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### *The Gospel of John – Chapter 3: “Nic at Night”*

### Written by the Apostle John around 85-90AD, making it the latest Gospel.

### John, along with his brother James were the sons of Zebedee and Salome. Jesus nicknamed them “Sons of Thunder”. (James was the first of the twelve apostles to be martyred, in Acts 12).

### John’s purpose for writing his gospel was to present both the human and divine nature of Jesus in order to encourage others “TO BELIEVE”.

### John 20:31“But these are written *that you may believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that *by believing* you may have life in his name.”

### The gospel of John is often looked at in four main parts;

* Chapter 1 (known as the Prologue) The presentation of Jesus and His purpose and the introduction of John the Baptist, and several key disciples.
* Chapters 2-12 (known as the Book of Signs) – Seven select Miracles (signs) performed by Jesus and the events surrounding them.
* Chapters 13-20 (known as the Book of Glory) Jesus primarily addresses His 12 apostles, preparing them for the cross and beyond.
* Chapter 21 (known as the Epilogue) Some additional interactions between Jesus and the Apostles after the resurrection.

*Let’s not approach the gospel of John with assumed familiarity. Let’s look at it with fresh eyes. If we do, we will see things we’ve never seen before. [Bahia Honda Key example]*

**John Chapter 3 – “Nic at Night”**

In the first part of this chapter there is a famous exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee. This conversation happened at Night, indicating that it was likely a secret meeting.

Pharisees were scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures, and well-educated in religious concepts. Nicodemus was not just a Pharisee, but a member of the Sanhedrin, a 70-man local court. This made Nicodemus the modern equivalent of a politician, priest, and professor all rolled into one.

Although Nicodemus was a Pharisee, it does not mean he was condemning and mean-spirited. In fact, he was quite the opposite. He recognized the divine origin of Jesus' power (John 3:2). He will go on to defend Jesus in front of the other Pharisees (John 7:50–51), and along with Joseph of Arimathea, bring embalming materials for Jesus’ burial (John 19:39–42).

**1”**Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.”

**2**He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

Nicodemus is confessing his belief in Jesus as a teacher from God, and affirming the validity of his “signs” (miracles). Interestingly, in John we only saw one of Jesus signs so far (John lists seven). This could be an indication that John did not record everything Jesus did, including some of the other early miracles, in the same manner that the other gospel writers did.

**3**Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

**4**“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus introduces the phrase “born again”. Nicodemus (half-jokingly?) says “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb?” … [I wonder if they laughed].

Jesus plainly says, “no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

The Kingdom of God means experiencing God’s kingdom, even here on earth as it is in heaven. The Kingdom of God is seeing, experiencing and participating in His sovereignty, understanding His will and having fellowship with Him in the Spirit. To do this, you need to be made alive in the Spirit, because God is spirit.

“Born again” means rebirth of the spirit which has been generationally dead in mankind through history. Jesus goes on to explain this in the next verses.

**5**Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **6**Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Born of water means natural birth, Born of the Spirit means spiritual birth.

**7**You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ **8**The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

**9**“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

**10**“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?

Jesus is using the word wind (gr. pneuma) which is the same word as spirit. He is making a point that there are immaterial forces in the world that you cannot necessarily see, but are very real and powerful. Nicodemus did not pick up on this.

**11**Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.

**12**I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? **13**No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.

It all comes down to believing. Spiritual things are only perceived through the spirit, those who are not born of the spirit cannot understand them. The only way to receive them, is by believing.

Paul tells the Corinthians;

**1st Corinthians 2:14** “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them,* because they are spiritually discerned.”

Jesus refers to himself in this section as the “Son of Man”. Nicodemus will know exactly what that means, because the book of Daniel mentions the coming of the “son of man” who is given everlasting dominion. Jesus is referred to as the “Son of Man” 88 times in the New Testament. In fact, *Son of Man* is the primary title Jesus used when referring to Himself.

He then talks to Nicodemus about a portion of the Torah that they were both familiar with. The book of Numbers, chapter 21.

**Numbers 21:4-9** “**4**They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; **5**they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

**6**Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. **7**The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

**8**The Lord said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” **9**So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.”

The reason that these people were wandering in the wilderness was because of their sin. God brought them to the border of the Promised Land, but when they heard the reports from the spies, their faith failed. They said that God could not overcome the giants in the land. As a result of this unbelief, God sent them into the wilderness to wander until that generation died out (Numbers 14:28-34).

So when they sinned against Moses and God by speaking out against them, the Lord punished them with venomous serpents. He also provided a way to escape their lethal venom, but it required them to admit their sin, repent, and exercise faith by looking straight at the symbol of sin and death, and believe that God would save them. Those that did, were spared, those that did not, were not.

(This is a foreshadow of the cross…

**2nd Corinthians 5:21** “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

On the cross, our sin was imputed to Jesus. That is how He paid our sin debt to God. He had no sin in Himself, but our sin was imputed (attributed) to Him so, as He suffered, He took the just penalty that our sin deserves.)

Then Jesus spoke these famous words;

**14**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15**that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

***16****For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

**17**For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18**Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does **not** believe stands condemned already because they have *not believed* in the name of God’s one and only Son.

It does not get any clearer than that, this is why it’s important “to believe”.

**19**This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. **20**Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. **21**But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

Jesus was first introduced in John as the “light of all mankind”.

***John 1:4, 5-9,10“****In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.****5****The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcomeit…*

***…9****The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.****10****He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.****11****He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”*

The world was covered in deep darkness by sin (separation from God) at the time that Jesus came into the world. Jesus was born as God’s son, and “*In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.”*

**22**After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. **23**Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. **24**(This was before John was put in prison.) **25**An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. **26**They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”

**27**To this John replied, “*A person can receive only what is given them from heaven.***28**You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ **29**The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is *now complete*.

The argument that arose was regarding *baptism vs. ceremonial washing*. They both appear to be the same thing (mitzvot), however *ceremonial washing* is a symbol of *purification*, but *baptism* is a sign of *repentance*.

John told his followers that he was doing all that he could do with what was given to him from God. *[That’s all any of us can do.]* John joyfully did his part, but with Jesus on the scene, it is now complete.

Jesus was baptizing differently than John was, He was baptizing in *water* and in *Spirit.*

*This is revealed in Acts 19:*

**Acts 19:1-6 “**While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples **2**and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=acts+19&version=NIV#fen-NIV-27588a)] you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

**3**So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

**4**Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” **5**On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **6**When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them.”

At this point John knew that his purpose was fulfilled and he had done what he was born to do “prepare the way of the Lord”.

He makes the following statement that shows his deep humility and respect for who Jesus is;

**30He must become greater; I must become less.”**

(“He must increase, but I *must* decrease.” NKJV)

This is a statement we all must make and a sentiment we need to live by. We are not here to exalt ourselves or make our mark in the world, we are only here to introduce people to Jesus, so that they may believe upon Him and experience Him with *or* without us.

Anything we do with mixed motives, meaning glorifying ourselves along with Jesus will have inferior results and in effect compromise and diminish the glory of God in our lives. It’s only when we are willing to say, “He must increase, but I *must* decrease.” That we can experience the fullness of what He has for us.

Asbury Revival:

An amazing movement of God at Asbury University that started in a weekly chapel service, when a young man spoke out in humility and repentance about sin in his life and asked for prayer. That triggered many similar expressions and actions along with extended prayer and worship. The hour-long chapel service didn’t end, it kept going into the afternoon and evening, all through the night into the next day, and the next day and has been continuing for two and half weeks. People from all over the world are flocking to it in the thousands and all are reporting an overwhelming sense of God’s Spirit manifested in peace, reverence, repentance, freedom, deep joy and a sweet spirit of unity and love. No extreme expressions of loud worship or self-seeking displays. But lives are being changed, people are coming to Jesus and God is being glorified.

There are no celebrity speakers or professional worship artists. No big stage and lights. Various amateur musicians and singers are playing mostly old praise and worship songs, with a makeshift worship team and no lyric projection. Ordinary people are leading prayers and offering messages from the word of God. Yet it has become the *most powerful and dynamic event that we have seen in decades.*

One of the very few rules that the leadership at Asbury has put forth, is that only Jesus can be glorified. No big names, popular Christian celebrities, or ministry promotion will be given a platform. Only Jesus. Major networks and Social Media influencers have been turned away. Famous Christian singers, speakers and leaders have had to stand in line anonymously like everyone else and wait their turn to get in.

It’s all about Jesus!

*[My role as concert director for Autumn Blaze at the Meadowlands, STAR99 Concerts, and Ocean Grove Great Auditorium events. Our plan was always, - “Get the best, most popular and expensive artists and bands, book the most professional sound and lighting companies, promote the heck out the events, then hope that the crowds are impacted by their ministries.” It usually had very mediocre results.*

*I often wondered, what if we just promoted Jesus, lifting Him up, and no one else?]*

*Our goal for our lives, our ministries and our church, always must be to lift up Jesus, so that many will come and believe upon him, and have eternal life. Everything else is a distant second.*

**John 12:32** “When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

Closing verses :

**31**The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32**He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. **33**Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. **34**For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. **35**The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. **36**Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them. <>

**Let’s lift up Jesus so that *many* can see and believe, and have eternal life!**