

"The Serpent and the Savior"

John 3

Introduction: Today we are stepping away from Balaam and we are going to look into a conversation between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus. The conversation which is recorded for us in John 3 is one of the most important conversations which we will ever listen into. It is in this conversation that we learn about the need to be born again and we find the means to be born again.

I. The Meeting

Notice John 3:1-2

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. This means he was a very religious man. He had apparently followed the teaching of Jesus and he was very aware of the miracles of Jesus. But he did not know Jesus. We see in verse 2 that he came by night. He came by night because he most likely did not want the other Pharisees to know he was interested in what Jesus was teaching. But the fact that he came by NIGHT tells us that he also came in the darkness, both physical and spiritual. Nicodemus was like so many people in our world today who are religious, but they are not saved. They would appear to be saved on the outside but in the heart, they are lost.

Application:

Religion will not save anyone and anyone who is trusting in their religion to get them to heaven is just like Nicodemus in that they too are walking in spiritual darkness.

Let us notice another man who also was religious and not saved.

Genesis 4:1-7

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

² And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

³ And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

⁴ And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

⁵ But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

⁶ And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

⁷ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

Cain was religious and he died in his sin because he was never saved.

II. The Need

Notice John 3:3

This statement does not seem to fit into the conversation, but we must understand that Jesus knew his heart. He knew exactly why Nicodemus had searched Him out.

John 6:44

⁴⁴ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Jesus knew that the Father had drawn Nicodemus to Him, and He knew Nicodemus wanted to know about salvation, so Jesus went straight to the need of Nicodemus.

Application:

This is the need of every person in the world. We are all born with a sin nature, and we are born spiritually dead.

Ephesians 2:1-5

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

³ *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

⁴ *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

⁵ *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

We are all born spiritually dead because we are born with a sin nature which we inherited from our earthly fathers. Therefore, we **MUST** be born again. We must be born of God because when a person is born of God they are born of incorruptible seed. When we are born of God, we are then given eternal life.

1 Peter 1:23

²³ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

III. The Question and Answer

John 3:4-6

Nicodemus ask the most important question ever for mankind. How can a man be born again? Jesus then explained that every sinner must be born of water and of the Spirit.

What does He mean by water?

Ephesians 5:25-26

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

The water is most likely a reference to the Word of God that is essential for salvation.

Romans 10:10

¹⁷ So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The new birth is also of the Spirit.

But how does this take place?

IV. The Old Testament Picture and the Provision

Notice John 3:14

Jesus here pointed to something which happened in the wilderness with Israel.

Numbers 21:5-9

⁵ 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 people sinned and God allowed them to be bit with serpents. The cure was to look to the brass serpent on the pole and they would be healed.

Notice John 3:14-15

The serpent on the pole was a picture of Jesus. Why use a serpent to portray Him? The serpent is symbolic of sin and Jesus became sin for us.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The serpent was BRASS because brass represents judgment and Jesus took our judgment on the cross. He was our SUBSTITUTE.

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

When the people looked upon the serpent and believed what God said they were healed.

Application:

Two thousand years ago man was bitten by the serpent when Adam ate the forbidden fruit. His one act of disobedience plunged the entire human race into sin. With the serpent's bite came death upon all men.

Romans 5:12

¹² *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

Every sin that we ever commit in our lives **MUST** be paid for.

Romans 6:23a

For the wages of sin is death;

V. The New Birth

Notice John 3:16

In this verse we see six points of greatness:

1. The Greatest Love

No matter what you have done in your life God still loves you and He wants you to be forgiven of your sins. He wants you to be born again.

2. The Greatest Gift

The greatest Gift that was ever given was the Gift of Jesus Christ when He came here to die in your place upon the cross.

3. The Greatest Simplicity

You are saved only by grace through faith. There are no works that are required. We are born again by placing our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Titus 3:5

⁵ *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

4. The Greatest Security

Once you are born again you are secure in Jesus Christ.

John 10:27-29

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Romans 5:21

²¹ That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

5. The Greatest Possession

The greatest possession ever is eternal life.

1 Timothy 6:7

⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Conclusion:

You better be sure you are born again!