpent represents sin
3. Jesus will be lifted up on the cross to become sin being judged for us
4. What did Moses' people do to receive healing?
  - a. Not a thing but look & believe
  - b. We too need only to believe the cross of Christ is what heals us

## #4 – Openness to truth (Vs 16-21)

Read 3:16

1. This is the why, *why* did God send Jesus?
  - a. *What* did God send Jesus for? To save us
  - b. *Why* did God send Jesus? B/c He is love!
2. It's God's nature to love and the ultimate expression of love is the cross (Read) I John 3:16
3. In a context centered on Israel, Jesus says that God's love in this saving way is for the *world*

Read 3:17-18

1. The Law has already come to shine a light on our innate sinfulness (Read Rom 3:19-20)
2. Christ's work on the cross saves from the curse of sin and death – bringing us into eternal life
3. The *only* way to be condemned to death in hell is to reject the cross

Read 3:19-21

1. You've either brought your life to the light of Jesus or you're still hiding in the dark

- a. If you love sin – you’ll hide & abide in death
  - b. If you love truth – you’ll come to the light & be saved
2. This call to the light would be a challenge to Nico to go further w/ Jesus – he came “at night”
  3. This Nicodemus will be seen 3 times
    - a. John 3 - seen *inquiring* of Jesus by night
    - b. John 7 - seen *defending* Jesus in Sanhedrin
    - c. John 19 - seen *worshipping* Jesus at His death

## Conclusion

If we’re going to approach Jesus & come away changed b/c of it, here’s how

1. **Nonresistance to change** – come w/ sincerity
2. **Inquisitiveness in the Spirit** – Listen to H.S.
3. **Commitment to the Word** – What we need has already been revealed in the written Word
4. **Openness to truth** – Don’t hide, but come to the light, God loves you!