

John 3:1-21

by Damian Kyle

The sermon explores the necessity of being born again for true faith and relationship with God, as illustrated through Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus.

Duration: 53:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 2:23-25, John 3:11-12, John 3:16, Romans 5:8

Topics: "John"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well in John chapter four. He highlights Jesus' ministry of evangelism and how he breaks the ice with the woman by asking for water. Jesus then talks about living water and the woman's curiosity is piqued. The preacher also discusses the importance of belief in Jesus as the only way to salvation and emphasizes that a lifelong rejection of this salvation is the only unforgivable sin.

Transcript

John chapter 3. At the end of chapter 2 there is some dynamic that is happening between Jesus and a group of people that, how shall we say, it was not altogether satisfactory to Jesus. There is a belief that's being placed in him, but it's a belief that he can't commit himself to. I would contend in looking at it that it was because their faith in him was based upon signs.

And I would always contend that that is the weakest faith that we have to offer to God. There was a place where Jesus said in the course of his ministry where, but it wasn't a favorable thing as it relates to this, where he said, well at least believe me for the signs sake. But he resorts to it.

It wasn't a first choice. So there's something about this faith that isn't that appealing to him because he doesn't commit to it. But then in chapter 3 he moves on to a faith that he will commit to in the description of the account between he, Jesus, and a man by the name of Nicodemus.

There's a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus was first of all a Pharisee. We tend to think of them in negative terms.

They're to be thought of in negative terms as a group. But there were good Pharisees, Nicodemus being one of them, honest, sincere men who had a deep, deep love for God that were among the sect of the Pharisees. Jesus denounced them though as a group and as a religious system for what they had turned

into as a group of hypocrites, which we'll get to in a moment for the reasons why.

The Pharisees, the sect of the Pharisees, had their birth in what is known as that period between the Old Testament and the New Testament during the period of the Maccabees where God's people in terms of obedience and holiness had reached such a low, low place that a group of men among the nation disgusted with it. They broke off from the people and they committed themselves in a fresh way as had been done in the history of the Jews to absolute obedience to God's Word, to holiness, to let's live this life by the power of God and let's see what it turns into. Let's see if these promises are true.

Let's see if he'll do what he said he'll do as a part of our obedience. They gave themselves to this. They're zealots.

Zealots are wonderful. You never want to ever be among the body of Christ if the zealots have been wiped out. Now you need level-headed people too, I think in a lesser degree, but the zealots are important.

We all need one another, don't we? But the problem of the zealot is this, and it became the problem of the Pharisee, and that is in their zeal for God, they weren't content to simply obey the obvious meaning of God's commandments. So they began to interpret those commandments more strictly or more completely. They began to speak into the silence or the gray around those commandments until they began to add commandments to the commandments and all of these commandments and moving into the external of how the person looked and all of this kind of stuff.

Then they added out of their zeal so many things to the commandments of God that came out of their own reasoning or their own zeal or their own tradition that ultimately they developed a system of commandments that no one could keep, not even them. That's what zealots will always do. And what that does to a person or to a church that is made up wholly of this kind of person is that they realize that no one can keep that, not in public and in private.

So all of the effort goes into keeping it in public, but they know they don't keep it in private because it's impossible for any person to keep. And so what do they resort to? They resort to acting hypocrisy. And that's why Jesus comes to the Pharisees and he denounces them for their hypocrisy.

These burdens that they were laying on with the scribes upon the people that they knew in the privacy of their own life, they weren't even trying to keep anymore, but they kept putting them on the people. And so this was what the Pharisees had become by the time of Jesus' day comes around. But he's a religious man and he is a man who is very, very serious about religion.

All of that can be understood through his involvement of the sect of the Pharisees. He's also described as a ruler of the Jews, which probably makes him a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a 70 man kind of board or council that ruled over the Jews, not politically because Rome had that position, but spiritually, they were the 70 most powerful men in all of Israel over the Jews, the most influential in all of the world for Jews.

He was one of that 70 and so extraordinarily powerful man, extraordinary influential man. And we know from later on in John's gospel, in John chapter 19, that he must have been a very rich man because when Jesus was being buried, Nicodemus comes to help in the burial and he brings a hundred pounds worth of spices with which to bury Jesus. Those things were very, very expensive.

So he brings these things. And you notice additionally in verse 10, that when Jesus speaks to him, he calls him the teacher in Israel. He was evidently like the guy selling the most tapes in those days.

He was the teacher. He was the rabbi. He was the prominent instructor of that time.

Something happens to him that brings him to Jesus. Something that Jesus does because he comes and he's going to say, you know, rabbi, I know, you know, your teacher comes from God. Nobody can do these signs that you do unless God is willing.

But something about how Jesus handled himself, it would seem as the whole progression goes on and the cleansing of the temple of those men and women selling, of those men selling, sorry ladies, of those men selling all of those animals for profit and the money changes. And it appears that when he sees Jesus do this, it hits him like a ton of bricks. And he's willing to risk everything, his wealth, his position, his influence, his reputation to come to a carpenter.

You have to understand here is a man of astonishing stature who is coming to a rabbi who in the eyes of all of his peers is just a carpenter. Something's happened to this man that he comes to Jesus. And I think that when he saw Jesus cleanse that temple, that he was confronted with a holiness that was beyond what he had ever known or had ever seen as a Pharisee.

And when he either watched it with his own eyes or the report was brought to him of what Jesus had done, it rang true in his heart that that is what a holy man would have done in that situation. He's given his whole life to holiness. He's given his whole life to religion.

He has excelled in it. And when he sees Jesus, he realizes that he has been playing in the shadows. He's been in the kiddie pool as it relates to religion, as it relates to God, as it relates to holiness.

He's been majoring in the minors. You ever had that happen where you and your Christian walk, you're going along and you're excelling in the little circle that you're involved in or the little church or the little town or whatever it might be. And one day God brings across your path a man or a woman who is so spiritual and so holy and so like Christ that you look at that and you realize, I've been a big fish in a small pond.

With all of a sudden, my definition of what a holy life looks like, what a godly life looks like, what godly zeal looks like, all of a sudden is being redefined in my mind and in my heart so fast I can barely keep up with it. And he sees that, and it's to his credit that he sees that in the Lord Jesus. And a light goes on and he asks himself and he thinks to himself, here I am.

I think that I am holy. I think that I am among the holiest in all of Israel. And how in the world could I have ever put up with all these years and even endorsed it, what they were doing on that temple mount.

And he's ashamed of how low the standard was for him. And when he sees true holiness and the reality in Jesus, he's attracted to it. He's willing to risk everything to come and to learn about the source of that kind of life.

He doesn't view Jesus as the Son of God or any of those things yet, but he knows that whatever Jesus is tapped into, it's infinitely superior to what he's ever been tapped into as a Pharisee. And so he comes. This man came to Jesus by night.

I have a classic Nick at Night right here in the Bible. Now listen, there's nothing new under the sun. I only get to do that every time we hit John, so forgive me if you've been here long enough and you've heard it three times.

I still like it. He comes at night. We don't really know why he comes at night.

I mean, it could be secretly he's concerned about his position or something like that. I'm inclined to believe that he came at night because that's when he figured he could get some alone time with Jesus. I mean, the crowds are there, all of the things that are happening and all, and you look.

And if you've ever tried to talk with a busy person, you're going to come and you're going to try and talk about the most important thing in your life. And what you figure is how can I get this person alone for five minutes so I can have their undistracted attention so maybe he comes at night because now it can just be him and Jesus to talk about the things that are the most important to him. And notice his confession concerning Jesus.

He said to him, Rabbi, we know. Now notice that word we. We know that you are a teacher come from God.

So his first confession is that Jesus is a teacher. He confesses secondly, we know that you're come from God. For we know that no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with them.

So he confesses three things. You're a teacher, you're come from God, and God is with you. Now Jesus says much more than those three things, but this is what he understands Jesus to be up to this point.

And he's not alone. He says, we know these things about you. What are his circles? The religious leaders came to conclusions, doubtless accurate conclusions concerning Jesus very early in his ministry.

And sometimes we see the strength of Jesus's denunciation of them in the scriptures. He knew more than Nicodemus knew what they knew about him, but they were willing to oppose him knowing these things about him. I'm not just the only one Nicodemus is saying that knows these things about you.

We know these things about you. Until Jesus came, there had been a 400 year silence of God speaking to the nation at all, much less these kinds of miracles and signs and wonders and all of these great things that were going on. Things had been dead for a long time.

So they knew that God was in this. Well, that's his confession that he makes concerning him. And Jesus answered this thing.

It wasn't a question that was asked, but this was the confession. Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus, most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And you read that.

And, you know, as you read through the thing, you just go, listen, are these two people, have they got a bad connection or what's happening here? They engaged in the same conversation. Here's Nicodemus. He's talking about one thing here.

And Jesus seems to completely disregard what it is that he's saying. And he moves into the necessity of the spiritual birth as the theme. Now, Jesus apparently knows about Nicodemus, that what Nicodemus is attracted to in Jesus is the relationship that he has with the father, the closeness that he has with the

father.

And so Jesus isn't going to banter around about his identity at this point and, and clarify these kinds of things. He's going to bring him to the place where if this man becomes born again, these other things are going to fall in place. So he speaks to him about the necessity of being born again.

Now in John chapter four, when he meets the woman at the well, you know, one of the great things to learn about Jesus is his whole ministry of evangelism. And he meets the woman at the well, and he kind of, you know, breaks the ice, so to speak, by asking for some water. And he talks about water and, you know, and I'll give you a water that, you know, is living water, springs up inside of you, you don't have to come down, you drink this water, you'll thirst again.

He finds some common ground, begins to work with her on that. Here, he cuts straight to the chase. I don't know if you do the same thing.

When a religious person comes to my doorstep, or I meet them on the street, I cut to the chase. I am able to assume that they have a body of knowledge, that we can track with one another, we can jump all of this, let's get down to what it's really all about, and they can follow you. Nicodemus is going to be able to follow him a little bit, though he does go through some mental contortions in just a moment.

And so Jesus, again, verse three, said, most assuredly, verily, verily, in the old King James, which means, listen, believe everything I say, but really pay attention to this. I say to you, unless one, anyone that is Jew and Gentile, like everyone needs this to happen, is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. You notice that term born again, where it came from? It came from Jerry Falwell, didn't it? Jerry's coming into town this week, God bless him, it should be great.

I'm serious, I am. There is nobody, when I am watching one of those TV shows, they got somebody coming on for the Christian perspective, I am thrilled when I see Jerry Falwell on there. He really stays with the word and he knows how to hold his own on these things.

Where was I? But it's not the definition of some man, somebody come up with born again. Jesus is the one that used the term. A lot of people today, and I think certainly in liberal circles, and people have somehow, within Christianity, and it's carried out into the world, that somehow there is this perception that the born again Christian is some extraordinarily dangerous kind of Christian.

He is a fanatical kind of Christian. So you have these polls that and Gallup does, and how many Americans call themselves Christians, and it's some astronomical number, and then how many of them consider themselves to be born again Christians, and the number is typically a third of the former number. Excuse me, there is no other Christian but a born again Christian.

You cannot be a Christian except that you're born again. There is no other variety, and that's what Jesus is saying here. Unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God, much less be a part of it.

All Christians are born again Christians. Now what in the world does that mean? Well, I'm going to get ahead of myself here a little bit on all this, but none of this is new for you. It means each of us has been born physically.

I mean, here we are in this room tonight. There's evidence that a physical birth has occurred in our lives, but the physical birth isn't enough to enter into the kingdom of God. I've got to be born again.

There is the necessity in Jesus's mind of another birth. We're going to see in a moment that it is a reference to a spiritual birth. One of the greatest things I've ever seen, and I'm going to bore you that have been here for a while a little bit, is that three-finger illustration where you have man created in the image of God.

How were we created in the image of God? God's about 6'3", 200 pounds. Well, that's how we're created in the image of God. We're created in the image of God in that God is a trinity or triunity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We've been created in the image of God and that in the original creation with Adam and Eve, we were created in inferior trinity of spirit, uppermost, soul, that is the intellect and the emotion, and body. God had chosen to have relationship with man in the realm of the spirit. In an original creation, in Adam and Eve, the soul and the flesh, the body, were in subjection to the spirit.

God said to Adam and Eve, listen, of all of the trees in the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil don't eat that because in the day that you eat of it, you'll surely die. The very next scene in the Bible, we don't know how much time has elapsed, but if they're anything like you and I, it wasn't very long. Of course, we were born fallen.

But the very next scene in the Bible, there they are, and they partake of the forbidden fruit, and on that day they died. They did not die physically. Again, our presence in this room is a testimony to that fact.

How did they die? They died spiritually, and it's worse than that because then their whole world was turned upside down, and now man, as he's born into the world, is born not only spiritually dead, but he's born addicted, so to speak, to the fleshly appetites. His body appetites are what drives him, and the intellect and the emotions are subservient to the flesh, and there is only one solution to the catastrophe of this condition, and that is a spiritual birth because that's the only thing that allows me to return to the very thing that I've been created for, and that is personal relationship with God, so the necessity of a spiritual birth. And so that's what he's talking about here.

Now, Nicodemus is a bit confused in verse 4, and he said to Jesus, how can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Can you imagine the mental images? In his mind, he thinks Jesus is talking about, you've got to be born again, so it requires a second spiritual birth, but he just thinks, here he is, the teacher in Israel, and he is, it's just, I'm just not getting this, Jesus. Is that how it happens? And Jesus said, most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. So he gets a little more revelation concerning this birth, that it's a spiritual birth, and in order to enter into the kingdom of God, to have a personal relationship with God, one must follow the physical birth, the water birth, with a spiritual birth.

Now there in verse 5, where it talks about being born of water, some people say, that's a reference to the word of God, or it's a reference to this or that. To me, it's clearly a reference to the physical birth. I must experience a physical birth and a spiritual one, because then in verse 6, he starts to talk about that which is born of the flesh is flesh.

He's talking about these things. And water is really, it's synonymous with physical birth, isn't it? What do you do when your wife is pregnant? The due date is close. What are you waiting for? You're waiting for a water to break.

So when the water breaks, the amniotic fluid comes forth, that means now this baby is on its way. So it's a symbol of physical birth. So he says, unless one is born of physical birth and the spirit, a spiritual birth, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

So the spiritual birth is the Holy Spirit coming into a human life, and him coming into our life, he brings with him the capacity for relationship with God. That which, verse 6, is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit. This birth, the spiritual birth, can't come out of the flesh.

It doesn't come out of the flesh, it can only come out of the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus said, do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. Now you notice that word must, you must be born again.

This is not optional equipment for getting to heaven. He didn't say, now listen, I've got a deal for you, you can be born again. A lot of times it's presented that way.

That's fine. I mean, maybe it appeals to the loftier side of some people, but it's a little more serious than just something that I can do so I have fulfillment in life. It's something that I must do.

In order to inherit the kingdom of God. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. And so here is Jesus speaking up to this point, and the whole theme is the necessity of a spiritual birth.

I trust that no one in this room, or in the overflow room, for the rest of their Christian life will ever doubt the necessity of a spiritual birth to be born again. And then Jesus moves in verse eight, and he does something interesting, because then he addresses the mystery of the spiritual birth. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but you can't tell where it comes from and where it goes, and so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

And so the wind blows, and when the wind blows, you don't know, you know, where's the wind factory. And so it comes and it blows, and where it comes from, and why it does all of the things that it does, it's a mysterious element associated with it. So is the spiritual birth.

Now one of the interesting things about hearing the wind, you hear the wind when the wind is blowing through something. And it's altogether likely that as Jesus is talking with Nicodemus about the necessity of the spiritual birth, that the wind blows through some trees that they're standing near, and all of a sudden Jesus, who can take anything out of creation and use it to testify concerning himself, speaks of the wind as an example of the spiritual birth. There's mystery about it.

When you're born again, where does the Spirit come from? You ever seen the Spirit enter into a person when they're born again? I haven't. If you have, don't blurt out, I'll talk to you later. I have other questions for you, theological questions, not UFO questions or things like that, whatever else you might be into.

We're glad you're here though. This is a safe place. Better than late night talk radio, which really isn't good for you.

All right. But we don't see the Spirit of God come into a person. When I was born again, I didn't see him come into me, but I know he came into me.

In the same way that I know that the wind is real because it's blowing through a tree, the effect that it has upon a tree. How do I know that the wind is real? Because the effect upon a tree. How do I know that the spiritual birth is real? Because the effect upon a person, the change that occurs.

Isn't it amazing the people that God changes? Just look around. I'll give you a minute here. You know the testimonies that are in this room? Third service, I embarrassed my friend from Calvary Chapel, who's the pastor there.

You look at him and you just say, look at the little grandpa. Before he came to know the Lord, oh boy, outlaw, biker, tough, I mean just one mean guy. The Lord saves him and now he's a pastor of a thriving church in Nevada.

And so it is. You can go up and down all the aisles and it changes. What has happened? What we once were and what we've become now.

The Lord isn't asking for anyone to believe. Well, I'll get to that in just a moment. So the beautiful effect, it's a mysterious thing that happens, but we see the effect of it.

And Nicodemus answered and said then, how can these things be? And the whole key now to the rest of Jesus' discussion with him is that single word, how? He knows what it is, what it is to some degree. And now as he's listening to Jesus speak about it, the next big question that arises in his mind is how can these things be? How can this happen in my life? How can this happen in a person's life? And Jesus answered and said to him, are you the teacher in Israel and you don't know these things? Now you look at this and think that Jesus is like, all right, Buster, are you the big teacher? There's a bit more to it than that. Because in the book of Ezekiel, I believe it's chapter 36, God spoke of the day that when, of the day that he would put a new heart by his Holy Spirit in his people.

Speaking mystically in the Old Testament of what Jesus is talking about clearly here, and that is a spiritual birth. So Jesus is saying in effect, listen, you're the great student of the scriptures and did you miss in the Old Testament what was declared there concerning these things? Most assuredly I say to you, we speak what we know and we testify what we have seen and you do not believe our witness. Jesus said, I have come and I represent the Father and I have come and I am not bringing you simply a report as a mere prophet or as a mere teacher that God speaks to from heaven, speaks it to me and then I deliver it to you.

I have come from heaven. I speak of things I've seen. I speak of things I've heard.

That's where I'm coming from in all of this teaching and yet you don't receive our witness. Jesus has been speaking to these people for some time now and they were rejecting his witness. He said, if I have told you earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? If you aren't going to, if you can't handle addition, how am I going to take you into multiplication, Academus? Well, you know, sometimes to become teachable as a religious leader, you got to get knocked off your high horse a little bit and all, and that's what Jesus is doing.

He's humbling him. Jesus said, no one has ascended to heaven, but he who came down from heaven, that is the son of man who is in heaven. So Jesus declared, I am uniquely qualified to speak on these things.

And there's Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Even so, must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal or everlasting life. Now, Jesus illustrates for Nicodemus a passage from the old testament to illustrate the spiritual birth.

And it's from Numbers chapter 21, where the children of Israel were wandering through their wilderness experience and all, and they were a pretty crabby group. In fact, they're just whiners and complainers. And

they reached this particular point in their journey.

And all of a sudden they hate God again, and they hate Moses again. And why have you brought us out here to die? And we hate this manna that we're having to eat, and we can't believe that you force us to eat it. And we don't have any water out here.

And they head into the whole thing again. And the Lord sends some snakes into the midst of the camp, and the snakes begin to bite the people and they begin to die. And then the people true to form, these people are not foreign to us.

All of a sudden they cry, uncle, uncle. Then they realize, all right, this is happening. It's God's judgment on us because of our whining and everything.

And so they come to Moses and they say, we've complained against God and we've sinned against you and everything. And so, you know, pray to the Lord that he'll stop these snakes from biting us. And the Lord came to Moses and he spoke to Moses and he said, what I want you to do is take a fiery serpent.

I want you to set it on a pole and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at that fiery serpent on the pole, he shall live. And so Moses made a fiery serpent. He made it out of bronze and bronze is a symbol of judgment.

It's a medal of judgment and the Bible. And he put it out there in the middle of the camp on a pole. And so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, that when he looked at the pole with a bronze serpent on it, he lived.

The idea is that he looked in and he looked in faith. It's very, very simple, isn't it? Now, the interesting thing about that whole thing in Numbers chapter 21 is that that event sat for 1,500 years in the Old Testament scriptures. And for 1,500 years, not one rabbi had an explanation for it.

I mean, unless they were fanciful and making up whatever they wanted. That event occurred in the Old Testament so that Jesus would have an example in this conversation with Nicodemus to give insight to that event and use that event to give insight to the spiritual birth. And all that a person had to do when he was bitten by the snake was to understand that this pole in the middle of the camp with the bronze serpent that was on the top, that this was the salvation that pleased God.

It is the salvation that he has chosen, the means by which he has chosen to save man from that bite of the snake. For us, it's the bite of sin. And knowing that that was God's chosen way of salvation, if they look to it in faith, they wouldn't die.

Very simple. Look and live. The English language, both letters begin with L. Look and live.

Now, when I was a brand new Christian, there was a guy pastoring up in Sacramento by the name of Lewis Neely. He's still there. And hard to believe this was about 20 some years ago, but they always had these concerts up there in Sacramento.

And so I went up there and I saw Leon Patello and their own band and all these different things that they were doing when I could head up there. I remember Lewis Neely, and he's much older now. He's about my age when he did all this.

So you'll tell stories about me someday, perhaps. But Lewis Neely is an evangelist. He's a wonderful evangelist.

And he talked about some place in some building he was in where they had this automated drinking fountain. All you had to do was just stoop down to the water and come on and drink. But it was a time when all that stuff was brand new.

So it was like people didn't trust that. A little new age, wouldn't you say? You know, that kind of thing and everything. The trilaterals were probably involved in the whole thing and everything.

So they looked at the deal and I mean, so finally they put a sign on the drinking fountain and it said, stoop and drink. And so you could go up and you look at the sign and everything and the interesting thing about it is you didn't have to understand why it worked. You just had to obey the command.

You didn't have to track the water from the ice melt all the way through, you know, the reservoir systems and into the rivers and all of that and how the water got from there to here so that you could stoop or drink. You didn't need to understand everything about it to get a drink of water. All you had to do was just obey the sign, walk up, stoop, and you hit the little laser thing and there came the water and you could drink.

And that's as simple as could be in terms of salvation. And that's what he did in the Old Testament, just look and live. One of the greatest hindrances as it relates to, and he takes all of this and he says, even as Moses lifted up verse 14, the serpent in the wilderness, and then he takes it and he applies it as a type to himself, even so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes, this is our look and live, believes in Jesus, looks to the cross and believes in him, trusts in him for salvation, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

It's that simple. And so often a person is stumbled because they don't understand why it works or how it works. You don't have to understand it for it to work.

Sufficient that this is the way that the father has chosen for the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of mankind by simply looking to Jesus in faith, believing upon his death upon the cross for the forgiveness of my sins, and then repenting and turning to God, giving my life to the Lord for him to use my life now as he sees fit and all. And as I believe in that, trust in that for the forgiveness of my sins, Jesus upon the cross, believing that he died and he was buried and rose again on the third day, then the spiritual birth occurs. I have everlasting life.

As sure as those people that took, and here they are crumbling down, you know, onto the ground and everything, and they looked and they were made well, as sure as that happened, so too when we look to the cross in faith that a spiritual birth occurs within our lives. You can just see one of the classic things I've ever heard concerning that scene in Numbers is in the picture that's painted is so fabulous of all these people, they're dying, they've been bitten by the snakes, and there they are in this terrible condition that they're in and everything. And someone comes and says, listen, all you've got to do is just look at the bronze serpent and live.

And then these people are going to say, well, what difference can that make? I mean, you know, you go look at the bronze serpent for me and see if that does it. I mean, it doesn't make any sense in some respects to us because of the finiteness of our mind that that could make any difference. But it was all the difference between life and death.

Why? Again, because it's the way that God has chosen to save us. And he doesn't have to fully explain himself, sufficient to know that that's the salvation that pleases him. And it's the only salvation that pleases

him.

And so Jesus speaks of this passage, ascribing it to himself. And again, in verse 15, there's that, and whoever believes, there's that word of John all the way through the gospel, believes, believes, and trusts in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved, and here's perhaps the most famous verse in all of the Bible, the gospel all included it, for God, this is the origin of man's salvation.

It has its origin in God. For God so loved the world. This is his motivation in saving us.

He not only loved us, but he so loved us. And what is the degree of his love? What is the revelation of his love? He so loved us that he gave his only begotten son. Paul would write to the Romans and he would say, God demonstrated his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.

That's the awesome thing. That's the degree of his love. How do I know that the Lord loves me tonight? He only loves people that have \$1,500 or more in their bank account.

That's the supreme test for the love of God. No, we know by the cross of Calvary and the sacrifice that he was willing to make, not only to forgive us, but that on the other side of that forgiveness, we entered into a personal relationship with him. And so God so loved the world, his motivation that he gave salvation as a free gift.

He gave his only begotten son, his only unique son, that whoever Jew or Gentile, this is how salvation is open to whoever, that whoever believes in him, that is trusts in him should not perish, but have everlasting life that comes by trusting. Now this trusting in Jesus for salvation is more than just having an intellectual knowledge that that's the way of salvation. The demons believe the existence of God.

The demons believe that Jesus is the son of God. They spoke it continually, yet there won't be a demon in heaven. And so it's more than just an intellectual ascent to the truth of this.

It's more than just an emotional thing. A person can cry all the way through a service like this and leave here unsaved. What's happening here and all of this is as the Lord is speaking and we round it out with other parts of the scripture, there is that necessity to understand and accept to believe fully in who died on that cross.

That Jesus was the son of God and God the son and is. That's who died on the cross for me. This is one of the things that I talk with the Jehovah Witnesses continually about.

It isn't enough for them to believe. I must believe the right things about the one on the cross. Because Jesus is later going to say in John's gospel when he speaks with the religious leaders, he says, unless you believe that I am, you'll die in your sins.

So there is not only believing in him, but believing in him for who he truly was that died on the cross for my sins. And then to accept what the Bible's assessment is of me, and that is that I am a sinner in need of salvation. And then a willingness to repent, to turn from my own sinful, rebellious ways in direction, to turn from going in that direction, to then turn and going in God's direction.

And then the yielding of my will to God. God, my life is no longer my own. It's yours.

You use it however you want. It's your property. I've wasted it.

I've ruined it. I would only further ruin it under my lordship. It's yours.

So these are the hard attitudes. And it's believing in Jesus, trusting him for salvation. But you know, when a person comes to that point, there's an eagerness for that to happen.

Then Jesus said, for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. And he who believes in Jesus is not condemned, but he who does not believe, and here's the believe, the believe over and over again, but he who does not believe is condemned already. And that's the key word already.

I remember one time I was teaching in the early years of this fellowship over at Sherwood Bible Church. And there was a guy that used to come to the church and he was a bad guy, but he came, you know, and I mean, that's fine. We're glad to have him there.

But I remember one time I was teaching related to this passage and I spoke about the fact that God did not come into the world to condemn the world. And he used to sit there like this, you know, and everything. And all of a sudden he just starts, you know, affirming what I'm saying and the whole deal.

That's right. He didn't come into the world to condemn the world. You know, that's right.

That's right. You didn't come into the world to condemn the world. And then I went on and I explained in the very next verse, the reason that Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn the world is because the world didn't need condemnation.

It's already condemned. There are no more shaking going on there at that particular point with his head. So, you know, everybody likes this kind of, you know, soft kind of Pillsbury boy, the teeth out of it, anything that could, you know, and all of that.

But the reason that Jesus didn't condemn is the fact of the matter is every one of us born into this world. We're condemned. We're already condemned.

The world is condemned. People look at the Christians and say, you Christians, all you do is condemn. You condemn homosexuality.

You condemn abortion. You know, you condemn this thing and you condemn that thing and you condemn sin and all of this kind of stuff. All you do is condemn.

We don't condemn. It's already condemned. All we're doing is telling people that it's already condemned.

It is set aside for judgment. Get out while you can. So Jesus speaks here of the fact that the person that doesn't believe, in other words, they stay in the condition that they've been born into this world in, then they stay in a condemned condition.

And the Lord doesn't want anyone to stay in that condition. He's not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Now, the condemnation there in that second half of verse 18 will only be another hour.

Just relax. But the condemnation there that's spoken of in that section, that last part, the condemned already, the condemned already is, notice that word, because he's lived a terribly sinful life. No, no one will end up condemned over that.

The condemnation is because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. If any person lives through this life, there's only one sin for which there is no forgiveness. And that is a lifelong rejection of the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring me to him in the course of my life.

And so when a person stands before the great white throne judgment, as it's described there in the revelation, there's no mention of videos being shown like these dumb TV shows where they're watching and they go, all right, we need to have justification for condemning you to hell or this kind of thing and roll it. You'd have to be out of the time-space continuum to get through all of that as it relates to mankind. The condemnation on that scene is because they cannot find that person's name in the book of life.

That's the one sin, a lifelong rejection of Jesus. That is the condemnation because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world.

Who is the light? Jesus from John chapter one. When we saw that has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil and everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. Why do people reject the light? Because they love darkness.

They want to do their own thing even if their own thing is open rebellion against God. And the open rebellion doesn't necessarily have to be sex, drugs, and rock and roll. I can live over in the college district.

I can be on every board and council doing good community things in the city of Modesto. And if I reject the person of Jesus Christ, it is because of my own pride. I want to maintain my life under my own control.

I like the life that I've chosen for myself and I don't want anything to do with God. And rebellion is darkness whether it's considered dark by society's standard or not. All rebellion is darkness.

So the condemnation, people reject Jesus not for all of these reasons that are given. They reject it because they do not want a relationship with God and they do not want God controlling their life and they don't want God controlling their life because they like the darkness and they know he'll bring them into the light. Now some people are in darkness yet because they haven't heard the gospel.

That's what we're still here for. How long I don't know given the news, the recent weeks and what's happening in the Middle East and all of these kinds of things that are happening. But there's some people that haven't received, they haven't heard the message yet and that's what we're here for.

But the person that's heard and rejected it, they don't want to come to the light because their dark deeds will be exposed. That's how heaven sees it. That's the way it's going to be one time, one day, standing before the Lord.

All of these big things and all of these excuses and all this kind of stuff and everything and one day it's going to be exposed. No, you didn't come because you like darkness. And people that like darkness, they don't like to go into the light because light shines on the darkness.

But not everyone is in that condition. Notice in verse 21, but he who does the truth comes to the light that his deeds may be clearly seen that they have been done in God. So many reject, but many come.

Tired of their old life, tired of their old ways, all of this kind of stuff and they reach that point in their life where they say, okay I'm done with this. And like Nicodemus, they come to Jesus. Attracted by his life or whatever it might be, and they come.

But they come because they love the light. Nicodemus loved the light he saw in Jesus. And the light exposed the darkness in his own life, but he wasn't going to protect the darkness because he loved the light more than the darkness now.

And the epilogue concerning his life as we find him at the scene of Jesus's crucifixion afterward, now a believer, handling Jesus's body in preparation for burial. So a beautiful ending to this story in this account between Nicodemus and Jesus.

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