

# “For God So Loved The World”

## John 3:1-21

Message by Michael J. Barnard

January 24, 2021

**Teaching Aim:** To explore the circumstances surrounding the nighttime meeting between Jesus and Nicodemus. To learn how the story of a bronze serpent on the pole in **Numbers 21:4-9** pointed to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. To realize Jesus bore the punishment for our sins while on the cross and anyone who looks to Him by grace through faith will be saved and receive eternal life.

### DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

#### **Part I: Jesus gives Israel’s teacher a lesson on Old Testament prophecy (John 3:1-15)**

1. Who was Nicodemus and what party of the Jews did he belong to (**vs.1**)? Why do you think he came to Jesus by night? What was it about Jesus that caught Nicodemus’ attention (**vs. 2**)? How does **John 3:1-2** relate to **John 2:23-25**? Do people still come to Jesus today for the wrong reasons? What is the right reason to come to Jesus? (See **Rom. 3:23; 5:8-11; 6:23**)
  
2. How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus’ fascination in the signs He performed (**vs. 3**)? Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, this meant he likely sat on the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews. This council was comprised of 71 men. Do you think the response from Jesus caught Nicodemus by surprise? What truth did Jesus reveal to Nicodemus in **John 3:3**? The word “*unless*” stresses a necessary condition. What necessary condition must take place for an unbeliever to even “*see*” the kingdom of God?
  
3. In **verse 3**, Jesus was speaking of “*regeneration*” or “*birth from above.*” According to **verse 4**, what did Nicodemus think Jesus was talking about? In reality, Jesus was speaking of spiritual birth while Nicodemus was thinking of physical birth. What second truth was revealed by Jesus to Nicodemus in **verse 5**? What did Jesus mean when He said, “*born of water?*” (See Commentaries) What did He mean when He said, “*born of the Spirit?*” Why are both kinds of birth necessary for salvation?
  
4. Some have tried to explain, “*born of water*” as meaning baptism. Does this understanding line up with the context of **verses 1-5**? What is the context in **verses 6 & 7**? When it comes to the water, what must precede every physical birth? According to **verse 3**, what must precede every spiritual birth?

5. The English word “wind” is translated from the Greek word “*pneuma*.” The Greek “*pneuma*” can also be translated as “*spirit*.” It is likely that a breeze was blowing that night and Jesus decided to use it to illustrate a spiritual point (**vs. 8**). The wind, like the Spirit, comes from an unseen heavenly source. How can we know that it is windy today? How can we know that the Holy Spirit is working in a person’s life? Jesus concludes, “*So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*” There is an element of mystery to regeneration.
  
6. According to **verse 9**, did Nicodemus understand what Jesus was telling him? How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus in **verse 10**? Should Nicodemus have known this truth from his Old Testament studies? (See **Ezek: 36:26-27**) Who is Jesus referring to as “we” and “our” in **verse 11**? Jesus refers to earthly things in **verse 12**. What earthly things had Jesus been discussing with Nicodemus in **verses 1-8**?
  
7. What additional fact can we learn about Jesus from **verse 13**? Son of Man is Jesus’ favorite designation for Himself, He uses it at least 82 times in the gospels. Is Jesus simply saying that He is a man, or is He saying something more? Jesus was likely identifying Himself with the heavenly figure in **Dan. 7:8-14**. How does **verse 13** relate to the description in **Dan. 7:13-14**?
  
8. In **verses 14 & 15**, Jesus alludes to a story in the Old Testament that Nicodemus probably taught many times. In doing so, Jesus took “*Israel’s teacher*” on a journey back into the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) and explained the meaning of this unusual story. (See **Numbers 21:4-9**) Although Nicodemus would have been familiar with this story, he had no idea of the depth of the meaning. At this point Jesus had not been crucified. Why do you think Jesus, at this moment in his conversation with Nicodemus, chose this story?

## **Part II: The story of a bronze serpent on a pole (Numbers 21:4-9/John 3:15-16)**

1. What happened to the children of Israel as they traveled from Mount Hor along the route that took them to the Red Sea as they traveled around Edom (See **Num. 21:4**)? Have you ever grown impatient with God when things didn’t go your way or happen fast enough? Have you ever lived to regret your impatience? What can we learn from **Rom. 8:28**?

2. How did the impatience of the people manifest itself in **verse 5**? Was there really no bread and no water or were the people simply unsatisfied with God's provision? (See **Exod. 16:1-13; 17:1-7**) What did the Israelites detest (**vs. 5b**)? What was this food called that the people considered so miserable? (See **Exod. 16:31-36**) Have you ever been guilty of not appreciating God's provision in your life? Do you still have areas that you struggle with?
  
3. What can we learn about God's response to the ungrateful Israelites (**vs. 6**)? Does this punishment seem cruel to you or is this one of those rare instances in the Bible where we see God's justice breaking forth? (See **2 Sam. 6:1-8; Acts 5:1-11**) Does God still get angry with us today when we are ungrateful to Him? How should we as believers respond to God's provisions in our lives? (See **Psa. 107:1; 1 Thess. 5:16-18**)
  
4. How did the children of Israel respond once people started dying from the venomous snakebites (**vs. 6**)? Why is it that we so often have to get bit by our own sin before we return to God in repentance? What is the meaning of the word "*repentance*"? (See Dictionary) What did Moses do in response to the request from the children of Israel?
  
5. What unusual instruction did the LORD give to Moses in **verse 8**? Why a snake on a pole? What was the significance of it being made out of bronze? (See **Gen. 3:1, 14-15; Exod. 27:1-8; Num. 4:13**) What did God say would happen to the bitten people if they would simply look at the serpent on the pole and believe God?
  
6. How did Moses respond to this unusual instruction from the LORD (**vs. 9**)? What happened as a result of the obedience of Moses? The Bible teaches with obedience comes blessing, with disobedience comes curse. How have you seen this truth played out in your own life? Did God save the Israelites who believed Him? In the Numbers account, did God save them physically or spiritually? Note: The deeper meaning is about to be revealed by Jesus to Nicodemus.

7. What famous words did Jesus say to Nicodemus in **John 3:16**? According to **John 3:16**, who is the ultimate fulfillment of **Numbers 21:8**? How do these Scriptures point to our salvation today? (See **2 Cor. 5:21**) What relation does the modern symbol of the American Medical Association have to **Num. 21:8** and **John 3:16**?
  
8. What is the meaning of the phrase, "*His only begotten Son?*" (See Commentaries) Why do you think **John 3:16** is the most famous verse in the Bible? Have you received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? If not, why not repent of your sin and do so right now in prayer? Note: **Verse 16** tells us "*that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*"
  
9. What do we learn from **verse 17** about the mission of Jesus Christ? What is the meaning of the name "*Jesus?*" (Hint: Search online) Who sent Jesus on this mission? (See **1 John 4:14**)

### **Part 3: He who does the truth comes to the light (John 3:18-21)**

1. **Verse 18** says, "*He who believes in Him is not condemned.*" A lot of people along with different world religions have varying beliefs about who Jesus is. What is the difference between believing Jesus existed and "*believing in Him?*" According to **Rom. 8:1** and **John 5:24**, what happens to the person who has saving faith in Jesus Christ?
  
2. Today there is a lot of discussion about the various ethnic races in the world and race relations. **Verse 18** reveals to us that there are only two kinds of people in the world, what are they? What can we learn from this verse about people who refuse to believe in Jesus?
  
3. Who is the light that came into the world (**vs. 19**)? (See **John 8:12**) Define the word "*condemnation.*" (See Dictionary) Why will so many people be condemned at the end time judgment? What do we learn from **2 Cor. 4:3-4**?

4. According to **verse 20**, why don't evil people repent and come to the light? The ultimate reason people do not come to Jesus Christ by grace through faith is because they do not want to; they love the ways of the world too much. To ultimately reject Christ will lead people to an eternity in hell. What can we learn about God from the following verses? (See **Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9**) Note: Ultimately God does not send anyone to hell, people choose for themselves to go to hell by willfully rejecting Jesus Christ.
  
5. While evil people love to operate in the dark, believers in Jesus Christ are called to walk in the light (**vs. 21**). Why? Did Nicodemus ever come to belief in Jesus? (See **John 7:48-52; 19:38-42**) What are some changes that have occurred in your life since coming to Christ? What are some ways that Christians can walk in the light today?

#### **MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- No one can even see the kingdom of God unless he or she is born again!
- No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he or she is born of water (physical birth) and born of the Spirit (spiritual birth)!
- Spiritual birth is a gift of God and is only found by grace through faith in Jesus Christ!
- Looking to Jesus on the cross and believing in Him brings "*spiritual healing*" to God's children today in a similar way to looking at the serpent on a pole and believing brought "*physical healing*" to the Israelites!
- The most famous verse in the Bible is **John 3:16** for good reason; there is no clearer explanation of the love of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.
- Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved! (See **Acts 16:31b**)