

# Gospel of John (lesson 9)

John 3:1-21

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 came at night so no one would see him, and Jesus would be able to talk with him privately and personally. He knew there was something special about Jesus, but would not embrace him without more information.

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

Jesus responds with the answer to the question that Nicodemus did not ask. Jesus gave Nicodemus the information he needed.

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 [plural] 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.”

Nicodemus did not understand that the salvation of the soul begins with the rebirth of the spirit. The Old Testament focus was on the shedding of blood for the covering of sins. This was a temporary remedy that was performed mechanically without the understanding of the spiritual need of a real solution.

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

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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. [who is in heaven] 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, [exalted] 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” {Numbers 21:4-9}

This is the pattern. The Israelites grumbled in the desert before entering the promised land. God judged them with poisonous snakes, and they cried out to God for help. Moses was instructed to make a brass snake and lift it on a pole so all could see it. Those who repented and looked up to the snake on the pole were healed. Jesus was lifted up on a cross for all to see, and those who repented of their sins and looked up to him are saved.

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.

Jesus' mission was a mission of mercy. He came to complete what the blood of animals could not do. Jesus came to deal with the root of sin, our sinful nature. His solution starts with the rebirth of our spirit. Once our spirit is reborn, God's power to restore our soul and body can flow from our renewed spirit. We are spirit, soul, and body; our salvation is the remedy for all three parts of us.