

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to those of you who remembered to set your clocks last night. For those who may not know, we are in the season of Lent which is the 40 days before Easter where we commemorate the 40 days of Christ's fast in the wilderness. Our messages for the next few weeks will be a buildup to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

MAIN TEXT (John 3:1-18)

BACKGROUND

The gospel of John was written in about 85-90 A.D. by the Apostle John, well after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. John gives his reason for writing the gospel in Chapter 20, verses 30-31: **Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.**

Today, we will see from our passage, a conversation that Jesus had with a religious leader named Nicodemus. We will observe that YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN, to be born again YOU MUST BELIEVE, specifically, you must believe that CHRIST WAS LIFTED UP and that Christ was lifted up for God's saving purpose.

PASSAGE OUTLINE:

1. YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN (3:1-8)
 - a. (3:1) **There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.**
 - i. He was a member of the party of the Pharisees, who were the right-wing political and religious party.
 - ii. He was a member of the ruling council known as the Sanhedrin.

- iii. This was somebody with authority investigating who this Jesus was.
- b. (3:2) **This man came to Him at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him.”**
 - i. So often, people are tempted to make Jesus less than He is.
 - ii. The big sign mentioned before this passage is the cleansing of the Temple.
- c. (3:3) **Jesus said, “I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**
 - i. Jesus gets straight to the point.
 - ii. (Tenney) “Essentially, this means to have a new life. It isn’t simply a moral or religious reform, but the bringing of new life.”
 - iii. Nicodemus has acknowledged God, and Jesus is telling him how he must get to God’s kingdom.
- d. (3:4) **“But how can anyone be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked Him. “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?”**
 - i. We use the term born again, but to Nicodemus this was a new and strange teaching.
 - ii. We believe some pretty incredible things.
- e. (3:5-6) **Jesus answered, “I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.**
 - i. Born of water is the same as born of the flesh; humans live in a pouch of fluid before being born.
 - ii. Being born of the flesh gives us a body with the genetic material of our parents.

- i. The “we” is Christ and His disciples
 - ii. Christ was testifying about Himself. His disciples were testifying about Him. Those of us who believe must also testify about Him.
 - iii. If you don’t believe the testimony, you cannot see the kingdom of God.
 - c. (3:13) **No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven—the Son of Man.**
 - i. He is plainly testifying to where He came from.
- 3. You must believe that CHRIST WAS LIFTED UP (3:14-15)
 - a. (3:14-15) **Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.**
 - i. (Numbers 21:4-9) **Then they set out from Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea to bypass the land of Edom, but the people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses: “Why have you led us up from Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread or water, and we detest this wretched food!” Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and they bit them so that many Israelites died. The people then came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Intercede with the LORD so that He will take the snakes away from us.” And Moses interceded for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake image and mount it on a pole. When anyone who**

is bitten looks at it, he will recover.” So Moses made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, and he looked at the bronze snake, he recovered.

- ii. It’s often pictured looking like a caduceus, but if the snake were straight, it might have looked like a cross.
 - b. Without the lifting up of Christ on the cross, our salvation would have been impossible, because our sin would remain unpaid!
4. Christ was lifted up for GOD’S SAVING PURPOSE (3:16-18)
- a. **(3:16) For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.**
 - i. God’s purpose in Christ’s sacrifice was salvation.
 - ii. It does require belief on our part.
 - b. **(3:17) For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.**
 - i. (Rom 8:1) There is therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.
 - ii. He didn’t come to judge the world, but to call the world to repentance!
 - c. **(3:18) Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and Only Son of God.**
 - i. Note that the default state of man is condemned.
 - ii. It is only when we believe in Christ that we may be saved.
 - d. So, what do we do with this realization?

APPLICATION:

1. God Time
 - a. Spend time this week thanking God for sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross for your sins.
 - b. Pray for those that you are not sure have given their lives to Christ.
2. Gather Time
 - a. As we go into our time of invitation, consider whether or not you are right with Christ.
 - b. Do you truly believe? If not, ask God to help your unbelief.
3. Group Time
 - a. Make time this week to gather with a small group of believers to learn more about Christ.
4. Give Time
 - a. Consider what you should give up this week to honor Christ and His sacrifice for you.
5. Go Time
 - a. Tell a friend, relative, neighbor, or co-worker about Christ. Let them know that He died for their sins as well as yours.