

**10-3-24 DBC All Believers Conference**  
**Nicodemus' Encounter With Jesus – John 3:1-18**

**Introductory Comments and Context Build-Up**

1. Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover (See *John 2:13*).
2. During certain periods of Jesus' ministry, He seemed to lay low and stay **OFF** the Jewish religious leaders' radar. This trip was **NOT** one of those trips! (See *John 2:14-16* and His first cleansing of the Temple).
3. The Jewish religious leaders ask Him for "A" sign to validate and verify His aggressive actions, and He points them to His future resurrection (See *John 2:18-22*)
4. Following this interaction, Jesus now does **MANY SIGNS**, and this is what is going to attract Nicodemus' attention! (See *John 2:23*)
5. An additional connection and transition from chapter 2 to chapter 3 is clear from John's writing...compare 2:25 and 3:1.

**(Verses 1-3) - Jesus Challenges Nicodemus with Truth.**

✚ **(Verse 1)**

1. Who was Nicodemus?
  - a. John calls him a "\_\_\_\_\_ " and "a ruler of the Jews."
  - b. We learn elsewhere that he was a member of the prestigious \_\_\_\_\_, which was **THE** supreme judicial council of the nation of Israel. (*John 7:50*)
  - c. John sheds additional light on his \_\_\_\_\_ later (*7:50-51*) which shows that Nicodemus was fair-minded and rational.
  - d. We also learn from verse 10 that he was **THE** \_\_\_\_\_ of Israel, meaning he was a prominent and well-known teacher, if not **THE** most prominent and well-known teacher of his day.

✚ **(Verse 2)**

1. "This man came to Jesus by night," – This is \_\_\_\_\_, because either Nicodemus was unsure about his own evaluation of Jesus, he was unsure about how his potential interest might be viewed by others, OR he may also have wanted uninterrupted private time with Him.
2. "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God;" - Nicodemus starts with a **BIG** \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus. Here was **THE** premiere rabbi of Israel, and he was addressing Jesus as a rabbi.
3. "For no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." – Nicodemus, too, was convinced at some level by the \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus' had performed during Passover (*2:23*).

- a. Again, being convinced by the signs Jesus performed was not a bad thing! It is what they were designed to do! (See John 20:30-31)
  - b. By saying “God was **WITH** him,” Nicodemus was insinuating that God the Holy Spirit was doing these miracles through Jesus. So, there is a lot of good things going on with Nicodemus here as he is grappling with **WHO** Jesus is. The religious leaders later in Jesus life would attribute His miracles to the working and power of Satan (Matthew 12:22ff).
4. Ironically, Nicodemus never gets to ask his \_\_\_\_\_, because Jesus interjected and took the conversation to his biggest need – **NOT** his greatest curiosities!

✚ **(Verse 3)**

1. “Unless one is born again,” - Instead of any physical birth \_\_\_\_\_, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be “born again” or literally he must be born “from above.”
  - a. “Born again” means to be “birthed from above.” The verb “born” indicates an action done **TO** you and not **BY** you at a point in time, not something continuous. This is just like your physical birth – your mother and her body birthed you, **NOT** you, yourself!
  - b. This is the only place in the New Testament where this word is translated “again.” It is typically translated “top,” “first,” or “from above.”
2. “Cannot see the kingdom of God.” – “Cannot” is comprised of two Greek words – “Ou” which expresses a direct and full \_\_\_\_\_, independently and absolutely, and hence, objectively. “Dunamai” means to be \_\_\_\_\_, or to have power.
  - a. What Jesus is communicating is that those who are **NOT** born from above, will **NOT** experience the kingdom or see the kingdom with personal perception because they will **NOT** get into it!
  - b. At this time, the Jews believed that “every” Jew would enter the kingdom just because of their bloodline (i.e., they were Abraham’s children) with the exception of a deliberate apostasy or extraordinary wickedness ((e.g., Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 10:1).

**(V4-V10) Nicodemus’ Follow-Up Questions with Jesus’ Quick Old Testament Examples/Reminders**

✚ **(Verse 4)**

1. “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” - Nicodemus was \_\_\_\_\_ by what Jesus was saying as evidenced by his response.
2. It is interesting to note some additional confusion that Nicodemus may have had from Jesus’ statement from a cultural perspective. There were \_\_\_\_\_ different ways a Jew could be born again in Jewish culture.
  - a. (1) A Jewish boy at his Bar Mitzvah at age 13 was “born again,”
  - b. (2) Once a Jew was married to a Jewess he was “born again,”
  - c. (3) When a Jew was ordained a Rabbi he was “born again,”
  - d. (4) When a Rabbi became the head of a rabbinical school (i.e., he had disciples) he was “born again,”

- e. (5) A Gentile who converted to Judaism was “born again,” and
- f. (6) To be crowned a Davidic king of Israel was to be “born again.”

✚ **(Verse 5)**

1. “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you,’ – Again, Jesus uses the same phrase He did in verse 3, (**Amen, Amen**), which He used often to indicate an \_\_\_\_\_ way of saying “What I am about to say is SUPER DUPER trustworthy!”
2. **1<sup>st</sup> Example from the Old Testament:** “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,”
  - a. At first, this seems like two separate examples: “born of water” AND “(born of the Spirit), but the preposition “**OF**” \_\_\_\_\_ both water and Spirit meaning that both terms are descriptions of the same thing (i.e., spiritual birth).
  - b. Many people get confused here and think Jesus’ phrase is speaking of two different things and thus different views have arisen...
  - c. Jesus is referring to Ezekiel 36:25-28 and the renewal of Israel, via the New Covenant, when they enter the Millennial Kingdom. (See also Isaiah 44:3 which connects “water” and “spirit”)
3. “He cannot enter the kingdom of God,” – Just like in verse 3, “cannot” is comprised of two Greek words revealing the absolute \_\_\_\_\_ of anyone to “enter” the kingdom of God without this birth from above!

✚ **(Verse 6)**

1. **2<sup>nd</sup> Example from OT:** “Born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit”
  - a. Both occurrences of the word “born” here are used with the \_\_\_\_\_ tense, meaning a past completed action with ongoing results.
  - b. With this statement, Jesus distinguishes between physical birth and spiritual birth, or the birth “from above,” that He has been discussing.
  - c. The Jew of Jesus’ day held a couple of \_\_\_\_\_ views regarding entrance into the kingdom of God: A genetic Jew, who was circumcised, and who did **NOT** apostatize would enter the kingdom.
  - d. The Old Testament account of Abraham and the birth of Ishmael (son of the flesh) and Isaac (miracle son of promise) should have caught Nicodemus’ \_\_\_\_\_. This was an example of a fleshly natural birth vs. a fleshly Spirit-enabled miraculous birth.

✚ **(Verse 7)**

1. “Do not marvel,” – “Marvel” meaning to wonder, or to be struck with admiration or astonishment. Literally, do not be \_\_\_\_\_ by the necessity of the new birth for entrance into the kingdom.
2. “You must be born again.” – “Must” (*dei*) means something needed or \_\_\_\_\_. Once again, this emphasizes the intensity and importance of what Jesus was communicating to Nicodemus here!

✚ **(Verse 8)**

1. **3<sup>rd</sup> Example from the Old Testament:** “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.”
  - a. Now, WHY does Jesus use the wind to illustrate spiritual birth? There are three similarities He may be drawing on:
  - b. **First**, both the Spirit and the wind operate \_\_\_\_\_. Man does not and cannot control either one.
  - c. **Second**, since we cannot see either the wind or the Spirit, we perceive the \_\_\_\_\_ of both by their effects.
  - d. **Third**, we cannot explain their actions, since they arise from \_\_\_\_\_ and partially unknowable factors. They are mysterious.
  - e. Jesus uses this analogy to wind to allude to an Old Testament passage describing the new birth, from Ezekiel 37:1-14 where the Spirit of God brought life to a valley full of dead bones.
2. “So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” – Again, this birth from above does **NOT** happen when somebody performs the necessary list of \_\_\_\_\_. This is a spiritual operation from start to finish.

✚ **(Verses 9-10)**

1. “Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’” – “Can” (*dunamai*) means to be able, to have power, whether by virtue of one’s own ability and resources. Nicodemus is saying, “How is what Jesus is saying EVEN \_\_\_\_\_?”
2. “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?’” – “Are” is a present, indicative indicating that “right now” (at the time of the conversation) Nicodemus was the \_\_\_\_\_ teacher in the nation!

**(V11-V21) Jesus’ More In-Depth Answer and Explanation**

✚ **(Verse 11)**

1. “Most assuredly, I say to you,” – Once again, Jesus uses the same phrase He did in verses 3 and 5, (*Amen, Amen*), which communicates the \_\_\_\_\_ of what He is saying.
2. “We speak what We know and testify what We have seen,” – Notice, the emphatic and almost disruptive switch in \_\_\_\_\_ here from “I” to “We!” - **WHO** is speaking here and **WHO** is testifying as to what **THEY** have seen? **WHO** is Jesus talking about here?
  - a. Jesus is speaking about the Godhead here, and He often invokes the witness of the Godhead when attempting to present a strong and valid argument to a Jewish mind. (See John 5:36-38; 8:12-18)
  - b. “We speak what We know” – “Know” is a perfect indicative indicating this is something they know intuitively (not through a process of learning), and that they have known in the past and continue to know in the present.
  - c. “And testify what We have seen,” – “Testify” is a legal term meaning right now they, as a legitimate group of three (which was all that was needed in Jewish Law to convince the elders or judge of the truth), were giving witness to what they have “seen.”
3. “And you do not receive Our witness.” – It is clear from Jesus’ response to Nicodemus, that Nicodemus had **NOT** been \_\_\_\_\_ by what Jesus had said.
  - a. But, **NOT** only had Nicodemus **NOT** received the witness of the Godhead, but Jesus uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural form of “you” through verse 12. Jesus is also describing the Jewish leaders that Nicodemus represents! (See verse 2, “**We** know...”)

✚ **(Verse 12)**

1. “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe,” – “Earthly things” – Since Jesus has been talking about the new birth, which is something that takes place on \_\_\_\_\_ and also something He used earthly illustrations to try to explain, He is most likely calling the new birth “earthly things.”
2. “How will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” - At this point in the narrative, Nicodemus did **NOT** believe this, and thus Jesus could **NOT** reveal anything else to him. Many times, rejection of revelation limits the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ revelation that one can receive.

✚ **(Verse 13)**

1. “No one has ascended to heaven,” – “Ascended” is used in the perfect tense indicating no one has ever ascended in heaven and \_\_\_\_\_ there!

2. “But He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” – “Came down” means to come or go down, to descend from a higher to a lower place.
  - a. Jesus uses a highly significant \_\_\_\_\_ reference here! This ONE who has “come down” from heaven is identified as the “Son of Man” which is a clear reference to Daniel 7:13!
  - b. Again, you can see Jesus’ heartfelt desire to \_\_\_\_\_ what He is saying to the Old Testament that Nicodemus should have been familiar with!

✦ **(Verse 14)**

1. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” – Jesus again references a story from the Old Testament, found in Numbers 21:4-9. This time, He uses this Old Testament story to illustrate the required \_\_\_\_\_ for being born again!
  - a. Because of the SOURCE of this judgment (i.e., God), the Israelites recognized and realized that God alone could \_\_\_\_\_ them from this judgment, so they turned to Moses to communicate with God and hopefully receive a reprieve.
  - b. God gave Moses the instruction to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole and to lift it up within eyesight of those who had been bitten. If the bitten Israelite would simply \_\_\_\_\_ at the pole with the bronze serpent, they would immediately be healed from the poisonous bite and live.
  - c. **A QUICK CLARIFYING QUESTION:** Did the dying Israelite have to “\_\_\_\_\_” to look at the serpent for the rest of their lives to stay saved from the snake bites, or was it a moment-in-time, once-for-all salvation?
2. “Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,” – Just as the serpent on the pole was lifted up, Jesus too must be lifted up. What is this speaking of? Clearly, this is speaking of the \_\_\_\_\_ He would die on the cross. (See John 12:32-33)
  - a. Now, the fact that Jesus used the phrase “Son of Man” may have confused Nicodemus even more, because the “Son of Man” reference is to Daniel 7:13-14, which speaks of a coming and reigning King, **NOT** a suffering servant!
  - b. The Jews had a hard time understanding the combination of these two truths: (1) A conquering King, and (2) A suffering servant. How could these two apparent contradictory things fit together?!

✦ **(Verses 15-16)**

1. “That” (*hina*) provides us with the \_\_\_\_\_ clause or reason WHY the Son of Man must be lifted up in death and WHY people in Nicodemus’ day must look at the Son of Man, by faith, in a similar way to the bronze serpent story.

2. “Whoever” – This word is repeated \_\_\_\_\_ in these two verses, and it is the Greek word “**pas**” and it means “all” where the idea is that the number is indefinite. It can mean “each one” without limit.
  - a. In keeping with the OT example Jesus just cited, the “all” or “whoever” here corresponds with the “everyone” in Numbers 21:8 and the “anyone” in Numbers 21:9.
3. “Whoever believes in Him” – “Believes” (**pisteuo**) means to have faith in, or to trust in. It meant to be firmly persuaded as to something and thus \_\_\_\_\_ upon it as a result.
  - a. Some appeal to John 3:15-16 and the present tense participle used for the word “believe” – they will say that this proves that our faith must be **ongoing** and **continual** to be saved. How can we know for sure?
  - b. **First: Grammatically:** The participle translated “whoever believes” in John 3:15-16 is a substantival participle. This type of participle does **NOT** indicate continuous, linear belief. It describes anyone who either HAS believed at some point in the past, or who believes at some point in the present, or who will believe at some point in the future.
  - c. **Second: Contextually:** The object lesson used by Jesus to illustrate “belief” was a one-time moment of faith and **NOT** an ongoing, continual faith – the Israelites with the bronze serpent and the connecting phrase “even so” in verse 14.
4. “Should not perish” – “Perish” means to destroy and with the Greek preposition “**apo**” as a prefix, the force is to destroy wholly. This word describes the \_\_\_\_\_ or “wages” of sin (Romans 6:23).
5. “But have eternal life.” – In \_\_\_\_\_ to perishing, the person who believes will have eternal life.
6. “For God so loved the world,” – First the \_\_\_\_\_! The NET Bible translates this phrase: “For this is the way God loved the world,” OR “This is how much God loved the world,”
7. “That He gave His only begotten Son,” – Now the \_\_\_\_\_! He gave His Son as a substitutionary gift – to pay and remove the penalty from the one who would simply look to Him in faith.
  - a. God the Father put His love into action and did **NOT** hold onto what was most dear to Him, but when He saw the world in need of a Savior, He gave up the greatest treasure in heaven – His only begotten Son. (See Romans 5:8)
  - b. God the Father’s knowledge of and planning for this event was revealed all the way back in Genesis 3:15 and repeated often in the Old Testament.

✚ **(Verse 17)**

1. “For” further expands and explains **WHY** God gave His only begotten Son – salvation, **NOT** condemnation, was in \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world,” – The reason for this was the evidence against mankind was obvious and \_\_\_\_\_! Mankind was guilty and deserving of death.
3. “But that the world through Him might be saved.” – Saved from what? – Clearly in this context, this person would be saved from the consequence of \_\_\_\_\_.

✚ **(Verse 18)**

1. “He who believes in Him is not condemned;” – This is the same \_\_\_\_\_ construction used in John 3:15-16 – This is the “believing one” or “the believer.”
2. “But he who does not believe is condemned already,” – This is the same \_\_\_\_\_ construction used in John 3:15-16 and in the first phrase of this verse – This is the “unbelieving one” or “the unbeliever.”
  - a. Whereas before, the **present** tense was used, here the **perfect** tense is used indicating that the “unbelieving one” has already been condemned in the past with results continuing in the present!
3. “Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” – “He has not believed” is a **perfect** tense verb. It indicates a completed action in the past with \_\_\_\_\_ results.
  - a. This means that this person has **NOT** believed in Jesus at a point in time in the past, and that they **continue on** in that unbelief!
  - b. This is WHY we will learn later that the Spirit of God is working tirelessly and relentlessly to convict the WORLD of “sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8-11).