

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS with Christ

“Seeing the Savior in Action”

Key Verse - 20:31—*“But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you might have life through His name.”*

Study Number Two – The Conversation with Nicodemus – John 3:1-21

We last looked at Snapshot #1 in the Gospel of John. We saw a picture of Jesus Christ within the context of the social activity—where He’s actually having fun—because a lot of times people fail to recognize that the Lord Jesus spent a maximum amount of His life with people who needed Him. He had a deep sensitivity to whether or not people were just playing fun and games, or whether they really did need Him and that they were responding to Him.

At the wedding we looked at **THREE KEY STATEMENTS:**

1. verse 3—“they have no wine,”
2. verse 5—“whatever he says to you, do it,” and then
3. verse 9 or 10—“you’ve saved the best till now.”

We used those three statements to point out the fact that

without a relationship to Jesus Christ we're like people without wine, there's something missing in our lives.

“Whatever he says to you, do it,” points us to the fact that God has a very specific set of instructions and we should be willing to do what He says. It's amazing, when all else fails, read the instructions. And when we do, the results are beautiful.

Each day in the Christian life is on an upward scale. We always seem to be saying, “You've saved the best till now.” And our walk with the Lord just gets richer and richer and we will ultimately say those words when we step into the realization of the inheritance which He has reserved for us in heaven.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it,” but it's going to be something fantastic. And that'll be the expression of the group, “You've saved the best till now.”

In this second snapshot, we're coming to the consideration of a man who's got a real need. At the end of chapter 2, we read a very interesting statement. It says, “Jesus did not commit Himself unto them because He knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man for he knew what was in man.” (ref. John 2:24-25)

In other words, the Lord Jesus knew the hearts of men. And He didn't spend His time talking to people that were impressed by His miracles. He didn't spend His time working with people that were just there out of curiosity. He zeroed in

on the needs of people. And when they had a need, He was willing to spend some time with them to help them have that need met.

Now, knowing the heart of Nicodemus, He's talking to a guy with a very legitimate need. In order to break the passage down, we have FIVE little words that start with E:

1. THE ENCOUNTER in verses 1-7,
2. THE EXAMPLE in verse 8,
3. THE EXPOSURE in verses 9-15,
4. THE EVIDENCE in verses 16-18, and
5. THE END in verses 19-21.

To set the stage for this particular passage, John the apostle was one of the twelve, along with his brother James. They were the sons of Zebedee.

Zebedee had Fishing Industries Incorporated. It was a big fishing business and they were very successful. They had a lot of outlets in several cities.

The Zebedee family, however, was kind of split religiously. Dad kind of followed the denominational power structure and mom kind of went after Jesus. John and James also followed the Lord Jesus.

Now when Jesus preached that message, He said, “Son of God had nowhere to lay His head.” John said, “Well, whenever You’re in the city of Jerusalem You can surely use our house.” In other words, they had an extra home in the city of Jerusalem and he gave Jesus run of the house when He was there.

Well, one night we can almost see Jesus coming home from a long day of teaching and He says, “John I’ve got to tell you this. I wasn’t able to call you because things were so busy, but we’ve got a guy coming for dinner tonight.” And John says, “Oh, that’s great. This is sort of par for the course. Who’s coming?” And Jesus said, “Well, I’ve invited Nicodemus.”

Well, by the time they pick John up off the floor again, to say Nicodemus would be to say a prominent leader was coming.

John is just so excited he’s coming, he whips into the kitchen and gets this great meal together and they come over and have dinner. And then John gets up as a very gracious host and he says, “Now I want you guys to go on in the library and talk and I’ll go out and do the dishes.” But really John had his ear up against the wall, listening to every word that’s said.

The reason we say that is, John is the only one that records the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus. Not to discount divine inspiration in this, but John must have had some kind of knowledge of this experience going on so that he could be recording what took place in this encounter.

Now, having set the stage just a little bit, let's begin with the verses and see what they've got to say to us.

I. The Encounter—verses 1-7

v. 1 But there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus his name, an official of the Jews;

“But there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus his name, an official of the Jews;”

When we give our attention to this first verse, there are a couple of terms right away that we need to understand.

1. “PHARISEE”—Nicodemus is a member of the Pharisees. There are only six thousand of these guys. It's kind of like being a part of the Masonic order. It's a super religious bunch of guys.

They committed themselves to keeping the Law all of their lives and they stood up before three witnesses to join this brotherhood and they went through all the rigmarole and everything that they were going to spend their whole life just keeping the Law.

In other words, he's a super religious guy. There were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the CONSERVATIVES and the Sadducees were the LIBERALS, because the liberals didn't believe in the resurrection. So he is

a conservative, in the sense, theologically—but he is a LEGALIST.

He believes that we gain acceptance in the presence of God by stacking up brownie points. And if we don't get enough, we don't make it. If we've got enough, we make it. In other words, he's living by performance.

2. you need to understand the word “official of the Jews.”

2. “OFFICIAL OF THE JEWS”—That means that he's part of the Jewish Sanhedrin. That means that he's one out of seventy guys in the city that rules on all religious decisions.

He's part of the high court of the religious world. So he is recognized—just one out of seventy guys—by everybody as Cardinal Nick or Bishop Demus.

Alright, now whenever we read a verse like that, we can draw some conclusions:

1. We have a guy who believes by strict religious observance we don't find all the answers to life—like, “Why is he here?”

2. We have a guy who has found, by personal experience, that wealth, fame, popularity, authority don't have the secret to real, meaningful, purposeful life.

3. We have a guy who's hungry for reality and is looking for something in addition to what he has already experienced in

the religious realm. In other words, he feels like there's something missing in his life and he's still looking to try to find what that is.

v. 2 this one came to Him at night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we are knowing that from God you have come a teacher; for no one is able to do these signs which you are doing except God be with him.”

“this one came to Him at night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we are knowing that from God you have come a teacher; for no one is able to do these signs which you are doing except God be with him.’”

Some people read that, “this one came to Him by night,” and they say he was a chicken. He was afraid that if he came to him in the daytime, somebody'd see him.

And as a result they'd say, “Oh! You know who went over to see that fanatic, Jesus the Nazarene last night?” And it would buzz around the city of Jerusalem and they would really eat his lunch, by telling everybody that he'd been over there. Most likely that's not the case.

“this one came to Jesus by night”—probably the reason that he came was because Nicodemus was downtown and the Lord Jesus was teaching and he sat in on one of His sessions. And when the session was over, we can almost see Nicodemus pushing his way to the front and saying, “You know Jesus, I've really been impressed by what You said. I really need to talk

to You some more.”

Jesus, knowing his heart, said, “Great, I can only work you in this evening, because I teach from dawn until dark. I’d love to have you over at the house tonight. I know John wouldn’t mind an extra plate at dinner.”

And Nicodemus says, “I’ll be there. I’ve got to cancel several committee meetings and a dozen other finance committee meetings and all that stuff, but I’ll be there.” And Nicodemus is there and he comes by night because this is a private time when they can sit down and talk together.

Now it says, “Rabbi,”—he calls Him a teacher—“we are knowing that from God you have come a teacher;”

He’s saying, “We know some things about You. We’ve formulated some conclusions.”

The word “we” could mean all the other Pharisees with him or it could be the proverbial “we,” when we want to be humble. Instead of saying “I” we say, “we did this” and “we did that.” It could be either way.

“we”—if it’s referring to the group which he’s a part of—“are knowing that from God you have come a teacher;”

How did Nicodemus come to that conclusion? He tells us in the last sentence:

“for no one is able to do these signs which you are doing except God be with him.”

He’s saying, “We’ve been watching what You’re doing, this changing water into wine got our attention. We’ve seen several things You’ve done, and there’s only one conclusion that we can come to, and that is You have come from God, a teacher. What message from God are You trying to bring to us?”

That’s the end of verse 2. Now in verse 3 Jesus says the first thing, as far as He’s concerned.

v. 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I am saying to you, except a man be born again, he is not able to see the kingdom of God.”

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I am saying to you, except a man be born again, he is not able to see the kingdom of God.’”

“Alright Nicodemus, here’s the message that I’ve come to bring from God. Now it’s not all those outward miracles that have impressed you that are important. All those outward miracles like changing water into wine and raising dead people and making blind eyes see, only to point to the greatest miracle of all. And that’s the inward miracle that takes place in the heart and life of an individual who expresses faith in Jesus Christ.”

He experiences the NEW BIRTH—which is the greatest miracle of all—and all these other miracles only point to that.

Now, in summarizing the ramifications of verse 3 and putting it in laymen terminology, “Nicodemus, you can have all the wealth, all the fame, all the religion. You can be baptized, catechized, homogenized, and simonized and the whole bit. But none of that will count unless you’ve been born again.”

“he is not able to see the kingdom of God.”

Now look at verse 4. Nicodemus comes back into the picture and we kind of see where he is.

v. 4 Nicodemus is saying to Him, “How is a man able to be born being an old man? He is not able a second time to enter the womb of his mother and be born, is he?”

“Nicodemus is saying to Him,”—he raises TWO QUESTIONS here.

1. “How is a man able to be born being an old man?” and
2. “He is not able a second time to enter the womb of his mother and be born, is he?”

Let’s just stop and try to put ourselves, if we can, into the shoes of a guy like Nicodemus.

Here's a guy whose whole life has been based on the philosophy, "That if I'm good enough and if I'm moral enough, and if I try hard enough and if I work at it and I live by these legalistic standards, I've got it made. God's obligated to accept me in the end."

Alright, we have a guy that's been living like that for seventy years. Here he is, an old man. He's had all the honors of life. Old people have a tendency to get set in their ways and so that's another problem. He's set in his ways, too.

And he hears a new twist to religion—"you must be born again." He's never heard that before in his long-legged life. And low and behold, here comes an up-start teacher who's impressing him with miracles and saying, "you've got to be born again."

Now he has **TWO QUESTIONS** and these two questions are both **PHYSICAL**.

Whereas Jesus is talking about something **SPIRITUAL**, Nicodemus is talking about something **PHYSICAL**.

1. "How is it that a man is able to be born being an old man?"

Thinking strictly from a human point of view, how can we turn back the wheels of time to get to the fountain of youth so a guy can "be born being an old man?" In other words, how can we start back over again?

Then the next question is legitimate in light of what he has seen about Jesus' past performance.

2. "He is not able a second time to enter the womb of his mother and be born, is he?"

In other words, "Granted You can change water into wine and I wouldn't put it past You to send me back to my momma's womb and start all over again! I mean really, You have the capacity to do that! Are you meaning that to be born again I'm going to go back and start all over with momma and be born again? And start all over physically?"

Verse 4 and verse 6 help us interpret verse 5.

We get so many wild and wooly and march-haired interpretations of verse 5. It all depends on what denomination by how verse 5 is interpreted.

What's Nicodemus doing? He's heard a spiritual truth, "You must be born again." What's he doing with it? He's making it PHYSICAL.

Alright, carry the PHYSICAL and the SPIRITUAL—the conflict between these two positions—at verse 5 and it makes verse 5 very obvious. Instead of seeing water baptism in verse 5, we see a physical birth.

v. 5 "Most assuredly, I am saying to you, except a man

be born of water and spirit he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God.

“Most assuredly, I am saying to you, except a man be born of water and spirit he is not able to enter the kingdom of God.”

What is Jesus saying to Nicodemus?

He’s saying, “Nicodemus, look, you’ve got to have two births to be ready for the kingdom of God! You’ve got to have a physical or a water birth. And you’ve got to, after you’re alive physically, you’ve got to be made alive spiritually to get ready for glory! You must have a time when you had your new birth!”

And that would be the obvious interpretation of that verse.

Now he says, “except a man be born of water and spirit.”

We all have had a time of a physical birth. There’s been some time when that took place. We all have a birthday.

Now, Jesus is saying we also must have a spiritual birthday in order to be ready for eternity.

“except a man be born of water and spirit he is not able to enter the kingdom of God.”

There can be one other interpretation to this. And that is, the “water” could refer to the water of the WORD OF GOD.

Ephesians 5:25 says, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water of the word.”

Psalms 119:9 and 11 says, “Wherewith all shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

In other words, the Holy Spirit can take the word of God and apply it to our hearts and we’ll experience the new birth in the process. We can make, by an act of our will, a choice to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior on the basis of what we’re studying here in the word of God. And the water of the word of God, applied by the Spirit of God to our life, can cause us to experience the new birth in a very unemotional and undramatic way. But nevertheless, in a very real way, just by the fact that the word of God has pointed that out to us.

That’s the beauty about salvation. See how verse 6 fits into this too?

v. 6 That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been of the Spirit is spirit.

“That which has been born of the flesh”—or by water—“is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit.”

There are two kinds of birth. There are two realms here. There’s the MATERIAL and the PHYSICAL. And before we can experience the SPIRITUAL, we must have had a physical birth.

Now, verse 7 is the **KEY VERSE** in the whole passage.

In verse 7 united, unanimous, one hundred percent—circle and underline the word “must.”

v. 7 Do not begin to wonder that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

“Do not begin to wonder that I said to you, “You must be born again.””

That’s a **DIVINE IMPERATIVE**. That is Jesus saying that before we can know of our eternal destiny, “You must be born again.”

There is no other place in the Bible that it’s more clearly stated. There is something that has to happen in our life, from the time we are born until the time we die, described here as the “new birth” or we are not going to spend eternity as a part of God’s family.

“You must be born again.”

What does it mean to be born again?

THREE THINGS:

1. It means to experience a **NEW WORK** of God in our life.

When we, by faith, receive the Lord Jesus in our life, there's a new work that takes place. The Bible says in:

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new.

There is an obvious work that takes place in our life when we receive the Lord Jesus.

2. It involves a NEW CAPACITY.

The new divine nature, the new life from God comes to dwell within, and that's the capacity for living life that pleases God.

As we're dependent upon the Holy Spirit who now resides within us, energizing this new capacity, that new changed life begins to flow from us.

This is where a lot of people get super uptight and frustrated because they're trying to live a life that pleases God and God didn't intend them to.

When we get to John 15 we will see, "Without me you can do nothing." God meant for us to be a branch in the vine and for His life to flow through us, and to begin to manifest Himself by fruit in a changed life. There's a new capacity that comes to dwell within.

3. It involves a NEW DESTINY.

The Bible says, “he that hath the son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.” (ref. 1 John 5:12)

We step out of death into life, we step out of condemnation and judgment into the gift of eternal life when we make that decision to receive the Lord Jesus and experience the new birth.

II. The Example—verse 8

v. 8 The wind is blowing where it is desiring to blow and you are hearing the sound of it. But you are not knowing from where it is coming and where it is going. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”

“The wind is blowing where it is desiring to blow and you are hearing the sound of it. But you are not knowing from where it is coming and where it is going. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus, it’s just like the wind. The Holy Spirit blows on the heart of an individual like the wind and He convicts that heart and shows him his need.

Jesus uses the wind as an illustration of the Holy Spirit for several reasons:

1. We can never predict when the wind is going to blow on a heart.

Isaiah is right when he says, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near.” (ref. Isaiah 55:6)

If the Holy Spirit is taking the Word of God and He’s blowing a gale in our hearts and saying, “Listen, this is for you,” do not make the mistake of rejecting the blowing of the Spirit of God to bring about conviction in our life. That’s a very serious matter.

How serious is that? In Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 4 we have a repetition three times of the same statement. When the Word of God says something once, we better listen. But when the Word of God says something twice, we better stand up and take notice. And when it says it three times, it’s like writing it across the skies.

What does it say there in those two chapters three times? It says, “Harden not your heart in the day of provocation or conviction.” The Holy Spirit is speaking to our hearts and we harden our heart to the claims of the Spirit of God as He blows upon our heart and convicts us, we are moving ourselves one day closer to our eternal destiny without being prepared or receiving the gift of His Son. That’s how serious that matter is.

And so the Holy Spirit is like a wind. We can’t predict when He’s going to blow on our heart. Maybe we didn’t even know

He was going to blow on our heart.

We'll learn some more about the Bible, but now He's getting personal. He's starting to talk to us and we're caught up in this thing. And the Holy Spirit is saying, "That's for you. Here's your opportunity. Here's your chance. Here's the time for you to make a choice."

"You must be born again."

It's like the wind of the Spirit of God blew.

2. He uses the Spirit and the illustration of wind as the Spirit because we can't see the wind, but we can see what it does.

We can't see the Holy Spirit but we can be sure of the effects of the Holy Spirit when He blows in the life of an individual. When He changes that person from a creature of His hand into the child of His heart, it's an amazing display to the world of a changed life.

And so the wind of the Spirit works. How does the Holy Spirit work on someone who isn't a Christian?

He nails them in **THREE AREAS**. John 16 says, "He convicts you of:"

1. SIN,

2. RIGHTEOUSNESS, and

3. JUDGMENT.

1. SIN—He shows us our need by revealing the fact that we have a broken Law on our hands. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (ref. Romans 3:23)

2. RIGHTEOUSNESS—He shows us Jesus Christ and His life and that’s how we ought to live if we want to be accepted in the presence of God.

3. JUDGMENT—He shows us the consequences of rejecting Him.

Here’s an illustration to get the point across and put the three things together.

Someone is going down the freeway at 70 miles an hour and there are flashing lights in the rearview mirror. And we pull over and we say, “But officer, I was trying my very best.” He says, “I know. You were speeding.”

SIN—speeding.

RIGHTEOUSNESS—there’s a sign, 55 miles an hour.

JUDGMENT—a ticket, go pay it.

SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS, and JUDGMENT.

SIN—what we've done.

RIGHTEOUSNESS—what we should have done.

JUDGMENT—the consequences of what we have done.

That's the function of the Holy Spirit who is prompting us to bring us to the point where we will receive the gift of life.

Hebrews 2:3 says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

We need to put ourselves in Nicodemus' shoes. Here he's heard this new message, "You must be born again," and the wind of the Spirit is blowing on his heart. What's a guy want to do when the wind of the Holy Spirit starts blowing on his heart?

He does one of three things:

1. Usually someone who's successful gets kind of COCKY. He says, "I don't need that. I've been handling it on my own to this point, and frankly I don't have a need for what you're talking about and I don't want to be a religious fanatic."

He gets cocky. He makes fun of religion and spiritual things. "You know man, I'm comfortable friend, and I've been able to handle it to this point and there ain't nothing that life has done to me yet that I haven't been able to handle. And thank

you and no thank you. Nice to have your position, but I don't want any part of it."

2. They get CONFUSED.

A lot of times, maybe that's what this passage will do. It leads to some coherency so we come to a moment of conviction and confession and we see the gift of His Son.

3. When a guy gets CONVICTED and he realizes he has a need and he doesn't have anything to cover up anymore, he's willing to be exposed in the Spirit of God. He opens up his life and he lets Christ come in. And that can be the proper response.

Well, that's what we're hoping Nicodemus does.

III. The Exposure—verses 9-15

v. 9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How are these things able to come to pass?"

"Nicodemus answered and said to Him, 'How are these things able to come to pass?'"

What is Nicodemus saying? He's saying, "Boy, if I could get to the door I'd get out of here. And if my wife was responsible for bringing me to this meeting, I'd kill her."

And that's what the psalmist says, "Whither shall I flee from

thy presence? I go into heaven and you're there, I go into hell and you're there. And if I get anywhere in between, you're there and so what do I do? Every time I turn around, you're there." (see Psalm 139)

That's kind of like Onesimus. Remember the story of Onesimus?

Onesimus is a runaway slave from Philemon. Philemon went to Bible class and became a Christian. Led his wife and his son to the Lord and they were praying for Onesimus. Onesimus checked out on them and ran to Rome. He stole a few things and thought he was going to be secure there and got wrapped on a drug charge and thrown in prison. And low and behold, he's next to the Apostle Paul and becomes a Christian.

He says, "How can you get away from God?" Every time he'd turn around, lifted up a board, there was another Christian crawling out.

"I can't deny the results," Nicodemus says, "but how can these things come to pass?" In other words, what's the process?

v. 10 Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel, and these things you are not knowing?"

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'You are the teacher of Israel, and these things you are not knowing?'"

There are a lot of people who claim to have the answers in religion and in theology that don't preach this. Ever stop to wonder why?

Here's a leader in theological circles. And this is a whole brand new truth to him. 'We're not any different today. To a lot of people, this is a brand new truth too.

v. 11 Most assuredly, I am saying to you, that which we are knowing we are speaking, and that which we have seen, we are bearing witness; and our witness you are not receiving.

“Most assuredly, I am saying to you, that which we are knowing we are speaking, and that which we have seen, we are bearing witness; and our witness you are not receiving.”

He exposes his heart. He's saying, “Nicodemus, I'm telling you about things that I can see and you're not receiving. If I told you about things you couldn't see, how would you receive it? You are not receiving what I'm giving to you.”

He is a part of the Pharisees and the Pharisees have looked on Jesus as a competitor to their cause and they're rejecting everything He teaches. And He's telling him right now, “My witness you're not receiving.”

v. 12 If I told you earthly things and you are not believing, how will you believe if I tell you of

heavenly things?

“If I told you earthly things and you are not believing, how will you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?”

v. 13 And no one has ascended into heaven except He who came down from heaven, the Son of Man.

“And no one has ascended into heaven except He who came down from heaven, the Son of Man.”

In other words, “I’m the only one who’s ever gone up there, lived there for eternity, and had come down here to tell you about it.”

v. 14 And just as Moses lifted the snake in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

“And just as Moses lifted the snake in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up;”

Why’d He put that in there?

The reason He put that verse in there is because He knows that Nicodemus, being a student of the Old Testament, will remember this experience. And we need to get the impact of “just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”

Back in Numbers 21 we read a very interesting account. The

children of Israel had been disobedient to God and God said, “Because of your disobedience I’m going to send fiery (or poisonous) snakes among you.” And the record goes on to give a very dramatic story of a lot of people dying as a result of the snake bites.

Moses comes into the presence of the Lord and he says, “Lord, would You do something? We’ve learned our lesson. We want to get right with You. We want to be in a position of blessing again.”

And the Lord says, “Yes, Moses, I’m going to issue some strange instructions, but I want you to do what I’m going to ask you to do. I want you to make a bronze snake and I want you to put it on a pole. And I want you to stand it in a central location. And then I want you to go around to all the twelve tribes and walk up every street and knock on every tent flap, and I want you to tell those people to look at the snake and live.”

What happened when Moses walked up the first road in the tribe of Judah? He knocked on the first tent flap and daddy came to the door and said, “Moses, what do you want?” Moses said, “Do you have anybody here that’s been bitten by these poisonous snakes?” And daddy says, “Yes, we’ve got three.”

Moses said, “You know, I’ve got some news for you from God. If you look over there to that serpent on a pole, everybody that’s been bitten will live.”

What do you think he did? He turned around and walked back inside. And while he was sitting around for family devotions he says, “We’ve got to pray for Moses. He’s had a sun stroke. He’s in bad shape. He’s giving stuff that’s incoherent, I can’t believe it. Look at a serpent on a pole and you’ll live.”

The only problem is that everybody in Israel that looked at the serpent on a pole did live. And that serpent on a pole is a picture of Jesus Christ when He died on the cross.

What an ugly picture. That’s right. The serpent is a symbol of sin. And the Bible says that Jesus Christ was made sin for us. That’s why He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” from the cross of Calvary. At that moment, He was being made a snake for us! He was being made a serpent on a pole. He was being made sin under judgment for each of us.

Foreshadowing the coming of Jesus Christ, when we look to Him and live, is an Old Testament picture of a serpent under judgment on a pole. And when they looked, they lived.

Now an interesting thing—the world can fight our intellectual arguments, they can fight our philosophy and they can get all fussed up and bothered over what’s going to happen to the Buddhists and the Hindus and to the Jews. They can fight until they’re green in the face over excuses and arguments about why we should never become a Christian by receiving Christ. But we’ll never destroy one argument, no matter how long we live. And that’s the argument that everybody who’s

looked and they've lived. And their lives have been changed. They'll never destroy a Christian's experience.

v. 15 in order that everyone who is believing in Him may be having life eternal.

“in order that everyone who is believing in Him may be having life eternal.”

IV. The Evidence—verses 16-18

v. 16 For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, in order that everyone who is believing in Him may not perish but may be having life eternal.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, in order that everyone who is believing in Him may not perish”—under the bite of the serpent of sin—“but may be having life eternal.”

God loved so much that He gave. Here's THE EVIDENCE—He gave His Son.

He loved us so much that He created us in the beginning for fellowship. He loved us so much He would pay any price to buy us back to a relationship, by the death of His Son.

If we're a Christian, our heart ought to be skipping a beat to

know that we're living on the very brink of time when the Bridegroom is going to come to take the bride to glory. You can't keep real love separated for very long.

And the Lord Jesus is soon going to come! He's going to split the heavens! And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, final love is going to be consummated and we're going to be forever with the Lord.

v. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world in order that He might be judging the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

“For God did not send His Son into the world in order that He might be judging the world,”—that's coming at a future time—“but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

v. 18 He who is believing in Him is not being judged. He who is not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

“He who is believing in Him is not being judged. He who is not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Why is it that he who believes “is not being judged?”

The reason being is that God's judgment fell upon Jesus Christ upon the cross and He became our sin-substitute.

On Him, Christ almighty vengeance fell,
That would have sunk a world to hell;
He bore it for a chosen race,
And thus becomes my hiding place.
(source unknown)

He took our sin.

Isaiah 53 predicted it when it said, “All we like sheep have gone astray, we’ve turned everyone to his own way. The Lord laid on Him, Christ, the iniquity of us all.” (see Isaiah 53:6)

“He hath borne our griefs, He hath carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem him, stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of my peace was upon him, and by his stripes I have been healed.” (see Isaiah 53:4, 5)

God poured out our judgment, that belonged to us, on Jesus Christ our substitute.

And when we come to know Him, we escape that judgment that is waiting for a lost and dying world that has rejected Jesus Christ.

What’s that judgment going to be like?

V. The End—verses 19-21

v. 19 Now this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved rather the darkness than the light, for their works were evil.

“Now this is the judgment, light has come into the world, and men loved rather the darkness than the light, because their deeds were evil.”

Men love to stay in their sin and in their darkness. And as a result, they experience judgment.

What must we do to be lost? Absolutely nothing. We're born into this world in water birth, we put it on automatic pilot and it'll head down the broad road to destruction. Because the Bible says, “There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end there are the ways of death.” (ref. Proverbs 14:12)

Do absolutely nothing and we'll end up in an eternal destiny, experiencing the judgment of God.

v. 20 For everyone who is practicing evil is hating the light, and is not coming to the light, in order that his works should not be exposed.

“Everyone who is practicing evil is hating the light, and is not coming to the light, lest in order that his works should be exposed.”

v. 21 But he who is doing the truth is coming to the light, in order that his works might be manifested

to have been accomplished by God.

“And he who is doing the truth is coming to the light, in order that his works might be manifested to have been accomplished by God.”

He doesn't have anything to hide. He's open, he's honest, he's received Christ. The things that are happening in his life are a work of God. He's not phony or hypocritical and trying to put up a big front by being something he's not. So he comes to the light in delight and walks before the light, because the things that are in his life are things that are a direct result of God's activity in his life. He's a man walking in the light, because he's experienced the new birth.

We have two reasons for believing that Nicodemus experienced the new birth on this occasion.

As the Sanhedrin is meeting and they're discussing the plight of Jesus Christ, there's one lonely voice out of seventy, with sixty-nine eyes glued on him that says the following:

John 7:50

Does our law judge any man before it hears him and knows what he does?

John 19:39

There came also Nicodemus which at the first came to Jesus

by night and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 100-pound weight, then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes with spices as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Revelation 22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Hebrews 2:3

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.

Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

Here are the lessons from the passage:

Lesson #1: Nicodemus is a man hungering for reality and a relationship.

Lesson #2: A man born once dies twice and a man born twice dies once and it's no big deal.

Lesson #3: There are no re-wind buttons on the video of life.

Lesson #4: To be Born Again is a divine imperative.

Lesson #5: The Spirit of God convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Lesson #6: Jesus Christ was made sin for us when He died upon the cross.

Lesson #7: Believing in Him is to have eternal life.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS with Christ

“Seeing the Savior in Action”

Key Verse - 20:31—*“But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you might have life through His name.”*

Study Number Two – The Conversation with Nicodemus – John 3:1-21

Key Verse 3:7

I. The Encounter—verses 1-7

v. 1 But there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus his name, an official of the Jews;

v. 2 this one came to Him at night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we are knowing that from God you have come a teacher; for no one is able to do these signs which you are doing except God be with him.”

v. 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I am saying to you, except a man be born again, he is not able to see the kingdom of God.”

v. 4 Nicodemus is saying to Him, “How is a man able to be born being an old man? He is not able a second time to enter the womb of his mother and be born, is he?”

v. 5 “Most assuredly, I am saying to you, except a man be born of water and spirit he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God.

v. 6 That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been of the Spirit is spirit.

v. 7 Do not begin to wonder that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

II. The Example—verse 8

v. 8 The wind is blowing where it is desiring to blow and you are hearing the sound of it. But you are not knowing from where it is coming and where it is going. So is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.”

NOTES

III. The Exposure—verses 9-15

v. 9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How are these things able to come to pass?”

v. 10 Jesus answered and said to him, “You are the teacher of Israel, and these things you are not knowing?”

v. 11 Most assuredly, I am saying to you, that which we are knowing we are speaking, and that which we have seen, we are bearing witness; and our witness you are not receiving.

v. 12 If I told you earthly things and you are not believing, how will you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?

v. 13 And no one has ascended into heaven except He who came down from heaven, the Son of Man.

v. 14 And just as Moses lifted the snake in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

v. 15 in order that everyone who is believing in Him may be having life eternal.

IV. The Evidence—verses 16-18

v. 16 For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, in order that everyone who is believing in Him may not perish but may be having life eternal.

v. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world in order that He might be judging the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

v. 18 He who is believing in Him is not being judged. He who is not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

V. The End—verses 19-21

v. 19 Now this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved rather the darkness than the light, for their works were evil.

v. 20 For everyone who is practicing evil is hating the light, and is not coming to the light, in order that his works should not be exposed.

v. 21 But he who is doing the truth is coming to the light, in order that his works might be manifested to have been accomplished by God.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read John 3:1-21 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What basis does Jesus give for entrance into the kingdom of God in verse 3?

3. How does Nicodemus respond to Jesus, according to verse 4?

4. What illustration does Jesus use in verse 8 to describe being born of the Spirit?

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5. What Old Testament illustration does Jesus use in verse 14?

6. What does Jesus mean by saying “so must the Son of Man be lifted up” in verse 14?

7. What purpose did God have in sending His Son into the world, according to verse 17?

8. Why are people unwilling to come to the light, according to verse 20?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Nicodemus is a man hungering for reality and a relationship.

LESSON #2: A man born once dies twice and a man born twice dies once and it's no big deal.

LESSON #3: There are no re-wind buttons on the video of life.

LESSON #4: To be Born Again is a divine imperative.

LESSON #5: The Spirit of God convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

LESSON #6: Jesus Christ was made sin for us when He died upon the cross.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:
