

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

### HIS MINISTRY BEGINS

**MATTHEW 4:17**

**FROM THAT TIME JESUS BEGAN TO PREACH AND TO SAY, "REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND."**

He, Himself, was the personal present kingdom. The devil had tried to tempt Jesus to rely on His deity – "...if thou be the Son of God." We find in the Scripture that Jesus would reveal His kingdom as He expressed Himself as "Son of Man." The title has its roots in the book of Daniel. There the Messianic kingdom, in contrast to the wild-beast nature of the world empires—lion, eagle, bear, panther, terrible beast—was described as the kingdom of the Son of Man. The kingdom of Heaven is the first and only kingdom of history in which true humanity, in the sense of Holy Scriptures, will rule on earth.

**DANIEL 7:13-14**

**I WAS WATCHING IN THE NIGHT VISIONS, AND BEHOLD, ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN, COMING**

**WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN! HE CAME TO THE ANCIENT OF DAYS, AND THEY BROUGHT HIM NEAR BEFORE HIM.**

**14 THEN TO HIM WAS GIVEN DOMINION AND GLORY AND A KINGDOM, THAT ALL PEOPLES, NATIONS, AND LANGUAGES SHOULD SERVE HIM. HIS DOMINION IS AN EVERLASTING DOMINION, WHICH SHALL NOT PASS AWAY, AND HIS KINGDOM THE ONE WHICH SHALL NOT BE DESTROYED.**

**MATTHEW 24:30**

**THEN THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN WILL APPEAR IN HEAVEN, AND THEN ALL THE TRIBES OF THE EARTH WILL MOURN, AND THEY WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN WITH POWER AND GREAT GLORY.**

**MATTHEW 26:64**

**JESUS SAID TO HIM, "IT IS AS YOU SAID. NEVERTHELESS, I SAY TO YOU, HEREAFTER YOU WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE POWER, AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.**

So Jesus is the King of the Kingdom and while here on earth He was the Kingdom personified among men. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus desired that He should be recognized as the Messiah only through faith. He did, however, slowly reveal to His own circle of followers that He was the Messiah. He did this with ever increasing clarity.

**JOHN 1:41**

**41 HE FIRST FINDETH HIS OWN BROTHER SIMON, AND SAITH UNTO HIM, WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAS, WHICH IS, BEING INTERPRETED, THE CHRIST.**

**JOHN 1:49**

**49 NATHANAEL ANSWERED AND SAITH UNTO HIM, RABBI, THOU ART THE SON OF GOD; THOU ART THE KING OF ISRAEL.**

**JOHN 4:25-26**

**25 THE WOMAN SAITH UNTO HIM, I KNOW THAT MESSIAS COMETH, WHICH IS CALLED CHRIST: WHEN HE IS COME, HE WILL TELL US ALL THINGS.**

**26 JESUS SAITH UNTO HER, I THAT SPEAK UNTO THEE AM HE.**

**JOHN 9:35-38**

**35 JESUS HEARD THAT THEY HAD CAST HIM OUT; AND WHEN HE HAD FOUND HIM, HE SAID UNTO HIM, DOST THOU BELIEVE ON THE SON OF GOD?**

**36 HE ANSWERED AND SAID, WHO IS HE, LORD, THAT I MIGHT BELIEVE ON HIM?**

**37 AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, THOU HAST BOTH SEEN HIM, AND IT IS HE THAT TALKETH WITH THEE.**

**38 AND HE SAID, LORD, I BELIEVE. AND HE WORSHIPPED HIM.**

Finally, Peter understood the revelation knowledge given to him by the Father.

**MATTHEW 16:13-20**

**13 WHEN JESUS CAME INTO THE COASTS OF CAESAREA PHILIPPI, HE ASKED HIS DISCIPLES, SAYING, WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT I THE SON OF MAN AM?**

**14 AND THEY SAID, SOME SAY THAT THOU ART JOHN THE BAPTIST: SOME, ELIAS; AND OTHERS, JEREMIAS, OR ONE OF THE PROPHETS.**

**15 HE SAITH UNTO THEM, BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM?**

**16 AND SIMON PETER ANSWERED AND SAID, THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.**

**17 AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, BLESSED ART THOU, SIMON BARJONA: FOR FLESH AND BLOOD HATH NOT REVEALED IT UNTO THEE, BUT MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.**

**18 AND I SAY ALSO UNTO THEE, THAT THOU ART PETER, AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.**

**19 AND I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: AND WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT BIND ON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN: AND WHATSOEVER THOU SHALT LOOSE ON EARTH SHALL BE LOOSED IN HEAVEN.**

**20 THEN CHARGED HE HIS DISCIPLES THAT THEY SHOULD TELL NO MAN THAT HE WAS JESUS THE CHRIST.**

Being both Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus considered being Son of Man the most important while ministering here on earth. Jesus now begins to enroll the disciples. Interestingly, Jesus called the first two disciples from among those who had followed John the Baptist. Since Andrew is the only name given, we can assume that John, the writer of the gospel, was probably the other disciple.

**JOHN 1:35-38**

**35 AGAIN THE NEXT DAY AFTER JOHN STOOD, AND TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES;  
36 AND LOOKING UPON JESUS AS HE WALKED, HE SAITH, BEHOLD THE LAMB  
OF GOD!**

**37 AND THE TWO DISCIPLES HEARD IM SPEAK, AND THEY FOLLOWED JESUS.  
38 THEN JESUS TURNED, AND SAW THEM FOLLOWING, AND SAITH UNTO  
THEM, WHAT SEEK YE?**

Jesus asked them who they were seeking to worship. It was a kind inquiry respecting their desires. It was an invitation to lay open their minds so they could state their wishes, and oexpress all their feelings respecting the Messiah and their own salvation.

Now reread John 1:38 to finish the verse and continue with verse 39.

**JOHN 1:38-51**

**38 THEN JESUS TURNED, AND SAW THEM FOLLOWING, AND SAITH UNTO  
THEM, WHAT SEEK YE? THEY SAID UNTO HIM, RABBI, (WHICH IS TO SAY,  
BEING INTERPRETED, MASTER,) WHERE DWELLEST THOU?**

**39 HE SAITH UNTO THEM, COME AND SEE. THEY CAME AND SAW WHERE HE  
DWELT, AND ABODE WITH HIM THAT DAY: FOR IT WAS ABOUT THE TENTH  
HOUR.**

**40 ONE OF THE TWO WHICH HEARD JOHN SPEAK, AND FOLLOWED HIM, WAS  
ANDREW, SIMON PETER'S BROTHER.**

**41 HE FIRST FINDETH HIS OWN BROTHER SIMON, AND SAITH UNTO HIM, WE  
HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAS, WHICH IS, BEING INTERPRETED, THE CHRIST.**

**42 AND HE BROUGHT HIM TO JESUS. AND WHEN JESUS BEHELD HIM, HE SAID,  
THOU ART SIMON THE SON OF JONA: THOU SHALT BE CALLED CEPHAS,  
WHICH IS BY INTERPRETATION, A STONE.**

**43 THE DAY FOLLOWING JESUS WOULD GO FORTH INTO GALILEE, AND  
FINDETH PHILIP, AND SAITH UNTO HIM, FOLLOW ME.**

**44 NOW PHILIP WAS OF BETHSAIDA, THE CITY OF ANDREW AND PETER.**

**45 PHILIP FINDETH NATHANAEL, AND SAITH UNTO HIM, WE HAVE FOUND  
HIM, OF WHOM MOSES IN THE LAW, AND THE PROPHETS, DID WRITE, JESUS  
OF NAZARETH, THE SON OF JOSEPH.**

**46 AND NATHANAEL SAID UNTO HIM, CAN THERE ANY GOOD THING COME  
OUT OF NAZARETH? PHILIP SAITH UNTO HIM, COME AND SEE.**

**47 JESUS SAW NATHANAEL COMING TO HIM, AND SAITH OF HIM, BEHOLD AN  
ISRAELITE INDEED, IN WHOM IS NO GUILLE!**

**48 NATHANAEL SAITH UNTO HIM, WHENCE KNOWEST THOU ME? JESUS  
ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, BEFORE THAT PHILIP CALLED THEE, WHEN  
THOU WAST UNDER THE FIG TREE, I SAW THEE.**

**49 NATHANAEL ANSWERED AND SAITH UNTO HIM, RABBI, THOU ART THE  
SON OF GOD; THOU ART THE KING OF ISRAEL.**

**50 JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, BECAUSE I SAID UNTO THEE, I  
SAW THEE UNDER THE FIG TREE, BELIEVEST THOU? THOU SHALT SEE  
GREATER THINGS THAN THESE.**

**51 AND HE SAITH UNTO HIM, VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, HEREAFTER YE SHALL SEE HEAVEN OPEN, AND THE ANGELS OF GOD ASCENDING AND DESCENDING UPON THE SON OF MAN.**

Now go to Luke, chapter 5.

**LUKE 5:27-28**

**27 AND AFTER THESE THINGS HE WENT FORTH, AND SAW A PUBLICAN, NAMED LEVI, SITTING AT THE RECEIPT OF CUSTOM: AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, FOLLOW ME.**

**28 AND HE LEFT ALL, ROSE UP, AND FOLLOWED HIM.**

Over a period of time, Jesus had chosen twelve men to follow Him. They are Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus the son of James, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot.

The main thing that I want you to glean from this is that many of these disciples went immediately after leaving their jobs went to tell another person or persons that they were now going to follow the Messiah. We must do the same. We, the church, should be gaining believers on a daily basis.

**MATTHEW 28:19-20**

**19 GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST:**

**20 TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: AND, LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.**

**PROVERBS 11:30**

**30 THE FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS A TREE OF LIFE: AND HE THAT WINNETH SOULS IS WISE.**

As Christians, we are to lead other people to Christ by evangelizing the world. We are to present the Plan of Salvation to those who do not know Jesus as their personal Savior. Our responsibility, however, does not stop just in winning the lost to Christ—we must disciple them. We are to *go*, but even more importantly is that we are to make disciples of them. But to be able to disciple, we must make certain that we are truly following Jesus in every way.

The Apostle Paul was a soul-winner. He taught his new converts to become disciples, who, in return, were to go out and win more souls to be discipled. Paul led by example. He walked the walk and talked the talk. Both are necessary in order for a soul-winner to also be a disciple-maker. Obviously, Paul understood Acts 1:8.

**ACTS 1:8**

**8 BUT YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER, AFTER THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU: AND YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME BOTH IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDAEA, AND IN SAMARIA, AND UNTO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH.**

Soul-winners and disciple-makers are to speak witness words and they are to live a life which witnesses even when they are not talking. Paul likened the life of a disciple-maker to that of an ambassador. He said that the disciple-maker must rub elbows with the individuals that were being disciplined. Paul simply followed the pattern that had been established by Jesus. Jesus was the best disciple-maker of all. He used the Old Testament Scriptures as He worked with people, but the main way that He made disciples was by being with the people.

**MARK 3:14**

**14 AND HE ORDAINED TWELVE, THAT THEY SHOULD BE WITH HIM, AND THAT HE MIGHT SEND THEM FORTH TO PREACH,**

For the disciples to be with Him means that He was with them. He taught them what to be like, not just what to do. So, the Biblical way of making disciples begins with establishing a good learning atmosphere. Ideally, we are to be the leader disciple-maker, the instructor, the ambassador.

I want to leave this thought with you today. It is found in the Book of Joshua.

**JOSHUA 13:1**

**1 WHEN JOSHUA HAD REACHED A VENERABLE AGE, GOD SAID TO HIM, "YOU'VE HAD A GOOD, LONG LIFE, BUT THERE IS A LOT OF LAND STILL TO BE TAKEN. (THE MESSAGE)**

After choosing His disciples and teaching them to be both soul-winners and disciple-makers, the next event in the life of Jesus is the turning the water into wine.

**JOHN 2:1-11**

**1 AND THE THIRD DAY THERE WAS A MARRIAGE IN CANA OF GALILEE; AND THE MOTHER OF JESUS WAS THERE:  
2 AND BOTH JESUS WAS CALLED, AND HIS DISCIPLES, TO THE MARRIAGE.  
3 AND WHEN THEY WANTED WINE, THE MOTHER OF JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, THEY HAVE NO WINE.  
4 JESUS SAITH UNTO HER, WOMAN, WHAT HAVE I TO DO WITH THEE? MINE HOUR IS NOT YET COME.  
5 HIS MOTHER SAITH UNTO THE SERVANTS, WHATSOEVER HE SAITH UNTO YOU, DO IT.**

**6 AND THERE WERE SET THERE SIX WATERPOTS OF STONE, AFTER THE MANNER OF THE PURIFYING OF THE JEWS, CONTAINING TWO OR THREE FIRKINS APIECE.**

**7 JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM, FILL THE WATERPOTS WITH WATER. AND THEY FILLED THEM UP TO THE BRIM.**

**8 AND HE SAITH UNTO THEM, DRAW OUT NOW, AND BEAR UNTO THE GOVERNOR OF THE FEAST. AND THEY BARE IT.**

**9 WHEN THE RULER OF THE FEAST HAD TASTED THE WATER THAT WAS MADE WINE, AND KNEW NOT WHENCE IT WAS: (BUT THE SERVANTS WHICH DREW THE WATER KNEW;) THE GOVERNOR OF THE FEAST CALLED THE BRIDEGROOM,**

**10 AND SAITH UNTO HIM, EVERY MAN AT THE BEGINNING DOTHTH SET FORTH GOOD WINE; AND WHEN MEN HAVE WELL DRUNK, THEN THAT WHICH IS WORSE: BUT THOU HAST KEPT THE GOOD WINE UNTIL NOW.**

**11 THIS BEGINNING OF MIRACLES DID JESUS IN CANA OF GALILEE, AND MANIFESTED FORTH HIS GLORY; AND HIS DISCIPLES BELIEVED ON HIM.**

Jesus had gone to the wedding at Cana. Cana was the highlands of Galilee. It was the home of Nathanael.

In verse 4, Jesus referred to His mother as Woman. The title woman does not convey a lack of respect or affection. It was used in addressing people of rank. On the surface, it seems that Mary was wanting Jesus to take this occasion to present Himself openly as the Messiah. However, it is not necessary to suppose she meant anything more than that Jesus assist her in arranging for the supplying of the wine by natural means, since many believe this was probably a relative's wedding. Jesus honored His mother by doing what she had asked. As a sign, the miracle was not meant to draw attention to itself. It was intended to demonstrate the power and glory of Jesus. The wine that Jesus produced was better than that which had already been served. The people at this event had come into contact with the Messiah. They drank what He had to offer. Jesus probably drank with them. This wine was found to be the best.

Jesus is the vine; the church branches out from Him. The same sap that flows in the vine, not only flows into the branches, but produces fruit on the branches which in return make the best wine possible. Jesus produces the best possible through the church. Miracles should be the norm for the church. Most miracles come through people rather than coming out of the clear blue.

**JOHN 2:12**

**12 AFTER THIS HE WENT DOWN TO CAPERNAUM, HE, AND HIS MOTHER, AND HIS BRETHREN, AND HIS DISCIPLES: AND THEY CONTINUED THERE NOT MANY DAYS.**

Jesus went down from Cana to Capernaum. It is the place where He would later establish His headquarters for His ministry while He was in Galilee.

**JOHN 2:13-25**

**13 AND THE JEWS' PASSOVER WAS AT HAND, AND JESUS WENT UP TO JERUSALEM,**

**14 AND FOUND IN THE TEMPLE THOSE THAT SOLD OXEN AND SHEEP AND DOVES, AND THE CHANGERS OF MONEY SITTING:**

**15 AND WHEN HE HAD MADE A SCOURGE OF SMALL CORDS, HE DROVE THEM ALL OUT OF THE TEMPLE, AND THE SHEEP, AND THE OXEN; AND Poured OUT THE CHANGERS' MONEY, AND OVERTHREW THE TABLES;**

**16 AND SAID UNTO THEM THAT SOLD DOVES, TAKE THESE THINGS HENCE; MAKE NOT MY FATHER'S HOUSE AN HOUSE OF MERCHANDISE.**

**17 AND HIS DISCIPLES REMEMBERED THAT IT WAS WRITTEN, THE ZEAL OF THINE HOUSE HATH EATEN ME UP.**

**18 THEN ANSWERED THE JEWS AND SAID UNTO HIM, WHAT SIGN SHEWEST THOU UNTO US, SEEING THAT THOU DOEST THESE THINGS?**

**19 JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO THEM, DESTROY THIS TEMPLE, AND IN THREE DAYS I WILL RAISE IT UP.**

**20 THEN SAID THE JEWS, FORTY AND SIX YEARS WAS THIS TEMPLE IN BUILDING, AND WILT THOU REAR IT UP IN THREE DAYS?**

**21 BUT HE SPAKE OF THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY.**

**22 WHEN THEREFORE HE WAS RISEN FROM THE DEAD, HIS DISCIPLES REMEMBERED THAT HE HAD SAID THIS UNTO THEM; AND THEY BELIEVED THE SCRIPTURE, AND THE WORD WHICH JESUS HAD SAID.**

**23 NOW WHEN HE WAS IN JERUSALEM AT THE PASSOVER, IN THE FEAST DAY, MANY BELIEVED IN HIS NAME, WHEN THEY SAW THE MIRACLES WHICH HE DID.**

**24 BUT JESUS DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF UNTO THEM, BECAUSE HE KNEW ALL MEN,**

**25 AND NEEDED NOT THAT ANY SHOULD TESTIFY OF MAN: FOR HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN.**

This took place at the commencement of his public ministry. His ministry would always show His great regard was for the pure worship of his Father. His coming Jerusalem was for the Passover. His coming was also to reform the abuses which had crept into worship. He was to teach man a proper regard for the glory of God. Needless to say, what He found here disturbed Him very much. It definitely was not worship. He physically made a whip of cords and drove the people and animals from the temple.

This was prophesied in Psalm 69:9

**PSALMS 69:9**

**9 FOR THE ZEAL OF THINE HOUSE HATH EATEN ME UP; AND THE REPROACHES OF THEM THAT REPROACHED THEE ARE FALLEN UPON ME.**

The temple was supposed to be the holiest site in Israel. People were coming there to celebrate Passover. Certainly, everything needed to be in order. The money changers had commercialized on the sacrificial system. It seems that nobody tried to resist Him. Their

consciences reproved them for their impiety. They had no self-defense. It was customary in the nation to cherish a profound regard for the authority of a prophet. The appearance and manner of Jesus - so fearless, so decided, so authoritative led them to suppose "he" was a prophet. They were afraid to resist him. They knew that many supposed him to be the Messiah. Jesus on all occasions had a most wonderful control over people. There was something in his manner, as well as in his doctrine, that awed men. People trembled at His presence. On this occasion he had the manner of a prophet. He had the authority of God. The testimony of their own consciences deemed him a prophet. They could not, therefore, resist the authority by which he spoke. Jesus purified the temple at the commencement of His ministry.

Jesus performed some miracles while He was here in Jerusalem.

**JOHN 2:23-25.**

**23 NOW WHEN HE WAS IN JERUSALEM AT THE PASSOVER, IN THE FEAST DAY, MANY BELIEVED IN HIS NAME, WHEN THEY SAW THE MIRACLES WHICH HE DID.**

**24 BUT JESUS DID NOT COMMIT HIMSELF UNTO THEM, BECAUSE HE KNEW ALL MEN,**

**25 AND NEEDED NOT THAT ANY SHOULD TESTIFY OF MAN: FOR HE KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN.**

Jesus' knowledge of human nature pierces the superficiality of faith in Him on account of His miracles. Verse 24 points out that He "did not commit Himself to them" because He knew they were not necessarily sincere. The word "commit" would be better translated "trust." He was sorrowful at the knowledge of the hypocrisy of their faith. At best, it appeared that the seed He had sown had fallen on stony ground. What the Jewish people did in relationship with other nations often seemed like the seed was falling on stony ground.

From here, Jesus gave His discourse on the new birth to Nicodemus. It definitely was an important message. It had to do with the spiritual welfare of mankind.

Let's go to John 3:1-21.

**JOHN 3:1-21**

**3:1 THERE WAS A MAN OF THE PHARISEES, NAMED NICODEMUS, A RULER OF THE JEWS:**

**2 THE SAME CAME TO JESUS BY NIGHT, AND SAID UNTO HIM, RABBI, WE KNOW THAT THOU ART A TEACHER COME FROM GOD: FOR NO MAN CAN DO THESE MIRACLES THAT THOU DOEST, EXCEPT GOD BE WITH HIM.**

**3 JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

**4 NICODEMUS SAITH UNTO HIM, HOW CAN A MAN BE BORN WHEN HE IS OLD? CAN HE ENTER THE SECOND TIME INTO HIS MOTHER'S WOMB, AND BE BORN?**



**5 JESUS ANSWERED, VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

**6 THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH IS FLESH; AND THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT IS SPIRIT.**

**7 MARVEL NOT THAT I SAID UNTO THEE, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.**

**8 THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH, AND THOU HEAREST THE SOUND THEREOF, BUT CANST NOT TELL WHENCE IT COMETH, AND WHITHER IT GOETH: SO IS EVERY ONE THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT.**

**9 NICODEMUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?**

**10 JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, ART THOU A MASTER OF ISRAEL, AND KNOWEST NOT THESE THINGS?**

**11 VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, WE SPEAK THAT WE DO KNOW, AND TESTIFY THAT WE HAVE SEEN; AND YE RECEIVE NOT OUR WITNESS.**

**12 IF I HAVE TOLD YOU EARTHLY THINGS, AND YE BELIEVE NOT, HOW SHALL YE BELIEVE, IF I TELL YOU OF HEAVENLY THINGS?**

**13 AND NO MAN HATH ASCENDED UP TO HEAVEN, BUT HE THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, EVEN THE SON OF MAN WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.**

**14 AND AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS, EVEN SO MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP:**

**15 THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.**

**16 FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.**

**17 FOR GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD; BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED.**

**18 HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED: BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY, BECAUSE HE HATH NOT BELIEVED IN THE NAME OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD.**

**19 AND THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION, THAT LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL.**

**20 FOR EVERY ONE THAT DOETH EVIL HATETH THE LIGHT, NEITHER COMETH TO THE LIGHT, LEST HIS DEEDS SHOULD BE REPROVED.**

**21 BUT HE THAT DOETH TRUTH COMETH TO THE LIGHT, THAT HIS DEEDS MAY BE MADE MANIFEST, THAT THEY ARE WROUGHT IN GOD.**

**Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He was a member of the “Sanhedrin,” or great council of the nation. He is twice mentioned after this as being friendly to our Savior. In the first instance Nicodemus advocated his cause and defended him against the unjust suspicion of the Jews. In the second instance Nicodemus came to aid in embalming the body of Jesus.**

**The design of John in writing this gospel was to show that Jesus was the Messiah. To do this, John uses as evidence the testimony of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. Nicodemus retained the belief of it until the death of Jesus.**

**JOHN 3:2**

**THE SAME CAME TO JESUS BY NIGHT, AND SAID UNTO HIM, RABBI, WE KNOW THAT THOU ART A TEACHER COME FROM GOD: FOR NO MAN CAN DO THESE MIRACLES THAT THOU DOEST, EXCEPT GOD BE WITH HIM.**

The same came to Jesus seemingly to inquire more fully of Jesus what was the doctrine Jesus had come to teach. He desired to be further instructed in private respecting his doctrine.

It was not usual for a man of rank, power, and riches to come to inquire of Jesus in this manner.

The most favorable opportunity for teaching such men the nature of personal religion is when they are alone. Scarcely any man, of any rank, will refuse to converse on this subject when addressed respectfully and tenderly in private. In the midst of their companions, or engaged in business, they may refuse to listen. When alone, they will hear the Lord's voice. They become willing to converse on the great subjects of judgment and eternity.

Nicodemus came by night. It is not mentioned why he came by night. It might have been that, being a member of the Sanhedrin, he was engaged all the day. It may have been because the Lord Jesus was occupied all the day in teaching publicly and in working miracles. In that case, there would be no opportunity for conversing with Jesus as freely as Nicodemus desired. It may have been that he was afraid of the ridicule and contempt of those in power. He may have been fearful that it might involve him in danger if publicly known. No bad motive is imputed to him.

his motives were such as God would approve. Note that Jesus did not reprove him. We should not blame men where Jesus does not. We should desire to find goodness in every man rather than be ever on the search for evil motives. Jesus did not refuse to converse with an inquiring sinner at night.

Ministers of the gospel at all times should welcome those who are asking the way to life. It is proper for men, even those of elevated rank, to inquire on the subject of religion. Nothing is so important as helping someone get saved. At all times men should seek the way of salvation, and especially in times of great religious excitement they should make inquiry.

Many believed on Jesus. He performed miracles, and preached, and many were converted. There was what would now be called a revival of religion, having all the features of a work of grace. At such a season it was proper, as it is now, that not only the poor, but the rich and great, should inquire the path to life.

Jesus was addressed as rabbi. This was a title of respect conferred on distinguished Jewish teachers, somewhat in the way that the title "Doctor of Divinity" is now conferred. It literally signifies greatness, and was given by Nicodemus, doubtless, because Jesus gave distinguished proofs that he came as a teacher from God.

Nicodemus declared that I know and those with whom I am connected know that you Jesus are the great Teacher. Perhaps Nicodemus was acquainted with some of the Pharisees who

held the same opinion about Jesus that he did. Nicodemus came to be more fully confirmed in the belief. He declared that he was aware the Jesus had come from God, having been sent by Him. This implies Nicodemus' readiness to hear Him and his desire to be instructed. He acknowledges the divine mission of Jesus, and delicately asks Him to instruct him in the truth of religion.

When we read the words of Jesus in the Bible, it should be with a belief that he came from God. We should believe that Jesus was qualified and authorized to teach us the way of life.

We should read the red and believe the words of Jesus.

Nicodemus expressed his belief that the miracles which Jesus had performed in the Temple and at Jerusalem could not have been done except God be with him. Except God aid Jesus and except His instructions are approved by God, Jesus would not have been able to do the things He did. Miracles show that a prophet or religious teacher comes from God. God would not work a miracle to attest the validity of a falsehood or to give countenance to a false teacher.

If God gives a man power to work a miracle, it is proof that he approves the teaching of that man. The miracle is the proof or the credential that he came from God.

**JOHN 3:3**

**3 JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Verily, verily is an expression of strong affirmation, denoting the certainty and the importance of what he was about to say. Jesus proceeds to state one of the fundamental and indispensable doctrines of his religion. It is that Christianity does not conceal anything. Jesus declared to every man, high or low, rich or poor, the most humbling truths of the gospel. Jesus said that the first thing in religion is a change of heart and of life.

His statement that except a man, that is all mankind, should be certain that unless he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. It includes, therefore, men of every character and rank, and nation. It applies to the moral and immoral, rich and poor, in office and out of office, old and young, bond and free, the slave and his master, Jew and Gentile. It is clear that our Savior intended to convey to Nicodemus the idea, also, that "he" must be born again. It was not sufficient to be a Jew, or to acknowledge Jesus to be a teacher sent by God that is, the Messiah.

It was necessary, in addition to this, to experience in his own soul that great change called the "new birth" or regeneration. The word translated here "again" means also "from above." It is evident, however, that Nicodemus did not understand.

**Our natural birth introduces us to light, but it also introduces us to a world of sin. We early go astray. All men transgress. The imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil from the youth up. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins. All sin exposes men to misery here and hereafter. To escape from sin, to be happy in the world to come, it is necessary that man should be changed in his principles, his feelings, and his manner of life. This change, or the beginning of this new life, is called the “new birth,” or “regeneration.” It is so called because in many respects it has a striking analogy to the natural birth. It is the beginning of spiritual life. It introduces us to the light of the gospel. It is the moment when we really begin to live to any purpose. It is the moment when God reveals himself to us as our reconciled Father, and we are adopted into his family as his sons. And as every man is a sinner, it is necessary that each one should experience this change, or he cannot be happy or saved. This doctrine was not unknown to the Jews, and was particularly predicted as a doctrine that would be taught in the times of the Messiah.**

#### **EZEKIEL 36:25**

**25 THEN WILL I SPRINKLE CLEAN WATER UPON YOU, AND YE SHALL BE CLEAN: FROM ALL YOUR FILTHINESS, AND FROM ALL YOUR IDOLS, WILL I CLEANSE YOU.**

**This change referred to in the New Testament is called the new creation. It is life from the dead. It is a resurrection. Without such experience, a person cannot enjoy or be fitted for the kingdom of God, that is heaven. The point is that the kingdom which Jesus was about to set up was so pure and holy that it was indispensable that every man should experience this change. An unsaved man cannot partake of its blessings. This is solemnly declared by the Son of God by an affirmation equivalent to an oath. There can be no possibility of entering heaven without experiencing the change which the Savior contemplated by the “new birth.” And it becomes every man, as in the presence of a holy God before whom he must soon appear, to ask himself whether he has experienced this change. If he has not, he should not rest until he has sought the mercy of God. He must seek the aid of God’s Spirit so that his heart may be renewed.**

#### **JOHN 3:4**

**4 NICODEMUS SAITH UNTO HIM, HOW CAN A MAN BE BORN WHEN HE IS OLD? CAN HE ENTER THE SECOND TIME INTO HIS MOTHER’S WOMB, AND BE BORN?**

**The expression “to be born again” was in common use among the Jews to denote a change from “Gentilism” to “Judaism” by becoming a proselyte by baptism. To the Jews, being born again meant a change from the state of a pagan to that of a Jew. But they never used it as applicable to a Jew. They supposed that by his birth every Jew was entitled to all the privileges of the people of God. When Jesus used it of a Jew, when he affirmed its necessity of every man, Nicodemus supposed there was something that surpassed his comprehension. Nicodemus therefore asked whether it was possible that Jesus could teach so absurd a**

doctrine. Nicodemus could conceive no other sense as applicable to a Jew - as that he should, when old, enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born.

From this we may learn that prejudice leads men to misunderstand the plainest doctrines of religion. We learn that things which are at first incomprehensible or apparently absurd, may, when explained, become clear. The doctrine of regeneration, so difficult to Nicodemus, is plain to a "child" that is born of the Spirit. Those in high rank in life, and who are learned, are often most ignorant about the plainest matters of religion.

We can also learn for this that a doctrine is not to be rejected because the rich and the great do not believe or understand it. The doctrine of regeneration was not false because Nicodemus did not comprehend it.

#### **JOHN 3:5**

**5 JESUS ANSWERED, VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

To be born of water is evidently signifying the natural birth. Now, let us see if there is any ground to indicate that water baptism has anything do with salvation. Baptism was practiced by the Jews in receiving a Gentile as a proselyte. It was practiced by John among the Jews. Jesus here says that it is an ordinance of His religion. He says that it is a sign and seal of the renewing influences of his Spirit. So he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is clear that they considered this ordinance as binding on all who professed to love the Lord Jesus. To neglect this is to neglect a plain command of God. It is clear, also, that any other command of God might as well be neglected or violated as this. It is the duty of everyone not only to love the Saviour, but to make an acknowledgment of that love by being baptized, and by devoting himself thus to his service. But, lest Nicodemus should suppose that this was all that was meant, He added that it was necessary that Nicodemus should "be born of the Spirit" also. This was predicted of the Savior, that He should "baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

#### **MATTHEW 3:11**

**11 I INDEED BAPTIZE YOU WITH WATER UNTO REPENTANCE: BUT HE THAT COMETH AFTER ME IS MIGHTIER THAN I, WHOSE SHOES I AM NOT WORTHY TO BEAR: HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST, AND WITH FIRE:**

By this is clearly intended that the heart must be changed by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The love of sin must be abandoned. Man must repent of crime and turn to God. We must renounce all evil propensities. We must give ourselves to lives of prayer and holiness, of meekness, purity, and benevolence.

Jesus then stated that Nicodemus and us, as well, cannot enter into the kingdom of God. One cannot enter into the true church here, or into heaven in the world to come,

except in connection with a change of heart. That is accomplished only by the proper expression of that change in the ordinances appointed by the Saviour.

**JOHN 3:6**

**6 THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH IS FLESH; AND THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT IS SPIRIT.**

We, humans, are born of the flesh making it a necessity for this change. So here, the Savior directs the attention of Nicodemus to the natural condition of man. Jesus is evidently referring to the natural birth process.

Perhaps, also, He alludes to the question asked by Nicodemus as to whether a man could be born when he was old. Jesus tells him that if this could be, it would not answer any valuable purpose. Man would still have the same propensities and passions. Another change would therefore be indispensable. The child is of like flesh as the parents. As the parents are corrupt and sinful, so will be their descendants. And as the parents are wholly corrupt by nature, so their children will be the same. In fact, the word "flesh" here is used as meaning corrupt, defiled, sinful. This word in the Scriptures is often used to denote the sinful propensities and passions of our nature. It actually denotes that humans have their seat in the animal nature.

**GALATIANS 5:19-21**

**19 NOW THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE MANIFEST, WHICH ARE THESE; ADULTERY, FORNICATION, UNCLEANNESS, LASCIVIOUSNESS,**

**20 IDOLATRY, WITCHCRAFT, HATRED, VARIANCE, EMULATIONS, WRATH, STRIFE, SEDITIONS, HERESIES,**

**21 ENVYINGS, MURDERS, DRUNKENNESS, REVELLINGS, AND SUCH LIKE: OF THE WHICH I TELL YOU BEFORE, AS I HAVE ALSO TOLD YOU IN TIME PAST, THAT THEY WHICH DO SUCH THINGS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Look back to John 3. It says that whoever is born of the Spirit, that is, the of the Spirit of God or by the agency of the Holy Spirit, is spirit. This says that such a person becomes spiritual. He, like the spirit, is holy and pure.

At this point, let's review what we have learned regarding the process of accepting Jesus as Savior. We have learned:

1. That all men are by nature sinful.
2. That none are renewed but by the Spirit of God. If man did the work himself, it would be still carnal and impure.
3. That the effect of the new birth is to make men holy.
4. No man can have evidence that he is born again who is not holy.

**JOHN 3:7**

**7 MARVEL NOT THAT I SAID UNTO THEE, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.**

John is saying that we should not wonder why such a request is made. It is possible that Nicodemus in some way still expressed a doubt of the doctrine, and Jesus took occasion in a very striking manner to illustrate it.

**JOHN 3:8**

**8 THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH, AND THOU HEAREST THE SOUND THEREOF, BUT CANST NOT TELL WHENCE IT COMETH, AND WHITHER IT GOETH: SO IS EVERY ONE THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT.**

Nicodemus had objected to the doctrine because he did not understand how it could be. Jesus shows him that he ought not to reject it on that account, for he constantly believed other things that could not be seen with the eyes. It might appear incomprehensible, but it was to be judged of by its effects. As in this case of the wind, the effects were seen, the sound was heard, important changes were produced by it. Trees and clouds were moved, yet the wind is not seen, nor do we know whence it comes. So it is with the operations of the Spirit. We see the changes produced.

Sinful men become holy. The thoughtless become serious. The licentious become pure. The vicious, moral. The moral, religious. The prayerless, prayerful. The rebellious and obstinate, meek, and mild, and gentle. When we see such changes, we ought no more to doubt that they are produced by some cause - by some mighty agent. We do not question the wind when we see the trees moved or the waters of the ocean piled on heaps. We do not see the wind and we do not understand its operations, we just say the wind make the trees move and the water have waves. Therefore, we should accept that that God has power over the most hardened sinner to change him. We should accept that there may be great variety in the modes of the operation of the Spirit. The wind can be gentle or strong, so can the Spirit of God.

The wind moves where it “wills” or “pleases.” Everyone that is born of the Spirit is, in some respects, like the effects of the wind. You see it not, you cannot discern its laws, but you see its effects. You know therefore that it does exist and operate.

Nicodemus’ objection was, that he could not “see” this change, or perceive “how” it could be. Jesus tells him that he should not reject a doctrine merely because he could not understand it.

**JOHN 3:9**

**9 NICODEMUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?**

Nicodemus was still unwilling to admit the doctrine unless he understood it. We have here an instance of a man of rank stumbling at one of the plainest doctrines of religion. He was unwilling to admit a truth because he could not understand “how” it could be. He daily

admitted the truth of facts in other things which he could not fully comprehend. People will often admit facts on other subjects, and be greatly perplexed by similar facts in religion. This is one reason why such men, particularly, so often reject the truths of the gospel.

The Bible tells us that we must live by faith. We should not question how—we are to accept it as done. We are to enjoy the blessings which flow from the renewing. We are to receive the sanctifying grace of God.

**JOHN 3:10**

**10 JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, ART THOU A MASTER OF ISRAEL, AND KNOWEST NOT THESE THINGS?**

Jesus asked Nicodemus if he is a teacher, knowing that he was. As such a teacher he ought to have understood this doctrine. It was not new,” but was clearly taught in the Old Testament.

**PSALMS 51:10**

**10 CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART, O GOD; AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN ME.**

**PSALMS 51:16**

**16 FOR THOU DESIREST NOT SACRIFICE; ELSE WOULD I GIVE IT: THOU DELIGHTEST NOT IN BURNT OFFERING.**

**PSALMS 51:17**

**17 THE SACRIFICES OF GOD ARE A BROKEN SPIRIT: A BROKEN AND A CONTRITE HEART, O GOD, THOU WILT NOT DESPISE.**

**EZEKIEL 11:19**

**19 AND I WILL GIVE THEM ONE HEART, AND I WILL PUT A NEW SPIRIT WITHIN YOU; AND I WILL TAKE THE STONY HEART OUT OF THEIR FLESH, AND WILL GIVE THEM AN HEART OF FLESH:**

**EZEKIEL 36:26**

**26 A NEW HEART ALSO WILL I GIVE YOU, AND A NEW SPIRIT WILL I PUT WITHIN YOU: AND I WILL TAKE AWAY THE STONY HEART OUT OF YOUR FLESH, AND I WILL GIVE YOU AN HEART OF FLESH.**



When worldly-minded men are placed in offices of religion, it is no wonder that they are strangers to the plain truths of the Bible. There have been many, and there are still, who are in the ministry itself, to whom the plainest doctrines of the gospel are obscure. No man can understand the Bible fully unless he is a humble Christian. The easiest way to comprehend the truths of Christianity is to give the heart to God and live to his glory. A child may have more real knowledge of the way of salvation than many who are pretended masters and teachers of Israel.

#### **JOHN 3:11**

**11 VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, WE SPEAK THAT WE DO KNOW, AND TESTIFY THAT WE HAVE SEEN; AND YE RECEIVE NOT OUR WITNESS.**

Jesus here speaks in the plural number, including himself and those engaged with him in preaching the gospel. Nicodemus had earlier used the pronoun “we” as he referred to himself and those with whom he acted. Jesus in reply said, we, who are engaged in spreading the new doctrines about which you have come to inquire, speak what we know. We do not deliver doctrines which we do not practically understand. This is a positive affirmation of Jesus, which He had a right to make about His new doctrine. Jesus knew its truth, and those who came into His kingdom knew it also. Every minister of the gospel ought to be able to appeal to his own experience, and to say that he knows the truth which he is communicating to others.

Jesus testified that He had witnessed by His omniscient eye all the operations of the Spirit on the hearts of men. His ministers are qualified to bear witness to the truth and reality of the change. Every successful minister of the gospel is a witness of the saving power of the gospel.

Jesus stated that even though we give evidence of the truth of the new religion; though miracles are performed, and revelation is given that this doctrine came from heaven, yet you reject it. They reject it even though it is constantly producing the most desirable changes in the hearts and lives of men.

#### **JOHN 3:12**

**12 IF I HAVE TOLD YOU EARTHLY THINGS, AND YE BELIEVE NOT, HOW SHALL YE BELIEVE, IF I TELL YOU OF HEAVENLY THINGS?**

If I have told you about obvious spiritual things, that is the operations of the Holy Spirit, which have occurred on earth and you have not believed them, then there is no reason for me to tell you about heavenly things because they are not visible to the human eyes. The probability is great that you will not understand them. Heavenly things pertain to the government of God and His doings in the heavens. How can you believe the more profound and inscrutable things pertaining to the redemption of men if you cannot believe the things of the Spirit that are evident.

**JOHN 3:13**

**13 AND NO MAN HATH ASCENDED UP TO HEAVEN, BUT HE THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, EVEN THE SON OF MAN WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.**

Since no man has ascended into heavens and the returned to earth, no man, therefore, is qualified to speak of heavenly things. To speak of those things requires intimate acquaintance with them. It demands that we have seen them. Only He, Jesus, is qualified because He came down from heaven, having been there since its creation. Jesus, being equal with God, came down and took upon Himself our nature.

**JOHN 1:14**

**14 AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US, (AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER,) FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.**

**PHIL 2:6**

**6 WHO, BEING IN THE FORM OF GOD, THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD:**

**PHIL 2:7**

**7 BUT MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, AND TOOK UPON HIM THE FORM OF A SERVANT, AND WAS MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN:**

He was “sent” by the Father as “a man” because of the Father’s interest in man. The Father had and has an expressive regard for man. Jesus gave Himself the title “Son of Man.” It was He, Son of Man who was then bodily on earth conversing with Nicodemus, yet he declares that He is “at the same time” in heaven.

This can be understood only as referring to the fact that he had two natures that his “divine nature” was in heaven, and His “human nature” on earth. Since Jesus was “in” heaven - as his proper abode was there, He was fitted to speak of heavenly things, and to declare the will of God to man.

The truth about the deep things of God is not to be learned from “men.” All the light which we are to expect on those subjects is to be sought in the Scriptures. It is only Jesus and those inspired by Him who can speak of those things.

**JOHN 3:14**

**14 AND AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS, EVEN SO MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP:**

Jesus proceeds in this and the following verses to state the reason why he came into the world. He illustrates His design, and the efficacy of his coming, by a reference to the case of the brass serpent, recorded in Numbers 21:8-9. The people were bitten by flying fiery

serpents. There was no cure for the bite. Moses was directed to make an image of the serpent, and place it in sight of the people, that they might look on it and be healed. This is used by Jesus as strikingly illustrating his work. Men are sinners. There is no cure by human means for the maladies of the soul. As the people who were bitten might look on the image of the serpent and be healed, so may sinners look to the Savior and be cured of the moral maladies of our nature.

The brass snake was erected on a pole and placed on high, so that it might be seen by the people. Understand, the serpent was the reason for their dying. A brass serpent cannot move. By looking upon a non-effective cause of their dying, they were healed. Jesus became our sin. He died. By looking upon Him as sin which can no longer harm us, we are saved. By identifying with His death, we die out to sin. Jesus being lifted up was proper. It was necessary and indispensable, if men were to be saved.

#### **JOHN 3:15**

**5 THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.**

This shows the fulness and freeness of the gospel. It is open so that all may come and be saved just by putting confidence in Him as able and willing to save. All who feel that they are sinners, that they have no righteousness of their own, and are willing to look to Him as their only Savior, will be saved. They will no longer be in danger, by nature, of perishing.

All people are sinking down to the pains of hell because of sin. They are in danger of being “punished with everlasting destruction.” We are all in danger of being separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. But all who believe on Jesus shall be saved from this condemnation and be raised up to eternal life. There is salvation in no other. Salvation is here full and free for all who will come.

What was easier for a poor, wounded, dying Israelite, bitten by a poisonous serpent, than to look up to a brass serpent? So with the poor, lost, dying sinner. What could be more foolish than for such a wounded, dying man to refuse to look on remedy so easy and effectual? Nothing is more foolish than for a lost and dying sinner to “refuse” to look on God’s only Son, exalted on a cross to die for the sins of men, and able to save to the uttermost “all” who come to God by him.

#### **JOHN 3:16**

**16 FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.**

This does not mean that God approved the conduct of men. It does not mean that He had benevolent feelings toward them, or was “earnestly desirous” of their happiness. God hates

wickedness, but he still desires the Happiness of those who are sinful. “He hates the sin, but loves the sinner.” A parent may love his child and desire his welfare, and yet be strongly opposed to the conduct of that child.

God’s love is not for any particular part of the world, but for the whole human race that had rebelled and that deserved to die. It was for this reason that Jesus tasted “death for every man.” He “died for all.” “He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.”

God’s love is a free and unmerited gift. Man had no claim. It pleased God to give his Son into the hands of men to die in their stead. It was the mere movement of love; the expression of eternal compassion, and of a desire, that sinners should not perish forever. The giving of His only-begotten Son is the highest expression of love of which we can conceive. A parent who should give up his only son to die for others who are guilty shows higher love than could be manifested in any other way. It shows the depth of the love of God, that he was willing to give his only Son into the hands of sinful men that He might be slain, and thus redeem them from eternal sorrow.

**JOHN 3:17**

**17 FOR GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD; BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED.**

Not to judge, or pronounce sentence on mankind is why God could justify sending Jesus to this world. Sure, man deserved condemnation, and it would have been right to have pronounced it.

God was willing that there should be an offer of pardon, and the sentence of condemnation was delayed. Although Jesus did not come then to condemn mankind, yet the time is coming when He will return to judge the living and the dead.

**JOHN 3:18**

**18 HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED: BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY, BECAUSE HE HATH NOT BELIEVED IN THE NAME OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD.**

He that has confidence in Jesus; that relies on Him; that trusts to His merits and promises for salvation is not condemned. To believe on Him is to feel and act according to truth. Lost sinners are to go to Him and act toward Him as the Savior from sins. They are to rely on Him. They are to look to Him “only” for salvation. God pardons sin, and delivers us from deserved punishment, because we believe on Him.

Jesus died in our stead. He suffered for us. By his sufferings our sins are erased. God forgives. When a sinner believes on Jesus, he trusts in him as having died in his place. He believes that God accepted the offering which Christ made in our stead. The death on

the cross is considered by God as being an equivalent for our sufferings in hell. Therefore, there is no further condemnation.

All who do not believe, whether the gospel has come to them or not. All people by nature, is condemned already by conscience, by law, and in the judgment of God. God disapproves of their character and their sin. There is no condemnation so terrible as this - that God disapproves our conduct, and that He will express His disapproval. He will judge according to truth. Woe to that man whose conduct God cannot approve.

This word, "because" does not imply that the ground or reason of their condemnation is that they have not believed. There are millions of sinners who have never heard of Him. The meaning is this: There is but one way by which men can be freed from condemnation. All people without the gospel are condemned. They who do not believe are still under this condemnation, not having embraced the only way by which they can be delivered from it. The verse may be thus paraphrased: "All people are by nature condemned. There is but one way of being delivered from this state by believing on the Son of God. They who do not believe or remain in that state are still condemned, for they have not embraced the only way in which they can be freed from it. Nevertheless, those to whom the gospel comes greatly heightens their guilt and condemnation by rejecting the offers of mercy, and trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God. There are thousands going to eternity under this "double" condemnation:

#### **JOHN 3:19**

**19 AND THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION, THAT LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL.**

This is the cause of condemnation; or this is the reason why men are punished. The coming of light often denotes instruction, teaching, doctrine, as that by which we see clearly the path of duty. All the instruction that God gives us by conscience, reason, or revelation may thus be called light. Light is used especially to denote the Messiah or the Christ. He is often spoken of as "the light. It was doubtless this light to which Jesus had particular reference here.

The statement that men loved darkness is the emblem of ignorance, iniquity, error, superstition - whatever is opposite to truth and piety. Men are said to love darkness more than they do light when they are better pleased with error than truth, with sin than holiness, with Belial than Christ. Men who commit crime commonly choose to do it in the night, so as to escape detection. Men who are wicked prefer false doctrine and error to the truth. The Pharisees cloaked their crimes under the errors of their system. Amid their false doctrines and superstitions, they attempted to convince others that they had great zeal for God.

**JOHN 3:20**

**20 FOR EVERY ONE THAT DOETH EVIL HATETH THE LIGHT, NEITHER COMETH TO THE LIGHT, LEST HIS DEEDS SHOULD BE REPROVED.**

Every wicked person hates light. They choose to practice their deeds of wickedness in darkness. They are afraid of the light because they could be easily detected. Most crimes are committed in the night. So it is with the sinners working against God. They hate the gospel, for it condemns their conduct, and their conscience would trouble them if it were enlightened. Their deeds should be reprov'd, detected, and condemned.

The gospel is "to reprove" men. It convicts them of sin in order that it may afford consolation. The sinner must be convicted or convinced of sin. If it be not in this world, it will be in the next. There is no escape for him; and the only way to avoid condemnation in the world to come is to come humbly and acknowledge sin here, and seek for pardon.

**JOHN 3:21**

**21 BUT HE THAT DOETH TRUTH COMETH TO THE LIGHT, THAT HIS DEEDS MAY BE MADE MANIFEST, THAT THEY ARE WROUGHT IN GOD.**

He who does right, or he that is opposed to error and to evil, acts according to truth. On the other hand, the sinner believes a lie - that God will not punish, or that there is no God, or that there is no eternity and no hell. The Christian believes all these, and acts as if they were true. This is the difference between a Christian and a sinner. The Christian loves the truth, and seeks it more and more. By prayer and searching the Scriptures he endeavors to ascertain the truth, and yield his mind to it. It is made clear or plain to him. His deeds are performed in God. He searches for truth and light that he may have evidence that his actions are right. They are performed according to the will of God, or perhaps by the assistance of God, and are such as God will approve. The actions of good people are performed by the influence and aid of God. Of course, if they are performed by his aid, they are such as he will approve. Here is presented the character of a good man and a sincere Christian.

This is the close of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. Jesus gave him a discourse condensing the gospel, giving the most striking exhibition and illustration of truth, and representing especially the fundamental doctrine of regeneration and the evidence of the change. It is clear that the Savior regarded this as lying at the foundation of religion. Without it we cannot possibly be saved. And now it becomes everyone of us, as in the presence of God, and in view of the judgment-seat of Christ, solemnly to ask ourselves whether we have experienced this change?

Do you know by experience what it is to be born of that Spirit? If you do you are saved. If not, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and should give no sleep to your eyes until you have made peace with God.

**JOHN 3:22**

**AFTER THESE THINGS CAME JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES INTO THE LAND OF JUDAEA; AND THERE HE TARRIED WITH THEM, AND BAPTIZED.**

If Jesus baptized other people, this definitely required some physical action on the part of Jesus.

Look at John 4:2.

**JOHN 4:2**

**2 THOUGH JESUS HIMSELF BAPTIZED NOT, BUT HIS DISCIPLES,**

Jesus may have baptized only His disciples or He may have had the disciples to do all the baptizing. We do know that the church, as the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to practice water baptism.

John the Baptist testifies of Jesus.

**JOHN 3:23-36**

**23 AND JOHN ALSO WAS BAPTIZING IN AENON NEAR TO SALIM, BECAUSE THERE WAS MUCH WATER THERE: AND THEY CAME, AND WERE BAPTIZED.**

**24 FOR JOHN WAS NOT YET CAST INTO PRISON.**

**25 THEN THERE AROSE A QUESTION BETWEEN SOME OF JOHN'S DISCIPLES AND THE JEWS ABOUT PURIFYING.**

**26 AND THEY CAME UNTO JOHN, AND SAID UNTO HIM, RABBI, HE THAT WAS WITH THEE BEYOND JORDAN, TO WHOM THOU BAREST WITNESS, BEHOLD, THE SAME BAPTIZETH, AND ALL MEN COME TO HIM.**

**27 JOHN ANSWERED AND SAID, A MAN CAN RECEIVE NOTHING, EXCEPT IT BE GIVEN HIM FROM HEAVEN.**

**28 YE YOURSELVES BEAR ME WITNESS, THAT I SAID, I AM NOT THE CHRIST, BUT THAT I AM SENT BEFORE HIM.**

**29 HE THAT HATH THE BRIDE IS THE BRIDEGROOM: BUT THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM, WHICH STANDETH AND HEARETH HIM, REJOICETH GREATLY BECAUSE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE: THIS MY JOY THEREFORE IS FULFILLED.**

**30 HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE.**

**31 HE THAT COMETH FROM ABOVE IS ABOVE ALL: HE THAT IS OF THE EARTH IS EARTHLY, AND SPEAKETH OF THE EARTH: HE THAT COMETH FROM HEAVEN IS ABOVE ALL.**

**32 AND WHAT HE HATH SEEN AND HEARD, THAT HE TESTIFIETH; AND NO MAN RECEIVETH HIS TESTIMONY.**

**33 HE THAT HATH RECEIVED HIS TESTIMONY HATH SET TO HIS SEAL THAT GOD IS TRUE.**

**34 FOR HE WHOM GOD HATH SENT SPEAKETH THE WORDS OF GOD: FOR GOD GIVETH NOT THE SPIRIT BY MEASURE UNTO HIM.**

**35 THE FATHER LOVETH THE SON, AND HATH GIVEN ALL THINGS INTO HIS HAND.**

**36 HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON HATH EVERLASTING LIFE: AND HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT THE SON SHALL NOT SEE LIFE; BUT THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDETH ON HIM.**

**John contrasts his own role with that of Jesus, asserting the supremacy of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is true and should be accepted as such. He Himself is of divine origin, He taught from His own divine experience. He received the Spirit in fullness, with nothing held back. He alone has universal authority.**