

## John 3:14-21

In John Chapter 3, a teacher in Israel shows up at night school.

Yes, Jesus' miracles had convinced him that He was **"a teacher come from God."**

However, he was totally unprepared for what he was going to hear.

Like many of us, Nicodemus had all his questions ready, and he already knew how the lesson would go.

*Are you our Messiah?*

*When will you set up your kingdom?*

*What did God really mean when He said this or that?*

But it wasn't question and answer time.

Immediately, Jesus took charge of the lesson, making a statement that completely threw him off.

John 3:3 **"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

His response was predictable --- **"How can a man be born when he is old?"**

Jesus' response was patient and kind.

He wasn't talking about a physical birth; He was talking about a spiritual birth.

However, they had reached an impasse.

It was then that Jesus said --- in V 12, **"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"**

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Certainly Nicodemus knew the Scriptures, and certainly he was a ruler in Israel, but

as Jesus quickly pointed out, he had his limitations.

Yes, Nicodemus, "**--- no man hath ascended up to heaven,**" and you're just a man.

*In spite of your religious training, you're completely earthbound, and have no personal ability to investigate heavenly things.*

*So Nicodemus, don't just stand there saying -- "**How can these things be?**"*

*You're not the authority on heavenly things.*

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And we're still played the same game today.

In spite of the fact that "**--- no man hath ascended up to heaven,**" there's no scarcity of intellectuals, so-called holy men, and religious leaders of a thousand different cults, who will confidently tell you all about heaven.

And that's in spite of the fact that they've  
never been there.

Personally, they don't have a clue what they  
are talking about.

No, they're blind leaders of the blind, and  
they have a following of thousands.

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No, man cannot investigate God.

If we know anything about heaven, it's  
because He has personally revealed it  
to us in His Word.

We must rely upon Him "--- **that came down  
from heaven, even the Son of man which  
is in heaven,**" and the Holy Spirit whom  
He has sent.

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Yes, Nicodemus, this Man is much more than  
**"a teacher come from God."**

Jesus is Deity, for He **"came down from heaven."**

And not only that, but Jesus is omnipresent.

Yes, He is **"--- the Son of man which is in heaven."**

What a revelation!

But there's something else here that we missed in last week's lesson.

So let's take another look at V 13: **"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."**

Right between those two statements that so clearly proclaim His Deity, Jesus calls Himself **"the Son of man."**

Now, that's His earthly title, isn't it?

As "**the Son of man,**" He is the promised  
Messiah, David's greater Son, and even  
Mary's Son.

And He didn't always call Himself "**the Son  
of man.**" Sometimes He referred to  
Himself as the Son of God.

But here, He is "**the Son of man.**"

And by that one statement, He demonstrated  
the fact that He is perfectly God and  
perfectly man.

Yes, Nicodemus, your teacher is the only man  
in the world that can truly say, "**We  
speak that we do know, and testify that  
we have seen.**"

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However, Jesus could see it in his eyes, and  
indeed in his mind.

This new concept that a man "-- **must be born  
again**" was simply beyond him.

So turning to the Old Testament, this  
*patient Rabbi* leads him into familiar  
territory.

Yes, it was the old story of the brazen  
serpent, but that night it took on new  
meaning.

V 14-15 **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent  
in the wilderness, even so must the Son  
of man be lifted up:**

**15: That whosoever believeth in him  
should not perish, but have eternal  
life."**

Indeed, the complete Gospel message was  
there.

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I'm sure Nicodemus could have recited the  
whole passage by heart, but we better  
look it up.

Numbers 21:5-9 "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

6: And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

7: Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8: And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he



looketh upon it, shall live.

**9: And Moses made a serpent of brass,  
and put it upon a pole, and it came to  
pass, that if a serpent had bitten any  
man, when he beheld the serpent of  
brass, he lived."**

The turning point came when the people  
repented of their sins.

That will always be the first step.

Then they ask Moses to **"pray unto the LORD,  
that he take away the serpents from  
us."**

However, there's no indication He did, at  
least not right away.

No, **"the wages of sin is death,"** and the  
serpents were God's righteous judgment  
upon their sins.

That could never change.

However, He could and He would provide a  
remedy.

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The same situation prevails today.

As long as man has an old nature, he will  
sin against God, and **"the wages of sin  
is death."**

However, God has provided the serpent of  
brass, and **"every one that is bitten,  
when he looketh upon it, shall live."**

And did you notice that the object of their  
salvation was made in the likeness of  
the fiery serpents that had bitten  
them?

And not only was it made in the likeness of  
these serpents, but it was made of  
brass.

Brass speaks to us of sin judged.

In the Old Testament, the altar that stood before the tabernacle was made of brass.

Yes, it was the brazen altar, and on it the sin offering was totally consumed by fire.

It was a picture of the cross, and it was the place of God's judgment.

And then in Rev. 1:13-15, we have a portrait of Christ --- " **And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.**

**14: His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; (and then, notice the next verse)**

**15: And his feet like unto fine brass,**

**as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters."**

Yes, those feet would tread the pathway to judgment.

And when He got there, He would be **"lifted up from the earth"** that He might **"draw all men unto"** Him.

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And then, as Nicodemus listened, Jesus patiently explained God's good news of salvation.

V 16-17 **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

**17: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."**

I have no idea what was going on in  
Nicodemus's mind.

The idea that "**--- God so loved the world,  
that he gave his only begotten Son**" was  
almost as unbelievable as Jesus'  
previous statement about being "**born  
again.**"

As an Israelite, and indeed "**a ruler of the  
Jews,**" he knew a lot about God: He was  
the Creator, He was almighty, and He  
was merciful to the weak and  
defenceless.

Yes, he was quite familiar with Deut 10:17-  
18, where it says, "**For the LORD your  
God is God of gods, and Lord of lords,  
a great God, a mighty, and a terrible,  
which regardeth not persons, nor taketh  
reward:**  
**18: He doth execute the judgment of the**

**fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment."**

Oh yes, he knew He was a God of love in that sense, but the idea the He would give **"his only begotten Son"** for unrighteous sinners was something that a Pharisee would have never dreamed of.

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So let's take a moment to really look at this radical new idea.

John 3:16 **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

There can be no doubt that the driving motive is love, and not just love for the lovely.

And the cost would involve the very best  
that heaven could provide for the worst  
that earth could produce.

Yes, the cost would be "--- **his only  
begotten Son.**"

Surely, if there could have been any other  
way, God would have never paid such a  
price!

There's no doubt that the price would be  
unspeakable, but the remedy would  
include everyone who would be willing  
to come.

None would be too bad and none too good.

The invitation would be to "**whosoever.**"

Yes, Nicodemus, even the Gentiles.

And it is "**whosoever believeth,**" not  
whosoever worketh.

Titus 3:5 makes this very clear -- "**Not by  
works of righteousness which we have**

**done, but according to his mercy he  
saved us, ---"**

And the promise is absolutely sure.

Notice the words "**should not perish, but  
have everlasting life.**"

But shouldn't Jesus have said, *shall* have  
everlasting life?

Isn't everlasting life something that  
belongs to the future?

Isn't it something that we hope for when we  
die?

No, Nicodemus. Jesus said what He meant and  
He meant what He said: "**but have  
everlasting life.**"

It's a present possession, or it's no  
possession at all.

And when does it begin?

It begins when we accept Jesus as our  
Saviour.



And when does it end?

Obviously never; it's everlasting life.

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I would like to change the subject for a few moments and talk about the names of Christ.

In the Old Testament Scriptures, Christ has many names.

However, strange as it may seem, the name Jesus never appears.

Actually, the name *Christ* doesn't appear either.

However, Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Messiah* which does appear twice in the book of Daniel.

Messiah means anointed, and it always refers to Israel's coming king.

And then there is His name Immanuel, which means "God with us," a thought that I

would imagine would make the average Israelite a little nervous.

Also, in Isaiah 9:6 there are many words and names that describe the manhood and Divine attributes of our coming Saviour --- **"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."**

However, the name *Jesus*, at least when it refers to our Saviour, was unknown in Old Testament times.

Certainly it appears in the Hebrew form *Joshua*, but then it refers to Israel's leader, not our Lord Jesus Christ.

And not only was Jesus' name hidden in Old Testament times, but the meaning of His name, which is *Jehovah is salvation*, was also relatively unknown.

I say relatively unknown because the Old Testament saints did look forward to God's provision, pictured in the Passover lamb and the Old Testament sacrifices.

However, for many in Israel, the concept contained in the name *Jesus* was not understood.

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And then, for the first time in history, this wonderful name, and its meaning appeared on the lips of the angel that had been sent to Joseph.

Math. 1:21 **"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for**

**he shall save his people from their  
sins."**

No, He hadn't come to "**save his people from**"  
the Romans, He had come to "**--- save  
his people from their sins."**

And not just "**his people,**" for the angel  
told the shepherds, "**I bring you good  
tidings of great joy, which shall be to  
all people."**

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Yes, *Jesus* was a new name, and a relatively  
new concept.

That's why Philip's message to Nathaniel was  
so significant --- **We have found him,  
of whom Moses in the law, and the  
prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth,  
the son of Joseph."**

Not surprisingly, Nathaniel had his  
objections.

Yes, Jesus' name, and the whole concept that *Jehovah is salvation* was largely hidden until that wonderful day when John the Baptist identified Jesus as "--- **the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**"

And now, Jesus had flung the door wide open!

John 3:16-17" **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."**

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We can almost read Nicodemus's thoughts.

*You mean to say, He is our Saviour, not our Judge?*

Well, actually, He could be either, and  
Jesus was quick to point that out.

V 18 **"He that believeth on him is not  
condemned: but he that believeth not is  
condemned already, because he hath not  
believed in the name of the only  
begotten Son of God."**

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There's a ridge on the North American  
continent called the Great Divide.  
All the rivers on one side of that ridge  
flow into the Pacific Ocean, while  
those on the other side end up many  
thousand miles away in the waters of  
the Atlantic.

Jesus is God's *great divide* --- **"He that  
believeth on him is not condemned: but  
he that believeth not is condemned  
already ---"**

But why would anyone reject God's offer of salvation?

After all, we are assured that **"whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

Well, there are several reasons.

First of all, not everyone has heard the good news.

There are many who still sit in darkness, and we are responsible to help them.

Then, of course, there's Satan's great deception which distorts the Gospel message in a thousand different ways.

However, as the next two verses indicate, there's another reason.

V 19-20 **"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**

**20: For every one that doeth evil  
hateth the light, neither cometh to the  
light, lest his deeds should be  
reproved."**

Yes, there are some who have heard the  
truth, perhaps many times, but  
continued to prefer the **"darkness  
rather than light."**

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For a number of years, my family and I lived  
on the Caribbean island of Bonaire,  
Netherlands Antilles, while serving the  
Lord with Trans World Radio.

And like anywhere else in the world, there  
were things you enjoyed and things you  
just put up with.

One of the things in that latter category  
was the presence of large cockroaches  
that lived in and around our homes.



You couldn't get rid of them because they lived in your septic tank, and if they stayed there, everyone would have been happy.

However, occasionally, when you entered a room and switched on the light, you would see one of them scurrying into a dark corner.

Yes, they loved the darkness rather than light; it was just their nature.

And they could run like lightning, but, fortunately, they always ran away from you.

The mission owned a large Activities Building that we used for various functions, including church.

Like our homes, it had louvered windows, and was somewhat open to the elements.

During the dusty season, it became rather dusty, and at all times it was relatively hot.

However, they also owned a studio building, and because of our broadcast requirements, it was soundproof, air-conditioned, and completely sealed.

When you went in there, it was like living in a different world.

For several Sundays, the men's Bible study decided to hold their class in the main recording studio, and we took turns teaching the lesson.

In that quiet room, there was no oppressive heat, no dust, and, of course, any possibility of cockroaches was left far behind.

It was my turn to teach, and I had barely gotten into the lesson when Dan

Canfield, one of our South American  
broadcasters, jumped up from his seat  
and yelled, "a cockroach!"

Now, Dan was a very likable fellow, but a  
bit high strung, and I must admit, I  
was a little annoyed at the commotion.  
After all, cockroaches were quite harmless,  
and they always ran away from you.

However, what was a self-respecting  
cockroach to do in a brightly lit  
studio with a huge man trying to stamp  
him into oblivion?

Why, of course, find a dark place to hide,  
which in this case happened to be right  
up my pant leg!

Actually, I didn't see him make his hasty  
retreat, and I didn't really believe  
Dan when he yelled, "he's gone up your  
pant leg!"

*After all, cockroaches don't do that sort of thing; they always run away from you, don't they?*

But then I felt a little tickling sensation just below my knee.

So what was a self-respecting Bible teacher to do in a situation like that?

I gave two hard stamps, the cockroach fell out, and Dan finished him off.

I must say, the roach found the whole thing quite depressing.

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Yes, Jesus said, "**men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**"

And He also said that "**every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.**"

You see, Jesus came to save us from our  
sins, not in our sins.

And you can't accept the gift unless you are  
willing to except the Giver.

And herein is the problem:

V 20-21 **"For every one that doeth evil  
hateth the light, neither cometh to the  
light, lest his deeds should be  
reproved.**

**21: But he that doeth truth cometh to  
the light, that his deeds may be made  
manifest, that they are wrought in  
God."**

Yes, Jesus is God's *great divide*.

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So what was Nicodemus's reaction to all this  
new information?

Did he continued to say **"How can these  
things be ---"** or did he listen?

Well, we don't really know.

When Jesus stopped talking, the Holy Spirit brought down the curtain on this interview.

Perhaps they talked long into the night, and perhaps they did not.

As we have just noted, John's account of this very private meeting ended abruptly at V 21.

No, we don't know how long it took for the seed sown to bring forth fruit, but we know it did.

And here's something else we know.

We know that the Holy Spirit took this seed, which had been so carefully planted by Jesus, and scattered it far and wide.

And down through the centuries, it has taken root in the hearts of millions, even

springing up in the hearts of those in  
this class.

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Well, this lesson has been about a ruler of  
the Jews who came to Jesus by night.

Let me finish it by telling you about  
another ruler.

In this case, it is Queen Victoria, who was  
the ruler of the British Empire.

After attending a service in St. Paul's  
Cathedral, and listening to the sermon  
with great interest, the Queen asked  
her Chaplain, "If one could be  
absolutely sure in this life of eternal  
safety."

His answer was that he "knew of no way that  
one could be absolutely sure."

This incident was published in the Court  
News, and was noticed by a humble

minister of the gospel by the name of John Townsend, a good friend of George Mueller.

After much prayer, he decided to send her a note.

And after paying due respect, he told her he knew "that you could be absolutely sure of our eternal life in the home that Jesus went to prepare."

He then asked her to read John 3:16 (which we have looked at tonight) and then Romans 10:9-10 which says, **"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.**

**10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."**



He went on to say "These passages prove there is full assurance of salvation by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for those who believe and accept His finished work."

Much prayer went up from John and his friends. In a fortnight, a letter arrived from the Queen:

To John Townsend;

Your letter of recent date received and in reply would state that I have carefully and prayerfully read the portions of Scripture referred to.

I believe in the finished work of Christ for me, and trust by God's grace to meet you in that home of which He said "I go to prepare a place for you."

(Signed) Victoria Quelp

