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John 3: JESUS – GOD’s GIFT TO MANKIND

Introductory Statement: The Apostle John (son of Zebedee; believed to be a cousin of JESUS), often referred to as the one whom the LORD loves, writes this chapter about the preferred selection the FATHER GOD has made and shown toward HIS created order of things. HE has chosen to take pleasure in HIS creation and display it in the greatest action of love ever witnessed: giving HIS only SON to die so that HE could have an eternal relationship with man.

Objectives:

At the completion of this chapter’s study session we should be able to answer or better understand the following...

- *What is a Pharisee?*
- *What does it mean to be Born of Water and Born of the Spirit?*
- *Is the Kingdom of GOD different from the Kingdom of Heaven?*
- *What happened with Moses and bronze snake? Why is it significant?*
- *What makes JESUS, the Gift, so important?*

JESUS AND THE KINGDOM

- John 3:1-12
^{3:1}There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. ²After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. “Rabbi,” he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.”³ Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth,



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unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.”⁴ “What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother’s womb and be born again?”⁵ Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.⁶ Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.⁷ So don’t be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’⁸ The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can’t explain how people are born of the Spirit.”⁹ “How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked.¹⁰ Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things? ¹¹ I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won’t believe our testimony. ¹² But if you don’t believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

- Nicodemus’ Visit
 - Recognize JESUS as Teacher who worked miracles
 - Pharisee
 - Sect within Judaism which governed by scripture AND oral tradition
 - Part of the Sanhedrin ruling body (23 or 71 members)
 - Headed by High Priest
 - Pharisees and Sadducees (Sadducees had more seats)
 - Supreme Court



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| | Pharisees | Sadducees |
|------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Authority of Scripture | Equal weight (authority) to scripture and tradition “Tradition of the Elders” | Literal interpretation of scripture |
| Resurrection from Dead | Yes | No |
| Afterlife | Reward & Punishment | Soul Perishes at death |
| Supernatural | Believe in angels, demons, spirit realm | No spirit world |
| Social Status | Represent the common, working class | Affluent; Elite |
| Worldview | Religion “self-righteous & smug in delusion of pleasing God by keeping the law – or part of it | Political |
| Power/Influence | Synagogue (more influence as they were closer to the people) | Temple |



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- Pharisee (cont'd)
 - JESUS took issue with their authoritative stance on the Tradition of Elders
 - *Mark 7:3-9 – MEV*

^{7:3} For the Pharisees and all the Jews, unless they wash their hands ritually, do not eat, keeping the tradition of the elders.
⁴ When they come from the market, unless they wash, they do not eat. And there are many other traditions which they have received and observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and bronze vessels and dining couches.⁵ So the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”
⁶ He answered, “Well has Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. ⁷ In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ ⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” ⁹ And He said to them, “You full well reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition.
 - Had an encounter with John the Baptizer (Baptist) *John 1:24-28 NLT*

^{1:24} Then the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ asked him, “If you aren’t the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?” ²⁶ John told them, “I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. ²⁷ Though his ministry follows mine, I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal.” ²⁸ This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.



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- The Pharisees watched John's baptisms but did not participate
- The Pharisees believed that they were in right standing with GOD because of their heritage as Abraham's children
- JESUS speaks to the heart of the matter
 - You can't See the Kingdom of GOD unless you're born from above
 - You can't *Enter* unless you're born of water and of Spirit
 - The Kingdom of GOD is the realm where GOD reigns supreme, and JESUS CHRIST is King. GOD's authority is recognized, and HIS will obeyed.
 - Born of Water – 2 main schools of thought
 - JESUS is referring to Natural Birth
 - A child is developed in water and through water
 - John 3:6 (NLT) – ^{3:6} Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.
 - JESUS is referring to Baptism
 - Initial phase of being born from above is repentance from sins, symbolized by water baptism
 - John's baptism – ceremonial cleansing of repentance (Water)
 - JESUS' baptism – identification/submission to HIS LORDship (Spirit)



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JESUS AND LOVE

- Text: John 3:13-21 (NLT)
^{3:13} No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. ¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”
- No one before JESUS had ever gone to heaven and returned. Two individuals had gone on to heaven without dying.
- Genesis 5:21-23 (NLT) (Enoch)
²¹ When Enoch was 65 years old, he became the father of Methuselah. ²² After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³ Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴ walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.



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- 2 Kings 2:1-11 (NLT)

^{1:1}When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. ²And Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to Bethel. “But Elisha replied, “As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!” So they went down together to Bethel. ³The group of prophets from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, “Did you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?” “Of course I know,” Elisha answered. “But be quiet about it.” ⁴Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to Jericho.” But Elisha replied again, “As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you.” So they went on together to Jericho. ⁵Then the group of prophets from Jericho came to Elisha and asked him, “Did you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?” “Of course I know,” Elisha answered. “But be quiet about it.” ⁶Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to the Jordan River.” But again Elisha replied, “As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you.” So they went on together. ⁷Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River. ⁸Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground! ⁹When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away.” And Elisha replied, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor.” ¹⁰“You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah replied. “If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won’t.” ¹¹As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven.



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- JESUS' action of coming to earth was born out of Love
 - Revelation 13:8 (KJV)
And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb *slain from the foundation of the world.*
 - Though slain, HE would still be exalted to take on man's judgement and heal man's condition of sin unto death
 - Moses and the children of Israel were a foreshadow of what would happen with and through JESUS
 - Judgment came as a result of sin
 - Numbers 21:4-9 (NLT)
^{21:4} Then the people of Israel set out from Mount Hor, taking the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient with the long journey, ⁵ and they began to speak against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!"⁶ So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died. ⁷ Then the people came to Moses and cried out, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take away the snakes." So Moses prayed for the people.⁸ Then the LORD told him, "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!" ⁹ So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!



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- Isaiah 53.5 (MEV)
⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.

- John 12:30-33 (MEV)
³⁰ Jesus answered, “This voice came not for My sake, but for your sakes. ³¹ Now judgment is upon this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself.” ³³ He said this to signify by what kind of death He would die.

- Because of Love, JESUS took the judgement that was rightfully ours
 - Looking up to JESUS goes beyond physical sight. It involves Faith/Belief in HIM and HIS sacrifice to save us
 - GOD so desires relationship with us that HE sacrificed HIS only SON to redeem us into that relationship
 - HE didn’t send JESUS to condemn or judge you and me. Judgement had already been set
 - Romans 6:23
²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- GOD doesn’t want us to hide from HIM, but to run to HIM. We can’t cover our own sin. We must not be afraid that HE will expose our sin. HE wants to cover you and I in HIS light of truth



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- Genesis 3:7-10 (MEV)
^{3:7} Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.⁸ Then they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ The LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ He said, “I heard Your voice in the garden and was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself.”



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JESUS AND GREATNESS

- Text: John 3:22-36 (NLT)

²² Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.²³ At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism.²⁴ (This was before John was thrown into prison.)²⁵ A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew over ceremonial cleansing.²⁶ So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to him instead of coming to us." ²⁷ John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' ²⁹ It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. ³⁰ He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.³¹ "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. ³² He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! ³³ Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. ³⁴ For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. ³⁶ And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."
- John declares again that JESUS is the GIFT sent from above. HE is the Messiah. HE is sent by GOD



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- Only GOD gives the ability to receive anything
- JESUS is Greater than anyone else
- All Things are put in JESUS' hands
- JESUS is the only relief from GOD's judgment against sin

