



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA  
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December 20, 2009

# The Gospel of John

## I Tell You the Truth

[John 3:3-15](#)

**Related Topics:** Nicodemus; God Conversing With Man; The Only Way To See The Kingdom of God; The Only Way To Enter The Kingdom of God; Born Again – What it is; Born Again – What It Isn't; God's Greatest Miracle; The Holy Spirit; The Work of the Holy Spirit; The Evidence of New Birth; God's Love; Gospel In Miniature; The Serpent In The Wilderness; The Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus; Faith; Looking To Jesus Alone;

### REVIEW

Last week we were introduced to a man who came to Jesus by night — Nicodemus.

#### 1.) A Rich Man

We know this from [John 19](#) — When after the death of Jesus Nicodemus provided 70 pounds of extremely expensive burial spices to prepare Jesus for burial

#### 2.) A Religious Man

He was a "Pharisee." 6,000 men who were the most fanatical men in Israel in regards to keeping the Law of God.

#### 3.) A Ruler

*Verses 9-10 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, "Are you **the** teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?"*

*Verse 1 — a ruler of the Jews*

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a court of 70 members and was the supreme court of the Jews.

These were THE MOST POWERFUL men in Israel. These 70 men had religious jurisdiction over every Jew in the world; and one of its duties was to examine and deal

with anyone suspected of being a false prophet. **Again, it is amazing** that Nicodemus should come to Jesus at all.

Nicodemus had EVERYTHING to lose by meeting with Jesus. He could only muster the courage to have a secret meeting with Jesus in the dark of night.

But he did COME to Jesus, because despite all of his wealth — despite all of his amazing dedication and zeal for religion — despite all of his knowledge of the Old Testament despite all of his power — Nicodemus was EMPTY. He discovered that NONE of those things gave life! He was left wondering WHAT ELSE must he do to be accepted by God.

**THIS MORNING** we are going to eves drop on the conversation that took place between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Of the 1,889 chapters of the Bible THIS chapter of John is one of single most important chapters of the Bible.

**QUOTE: J.C. Ryle** — *A man may be ignorant of many things in the Bible, and yet be saved. But to be ignorant of the matters handled in this chapter, is to be in the broad way which leads to destruction.*

Before we even examine the CONTENT of the conversation — I want us to understand that this conversation is radical in the fact that it even happened!

John introduced Jesus to us against the mind-blowing backdrop of eternity — *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God* —and that *everything was created by the Word*. Then John tells us that Jesus — the eternal, creator God — was not content to be enshrined in eternal majesty. John tells us that *the Word became flesh and dwelled among us*.

When John records the life of God Incarnate — we discover that Jesus didn't show up on earth to address a global audience and then retreat from mankind. John tells us that Jesus interacted with people. We have already seen Jesus at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. In the next chapter we will see Jesus having a conversation with a woman of Samaria. Here had a sit down, face-to-face, conversation with just ONE man. And as we noted last week — a man not willing to meet Jesus in broad daylight for fear of what might happen to his wealth and power.

AMAZING — Jesus truly is *Emmanuel – God with us*.

We are so prone to think about God — and approach God — on the basis of our human relationships. Because humans put us on hold, reschedule, cancel, or avoid us all-together, we assume that's the way it is with God. God is busy, or God is taking care of more important things, or God is taking care of more important people or God is checking the caller I.D. and not picking up!

We must always understand God in the light of Who He has revealed himself to be. **Remember *John 1:18 NLT*** — *“No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.*

In the conversation recorded for us in **John 3** we discover that God comes to speak to individuals — because we — individually — need him to speak to us. This Jesus of **John 3** is ALIVE! He is *the same, yesterday, today and forever*. As Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, He speaks to us through His Word. In **John 17:17** Jesus says that the Word of God IS TRUTH. Jesus as speaks the truth into the life of Nicodemus, He speaks the truth into our life through the Scriptures. THAT is why we have such a passion for the Word of God. THAT is why study through entire books of the Bible. (By the way — Tomorrow night we are studying **1 Kings 10**).

**Let’s look at the CONTENT of this conversation**

**Jesus begins the conversation by saying — *I TELL YOU THE TRUTH NICODEMUS.***

**John 3:3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you**

**REMEMBER** — Nicodemus comes to Jesus with a great yearning — how can he truly know God. Jesus responds by saying — I TELL YOU THE TRUTH.

That is so radical — Jesus says that on a number of occasions in John’s Gospel. Why is that? It’s because this world is filled with lies. Jesus will tell us later (**John 8**) that Satan is a liar. He calls Satan the “Father of lies and says that Satan’s been lying since the beginning. Lying is Satan’s native language. Lies pervade our world and liars reign. But, Jesus always tells the truth because Jesus IS the truth (**John 14:6**). Jesus CHALLENGES mankind to BELIEVE His Word! *Listen to what I have to say. You may not see it this way. You may not believe it this way. You may not understand it this way, but this is the truth.*

**John 3:3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

**FIRST** — A few thoughts on THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Kingdom of God — Matthew 5x Kingdom of Heaven 31x

Kingdom of God — Mark 14x

Kingdom of God — Luke — 31x

In John’s Gospel — Jesus mentions the Kingdom of God TWICE. So, when it comes up, you’ve got to pay attention to it. You’ve got to pay a lot of attention about the kingdom of God.

At the present there are two domains in the universe — One is under the rule of God and is characterized by life and light and love and truth. The other is under the rule of Satan and it is characterized by death and darkness and lies.

In our culture we cannot get our heads and hearts around the concept of a king — a sovereign monarch. We don't like the idea of anyone telling us what we can or can't do unless we give them the permission (we call that elections). And then if they don't meet our expectations we throw them out.

We don't like the idea of a king who rules and reigns and governs with authority and power and control and majesty and absolute sovereignty. But I want you to think about this. *What if that king was your dad? What if your dad loved you? And, what if you had a dad that adored you and cared for you and treated you as a beloved child?*

Multiply that by INFINITY and THAT is what you have when God is your King and you are a member of his kingdom. When you become a child of God Your father is the ruler of the universe — the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

**AGAIN — REMEMBER** — Nicodemus comes to Jesus with his heart weighed down with the question: *“How can I to get into God's Kingdom? — Will my religion make me righteous enough for God to accept me?”*

Jesus ANSWERS Nicodemus — NOT with some long theological thesis; — NOT with hundreds of double sided pages (like the Talmud's explanation of the Sabbath Law). **Jesus answers it with FIVE WORDS. *You must be born again!***

**Let's begin by saying what “Born Again” is not.**

Being born again is not merely an outward alteration of life. It is not joining a group of people with a certain set of moral values. It is an absolute transformation of the heart, the will, and the character. It is a resurrection. It is a new creation. It is a passing from death to life. It is the bringing into existence of a new man, with a new nature, new desires, new appetites, new judgments, new opinions, new hopes, and new fears. THAT is what Jesus means by the term “Born Again.”

**Nicodemus is blown out!**

***<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?”***

**So Jesus restates the truth**

***<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.***

HERE Jesus gives the reason WHY we must be born twice

The first time you were born it was a physical birth. Your mom's water breaks and out you come. You're born into this world through water. The Bible says that in THAT birth you came into the world **physically alive** but **spiritually dead**. The Bible is very clear on this point.

## **FOLLOW ME HERE**

***Romans 5:12-21** <sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man — What man was that? Adam. <sup>12</sup> And death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned —*

Everyone is affected by Adam's sin — we sin by nature and we sin by choice.

HUGE POINT — There are ONLY TWO categories of humanity on planet earth! We tend to see things in terms of nations and races — genders and cultures — social-economic backgrounds. **REALITY:** There are ONLY TWO categories — those who are under Adam, those who are under Jesus.

**To be under Adam, you need to be born.**

**To be under Jesus you need to be born again.**

Apart from Jesus EVERY human is conceived with a nature of sinful, foolish, rebellion against God. Your natural proclivities are to repeat the sins of Adam and Eve.

That's why Jesus said *you must be born again* — because in our first birth we are conceived with the sin nature. You are not born as a good person with a blank slate.

***Psalm 51:5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

Some of your translations will say — *I was sinful from my mother's womb.*

***Eph. 2:1-3** <sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup>among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

**KEY POINT:** UNTIL we receive that NEW NATURE we can't even SEE the Kingdom of God.

***1 Corinthians 2:14** The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

THAT Kingdom is something that you just cannot see or understand unless you are born again. You see people living a life of loving obedience to Jesus and you just can't get it. You hear people talking about "the will of the Lord" and you don't get it. You see people rejoicing in adversity and hear them saying — *Not my will Lord — but yours —*

and you just don't get it. But once you are born again you SEE it — you are IN it and know it

**QUOTE: F.B. Meyer** — *No kingdom can understand another kingdom. You must be born into life to know life.*

**KEY POINT:** UNTIL we receive that NEW NATURE we can't get IN to the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is where God rules. EVERY descendant of Adam came into this world fallen in every area of our being. We came into the world without faith, or love of God. We came into this world with no natural inclination to serve Him or obey Him, and no natural pleasure in doing His will.

*Ephesians 2:1-3* 'And you were dead in the trespasses and sins<sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Years ago a very popular English pop star named Cliff Richards, who is a Christian, wrote a tune with the lyric — *The only way out is the only way in and it's You*

Jesus is saying to Nicodemus — *I TELL YOU THE TRUTH Nicodemus — The ONLY way OUT of the kingdom of this world is the ONLY way IN to God's Kingdom. You must be born again!*

**QUOTE: J.C. Ryle** — *Heaven may be reached without money, or rank, or learning. But it is clear as daylight, if words have any meaning, that nobody can enter heaven without a "new birth."*

**HUGE** — The very language used by Jesus tells us that **SEEING** and **ENTERING** the Kingdom is **BEYOND** the capacity of man!

If you are Christian, you ARE the greatest MIRACLE in God's universe! You WERE dead to God and alive to sin. NOW you are alive to God and dead to sin. Satan WAS your father. NOW God is your father. You WERE the enemy of God. NOW you are the child of God. You WERE going to be eternally separated from God. NOW you will be eternally present with God. It was a miracle that God did for you. The Spirit of God came and he convicted you of your sin. The Spirit of God came and he opened your blind eyes to see the truth. He opened your ears to hear the truth. He opened your heart to believe the truth.

*2 Corinthians 4:6* "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The spirit of God came to dwell within you and then he caused you to be a new creation in Christ. At that very moment He began to change your desires, and change your

identity, change your destiny. A new father, a new family, a new life! MIRACLE OF MIRACLES!

**“That which is born of the flesh is flesh,**

**One of the great dangers** of being raised in a Christian environment is that of thinking that all is well between you and God because you were born into a Christian family.

There are a lot of people who say — *I have been a Christian my whole life.* No you haven't! From the moment you came into this world you were an enemy of God.

There are a lot of people who say — *I went to church my whole life.* That does not matter.

There are a lot of people who say — *I was raised in a Christian home. My parents loved the Lord.* That's nice. But, that doesn't do anything for you. It's just not enough to be born into this world into a decent family and a decent church. THAT is all just realm of the natural — the flesh. *You MUST be born again!*

**AGAIN — This is so radical!** God incarnate is having a conversation with this man who came to Him by night. In this conversation He wants to tell Nicodemus who we are, and who is God. He wants to tell Nicodemus the way that God works **in** us, and **through** us, and **for** us, and in spite of us so that we can know God as our King and our Father — and see His Kingdom as our home. THAT'S what was burning in the heart of Jesus to talk about with this man.

**“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”**

What a great way of illustrating the work and the ways of the Holy Spirit!

There is so much about the wind that is mysterious and inexplicable. We cannot handle it with our hands, or see it with our eyes. When the wind blows, we cannot point out the exact spot where the molecules first began to move and to be felt. As we feel the wind we can't know the exact distance where it will cease to be felt. But having acknowledged that — we would never deny its presence.

So it is with the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about this SECOND BIRTH. Powerful. Ever present. Always active. On the move. Completely free. And, never seen. You don't SEE the Spirit of God, but you SEE THE EFFECTS of His work. When you see trees bowed — you know the wind is moving!

Jesus tells Nicodemus — That's how it is with everyone who is born again. He comes at us from a direction we could never predict — Works on us in ways we never expected. If the Spirit of God is in you — there is change, there is life. He blows us right into the

kingdom. He blows all the sin out. He blows all of the confusion out. He blows all of the lies out. (When I was born again it was like I had so much trash blown out of my brain!) There are times in Southern California when you can stand in front of the Ontario Airport and not see Mt. Baldy. But when the Santa Ana winds kick up it blows all of that crud away and there it is — this mountain that you couldn't see that morning. That's part of the work of the Holy Spirit. He blows away the crud so we can see our King — see His kingdom. I pray that the Spirit of God would be free in our lives — blow however and wherever he desires.

**QUOTE: J.C. Ryle** — *And now let us solemnly ask ourselves whether we know anything of the mighty change of which we have been reading? Have we been born again? Can any marks of the new birth be seen in us? Can the sound of the Spirit be heard in our daily conversation? Is the image and superscription of the Spirit to be discerned in our lives? Happy is the man who can give satisfactory answers to these questions! A day will come when those who are not born again will wish that they had never been born at all.*

**<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?**

Nicodemus was *THE teacher* — the most recognized biblical authority of Israel. If he was in the dark about what was the state of the Jewish *people*? The blind were leading the blind, and both were falling into the ditch. ([Matt. 15:14](#).) This has a tragic contemporary relevance today. The NECESSITY of the New Birth and the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is so little understood by those who should be proclaiming and explaining those truths — leaving those who need to know about it in the ditch..

**How can this be?**

We spent a considerable amount of time last Sunday in describing the religious world and mindset of Nicodemus. Nicodemus lived in a religious world where you obey all the rules — you do stuff — and then God loves you. You earn it. You work for it. You accomplish it. So Nicodemus asks *How can this be? You're making it sound like this is something that God does. Surely it can't be that God fixes us and that God heals us and God teaches us and God moves upon our hearts. How can that be?*

**<sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.**

**AGAIN — I TELL YOU THE TRUTH**

Jesus says — *Nicodemus I understand, you see it this way. This is how it appears to you. But, I tell you the truth... you do not see it as it is.*

Jesus says — *Here's the deal... I'm God. I came from heaven and I've seen everything. I've come down here to tell you what it looks like and how it works. Now, if you want to argue about perspective, trust me. I tell you the truth. This is how God works, this is who God is, this is what God does, this is how you get into the kingdom. This is how you meet the king. I tell you the truth. Trust my testimony. I'm God, I came down from heaven. I've seen it all. I know what I am talking about.*

WHY SHOULD WE TRUST JESUS? Because He is the Word who became flesh! He IS God come as man!

And by the way — It is exactly on this point that we all stumble. Jesus tells us very basic and simple things. He wants us to believe him.

**EXAMPLE:** We sin. Jesus says — *Because of the cross you're forgiven.* We say — I don't know.

**EXAMPLE:** Jesus says — God loves you. We say — I'm not sure.

Our problem is NOT that Jesus is telling us tons of stuff that's perplexing. Our problem is that we question whether or not Jesus is telling us the truth. Scripture says —

**Romans 3:4** *let God be true and every man a liar.*

**FAITH** is not how you feel about what Jesus says. **FAITH** is **LIVING** as though what Jesus says is true!

The bottom line for Nicodemus is the bottom line for you and me today! Do you believe that Jesus tells you the truth? If you do — that will change everything — here and now and in **ETERNITY**. If you don't, then you'll look at Jesus as another teacher, espousing another world-view with another series of presuppositions and opinions.

**<sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.**

We are still in the context of ***HOW can this be? How can this happen?***

**REMEMBER** we have said — The **NEW** is in the Old **CONTAINED**. The **OLD** is in the New **EXPLAINED**. Here Jesus **EXPLAINS** an odd event recorded in **Numbers 21** in so doing answers the question ***How can this happen?***

***Numbers 21:4-9*** <sup>4</sup>*From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup>And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food."* <sup>6</sup>*Then the Lord sent*

*fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup>And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.*

Strange remedy! A very REAL and POISONOUS snake bit me. I'm dying. But if I look at that bronze snake I'll be healed! HOW does that work? That CAN'T really be the remedy? For the Israelite bitten and perishing — they had to TRUST that what God was telling them the truth. You can't DO anything to be healed — you must LOOK at that serpent on that pole and TRUST that in so doing you will be saved!

Jesus uses moment in Israel's history to **explain the role of FAITH** — apart from any WORKS — in the SECOND BIRTH.

**But more than that** — Jesus says that THAT moment in the wilderness — where Israelites were bitten by a SERPENT — and that God's healing remedy was to place a bronze serpent on a pole — was actually pointing towards the moment when the Son of God would be lifted up on a cross.

The obvious question is — *How is the serpent is a portrait of Jesus? I might not be a Bible scholar — but the Bible says serpents – bad.... Jesus – good.*

When do we first find a serpent in the Bible? **Genesis 3** in the Garden of Eden. What does the serpent do? He lies and destroys the whole earth and corrupts the whole.

The very last mention of the serpent tells us his **identity** and his **end!**

***Rev. 12:9** <sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

The serpent of **Genesis 3** was none other than Satan.

The question is – Where does this serpent fit with Jesus on the cross?

WHY did Jesus die on the cross? Sin! Who's sin? My sin — Your sin — Our sin.

***2 Corinthians 5:21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

The theologian John Calvin called this *The Great Exchange!* As Jesus hung there, our sin was placed upon him. The work of the serpent — lies, death, chaos, separation from God, sin, evil, wickedness — was laid upon Jesus. Our sin hung on the cross. The work of the serpent hung on the cross. The authority of the serpent hung on the cross. And was judged and was conquered by the King of the Kingdom.

The ONLY way that you can be born again is to LOOK to Jesus — SEE Jesus slaughtered in YOUR place — paying the penalty for all of YOUR sins; past, present and future. That the totality of all that YOU and I have done was placed upon Christ.

**QUOTE: J.C. Ryle** — *It is true that we are guilty debtors--but Christ has paid our debts with His own blood. This is the real Gospel! This is the good news! On this let us lean while we live. To this let us cling when we die. Christ has been "lifted up" on the cross, and has thrown open the gates of heaven to all believers.*

## I WANT TO CLOSE WITH THIS

Nicodemus came to Jesus and respectfully and humbly said *Rabbi* —*we know that you are a teacher sent from God.*

Jesus prefaces His conversation with “I TELL YOU THE TRUTH.” Then Jesus laid on Nicodemus two “MUSTS” — both of which made it abundantly clear to Nicodemus that Nicodemus needed MORE than a teacher —

1.) *‘You must be born again,’* — tells us that we need more than a Teacher — We need a LIFE GIVER

2.) *‘The Son of Man must be lifted up,’* — tells us that we need more than a teacher — we need a SAVIOR.

**QUOTE: Alexander Maclaren** — ‘Thou art a Teacher sent from God.’ Ah, brethren, that will not do; it will not do for you and me! We need something a great deal deeper than that.... if you want to understand Christ you must understand sin; and whoever thinks lightly of it will think meanly of Him. An underestimate of the reality, the universality, the gravity of the fact of sin lands men in the superficial and wholly impotent conception, ‘Rabbi! Thou art a Teacher sent from God.’ A true knowledge of myself as a sinful man, of my need of pardon, of my need of cleansing, of my need of a new nature, which must be given from above, and cannot be evolved from within, leads me, and I pray it may lead you, to cast yourself down before Him, with no complaisant words of intellectual recognition upon your lips, but with the old cry, ‘Lord! be merciful to me a sinner.’

BOTTOM LINE — Jesus is not just a teacher — He is LIFE-GIVER and SAVIOR.

BOTTOM LINE — The teachings of Jesus can not SAVE us. The Cross of Jesus alone can save!

NEXT SUNDAY — We are going to see what MOVED God to send His Son — see how God really feels about you.

It’s Sunday after Christmas. Bring your visiting friends and family.