

John 3

Part 1

- John 3 is one of the great chapters of the Bible.
- It is a chapter that should be studied very carefully and seriously by all who desire salvation.
- It tells us of God's amazing love, the necessity of the new birth, how to please God, etc.
- The study of John 3 will be divided into five parts.

Nicodemus Comes To Jesus

3:1-2

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

1. The apostle John informs us that a man "named Nicodemus" came to Jesus.
 - a. Nicodemus was a Greek name with an uncertain meaning.
 - b. It was a name that occurred among the Jews.
2. At this point he informs us that Nicodemus was "a ruler of the Jews." (Jn. 3:1).
 - a. He was likely a member of the Sanhedrin - the supreme court of the Jewish nation.
 - b. Most of the members of the supreme court hated and rejected Jesus, but Nicodemus was an exception.
 - c. Nicodemus was "the teacher of the Jews." (Jn. 3:10).
 - 1) This does not mean he was the exclusive teacher of the Jews.
 - 2) The Pharisees looked upon themselves as teachers of the ignorant multitudes.
 - d. He was a Pharisee.
 - 1) The Pharisees believed in the resurrection, angels, etc. (Acts 23:7,8).
 - 2) Most, if not all, of the Pharisees were very self-righteous. (Lk. 18:9-14).
 - e. He was a believer in Jesus like those described in John 2:23-24, but he had not obeyed the Lord.
 - f. Their faith was not a saving faith because there was no obedience.
 - 1) Many of the Jews believed in Him because of His signs, but were not saved believers.
 - 2) They had not committed their lives to Jesus.

3) Because of their lack of faith and fickleness Jesus did not entrust Himself to them.

3. Nicodemus is only mentioned in John and was mentioned two other times in this gospel. (Jn. 7:50-51; 19:39).

a. He **came to Christ**. (Jn. 3:1,2).

b. He later **spoke up for Christ** before the Jewish Sanhedrin. (Jn. 7:50-51).

John 7:50 Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them,

John 7:51 "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"

1) Nicodemus manifested great courage in asking that Jesus receive a fair hearing.

2) His courage was met with criticism and possible expulsion from the Sanhedrin.

John 7:52 They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

3) It is not known how Nicodemus responded to this rebuke but there is no evidence he made a further stand.

c. He later **honored Christ** at His death. (Jn. 19:38-40).

John 19:38 After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret {one} for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body.

John 19:39 Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds {weight.}

John 19:40 So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

1) It took a lot of courage on the part of Nicodemus to identify himself with Jesus.

2) This action would cause him to be criticized and perhaps even expelled from the Sanhedrin.

3) It was also very possible the Romans or Jewish leaders would punish him.

4) It is interesting that Joseph of Arimathea manifested great courage in asking for the body and he and Nicodemus buried the body of Jesus and "bound it in linen wrappings with the spices."

5) It should be kept in mind that even Jesus' disciples were afraid to be associated with Him when He was crucified.

6) The gospel of John was written many years after the death of Jesus, and it cannot be known who knew what Nicodemus had done.

7) John may have learned about this conversation by revelation or from Jesus Himself.

8) It is even possible, though not stated, John may have heard the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus.

9) The Bible says nothing about Nicodemus at the trial of Jesus. We cannot be sure if he was present or how he voted. Luke 23:1 certainly leaves the impression he was present and took part in bringing Jesus to Pilate.

Luke 23:1 Then **the whole body** of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

10) One can be certain Nicodemus did not want Jesus to be condemned to death.

11) He likely wanted Jesus to be freed or perhaps punished, but not crucified.

John 3:2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God {as} a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

1. Nicodemus "came to Jesus by night"

- a. Some believe he came at night because this was the best time for him to see Jesus when things were not so busy.
- b. This is possible, but most likely he came at night because of fear of the Sanhedrin and a desire to keep his visit a secret.
- c. If his coming was just a matter of convenience, it seems strange that John would mention this again in John 19:39.
- d. Whether his night visit was a matter of fear or convenience has no real significance today.
- e. It should be mentioned whether his coming to Jesus was out of fear or convenience Jesus would have had more time at night for conversation. During the day Jesus was most often surrounded by crowds of people.

2. He addressed Jesus as "Rabbi."

- a. This was a title used to refer to a respected and recognized teacher.
- b. It had been used to refer to Jesus in John 1:38

John 1:38 And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?"

3. Nicodemus used the pronoun "we" to express what he and others believed. (Jn. 2:23).

- a. Some or many had concluded that Jesus was "a teacher" having come from God.
- b. They recognized that no one could do the "signs" Jesus was doing "unless God is with him."
- c. John had only recorded one sign to this point in his gospel (Jn. 2:1-12), but this verse and John 2:23 show Jesus had already performed a number of signs in other places.
 - 1) Nicodemus had likely witnessed some of them and heard about others.
 - 2) He knew Jesus was a teacher from God.
 - 3) He did not acknowledge Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus' Response To Nicodemus

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the

kingdom of God."

1. Without a question or further statement from Nicodemus, the Omniscient Jesus knew what was on the heart and mind of Nicodemus.
2. He immediately addressed the need of Nicodemus because He knew "what was in man." (Jn. 2:25b).
3. Jesus responded with the double affirmation of "truly, truly." See Jn. 1:51
 - a. The Greek word "amen" [ah **mayn**] means "truly, verily" and was used to stress the importance of what He was saying.
 - b. Jesus was saying "I most solemnly say to you."
 - c. The same word can have the meaning of agreement. (1 Cor. 14:16).

1 Cor 14:16 Otherwise if you bless in the spirit {only,} how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?

4. Jesus knowing what was in the heart of Nicodemus (Jn. 2:25) did not respond to his remarks, but immediately responded to his need and the need of everyone.
 - a. This may explain why Jesus immediately told Nicodemus what he needed to do to be saved.
 - b. Nicodemus was not completely ignorant on this subject because John the Baptist and his disciples and Jesus and His disciples were calling upon the people to repent and be baptized. (Matt. 3:2, 5-6; 4:17; Jn. 4:1,2).

John the Baptist

Matt 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matt 3:5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;

Matt 3:6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

Jesus and His disciples

Matt 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

John 4:1 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John

John 4:2 (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),

5. Jesus declared that one must be "born again" to "see the kingdom of God."
 - a. Nicodemus and all others must be re-made.
 - b. The word "see" is used in the sense of entering and enjoying. (Jn. 3:5).
 - c. The words "the kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" are synonymous. (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:3,10).
 - d. See also Matt. 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43; Mk. 1:15; 4:11, 26, 30; 9:1, 47; 10:14, 15, 23,24, 25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43; Lk. 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 9:2, 11, 27, 60, 62; 10:9, 11; 11:20; 13:18, 20, 28, 29; 14:15; 16:16; 17:20,

21; 18:16, 17, 24, 25, 29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16,18; 23:51; Acts 1:3).

e. The saved are called the body, the church, the kingdom in the scriptures.

1) The church and the kingdom are one and the same in the Christian age. (Matt. 16:18-19).

2) The church is called the body of Christ. (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18).

Eph 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,
Eph 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all

Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

3) Paul wrote the church of God at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), but he referred to them as the body. (1 Cor. 12:13).

4) He also spoke of these and other believers as the kingdom. (Col. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Col 1:13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

1 Cor 15:24 then {comes} the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

1 Cor 15:25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

1 Cor 15:26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

1 Cor 15:27 For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

1 Cor 15:28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

5) See also Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31; Rom. 14:17; Eph. 5:5; Col. 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:6).

c. The words "born again" come from the Greek word "anothen" [**ah** noh then] meaning "again, from above."

d. This word is translated "from above" in John 3:31 and also elsewhere in John. (Jn. 19:11).

John 3:31 "He who comes **from above** is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all."

John 19:11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you **from above**; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has {the} greater sin.""

e. James also used the word with the meaning of "from above." (Jas. 1:17; 3:15, 17).

James 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is **from above**, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

James 3:15 This wisdom is not that which comes down **from above**, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

James 3:17 But the wisdom **from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

f. This word can also mean “again, anew.” (Gal. 4:9).

Gal 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

1) NASB translates “anothen” [**ah** noh then] as “all over again.”

2) Literally “to which again you wish to serve anew [again].”

3) “Anew” is from “anothen” [**ah** noh then] meaning some were reverting back to some portions of the Law as a requirement for salvation.

g. The word may have both meanings in John 3:3.

1) One must experience a new birth [a second birth].

2) This new birth comes from the God above through the Holy Spirit.

3) The Holy Spirit was the source of saving truth. (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13).

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 15:26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, {that is} the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,

John 16:13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

h. It would appear, however, from the response of Nicodemus that he understood “anothen” [**ah** noh then] to mean “again,” that is, to a second physical birth. (Jn. 3:4).

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