

“The New Birth” John 3:1-21

Please Stand and Open your Bibles to John 3:1-15

As we now come to one of the most preached on sections of scripture, we hope to take a fresh look and find how it will apply to us today and what we need to learn from it. First, we need to remind us of why John wrote this book...

John 20:30-31

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

The center of this concept of believing is found right here in our story. A matter of fact all of the bible either points towards or back to the middle of our conversation today. But as much as we could just focus our attention on verse 16, we need to look at the context. It is unfortunate that we soon forget that the Bible was not originally written with chapters and verses. If you did not know they were added in the 12th century to help us find our way around the Bible. As helpful as they are, they are not inspired and if we didn't know better would think they have

always been there. Our story today does not begin in verse one but the end of chapter 2...

John 2:23-25

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. 24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, 25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

This is important because it lets us know where Jesus is during this visit with Nicodemus and why the answer that Jesus gives him. This early trip to Jerusalem Jesus did many signs and the people that believed in Him wanted to make Him public. But notice that it says that Jesus would not “commit” Himself to them. This is the same word translated “believe”. As we said before the way that John uses this word in its context it is one of trust and not simply believing something is true. You can believe in God. You can believe you are a sinner. You can even believe that Jesus died for the sins of the world. All of this cannot save you. You need to place your trust in Him. That He died for your sins and that your only hope is to believe to the saving of your soul. Again, these verses we just read fly in the face of “Lordship” Salvation, that says that you are truly not saved unless you make Jesus your Lord. I got news for you, He

is Lord. You can't make Him do anything. This is what they set out to do, and Jesus knows us and is not putting His trust in us for salvation. He knows what is in you and guess what? He loves you anyway! This is important context as we pick up in verse 1...

John 3:1

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

While Jesus is in Jerusalem He is approached by this man. First who are the Pharisees?

The government of Israel that existed at the time of Jesus was a ruling body called the Sanhedrin. It consisted of 71 leaders of two differing sects. One was the Sadducees that were the liberal party of the day. They were materialists that only said the writings of Moses were inspired. They did not believe in the supernatural, of angels of the afterlife. Then the others were the Pharisees. These were the ultraorthodox of the day. They believed that the whole Old Testament we have today was the Word of God, but they became legalists and added to it the Mishna and other interpretations of the law as being from God too. They were under the authority of Rome, who let them rule the people with their laws all the way up to capitol

punishment. So, they had great power over the people and were considered the way to righteousness. Even Jesus recognized their zeal when He said...

Matthew 5:20

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, this guy was brought up thinking he was right before God because he kept the law of Moses according to the tradition of his elders. He was caught up in a works trip, and this is important as we see his approach to Jesus...

John 3:2

This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

First, we see him coming by night. Why? Because he did not want it to be known that he was with Jesus. The rest of his comrades have rejected Jesus. Why? Because they believed that the Messiah would come to them and be among their class. We think that Nicodemus is saved but at the beginning was a secret follower.

John 7:47-51

Then the Pharisees answered them, “Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.”

Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?”

And he is mentioned again here...

John 19:38-39

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.

So, it would seem he would become it part of a “Secret Followers of Jesus Club”

I don’t know what Nicodemus expected to hear but this is how Jesus answers him...

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The word “again” there is implied, but it literally says, “Born from Above”. See the prevailing hypothesis that Nicodemus adhered to, is his pedigree and works made him right before God not his need for something. If you are here today and think your membership of a church, your good works, your family upbringing, or anything besides your need for a new birth you have missed it. You and I must be born again! Got to love Nicodemus’s reply...

John 3:4

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

We need to remember that Nicodemus only had natural eyes and ears to see and hear Jesus with. Jesus answers...

John 3:5-8

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is

born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

It is obvious in the context that the water and flesh is referring to natural birth and the Spirit of the new birth. Poor ole Nic doesn’t get it...

John 3:9

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

It is a good thing that Jesus does not leave him hanging. He didn’t say, “Go and figure it out on your own!” He didn’t tell him to go jump through some hoops, He told him the truth, and I am so glad He did!

Jesus Answers Nic’s Question

John 3:10-21

First, Jesus rebukes him for not knowing these things. Jesus recognizes that Nicodemus, as a leader, was responsible for these things. He was to know them, but he did not. Notice how

Jesus invokes the Trinity in His first answer? He then reminds him that He is not just another Rabbi but God Himself! This did not make sense to him at first. This is why John is writing it for us. He didn't get it. How do we know? Because Jesus uses an Old Testament story that has not been fulfilled at the time he is telling him as he has not died on a cross for the sins of the world yet. When the Children of Israel were in the wilderness for 40 years, toward the end of their journey the people got discouraged and started to complain about Moses and God. God then sent fiery serpents into the camp, and they started biting people and they were dying. They come to Moses and admit their sin and ask for forgiveness and Moses prayed for the people...

Numbers 21:8-9

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

For us on this side of the cross it is crystal clear and John including it in his gospel is perfect for the purpose of his book. The act of the looking at the bronze serpent was one of faith.

There were no works involved all you had to do was look. The contrast is beautiful...

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

The word “Only Begotten” is the Greek word “monogenes” and means one and only or one of a kind. Jesus’s mission is all summed up in these two verses. Jesus came to save and you are saved by putting your trust in Him. But what if you don’t? You are already condemned! From this point forward in Human history sin is judged by what you do with Jesus. But guess what? Not everyone will receive Him? Why Not? Because the cross of Jesus Christ exposes to us our sin and what the price of sin entails. Let’s break down these last few verses and then close this out today...

John 3:19-21

“...And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the

light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

The word for love is the word “Agape”. It means a sacrificial love. They love their sin so much that they are willing to sacrifice their eternal lives for it. This is why everyone does not get saved. The cross exposes exactly who we are and the only thing you can do is run from it and suppress it. But you can’t deny it. Jesus has come into the world. The light has come and died on a brutal Roman cross you your sin and mine. The only way to be saved is to come to the light, look to the cross and be forgiven. So how does one become born again? We need to go back to chapter 1.

John 1:11-13

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

You know I grow tired of all the arguing about salvation I hear about all the time. “Are you once saved only saved?” “Don’t you

believe that a Christian can walk away from his faith” Are you Calvinists” Are you an Armenianist? Come on tell me! My answer is and always will be “Are you Born Again?” Only you can answer that. How do I know that when I put my trust in Christ that I am Born Again?

Ephesians 1:13-14

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

You hear the gospel, you put your trust in it, and God gives you the New Birth! It really is that simple!

1 Peter 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy **has begotten us again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.