

"Jesus and Nicodemus"

John 3:1-21

Part 4

Introduction: In our study of John, we are in chapter 3 where we are listening to a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus who is a ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus was wrapped up in the legalism of the Scribes and the Pharisees. He was all about the external, which means he was consumed with keeping the Law and the commandments that the religious leaders had formulated. The Spirit of God had drawn Nicodemus to Jesus because his religion had left him empty and longing for fulfillment. In this chapter Jesus went right to the point and addressed the greatest need that Nicodemus had. He told Nicodemus of the need to be born again. Nicodemus struggled to understand the new birth when he should have known from his studies of the Old Testament. What was the problem? It was the legalism. The legalism had blinded him and the other religious leaders to the Truth of the Bible. We considered a statement last week concerning legalism.

"Sadly, Nicodemus serves as a clear example of the numbing effect that external, legalistic religion has on a person's spiritual perception—even to the point of obscuring the revelation of God."

Notice John 3:11-12

Nicodemus did not believe and that was his problem. He could not comprehend the new birth and therefore he would not be able to understand heavenly things.

Last week we ended our study on the next verse.

Notice John 3:13

Jesus is explaining to Nicodemus that man does not get to choose the path of justification. God is the One who has been offended and therefore it is God who determines the way of justification. Jesus and God are the same and therefore Jesus is stating that a man **MUST** be born again. This is what God has determined for man to be forgiven. But how does the new birth happen? What is required of man? We see the answer in the next verse.

➤ **Old Testament Illustration**

Notice John 3:14

In the first part of this verse Jesus refers Nicodemus back to Numbers 21 to something that happened to Israel that is a picture of how faith **MUST** be exercised. We need to take some time and look deeper into Numbers 21:5-9. It is important to notice that Jesus give Nicodemus very little detail about the account in Numbers. Why? Nicodemus was expected to know this passage as a ruler of the Jews.

✓ **The Sin**

Numbers 21:2-5

² And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

³ And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah.

⁴ And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

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.

After all that the Lord had done for the people of Israel in this verse we see them speaking out against God and against Moses. They complained because there were no bread and no water. There was manna but they had grown tired of manna. They should have known that God would provide because He had provided time after time.

Application:

The place where Israel was at here in Numbers 21 is the very place where many churches have come to in our society. The manna in the Old Testament was symbolic of the Word of God and in our society today there are many who attend church and they complain about the teaching of the Bible. They want something else, namely they want entertainment. They desire more programs and more contemporary music. Therefore, they complain when time is given to the Bible. How did this happen to Israel?

Numbers 11:1-6

And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

² And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

³ And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

⁴ And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

⁵ We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

⁶ But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.

It was the mixt multitude that started all the complaining. These were people who had joined Israel when they left Egypt. They are a picture of the world and the influence it has when it gets into the church. The world will never desire the Word of God but instead they will complain when the Bible is given time and they will desire entertainment.

✓ The Consequences

Numbers 21:6

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

The consequences for their sin were these snakes that bit them and many of the people died.

Application:

This pictures what has happened to the human race. Because man was "snake bitten" in the fall back in Genesis 3, we are all therefore under a death sentence.

Ezekiel 18:20a

²⁰ The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Romans 6:23a

²³ For the wages of sin is death;

✓ **The Confession**

Numbers 21:7

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.

This was the first step to being cured of the deadly snake bites. It was to recognize they had sinned against the Lord and to repent of their sin.

Application:

This is the first work of the Spirit that **MUST** take place in the sinner's heart if they are going to be born again and be forgiven of their sin. Until a person is convicted of their sin and desires to be forgiven there can be no salvation. A sinner must be under the convicting work of the Spirit as they hear the proclamation of the Word of God.

Romans 10:17

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

✓ **The Cure**

Numbers 21:8-9

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 cure that God gave was a brass serpent raised up on a pole and when the people looked upon the serpent on the pole they were healed.

Application:

This is a picture of the cross and the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we must ask several questions. Why a serpent? Why was it made of brass? The answers to both of these questions is very important.

➤ **Why a serpent?**

God required a serpent be raised upon the pole because the serpent represents sin. It was the serpent in the garden that talked with Eve and convinced her to eat of the forbidden fruit. When Jesus Christ was raised up upon the cross, he became sin for us.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

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.

Isaiah 53:6-11

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.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

⁹ And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

¹¹ He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

➤ **Why was the serpent made of brass?**

In the Bible brass speaks of judgment.

Revelation 1:13-17

¹³ *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;*

¹⁵ *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

¹⁶ *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

¹⁷ *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

This is Jesus with feet of fine brass standing ready to judge the world in the Tribulation. So why is the serpent made of brass? Because when our Lord was nailed to the cross, He took our judgment upon Him to pay for our sins.

Matthew 27:45-46

⁴⁵ *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*

⁴⁶ *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Getting back to Numbers then the people had to believe that the serpent on the pole was the means of healing, and they had to look to the serpent.

Numbers 21:8-9

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.*

Conclusion:

Notice John 3:14 again.

Just as the serpent had to be lifted up because that was the means of healing which God determined, in the same way Jesus had to be lifted up because that was the way of salvation determined by the God.