

## JOHN 3:1-16

# LESSON: GOD'S SAVING LOVE IN CHRIST —April 9, 2017

### INTRODUCTION:

**Chapter 2:18-25** The Jews who had been shocked by the action of Jesus demanded a sign to substantiate His authority and conduct. Jesus answers with a deep spiritual truth: "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" Jesus was referring to the destruction of His body and to His resurrection from the dead. The physical Temple was a type of Christ's body. Consequently, when the body of Christ is destroyed, the purpose and existence of the Jewish Temple is also destroyed. The destruction of His body also meant the destruction of the Temple. The Jews took Jesus literally and ignored the spiritual and true meaning of the statement. Even the disciples did not fully understand until He was risen from the dead. Then they believed the scripture and the Word which Jesus had said. Jesus had remained in Jerusalem for the Passover and many believed in His name, especially when they saw the miracles. However, their faith was not in the Giver, but in the gift; and He didn't commit Himself to them because He knew all men and what was in them (their heart).

### LESSON: I. TEACHING ABOUT GOD'S SAVING LOVE – John 3:1-8

**3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:**— In these opening verses, Nicodemus is introduced as a man of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews. The Pharisees were the religious separatists and the rulers (*Gr archōn*) who predominately formed the Sanhedrin.

**3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.** Nicodemus did not come in the daylight, but He came to Jesus by night, so that he would not be recognized. He said "we", meaning that he and the other religious leaders were convinced that Christ was a teacher come from God because of the miracles. They knew something was different about Him— a Teacher who came from God, meaning God was with Him.

**3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** So Nicodemus learns 1) he has to be born again; 2) without being born again he can't even see the Kingdom of God; and 3) God's Kingdom is the rule and reign of the King. The word "*again*" (*Gr anōthen*), means "*from above.*" "*Unless a person is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

**3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?**— Jesus had given a spiritual illustration, however, Nicodemus has a question: "*How can a man be born when he is old?*" His question revealed that he didn't grasp the spiritual meaning of this kind of teaching. Second, did he have to go back into his mother's womb a second time and be born again? He's implying of the physical, while Jesus is still speaking of the spiritual.

**3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** Jesus' answer: "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" Jesus is actually telling Nicodemus how to be a part of God's kingdom. He must be born of water and of the Spirit.

# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

**3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** Jesus continues to contrast physical birth and spiritual birth. The flesh produces flesh while the Spirit produces that which is spiritual.

**3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.** And Jesus says, "*do not be amazed or shocked by what I say*"; "*Marvel not...Ye must be born again*" meaning, it's absolutely necessary!

**3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.** The illustration Jesus now gives is of a natural view (*looking at the wind*) to illustrate the spiritual view. The Spirit of God works just like the wind. We may not know how the wind works, but we can see the effects of it. We cannot see how the the Spirit started to work within us, but we felt and came to know His results in us. And we don't know where God's Spirit will go next.

## II. APPLICATION OF GOD'S SAVING LOVE – John 3:9-16

**3:9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?**— Nicodemus' heart was touched, but still didn't quite understand. He said, "*How can these things be?*" He was a Jewish teacher of the Bible who knew the Old Testament thoroughly, but didn't know what it said about the Messiah, who had been prophesied all through the Old Testament. Knowledge is not salvation. He didn't know the who, the what, the where, the why nor the how. Mainly, how Jesus would operate when He came. Knowing about something and knowing something are two different things, and we see Nicodemus really wanted to know Jesus.

**3:10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?**— Jesus answered Nicodemus by bringing attention back to him. Was he not a teacher of the Jews, meaning he spent his whole lifetime reading and teaching; being a master of the Old Testament, and still not understand who Jesus is? Is that some of us today?

**3:11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.** We're always speaking, but do we really know Jesus.

1. We spoke what he did know.
2. We testified of what we've seen.
3. Yet you didn't receive our witness.

Who is Jesus referring to: "We"?

- <sup>1</sup>Jesus here speaks in the plural number, including Himself and those engaged with Him in preaching the gospel. Nicodemus had said in John 3:2, "*we know that thou art,*" etc., including himself and those with whom he acted. Jesus in reply says, "*We*" who are engaged in spreading the new doctrines about which you have come to inquire— speak what we know. We do not deliver doctrines which we do not practically understand. This is a positive affirmation of Jesus, which He had a right to make about His new doctrine. He knew its truth, and those who came into His kingdom knew it also. We learn here:
- That the Pharisees taught doctrines which they did not practically understand. They taught much truth Matthew 23:2, but they were deplorably ignorant of the plainest matters in their practical application.
- Every minister of the gospel ought to be able to appeal to his own experience, and to say that he knows the truth which he is communicating to others.
- Every Sunday school teacher should be able to say, '*I Know what I am communicating; I have experienced what is meant by the new birth, and the love of God, and the religion which I am teaching.*' Hallelujah!

<sup>1</sup> <http://barnes.biblecommenter.com/john/3.htm>

# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

## **3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?—**

Jesus has already given Nicodemus things which happen on the earth to understand, and he didn't believe. So, the earthly things were about wind, and birth, and water; those things which take place in a person's life on earth. Therefore, Jesus then asks, how can I reveal to you (plural) deeper spiritual truths of the heavenly things (the things which are under the invisible control of God)?

**3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.** Firsthand knowledge must come from the Son of man. That's why Jesus says, "...no man hath ascended up to heaven, because He's the only one who has come down from heaven and then ascended up to heaven. The Son of man born of a virgin originated in heaven. His origin was out of heaven, out of the spiritual world and dimension of being. Therefore, Jesus is the only one who truly understands the heavenly. <sup>2</sup>The connection between this verse and the preceding one seems to be as follows. The "*heavenly things*" to which the Lord had referred had not till then been clearly revealed to Nicodemus. To ascend to heaven, and penetrate the hidden counsels of God, was an utter impossibility to fallen man. Only the Son, whose native residence was heaven, was qualified to reveal heavenly things. No man had learned those things or was able to teach those things, except the Son of man. <sup>3</sup>No man hath attained to the certain knowledge of God and heavenly things as Christ has. It is not for us to send to heaven for instructions. We must wait to receive what instructions Heaven will send to us. Jesus came down to reveal those heavenly things.

## **3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:—**

Jesus had been speaking to Nicodemus about the imperative necessity of the new birth. By nature man is dead in trespasses and sins, and in life he must be born again. Now, Jesus comes with a scriptural illustration of Moses (Numbers 21:5-9). In the camp in the wilderness, people of Israel began to speak against God and Moses. God didn't put up with this. He sent fiery serpents among the people were being bitten by hundreds of poisonous snakes. The people repented and God commanded Moses to make a brass serpent, so that when those bitten, looked to that serpent, they would be healed. Well, likewise the Son of man must be lifted up.

1. Men today are dying from the poison of the serpent, the deadly poison of sin.
2. Today man is healed by looking upon the Son of Man who has been lifted up upon the cross, thereby, (Jesus) destroying the works of the devil.
3. Jesus became a curse for man.

This verse's reference of Christ being lifted up refers to Him on the Cross, that He might save man that has been bitten by the serpent of sin, as they believe by faith. The bronze serpent was later destroyed by King Hezekiah; it had become an object of worship (II Kgs.18:4). And in the New Testament, in this verse, this event is used as an illustration of salvation by Jesus; and in I Cor.10:9, as a warning by Paul the Apostle.

**3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.** Furthermore, the man who believes in the Son of Man being lifted up will not perish but will have eternal life. Thus every man must believe the message of Christ in order to be healed, that is, be born again.

## **3:16 For God so loved the world, —**

1. THE SOURCE OF LOVE—GOD (V16).
2. THE EXTENT OF LOVE—THE WORLD (V17).
3. THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE—HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (V16).
4. THE RESULT OF LOVE—WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH (V16).

1. THE FACT: GOD GAVE (V16).
2. THE EVIDENCE: GOD GAVE (V16)
3. THE PURPOSE: TO SAVE (V16).
4. THE PROOF: GOD SENT HIS SON (THE INCARNATION (V17).
5. THE MEANS: THROUGH HIM (JESUS) (V17).

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/John/john\\_09.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/John/john_09.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.studylight.org/com/mhc-com/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=003>

# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

The Jews believed God loved the religious (the true Jew) and hated the non-religious (the Gentiles). God loves every man, not just the religious, and the good. God is the source of this love, and His love goes beyond any type of human love we know; not because we deserved it, but because we didn't deserve it. *"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"* (Rom.5:8). It is an agape love that exceeds our ability to love another. He loves to perfection; loves to the ultimate degree, and it extends to the entire world.

**3:16b ...that he gave his only begotten Son**—God gave His only begotten Son to the world and His Son was to die for the world. It cost God dearly to give His Son. The sacrifice of love was a great cost. God took the initiative to save man; man didn't seek to save himself.

1. He gave up His Son to be separated from Him, allowing Him to leave His presence, majesty, glory, worship and honor in heaven.
2. He gave up His Son to be separated from Him allowing Jesus to come to earth...

*Into a world that was...*

fallen  
depraved  
wicked  
rebellious  
revolting  
apostate

*Into a world full of...*

darkness  
hostility  
bitterness  
wrath  
anger  
war

selfishness  
greed  
immorality  
barriers  
sin  
shame

3. He gave up His Son to be separated from Him, allowing Jesus to die for the sins of men.

The purpose of God's love is to save man;

- To save man from perishing.
- To save man to eternal life.
- To save man through belief.

**3:16c ...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish**—What are we to believe? Believe...

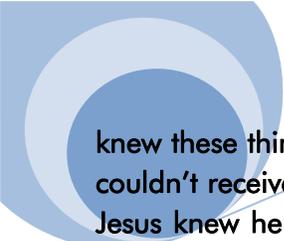
- that whoever personally trusts in Him will not perish in eternal judgment.
- that Jesus came to be our Way, Truth, and Life which was needed for right relationship with the Father.
- that Jesus came that He might destroy the works of the devil by going to the cross to die for our sins.
- that He is God Incarnate!

There is no way to perish (*be separated from God*) if you stay in this right standing with God. Therefore, there is everlasting life in His presence.

## SUMMARY:

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, a man of the Pharisees who came to see Jesus by night. He called Him Rabbi meaning Teacher. He at least knew that a man couldn't do these miracles except that He came from God and that God was with Him. Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again, or he couldn't even see the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus wondered how could he be born again when he's old. He thought he had to enter his mother's womb a second time and be born. Jesus lets him know that to be a part of God's kingdom, one must be born of water and of the Spirit. He's not to be amazed or shocked by what Jesus says, for this is absolutely necessary. The illustration Jesus now gives is of a natural view (*looking at the wind*) to illustrate the spiritual view. The Spirit of God works just like the wind. We may not know how the wind works, but we can see the effects of it. It's the same with the Spirit. (3:1-8)

Nicodemus still wanted to know how can these things be? Jesus brings attention to Nicodemus himself, that is he not a master of Israel and a master of the Old Testament, and still not understand these things of who Jesus is Nicodemus didn't understand the things Jesus was talking about, for Jesus spoke for Himself and those that



## PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

knew these things and testified of the things they saw because they were all apart of this. However, Nicodemus couldn't receive their witness. As Jesus conveyed earthly things to Nicodemus, in which he failed to understand, Jesus knew he wouldn't believe heavenly things. Well Jesus explains to him that no one, yes no one has ever ascended up into heaven, except the one who has come down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. In the wilderness Moses lifted up the brass serpent for the people to see and believe, to be healed from the poisonous serpents, so is it necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up for everyone to look on Him and believe, trust in, and receive Salvation offered by Him.. For when we believe, we will not perish, but have eternal life. God is the source of love and He extends that love to the whole world. His sacrifice of love gave us His only Begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life (**3:9-16**).

PITWM.