

In verses 1-10 of John chapter 3 we see the work that God does in salvation. (For previous studies in John log onto www.capitolcom.org/south-dakota). We learn that in order to be saved, one must be born again. The new birth, just like our first birth, is completely the work of God. We did nothing to bring about our first birth, and there is nothing we can do to bring about the new birth. Nicodemus rejected Jesus' teaching, unwilling to believe what Jesus had told him. He had worked so hard, had risen so far, and believed that all the good things he had done would save him. Jesus had shaken Nicodemus's worldview, and he was in shock asking, "How can these things be?"

Nicodemus' response is the human response. All man-made religions try to do the same thing; they all try to reach God through human means. We like to believe that somehow we can DO something to reach God, but just like Nicodemus, we all fall short. All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God. There is no way that we can ever be good enough or do enough good things to deserve heaven.

The new birth described by Jesus tells us what happens to someone when they are born again. It is a description of regeneration; it tells us what God does. In this passage we will look at the human response to the work God does.

John 3:11-21 says,

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. ¹² If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. ¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted

up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

- **Unbelief: The Human Problem – v 11-12**
- **Belief - The Answer – v 13-17**
- **The Result of Unbelief – v 18-21**

Unbelief: The Human Problem – v 11-12: The dialog between Nicodemus and Jesus in the first ten verses of the chapter end here as Jesus takes over the conversation. *Truly, truly,* introduces something important that Jesus is about to say. "You do not accept our testimony" is a rebuke to Nicodemus and his lack of belief.

The "we" in verse 11 includes the disciples, and even John the Baptist, who were giving testimony to Christ. Jesus, unlike any human in history has an eyewitness account of what happens in heaven – from eternity past to the present. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God... (John1:1-5)."

Jesus had spoken to Nicodemus about earthly things – birth and the need to be born from above. Nicodemus could not come to grips with the fact that he

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was unable to have any hand in salvation. How could he expect to understand things known only to Heaven?

Nicodemus had rejected what Jesus had said. He had failed to believe the truth Jesus had told him. He was unwilling to accept the truth because of the implications it had. The truth was that he had spent his life thinking he could work his way into heaven with good deeds, but Jesus had just told him he wasn't good enough and could never be good enough.

The Answer to Unbelief – v 13-17: Jesus again sets Himself apart. Nicodemus had come to Him believing they were on equal footing – Rabbi to Rabbi, but Jesus made it clear that they are not on equal footing. Nicodemus might have been the teacher of Israel (v 10), but Jesus – God incarnate - was the greatest teacher to ever live. Jesus had unique knowledge as God that Nicodemus, nor anyone else, has.

In verse 14, Jesus references an Old Testament event that portrays what must happen to Jesus. The story takes place in Numbers 21:5-9. God had sent serpents as punishment on the Israelites when they rebelled. Moses, under God's direction, placed a bronze serpent on a pole and anyone who looked at it after being bitten would live and not die. They had to put their faith in God, believing what He had said. Those who believed looked and were saved. Those that did not believe died. Just as the serpent was lifted up, Jesus would also be lifted up. "Lifted up" is an euphemism for being crucified in John's gospel. As belief was required of the Israelites who looked on the serpent, belief is required of those who look to Jesus for salvation. They must believe that He paid the penalty for their sins on the cross. The result of belief in Jesus is eternal life.

John 3:16 is one of the best known and most loved verses in all of Scripture. It tells us of the great love of God and that there is hope for this sin cursed world. God gave the indescribable, precious gift of His Son Jesus because He loved the evil, sinful world of fallen humanity. There was nothing in the world worthy of His love, but "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

God's gracious and incredible gift is available only to those who believe. Those who believe will "pass from death into life." They will not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus did not come to earth to judge the world (He will come *again* as judge), but He came as a Savior. He came with the express purpose of dying. He died to pay the penalty of sin for all who would believe.

He came to die for the "world" that "whoever" might believe is saved. There is no distinction. No one is left out because of ethnicity, skin color, or any other trait. Nicodemus, like the Jews of his day, liked to think that God's salvation was only for them, but it wasn't. It is available to anyone and everyone.

The Result of Unbelief – v 18-21: There are severe consequences for those who do not believe. While those who do believe receive eternal life, those who do not believe receive judgment because of their lack of belief in the "name of the only begotten Son of God." "In the name of" means all of who He is and what He has done.

The Light has come into the world (referencing Jesus in John 1), and rather than run to the Light, man hates the Light because it reveals him to be sinful. Those who reject the Light (those who do not believe) seal their own fate because they reject the only One who can save them. Those who practice the truth (those who believe) embrace the Light because they know their sins are forgiven, and they have nothing to fear.

Unbelief leads to judgment. Embrace the Light. The invitation is for "Whosoever." Believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and experience the matchless love of God.



Bible Studies:

7:00 am Tuesdays – Bible study – Governor's Large Conference Room – Open to All: Legislators, Constitutional Officers, Lobbyists, Staff

8:00 pm Tuesdays – Legislator Only Bible Study - Perkins

