

Exegesis of John 3:1-15

Introductory Thoughts:

I. Remembering What Came Before...

A. It is important to note that each chapter of scripture flows with each other.

1. This may seem obvious, but it is worth noting because it is easy to isolate scripture apart from the whole message of the writer.
2. The conversation with Nicodemus is important when we remember what came before it.

B. What did come before it?

1. Yes, chapter 2, but specifically, Jesus doing certain signs that manifested His glory (2:11).
2. This manifestation of His glory caused belief in some—namely, the disciples (2:11, 2:17, 2:22).
3. There were, however, others that did not believe in the manifested glory of Jesus (2:20, 2:23).
 - a) We must remember the significance of Jesus' manifest glory.
 - b) We are not talking about some “esoteric,” secret glory that Jesus had in his pockets like some trickster.
 - (1) His glory pointed to something very specific—grace and truth! (1:14b).
 - (2) The grace and truth of God is none other than the very message of Jesus bringing life to mankind and light to the darkness (1:4-5).

C. Why Does It Matter?

1. When Jesus, in chapter 2, then, does not “entrust Himself” to those who saw his signs, it is not because Jesus was not revealing Himself to them but that they chose to see something other than the manifested glory of God in the person of Christ!
2. This begs the question:
 - a) How does a person see the manifested glory? Why is it the disciples saw but these others did not?
 - b) This opens up the conversation we find with Nicodemus and Jesus.
 - c) It is equally here, in chapter 3 that we see the first introduction of the Spirit and His role in the salvation and sanctification of humanity—those who see Jesus in His manifested glory and believe (John 3:16).

Walking Through the Text:

I. The Link:

A. Notice the use of “man” (3:1).

1. This introduction of Nicodemus is meant to help us see the theological link and significance of the conversation that is about to occur.
2. Nicodemus, himself, is an interesting person.
 - a) There are commentators who have shared much information surrounding him, but ultimately, what we know is this:
 - (1) Nicodemus was a notable leader in the wealthy elite classes of his day and was someone who ought to know the Law and the Old Testament very well.
 - (2) More can be said about him, but really, what this conversation is meant to draw for us is not just the average Joe but even someone who would be looked at in the “most holy light” responds to Jesus and what that looks like practically.

B. Nicodemus and Jesus (3:2-15)

1. Initial Observations:

a) Symbolism:

- (1) John notes for us an interesting detail.
 - (a) Nicodemus comes to Jesus “by night.” (V. 2)
 - (b) This symbolizes the spiritual condition or spiritual darkness that is present throughout the gospel (1:5, 9:4, 11:10, 13:10).

b) Nicodemus’ statement in v. 2 can be seen positively or negatively.

- (1) That is, either we can see Nicodemus making a genuine statement or he is essentially saying, “We know who people say you are but we don’t buy it!”
- (2) It is more likely that this is a negative statement as just typed above.
- (3) That is, the existing and eventually heightened tensions with the Pharisees is clearly seen in 2:20 and is finding its way here with Nicodemus.
- (4) the challenge is Jesus being an authority as the Word of God and a religious leader, and the dislike or disbelief in Jesus, in that vain.

2. Jesus’ Authority:

a) In v. 3, Jesus gets to the heart of the matter, which gives us the full tie with 2:25.

- (1) Jesus goes into this statement because He is both demonstrating His authority to claim such a thing but also to note that Jesus is the one who is from God and is God (1:1).

- (2) The use of the word “see” in connection with the “kingdom of God” is a direct tie back to what Jesus said to Nathanael in 1:51.
 - (3) The Gospel of Christ is clearly displayed in Jesus and this, as we will learn, through the procession of the Holy Spirit.
3. The Holy Spirit.
- a) Nicodemus misses the point (**v. 4**)
 - b) Jesus not only doubles down but adds the Spirit into the mix (**v. 5**) and then further explains:
 - (1) The use of “water” in v. 5 should not throw us to water baptism.
 - (a) The use of the word “Water” is there to imply the cleansing ministry of the Spirit.
 - (b) The Spirit cleanses like water cleanses.
 - (2) Jesus continues down this line in **vv. 6-7**.
 - (a) There is a clear distinction between someone Spiritually transformed (born from above or born again) and someone who is not (merely the flesh).
 - c) The Will of the Spirit and of The God-Head (**v. 8**)
 - (1) Not only is someone truly “born again” if they are born of the Spirit, they are done so by the Will of the Spirit, in one will with the Triune God.
 - (2) We cannot miss this connection:
 - (a) The Spirit moves and does as He pleases but it is this way because the Son has brought life and will eventually die so that such a life will continue eternally (3:14-15)
 - d) Nicodemus’ Ignorance (**3:9-15**):
 - (1) Not only does Nicodemus have a hard time understanding how this will work via the Holy Spirit, he misses the fact that the Savior will make this possible—as told by the prophets and of Moses (1:51)—and will send the Spirit to do this work because the Son will be lifted up to die (3:14).
 - (2) This is the *main point* of what John is wanting us to see regarding the Savior!
 - (3) The Spirit proceeds from the Work of Christ because it is Christ who will be lifted up and give His life so that there may be eternal life given.
 - (4) This is the only way darkness will be eternally overcome!

What does this passage teach us: (1) about God/Jesus/Spirit? (2) about man? (3) the Gospel?