

Gospel of John Study Notes

John 3a – Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

The Gospel of John, Chapter 3, contains the most often quoted verse by evangelical Christians, “For God so loved the world...” But how we arrive at this verse is quite interesting. There’s quite a lot to discover in this chapter, so we’ll split it into two parts:

- John 3:1-21, Jesus Teaches Nicodemus
- John 3:22-36, Jesus & John the Baptist



Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

Here we read about an amazing meeting between Israel’s Teacher (Nicodemus) and Jesus the Rabbi. Those titles are extracted from the text to set the stage for our discussion. Nicodemus is a man of honor and wealth who is recognized by the Jews as one of great distinction. Jesus is the man who just cleared the temple! Though he did not go to seminary, he is shown here to be the teacher of Israel’s teacher.

Before we begin, we need to have an appreciation for Nicodemus. John and those reading these words for the first time knew more about Nicodemus than we do. The meeting was arranged under cover of darkness and probably lasted all night, at least deep into the darkest part of the evening.

Did Nicodemus become a Christian? (Read John 7:50-52 and John 19:39)

Notice the red letters in the first 15 verses. John listens to the conversation and takes notes for our benefit. I think the conversation went well into the night, so John provides a summary that has become the most quoted verse in the Bible:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

John 3:19

This time, God did not send a prophet, he sent his Son, a part of himself. May we hear the great Good News of Jesus and truly be born again!

Further reading:

- The Spirit: Isaiah 32:15-20; 44:1-5; 45:8; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:9; Joel 2:28
- Bronze Snake: Numbers 21:4-9

John 3:1-21

New International Version

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

3 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." **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!"

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. **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? **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. **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. **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.