

(John) 04 - the Life Acknowledged

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of regeneration and the new birth, highlighting the necessity of being born again to enter the kingdom of God.

Duration: 50:23

Scripture: John 1:19

Topics: "John"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the new birth and how it leads to a transformed life. He highlights that before someone is born again, they often encounter someone whose life can only be explained by a miracle. The speaker then goes on to explain key verses from the Bible, emphasizing that God sent Jesus not to condemn but to save those who believe in him. He also points out the contrasts presented in the Gospel of John, such as life and death, belief and unbelief, love and hate, and doing evil and doing what's true. The main message of the sermon is that one cannot be neutral about Jesus and must choose to either be for him or against him.

Transcript

John, chapter three. Perhaps the most familiar portion of God's Word. John, chapter three.

And after that, quietly, thank you God for sending Jesus. John three, right? Now, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 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.

Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born anew. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said to him, How can this be? Jesus answered him, Are you a teacher of Israel? And yet you do not understand this. Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of

what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deed should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God. After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea, there he remained with them and baptized.

John also was baptizing at Enon, near Salem, because there was much water there. And people came and were baptized, but John had not yet been put in prison. Now a discussion arose between John's disciples and a Jew of a purifying, and they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, here he is, baptizing, and all are going to him.

John answered, No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice.

Therefore this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all.

He who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks. He who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony.

He who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, but it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests on him. This is the word of the Lord.

Quieter then, let us sing in prayer, Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you Jesus that you came.

Holy Spirit won't you teach me more about his lovely name. Once again, Thank you God for sending Jesus. Thank you Jesus that you came.

Holy Spirit won't you teach me more about his lovely name. Have you got your altrander? And by the way, in case you forget, do keep this over the Christmas period with your notes, won't you? I don't want to have

to ask the others to do any more for me. So keep the one you have and bring it back with you at the beginning of next term.

John chapter 3 is the subject of our lecture this evening. And if you notice on the outline of it, we've seen the life announced in John chapter 1 verse 19 to chapter 2 verse 22. And the life acknowledged in chapter 2 verse 23 to chapter 4 verse 54.

I will clear, just one moment, I'm the one who's not clear. I'll be clear in one moment, hold it a minute please. Now, if you look at that outline again, I'm sorry, moment of confusion.

We've seen the life announced by the witness of John the Baptist in chapter 1 verse 19 to 36. And the witness of the first disciples in chapter 1 verse 37 to 51. And the witness of the works.

Now, that was the miracle of Cana, the wedding, the marriage feast and the cleansing of the temple. If you look down your notes a moment to the outline, you'll see, we're going to see later in chapter 5 through chapter 12, the life antagonized. But between these, we're studying the life acknowledged in chapter 3 and 4. And our subject tonight is chapter 3. And the life is acknowledged in these two chapters, first by three different types of people.

First by a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin. You see that in chapter 3 verse 1 through 21. And then it's acknowledged in chapter 4 verses 1 through 42 by a woman of Samaria.

And in chapter 4 verses 43 to 54, it's acknowledged by a nobleman, one of Herod's people. Here then is the life of Jesus acknowledged by those three different types of people. A Pharisee, chapter 3. A Samaritan woman, chapter 4. And a nobleman, at the end of chapter 4. Just notice that these are found, all of them, in different parts of Palestine.

Judea, that's the south. Samaria, that's central. And the nobleman, in Galilee, at the north.

In all these different parts of the country, the life is acknowledged. And it's very interesting to watch, as we shall do, the ways of approach Jesus made to people. He never approached two people in the same way.

One of them, Nicodemus, to his mind. The other, the woman of Samaria, to her conscience. And this nobleman, to his heart.

So Jesus, his initial approach to each one of these three people was different. We'll see that as we go through. Quite a man, Nicodemus.

All of his history is in John's Gospel. All we know about him. I'll give it to you in three parts.

A few points for a sermon for you. Ready for it? First of all, chapter three, verses one through twenty-one. His desire for Jesus.

Chapter three, verses one through twenty-one. His desire for Christ. Chapter seven, verse forty-five to fifty-two.

His defense of Christ. Chapter seven, verse forty-five to fifty-two. Does our law accuse anybody? Unless we have all witnesses.

Chapter seven, verse forty-five to fifty-two. And chapter nineteen, verse thirty-eight through forty-two. His devotion to Christ.

Chapter nineteen, verse thirty-eight to forty-two. It was he who took ointment to embalm his body. And he who took him with Joseph of Arimathea, that body, to the tomb.

So I repeat, so that you've got it clear. Chapter three, verses one through twenty-one. Nicodemus' desire for Jesus.

Forty-five to fifty-two of chapter seven. His defense of Jesus. Chapter nineteen, verse thirty-eight through forty-two.

His devotion to Jesus. Now, of course, this story here tells us the absolute necessity of regeneration. The necessity of regeneration.

Nicodemus was a ruler, but he needed a redeemer. He thought well of Christ, verse two. This man came to Jesus by night.

I suppose he came by night because he wouldn't compromise his position. Nobody would know. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.

That is as distinct from coming from one of our seminaries or colleges. We know you're a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. Yes, he thought well of Jesus, but not well enough.

Verses twelve through thirteen. If I have told you, said Jesus, to end earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? Think well enough of Christ. Every society has its terms of membership.

Christ laid down his. Verse three. You must be born again.

His terms of membership. Just to give you the Greek word there. Would you like to put it down? I'll spell it out to you.

A-N-O-T-H-E-N. I know a thing. And the word means from above.

You must be born from above. A-N-O-T-H-E-N. There's no other way.

Eternal life, that's the hallmark of everybody in the kingdom. That means not evolution, but revolution. Not evolution, but revolution.

You can't evolve from the flesh to the spirit. Verse six. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.

That which is born of the spirit is spirit. The word for spirit, by the way, is the word pneuma. P-N-E-U-M-A.

It's the word from which we get, in English, pneumatic. Pneuma. The same word is used for wind.

I've got words here. You can't evolve from the flesh to the spirit. It's dear old Dr. Tozer.

You know him, do you? He's got his books. You should get every book in the bookshop by Tozer. Tremendous.

What? That's the problem, isn't it? I suppose I couldn't take them all. But he's a great friend of mine, years ago in Chicago. It's he who said, if you can account for a Christian on the basis of psychology, you've unflocked him.

You've unflocked him. If you can account or try to explain a Christian on the basis of psychology, you've unflocked him. You've got a church member on your hands, but not a Christian.

That one's tucking in here, putting right down here, thinking about. It's not evolution, but revolution. And if you want to know how, well, verses 5 and 8. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and a spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

As I said, the wind or the spirit blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. You notice, by the way, that both Nicodemus and Jesus asked, How? Verse 4. Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he's old? Verse 9. Nicodemus said, How can this be? And Jesus, in verse 12, If I have told you earthly things you do not believe, How can you believe if I have told you heavenly things? Bring those three hows round.

How? Jesus made it clear that a man must be born of water and of the spirit. Verse 5. Hold it a moment. That does not mean water baptism.

It does not mean water baptism. How do you make that out, you say? Well, I'll tell you. Undoubtedly, Nicodemus had been among that crowd who had heard John the Baptist preaching, who said, Matthew 3, verse 11, Matthew 3, verse 11, I baptize you with water for repentance.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Get this down. Slow.

Dictation speed. Ready? Down with it. John's baptism was for repentance with a view to forgiveness.

Jesus' baptism was with the Spirit, capital S, as an evidence of repentance. I repeat that. John's baptism was with the, with the, yes, with a view to forgiveness, with water.

John's baptism was for repentance with a view to forgiveness. Jesus' baptism was with the Spirit as an evidence of repentance. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

No, except a man repent and be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom. That's what Jesus is saying to him. And for the experience of the new birth, Jesus uses a simple and familiar Old Testament illustration in verse 14.

You find it in Numbers 21. Numbers 21, verses 8 and 9. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. You can go into that story, it's very familiar.

And as everyone looked, they were healed. Nicodemus understood that three years later. He understood it at Calvary.

Just notice two musts here in verse 7. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born anew. And verse 14. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

A must on our part, because there's a must on Jesus' part. And notice the New Testament test of a new birth. In verse 19.

This is a judgment. The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. The New Testament test.

Light has come, but men prefer darkness. That's it. Because their deeds are evil.

And three words here notice also. So often we've seen them, and we will right through this gospel, because of the key, the outline. Just notice them.

Verse 15. Whosoever believes in him shall have eternal life. Life.

That's one word. Verse 16. Men also loved.

That's another word. Love. The third word, verse 19.

This is the judgment that the light has come into the world. The outline of the gospel. The whole picture of it.

Of what it says about Jesus. Life. Love.

Light. Nobody can explain the new birth. It's an absolute mystery.

You can't explain it, but everybody here is a witness to it. They can't explain it. But we're all a witness to it.

About that. Here's a little quote from that great preacher C. H. Spurgeon. Ready for it? Here it comes.

Here it comes. Ready? What is the worth of the grace, what is the worth of the grace which I profess to have received if it leaves me exactly the same kind of person that I was before I received it? A faith which does not drastically alter my behavior. A faith, repeating, which does not drastically alter my behavior will never change my destiny.

Will never change my destiny. You got that? Oh. We're from the beginning.

What worth is the grace, repeating, which I profess to have received which leaves me exactly the same kind of person that I was before I received it? Faith which does not drastically change my behavior will never change my destiny. That's very unpopular preaching. But I tell you, it's the preaching that's needed today.

Now, come on with me a little further. I'm not sure about this. So, I'm not saying this is authoritative.

But, there's every reason to believe that the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus has stopped at the end of verse 15. And that verses 16 through 21 are the reflections of John, who wrote the gospel. I mean, I'm glad that a number of others think the same.

About 50-50, actually. And personally, I take that view because the expression only begotten Son is never used by Jesus himself. And verse 18, believe on the name whoever does what is true, verse 21, suggests, all point to this as being a reflection of what John was saying.

Have you ever noticed that in the English translation, so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life here. That's purely interesting. No use to tell anybody that in any other country or in any other language.

It's awful to speak by interpretation. Hell. I was in Brazil once and I said, you know what faith is? F-A-I-T-H forsaking all, I take him.

And my translator held up his hands in absolute despair. Can't do a thing about that. So watch it when you try to translate into some other language.

Got that though, just as a matter of interest. Now, come on, why did God send Jesus, verse 17, this is why, not to condemn, but those who do not believe on his name, that is, do not put confidence in him, are condemned already. Verse 18, justification is conditioned by faith.

Notice also here what terrific contrasts John has in this gospel. I'll give you them, some of them. Verse 16, the contrast of death and life.

Verse 18, of belief and unbelief. Verse 19, love and hate. 19 and 20.

Verse 20 and 21, doing evil and doing what's true. Tremendous contrast. Death and life, belief and unbelief.

Light and darkness, love and hate, doing evil and doing what's true. Do you know what that says to me? It says this, I can't be neutral about Jesus. You ought to take sides.

I can't be neutral. Everyone must be either for him or against him. There are only two ways and two destinies.

I want to be sure we're heading to the right goal. And do you know what? If anyone can remain neutral about Jesus in your presence or mine, there's something wrong with our witness. I'll say that again.

Anybody can remember, can remain neutral in your presence or mine, neutral about Christ, there's something wrong with our testimony. Our testimony should be such as it forces people to take sides. Not because of unpleasantness, but of something about us that makes a difference.

Got that? All mute, put it down. Reverse gear. Try it again.

Can't remember what I said now. Oh yes. If anyone can afford to be neutral about Jesus in your presence, there's something wrong with the witness.

When I came to Christ, I was 21 years of age. That's a long time ago. I was training in Newcastle to be a chartered accountant.

You call that in America or Canada, CPA. There were 60 of us in the office. One of them was a bit peculiar, I thought.

All of us thought. The trouble about him was he was so consistent. Always got there on time.

Never stopped early. Never had a break for a coffee or something stronger. Never took more than half an hour for lunch.

Never stopped in the afternoon and always went on till about six and the office closed at five. When we told smutty stories, we had to shut up when he came. Not that he told us to, but we knew that we were sort of out of place in his company.

And that man just made us hop in that. Hop in that. I knew now, I didn't know then, he was a Christian.

I knew it was different. And we couldn't be neutral. One day my boss said to me, I want you to go on an audit of somebody's books.

Account of firms books near Carlisle. And you'll be there for three weeks. There's no means of getting back and forward.

It's a paint factory, miles up in the country. And you're going to go with, and he named this fellow. Three weeks in the company of a fellow who was a religious maniac.

Two days before I went, I got half a dozen fellows around me and over a glass of beer, I vowed that I'd knock the religion out of him in a week. So they wished me well. When we got there, only one bedroom in this pub, it's called the Grey Bull.

Never seen a Grey Bull, but that's what it's called. And at eleven o'clock at night, he knelt down to pray. I'd never seen anybody do that before, except in the church, now and again.

And I thought to myself, what do I do now? Well, I thought the only thing to do is put up a good show and try. So I knelt down to pray. At least I knelt down with him.

I watched him. Do you know how long he stayed down? Fifty-two minutes. Fifty-two minutes on a hard floor? No carpet? I watched him through my fingers.

I wasn't going to get up before him, and in fifty-two minutes he got up. And I stayed down an extra minute just to impress him. Then he got to bed.

And I thought to myself, as I went to bed, I'd put up a pretty good show tonight. And you know, I heard somebody walking across the floor, sitting down on my bed, and he said, excuse me, but do you ever think about anything seriously? I always used to whip up the fun. I said, what do you mean? He said, do you want to be saved? That's the diplomatic approach.

You'll find it in a book on easy lessons and soul winning. And I just fired every gun at that fellow that I had. Let him have it.

Made all the excuses you know what. Then he said to me, do you know anything about victory over sin? I said, no. And for the first time in my life he told me about Jesus, about his virgin birth and sinless life, his atoning death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And in twenty minutes he'd led me to know Jesus. You couldn't be neutral. You couldn't be neutral.

I'll just tell you that. That's the miracle of the new birth. And before somebody is born again they've always met somebody else whose life needs an explanation.

Shall I say nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand? They've met somebody whose life can only be explained by miracles. Before I leave this passage would you please jot down one little sentence

among each verse. Verse sixteen to twenty-one.

Verse sixteen. God loved the world but the benefits are for all who believe. His sun shines on us but those who stay inside don't get the rays.

Let me give you that again. God loved the world but the benefits are for whoever believes. His sun shines on us but those who stay indoors don't get the rays.

R-A-Y-S. Verse seventeen. God saves man through Jesus who condemns them.

If a man dies of thirst on the edge of a reservoir R-E-S-E-R V-O-I-R You know what that is? A place that contains water. Who's to blame? Repeating. God saves man through Christ who condemns them.

If a man dies standing on the edge of a reservoir he dies of thirst. Who's to blame? Verse eighteen. It isn't difficult to escape judgment on sin.

Believing in Christ is possible to all who know him but it may be costly. Now here's just a little play on words. Get this down or else you won't see it.

To believe that is write it this way B-E hyphen L-I-E V-E to B leave means to leave L-E-A-V-E or in order to be a disciple. Just a play on words but notice this. It may be costly because to believe B-E dash L-I-E-V-E to believe means to leave L-E-A-V-E or in order to be V-E a disciple.

Got it? Verse 19 and 20 against these verses would you just write down this. We make excuses for not believing in Christ but there's only one basic reason. We make excuses for not believing in Jesus but there's only one basic reason.

Loving the dark rather than the light. Got that? And I've just written down at the bottom of these in my Bible you might like to write down the same. Lord save me from making excuses to cover up sin.

Lord save me from making excuses to cover up sin. Now in the last three minutes just let me touch on the concluding portion of the chapter. Verses 22 to 30 Here's the last we hear of John the Baptist.

What a lovely fellow he was. He's the most neglected prophet in the New Testament. I'm longing to meet him.

You notice he closes his ministry exactly as he started. He closes his ministry exactly as he started. He was loyal to Christ to the very end.

Verse 28 You yourselves bear me witness that I said I'm not the Christ. But I have been sent before him. The disciples of John and Jesus were both baptizing.

Verse 22 and 23 Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea. There he remained with them and baptized. John was also baptizing.

Now at this time I won't go any further but to point out to you there what looks like a contradiction. Just notice it in your Bible. Chapter 4 verse 2 John, Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John though Jesus himself did not baptize but only his disciples.

And yet, verses 22 and 23 Jesus and his disciples went into the land and there he remained with them and baptized. There seems to be a contradiction. Again, without authority but with conviction I believe the

answer is that Jesus did not baptize with water.

But but his presence it is his presence gave the baptism of his disciples an authority from above. People would have been very reluctant to accept their baptism. That's my conviction.

You think it through as whether it makes sense. All I want you to notice at the moment is that this led to a controversy with the Jews. Verses 25 and 26 Christians are pretty good at starting that also.

John's disciples are jealous of Jesus' success. Verse 26 They came to John and said to him Rabbi, he who was with you beyond Jordan to whom you bore witness, here he is baptizing and all are going to him. Notice that John soon silenced them shut them up.

Verse 29 He said in effect I am not a rival, I'm a friend. Not a rival, I'm a friend. And he confirms his first testimony says his job is to bring the bride and bridegroom together.

Verse 29 That done, his ministry was over. He must increase but I must decrease. I've called that the blessing of non-success.

The blessing of non-success. I wonder if anybody could finish life more nobly than John did. Like the morning star.

Have you noticed it recently? Terrific, these last few mornings. It's eclipsed by the rising sun. So John was eclipsed by Jesus.

And he wanted it that way. Tremendous way to finish your ministry. The time? 7.28. Sorry.

God bless you.

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