

John 2:23-3:21 - Light In The Darkness

Notes

(Elementary & Bible English)
(PG in Oki - forewarned on Wed)
(Who am I?)

1) Where are we and what's going on? (5 Sections) An overview introduction. Normally we plod through the Scriptures, but since we're jumping in here in the Gospel of John let's start bird's eye view and work our way down contextually.

1) What is the broader context of this passage?

- The Gospel of John - 4th Gospel - c. 70-110 AD
- A. The Gospels of Luke and John, are broadly understood to be written in the chronological order of Jesus' ministry. Significantly, the Gospel of John serves as the backbone in the effort to understand the timeline of the ministry of Jesus because there are so many clearly defined time references that John makes as we go through his Gospel.
- B. We're picking up the narrative here at the first Passover *after* the inauguration of Jesus' official ministry with His baptism by John the Baptizer. There are explicit references in the Gospel of John to three Passovers with a possible fourth, the first one being this one here in John 2:12-25, possibly a reference in 5:1, depending on how you take 5:1 the 2nd/3rd is in 6:4, and finally, the culmination of Jesus' physical redemptive work and public ministry, the Passion Passover in & 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 18:39; & 19:14.

2) What is the context of the Gospel of John so far?

- The order of events in the narrative by John have so far been;
- 1. The introduction to the Gospel - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."(1:1) - that flashes back to the creation account in Genesis that leans on the common theological thread of light/darkness to **illuminate** to the audience that Jesus is the fullness of the revelation that was beginning to be revealed to us in Genesis. John 1:1-18
- 2. The introduction of John the Baptist - "Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?""(1:19) - and the juxtaposition & opposition between what we've seen about God and man's tendency toward self-righteousness that we see in the scribes and Pharisees John 1:19-39

3. God's interest in a relationship with us - "The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me."(1:43) and including us in His redemptive work by seeking and calling specific disciples. John 1:40-51
4. The introduction of God's power of creation and reformation over reality - "This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and ^{la}manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him."(2:11) - in the Word made flesh, Jesus, and His first miraculous sign. John 2:1-11
5. Most recently in the narrative we see; God's interest in maintaining His holiness and establishing Jesus' righteousness - "When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables." (2:15) - through judging some of those who are in wickedness in the Temple courts at the Passover Feast by flipping tables and driving the crooked money changers out of the temple courts with a whip. John 2:12-22

3) What is going on in the world around us as we immerse ourselves in the Word? If we imagine that we're jumping into the scene that's going on here in **John 3**, what would we feel, see, and smell?

- A. The Passover(What is it?) - First seen in Exodus 12 it was one of the three feasts that were mandatory for Jewish men to go to Jerusalem for (For more information on the feasts see Exodus 23:14-17, 34:23-24, Deuteronomy 16:16). In Jesus' day, as Passover would come around in the city of Jerusalem, the population would swell and the city would buzz with activity as familiar preparations and observances commenced. They would probably feel similar to how we feel around Christmas, the Fourth of July, New Years, or Golden Week depending on what traditions your family keeps. The same errands need to be run, familiar dishes are prepared, familiar smells take you back to years past, it's that same time of year, and tensions may be rising in the hustle and bustle with pesky family members faithfully making their appearance.
- B. Population Density - Josephus, 1st century Jewish/Roman historian estimates that upwards of 600,000 people would attend Passover in Jerusalem while more conservatively, modern historians working off of average population density estimations from archaeological excavations of ancient near-eastern cities place likely attendance numbers of Passover during Jesus' time to be closer to 120,000-150,000 people. Jerusalem in Jesus' day was only one single square kilometer, less than half of a square mile. MCAS Iwakuni is 5 square kilometers (1,300 acres/247.1=5.260913 KMsq)! Even on the conservative side, that would be like packing the entire population of Iwakuni onto the base! So like Friendship Day except it's an entire week and they don't leave so lodging, food, and specific Passover preparations have to be available.

(Ancient Jerusalem Population Reference)

<https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/estimating-the-population-of-ancient-jerusalem/>

4) What is the main thrust of the passage we're going over today?

- Coming to a Scriptural understanding of salvation

5) Why are we starting in [John 2:23](#)?

- A. Chapter and verse breaks are not original to the Scriptures - As I was studying it seemed as though the three verses previous to [Ch 3](#) helped to give us perspective about what was about to happen.
- B. Sometimes we can let the delineations between chapters and verses affect our understanding of passages and our understanding of biblical character's understanding of the Scriptures - Okay, what do I mean by that? [Matthew 27:46](#) - "eloi eloi lama sabachthani" Mark translates it and in English it means "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But why did Jesus say it? It's a traditional method of inducing mental flashback to specific sections in Scripture, in this case [Psalm 22](#). Meaning that anyone who had committed [Psalm 22](#) to memory would have immediately understood what Jesus was referencing. It's important to keep in mind that while we live and function in a world where illiteracy is hardly a problem we ever encounter, "it has been estimated that at least 90 percent of the Jewish population of Roman Palestine in the first centuries CE could merely write their own name or not write and read at all,^[7] or that the literacy rate was either about 3 percent^[8] or 7.7 percent.^[9] The exact literacy rate among male Jews in Roman Palestine was probably between 5 and 10 percent.^[9]". So in a world where few could read or write, the only way to commit Scripture to memory was by hearing and repetition.

[7] Hezser, Catherine "Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine", 2001, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism; 81. Tuebingen: Mohr-Siebeck, p. 503.

[8] ^ Bar-Ilan, M. "Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E." in S. Fishbane, S. Schoenfeld and A. Goldschlaeger (eds.), "Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society", II, New York: Ktav, 1992, pp. 46-61.

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Jump up to:

^{a b} [9] Wise, Michael Owen (2015). *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents*. Anchor Yale Reference Library. Yale University Press. p. 349. ISBN 978-0-300-21334-8.

- C. Keep in mind as we read the Scriptures - Chapter and verse breaks, while good and helpful for us to be able to reference and recite specific passages to one another, they still need to be understood in their proper context. **So in short,**

considering the context of [John 3:1-21](#), it seemed to me that [John 2:23-25](#) helps to be included in the setup to understanding Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus.

(Turn to [John 2:23](#) and read through to [John 3:21](#))

(Pray)

2) The Discerner of Hearts (3 sections) How is Jesus relating to people generally?

[John 2:23-25](#) - **23** Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. **24** But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, **25** and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

1) While at the Passover Jesus was working miracles

- A. There were many miracles that Jesus did that we do not know of - [John 21:25](#) - And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.
- B. The limited scope of the Scriptures is not meant to convey the entirety of everything that encompasses God - only what God wants us to be able to know, limited by our puny little brains. It's good for us to not be able to comprehend everything there is to know about God.

2) Many people believed in His name

- It seems that their belief in Him was based on a wrong understanding and possibly selfish motives
 - a. Like with the woman at the well in [John 4](#) who when told about living water that will make it so that she doesn't thirst again said, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."
 - b. The feeding of the 5000 in [John 6](#), after being filled with food to satisfaction, the people desired to kidnap Him to make Him king.
 - c. There is a common phenomenon with us that when we hear of the blessings of God, when we learn of His goodness and His ways we think to ourselves, "How can I get me a slice of that pie right now?!". We see it in money grubbing false teachers like Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland and the throngs of people that, like them, desire personal physical gain right now over even God himself. [James 4:3](#) - You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

3) But He knew the condition of their hearts so He didn't commit/entrust Himself to them

- Thank the Lord and praise God that the work wasn't finished there with just Earthly material blessing - That [Romans 11:33](#) rings so clear and true when it says, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!".
[1 Samuel 16:7](#) - But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see as man sees*; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

3) Nicodemus (4 Sections) Who is he?

[John 3:1-2a](#) - **1** There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **2** This man came to Jesus by night

1) What was a Pharisee?

- "The most important of the three were the Pharisees because they are the spiritual fathers of modern [Judaism](#). *Their main distinguishing characteristic was a belief in an Oral Law that God gave to Moses at Sinai along with the Torah.*"

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pharisees-sadducees-and-essenes>

- Meaning that they held the traditions of their spiritual fathers to be equal to if not greater than the Written Law given to Moses because they believed that God also granted them the authoritative ability to expound on the written scriptures to "clarify" what the Written Law meant and apply it into everyday life.
- Meaning that they believed they had the authority to have the final say on what the Scriptures actually said and how we are to understand them.

[Matthew 19:3](#) - **3** The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just any reason*?"

- There is an underlying assumption in this question that rests on a mountain of argumentation that stems from different rabbis that go back and forth about what conditions are needed before divorcing your wife.

(Here is the historical basis for the question that Jesus is being asked)

The Jewish rabbi [Shammai](#) and his school said it meant adultery. Only adultery was a legitimate reason for divorce. The Jewish rabbi [Hillel](#) and his school said that uncleanness could refer to any reason why a wife lost favor with her husband.

<https://thebibleisinmyblood.wordpress.com/tag/rabbis-shammai-and-hillel-on-divorce/>

This is the modern Jewish take on divorce

“A Jewish divorce is similar to many present day legal transactions. A divorce contract is drawn up under rabbinical supervision and signed by witnesses. The husband and wife are not subject to personal questions. If they choose to, they need not be present together. A Jewish divorce usually takes an hour or two, during which time the *get* is prepared and executed. The parties are expected to provide proof of identification, and will be asked some formal questions to make it clear that the *get* is being executed on their behalf without coercion. Costs may vary in different cases, but, on the average, a *get* costs \$350.”

get - Jewish religious legal document certifying a divorce
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/divorce-in-judaism>

2) What is the significance of “a ruler of the Jews”?

- A. This is understood to be a further explanation of Nicodemus’ position - Within the political and religious system in Jerusalem, most likely a part of the Great Sanhedrin, which functioned kind of like our Supreme Court and consisted of 71 of the most prominent and accomplished elders within Judaism and presided daily within the temple complex in Jerusalem. There were local Sanhedrins that presided over each town within the Land of Israel. As Josephus attests in the earliest record that we have of a Sanhedrin, he says that it was actually convened by Rome in 57 BC.
- B. Nicodemus’ position - Seen in [John 7:50-51](#) signifies that Nicodemus was a part of the Great Sanhedrin and because of it he was a powerful, prominent, respected, recognisable, and well learned man.
- C. The religious leaders of the day - And those directly associated were of the elite ruling class. Not only were they religiously in charge and eager to have their outward holiness seen and approved of by men as we see in [Matthew 6 & 23](#), but they were also politically powerful and unafraid to wield their influence as we see in their many confrontations with John the Baptizer, Jesus, and His disciples throughout the Gospels. *I can’t help but imagine, as well, that as the population started to swell within Jerusalem, many of the religious leaders likely personally swelled just the same.*
- D. There were also other sects - Within Judaism at the time and since then like the Sadducees, Essenes, Karaites, but for the sake of our section and not getting too lost in the weeds we’ll focus on the Pharisees.

[Matthew 23:1-13](#) - Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, **2** saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. **3** Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and

do not do. **4** For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. **5** But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. **6** They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, **7** greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' **8** But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. **9** Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. **10** And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. **11** But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. **12** And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

(Here is a little flavor of the "heavy burdens" that Jesus was talking about in [Matthew 23:4](#). This is the first paragraph of the first chapter of the rules that are supposed to be followed on the Sabbath. Imagine the burden that it is to feel the need to be subjected to even this small portion and be immensely grateful that Jesus reduced it down to two commandments to fulfill all of the Law and Prophets - Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. What a blessing it is to be freed into living for the love of God by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit!!)

MISHNA I.: There are two acts constituting transfer ¹ of movable things (over the dividing line of adjoining premises, based on biblical statutes). The two acts are, however, increased to four on the inside and to a like amount on the outside of the premises (by the addition of rabbinical statutes). How so? A mendicant stands outside and the master of a house inside. The mendicant passes his hand into the house (through a window or door) and puts something into the hand of the master, or he takes something out of the master's hand and draws it back (toward him). In such a case the mendicant is guilty (of transfer) and the master of the house is free. If the master of the house passes his hand outside and puts a thing into the hand of the mendicant, or takes something out of the mendicant's hand and brings it into the house, the master of the house is culpable and the mendicant is free. ² If the mendicant extends his hand into the house and the master takes something out of it, or puts something into it which is drawn to the outside by the mendicant, they are both free. If the master of the house extends his hand outside and the mendicant takes something out of it, or puts something into it which is drawn to the inside by the master, they are both free.

Mendicant - One who practices mendicancy and relies chiefly or exclusively on alms to survive, i.e. a hobo or beggar

3) Where else do we find him?

1. Here [John 3:1-21](#) - Coming to ask Jesus about who He is and what He's doing
2. [John 7:45-52](#) - Coming to Jesus' defense before the Sanhedrin - likely expecting Jesus to tear up their accusations Himself once He appears before the Sanhedrin
3. [John 19:39](#) - Coming to collect and prepare Jesus' body for burial

4) Why would he be coming to Jesus by night?

- A. Literary device - coloring the encounter
- B. Positional and political humiliation - lets not color Ol' Nico too darkly with accusations. He was likely subjected to a mountain of conflict on top of the objections that his contemporary Pharisees had. He was real-time working to unlearn and relearn the Truth and Light. Jesus' attitude and response to Nicodemus should inform our attitude towards him and others who are subjected to much falsehoods. It's possible for us to take down ideas while leaving the person that they're rooted in still standing in good condition. Jesus ALWAYS applies the right amount of pressure.

4) Discourse (11 Sections) The discussion begins.

[John 3:2b-12](#)

1) What is the significance of the admission that Nicodemus makes to Jesus in v. 2?

"Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

- A. First, he calls Him Rabbi, recognising, but not yet fully understanding, Jesus' authority to expound on the Scriptures.
- B. Second, he recognises that the miracles Jesus is performing only come from God.
- C. Because of the second point, he is trying to reconcile His current understanding of the Scriptures with the reality of who Jesus is and what He is doing, but currently Nicodemus hasn't fully come to fully understand who Jesus is.

2) What kind of a reply is that in v.3? Is that something that Jesus did regularly?

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- A. Jesus' reply is NOT a direct response to what Nicodemus said!
- B. Jesus did this often throughout the gospels like with "The Rich Young Ruler" in [Mark 10:17-27](#), [Matthew 19:16-22](#), & [Luke 18:18-23](#). He cuts to the heart of the question and the person asking.
- C. Jesus is going to lead Nicodemus through what's necessary for him to understand who Jesus is, why He has come into the world, and how He is going to accomplish what He has been sent by the Father to do.

3) Can we know if Nicodemus is being sincere in his response to Jesus in v.4?

"Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

- Not completely, it's not our job to be the discerners of hearts, but the signs point to "Yes."
- A. Even though Nicodemus' position in the Sanhedrin would technically place him in authority over someone that would be seen as lowly, he comes in humility to seek answers from Jesus.
- B. He defends Jesus to the Sanhedrin in [John 7](#)
- C. He cares for Jesus' broken body after the crucifixion in [John 19](#)

4) How easy is it to have an earthly mindset?

- A. Super - We're finite creatures in the sense that we have a beginning and also have a very limited sense of perception beyond what we can experience with our 5 senses. All we know and all we've seen has been from the perspective of inside our own head and it's really hard for us to see outside of ourselves.
- B. That's why it's necessary for us - To regularly do the things that help us to see from the perspective of God. Time in the Word, prayer, fellowship with believers, communion with God, communion itself, etc. these things are meant to do as Paul says in [Romans 12:1-2](#) - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

5) Is Jesus talking about baptism in v.5?

"Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

- Maybe, there are a few different interpretations that different people have that may be legitimate.
- A. Linguistic Context - Double meanings - The word that is used here in **v.5** “born of water and the spirit” can also be understood as, “born of water and wind” (the same Greek word, πνεύματος [pneumatosis], may be translated either “spirit/Spirit” or “wind”). I think that gives greater understanding and depth to **v.8** when Jesus goes a bit into using the wind and its effects as a parallel for how the Spirit works.
- B. Water Baptism - Personally, I see the view of Jesus talking about water baptism to be the least likely here in the context, but it is one view.
- C. Natural Birth - The view that Jesus is saying that one must be born of “water” referencing the woman’s water breaking during physical birth. This is the view that I have had up until studying this passage more deeply.
- D. Callback - Being born of water as a reference to the scriptural themes of water being the cleansing and delivery into a new work at different times like The Flood, crossing the Red Sea, Crossing the Jordan and now would be cleansing and delivering into a new age of the Church
- E. Water of the Word - Water as a reference to the cleansing and regeneration of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit
- F. Conclusion - I don’t think it’s necessary to be completely confined to strictly one meaning and sometimes in Scripture there are double applications, but what is important is to make sure that we bring it back to the context of the passage and Scripture more broadly. I don’t intend to shy away from taking a firm stance on the passage, but rather I prefer to equip you to understand a more complete context of a passage that may have some room to wiggle in its understanding. I think we should avoid taking unwavering theological stances on single passages that don’t truly and clearly allow for such a strong stance.

Now let’s zoom back out from **v.5** to consider Jesus’ whole response to Nicodemus’ question.

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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** Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

6) What does it mean to be “born again”?

- Born from the Spirit or literally translated “born from above” - Spiritual rebirth and regeneration by God through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross so that we can live in His glory in closeness and communion with Him.

7) Is there any OT precedent to the idea of needing to be born again?

- Isaiah 56:1-8 - The outsider being joined to the Lord, given a new name, and considered to be of the household of God - *Interestingly*, this is the passage that is referenced in the other accounts of a (possibly the other) Temple cleansing.
- Psalms 87 - Outsiders born in other lands being considered by the Lord to be born in His land among His people.

8) What does v.8 mean and how does it apply to what Jesus is telling Nicodemus?

- The word for spirit and wind all through this passage are the same and the readers/hearers would’ve understood the double application of the Spirit also being referred to wind and also being connected similarly to breath, breathe, blow, and life.
Acts 2:2 - The Spirit descending on the Apostles
Ezekiel 37:9-14 - Dry bones
John 20:22 - Jesus breathing on the Disciples
Genesis 2:7 - Life breathed into Adam
Job 33:4 - The Spirit of God has made me,
 And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.
- There is a connection being made here that I think is referring to the intangible nature of the Holy Spirit and how He works in the world and the lives of people. You can’t put your hands on what’s going on, but you can see the effects.

9) Jesus speaks so plainly and rebukes Nicodemus for not knowing about the things that Jesus is saying, but is Nicodemus justified in being flabbergasted?

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” **10** Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?”

- Kind of, but not really. A common action that we see from Jesus is combating false teaching with references directly from Scripture. This was flabbergasting to the people so steeped in the traditions of their fathers that cloud their ability to understand Scripture. Cut through the extra biblical beliefs with undiluted biblical truth.

10) Who is the “We” Jesus is referring to in v.11?

11 “Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.”

- The KJV, NKJV, DBY, and ASV are the only commonly used bibles that capitalize the “We” here in this verse. Capitalization of proper nouns in English translations is always a subjective judgment made by the translators. Some instances have more justification than others, but all ancient Greek manuscripts have no punctuation, capitalization, or spacing so choosing when to do so in English is a matter of interpreting the author’s intentions.
- “We speak” - The grammar indicates that it is a plural verb so it could be referring to the Trinity or it could be referring to Jesus and the prophets or it could be Jesus and the disciples or He could be referring to all of them and the Scriptures. Understanding who Jesus is referring to when He says “We” doesn’t affect our theology, but it does speak volumes about the condition of the heart of man that we have had so many witnesses to the truth and still refuse to come to the full knowledge of the Truth in God. Hebrews 3:7-15 - If you are hearing God’s voice don’t harden your heart. **You don’t know when your last chance to listen to Him will be.**

11) V.11&12 “you”, “you people”, & “y’all”

12 “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”

- Similarly - the grammar of the text in v.12 seems to indicate that when Jesus says “you” to Nicodemus that He is using it in the general sense of “you” like when we say “y’all” or “you people” and that’s reflected in the translation of the NASB20 and the NET.

12) What “earthly things” has Jesus told Nicodemus in v.12?

- His ministry and teachings - If understood to mean “you” generally as in all the people of Israel, then Jesus could be referring to all of the teaching that He has been doing so far in His ministry. It seems that even in saying this Jesus isn’t writing off Nicodemus or His chosen people, but rather it’s in an effort to call the rampant spiritual blindness to the forefront so that it can be dealt with and so that they can be made to see clearly as He demonstrated physically with his many healings!
- Applied to us - He desires to do just the same with us in our time! We just have to be willing to submit ourselves and our views to His perspective and trust what He says.

5) Heavenly Monologue (5 Sections) Jesus shifts from discussion to monologue.

John 3:13-17 - **13** No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who 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 whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

1) Who is the Son of Man and where do we see Him in Scripture?

- Throughout the OT “son of man” and “son of humankind” are used to reference the frailty of humanity (Num 23:19; Job 16:21; 25:6; 35:8; Pss 8:4; 80:17; 146:3; Isa 51:12; 56:2; Jer 49:18, 33; 50:40; 51:43) and the phrase has it’s turning point in Daniel 7:13-14(NLT) when he says that **13** As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. **14** He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed. From then on the meaning of “son of man” takes a turn and becomes a messianic reference that then is used as Jesus’ preferred method of referring to Himself and His Deity.

2) What is the serpent in the wilderness all about?

- Nehushtan (Bronze Thing)

Numbers 21:4-9 - **4** Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. **5** And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.” **6** So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

2 Kings 18:4 - 4 He (Hezekiah) removed the high places and broke the *sacred* pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

- I was always a little uncomfortable with the reference to the bronze serpent in the wilderness as a comparison to Jesus. It was the same with the title Son of Man. If it were anyone other than Jesus Himself making these references and claiming these titles I probably would have had a much harder time digesting them, but let's think for a moment about what that represents and what it means for us. What is the prominent biblical imagery that comes to mind when we think of a serpent? The serpent in the Garden of Eden. So in order for the fall, sin, death, and the serpent to be defeated, Jesus had to take our place and take the punishment that we deserve for the choices that we have made to sin and chase after the flesh. In order to take our place He, God Almighty in the Son, had to come in our likeness and our form to live the perfect life that we never could and give the sacrifice that we never could and He intentionally chose to come down and be among the worst that we have to offer in order to accomplish victory for us and lift us up to where He is.

3) What does it take to have eternal life?

- Look to Christ. Believe in Christ. All it took was to look to the serpent to be saved from death and Jesus connects that to Himself and reiterates that all it takes is to believe in Him to have eternal life.

4) What about the connection being made between the Son of Man and the Son of God

- The Old Testament also contains a figure who God claims as His own son in:
Psalms 2:7 - "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."
Psalms 2:11-12 - "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way,"
Proverbs 30:4 - Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has bound the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is His name, and what is His Son's name,
If you know?
Isaiah 9:6-7 - For unto us a Child is born,

Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7

Of the increase of *His* government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Hosea 11:1 - "When Israel was a child, I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.

- Jesus connects these two figures in the OT, but to Nicodemus He doesn't explicitly claim them to be about Himself. As an audience to the Gospel, we're told in the next passage in John 3:22-36 by John the Baptist, but as far as we know in this passage it is not yet revealed to Nicodemus that Jesus is talking about Himself.

5) How does this passage set us up for the punchline?

- It emphasizes the lengths that God has gone to in order to redeem us from sin and death so that we fully understand just how easy God has made it for us. - We are accountable to God for what we know and so once we come to understand the length that God has gone for us, it really serves to emphasize the separation that God is trying to cleave between us and the things that destroy us. The addictions, the self-obsessions, the self-righteousness, the abuse of others for personal gain, the grudges and unforgiveness we harbor, the gossip we revel in, the pleasure we take in the misfortune of people we think are bad by our own standards.

6) Punchline (1 Section)

John 3:18-21 - "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. **19** And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **20** For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be

exposed. **21** But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

1) How do you respond?

- Are you going to revel in the darkness or are you going to come to the light?
- Are you going to go back to the flesh or are you going to “do the truth”?
- Are you going to love the world and the things of the world or are you going to run to Jesus and live in the peace and joy that only comes from a relationship with God the Father, Christ the Son, indwelt by the Holy Spirit?
- Are you looking to Jesus?

Lord,

Help us to desire to come to the light and be washed clean daily by You and Your Holy Word. Help us Lord to see the world and the people around us with Your eyes and Your heart. We thank you Lord and we praise You for Your patience and Your gentleness with us. We praise You that You have gone to such great lengths to restore us and redeem us. We need You Lord. We desire You Lord. We are humbled by You Lord. We love You Lord.

Amen