

Sunday School- March 25, 2012

A NEW LIFE

for God so loved the world that
He gave his one and only son,

JOHN 3:16

that whoever believes in him
shall not perish, but have eternal life

Unifying Topic: GOD'S WORD SAVES

Lesson Text

I. Jesus Demonstrates God's Unconditional Love (John 3:11-15)

III. The Purpose Of The Messiah Is Salvation Not Condemnation (John 3:16-21)

The Main Thought: 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. (John 3:16, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People understand that their behavior has consequences. How can we be saved from the consequences of our poor choices? The writer of John gives assurance that, regardless of our choices, God lives us and sent Jesus so the world might be restored to a right relationship with God.

Lesson Aim: To examine the impact Christ's sacrifice had on all humanity.

Life aim: To exercise God's unconditional love in our daily relationships.

3:11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

3:16 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.

3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

3:18 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.

3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

3:20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

SYNOPSIS:

CHAPTER 2:13-25— The Jews' Passover was at hand. The Law required every male Jew twelve years old and above to attend the Passover. Jesus went up to Jerusalem, the political and religious capital of Israel. And because of its geographical elevation, the Jews always talked about going up to Jerusalem. Jesus has found in the court of the Gentiles, a terrible scene. The Sanhedrin were permitting the selling of sacrificial animals at exorbitant prices and permitting the changing of foreign currency into Jewish money, which was required for the temple tax. Jesus makes a whip and drives out both the animals and wicked merchants. He overturns the tables and scatters the coins across the floor. He commands the dove owners to get them out of there and says to them: "*make not my Father's house an house of merchandise*" (a marketplace, a sales shop). Again, the failure of Judaism is emphasized. The disciples recall that this is the fulfillment of prophecy: "*The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*" (Ps.69:9a RSV) -- "*has burned me up, has seized hold of me and devoured me and made me to act.*" The Jews who had been shocked by the action of Jesus demanded a sign to substantiate His authority and conduct. Jesus answers with a deep spiritual truth: "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" Jesus was referring to the destruction of His body and to His resurrection from the dead. The physical Temple was a type of Christ's body; and when the body of Christ is destroyed, the purpose and existence of the Jewish Temple were also destroyed. Consequently, the destruction of His body also meant the destruction of the Temple. The Jews take Jesus literally and ignore the spiritual and true meaning of the statement. Even the disciples did not fully understand until He was risen from the dead. Then they believed the scripture and the Word which Jesus had said. Jesus had remained in Jerusalem for the Passover and many believed in His name especially when they saw the miracles. However, their faith was not in the giver, but in the gift; and He didn't commit Himself to them because He knew all men and what was in them (their heart).

CHAPTER 3:1-10 — In these opening verses, Nicodemus is introduced as a man of the Pharisees and a ruler of the Jews. The Pharisees were the religious separatists and the rulers (*Gr archōn*) who predominately formed the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night so that he could personally talk with Christ and not be recognized. He and the other religious leaders were convinced that Christ was a teacher come from God because of the miracles. Jesus then makes a statement about the new birth, saying "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" The word "*again*" (*Gr anōthen*), means "*from above.*" "*Unless a person is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" The kingdom of God is His rule over His people and refers to everlasting life. Jesus had given a spiritual illustration; however, Nicodemus has a question: "*How can a man be born when he is old?*" His question revealed that he didn't

grasp the spiritual meaning of the Lord's statement. Jesus' answer: "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" To be a part of God's kingdom, one must be born of water and of the Spirit. Jesus continues to contrast physical birth and spiritual birth. The flesh produces flesh while the Spirit produces that which is spiritual. And Jesus says, "*do not be amazed or shocked by what I say*"; "*Marvel not... Ye must be born again*" meaning, it's absolutely necessary!

The illustration Jesus now gives is of a natural and spiritual view, looking at the wind. The Spirit of God works just like the wind. We may not know how the wind works, but we can see the effects of it. It's the same with the Spirit. Nicodemus' heart was touched but still didn't quite understand. He said, "*How can these things be?*" He was a Jewish teacher of the Bible who knew the Old Testament thoroughly, but didn't know what it said about the Messiah, who had been prophesied all through the Old Testament. Knowledge is not salvation. Knowing about something and knowing something are two different things and Nicodemus wanted to know. Jesus answered Nicodemus by bringing attention to himself as a teacher of the Jews, meaning he spent his whole lifetime reading and teaching, being a master of the Old Testament, and still not understand who Jesus is. Is that some of us today?

LESSON:

John 3:11-15 Jesus Demonstrates God's Unconditional Love

3:11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. —

We're always speaking, but do we really know Jesus. Three elements involved:

1. We speak what we do know
2. We testify what we've seen
3. Yet you don't receive our witness

Who is Jesus referring to: "*We*."? ¹Jesus here speaks in the plural number, including Himself and those engaged with Him in preaching the gospel. Nicodemus had said in John 3:2, "*we know that thou art*," etc., including himself and those with whom he acted. Jesus in reply says, "*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. He knew its truth, and those who came into His kingdom knew it also. We learn here:

1. That the Pharisees taught doctrines which they did not practically understand. They taught much truth Matthew 23:2, but they were deplorably ignorant of the plainest matters in their practical application.
2. 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.
3. Every Sunday school teacher should be able to say, '*I know what I am communicating; I have experienced what is meant by the new birth, and the love of God, and the religion which I am teaching.*' Hallelujah!

3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? — Jesus has already given him things which happen on the earth to understand and he didn't believe. The earthly things were about wind, and birth, and water; those things which take place in a person's life on earth. Jesus then asks, how can I reveal to you (plural) deeper spiritual truths of the heavenly things (the things which are under the invisible control of God)?

3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. — Firsthand knowledge must come from the Son of man. That's why Jesus says, "...no man hath ascended up to heaven, because He's the only one who has come down from heaven and then ascended up to heaven. His origin was out of heaven, out of the spiritual world and dimension of being even as the Son of man born of a virgin originated in heaven. Therefore, Jesus is the only one who truly understands the heavenly. ²The connection between this verse and the preceding one seems to be as follows. The "*heavenly things*" to which the Lord had referred had not till then been clearly revealed to Nicodemus. To ascend to heaven, and penetrate the hidden counsels of God, was an utter impossibility to fallen man. Only the Son, whose native residence was heaven, was qualified to reveal heavenly things. ³No man hath attained to the certain knowledge of God and heavenly things as Christ has. It is not for us to send to heaven for instructions; we must wait to receive what instructions Heaven will send to us. Jesus came down and He is timeless.

3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: — Jesus had been speaking to Nicodemus about the imperative necessity of the new birth. By nature man is dead in trespasses and sins, and in order to obtain life he must be born again. Now, Jesus comes with a scriptural illustration of Moses (Numbers 21:5-9). In the camp in the wilderness, people of Israel were being bitten by hundreds of poisonous snakes and were dying when they began to speak against God and Moses. God didn't put up with this; He sent fiery serpents among the people. The people repented and God commanded Moses to make a brass serpent, so that when those bitten looked to that serpent,

¹ <http://barnes.biblecommenter.com/john/3.htm>

² http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/John/john_09.htm

³ <http://www.studyight.org/com/mhc-com/view.cgi?book=joh&chapter=003>

they would be healed. Well, likewise the Son of man must be lifted up.

1. Men today are dying from the poison of the serpent, the deadly poison of sin.
2. Today man is healed by looking upon the Son of Man who has been lifted up upon the cross, thereby, (Jesus) destroying the works of the devil.
3. Jesus became a curse for man.

This verse's reference of Christ being lifted up refers to Him on the Cross, that He might save man that has been bitten by the serpent of sin, as they believe by faith. The bronze serpent was later destroyed by King Hezekiah; it had become an object of worship (II Kgs.18:4). And in the New Testament, in this verse, this event is used as an illustration of salvation by Jesus; and in ICor.10:9, as a warning by Paul the apostle.

3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. — Furthermore, the man who believes in the Son of Man being lifted up will not perish but will have eternal life. Thus every man must believe the message of Christ in order to be healed, that is, be born again.

John 3:16-21 The Purpose Of The Messiah Is Salvation Not Condemnation

3:16 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. —

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| 1. The source of love—God (v16). | 1. The fact: God gave (v16). |
| 2. The extent of love—the world (v17). | 2. The evidence: God gave (v16). |
| 3. The sacrifice of love—He gave his only begotten Son (v16). | 3. The purpose: to save (v16). |
| 4. The result of love—whosoever believeth in him should not perish (v16). | 4. The proof: God sent His Son (the Incarnation) (v17). |
| | 5. The means: through Him (Jesus) (v17). |

For God so loved the world—The Jews believed God loved the religious (the true Jew) and hated the non-religious (the Gentiles). God loves every man, not just the religious and the good. God is the source of this love and His love goes beyond any type of human love we know; not because we deserved it, but because we didn't deserve it. *"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom.5:8)*. It is an agape love that exceeds our ability to love another. He loves to perfection; loves to the ultimate degree, and it extends to the entire world.

...that he gave his only begotten Son—God gave His only begotten Son to the world and His Son was to die for the world. It cost God dearly to give His Son. The sacrifice of love was a great cost. God took the initiative to save man; man didn't seek to save himself.

1. He gave up His Son to be separated from Him, allowing Him to leave His presence, majesty, glory, worship and honor in heaven.
2. He gave up His Son to be separated from Him allowing Jesus to come to earth...

Into a world that was...

fallen
depraved
wicked
rebellious
revolting
apostate

Into a world full of...

darkness selfishness
hostility greed
bitterness immorality
wrath barriers
anger sin
war shame

3. He gave up His Son to be separated from him, allowing Jesus to die for the sins of men.

The purpose of God's love is to save man;

- To save man from perishing.
- To save man to eternal life.
- To save man through belief.

...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish—What are we to believe? Believe...

- that whoever personally trust in Him will not perish in eternal judgment.
- that Jesus came to be our Way, Truth, and Life needed for right relationship with the Father.
- that Jesus came that He might destroy the works of the devil by going to the cross to die for our sins.
- that He is God Incarnate!

There is no way to perish (*separated from God*) if you are in this right standing with God; therefore, you'll have everlasting life in His presence.

3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. —The Jews understood that the Messiah would come to condemn the Gentiles (Amos 5:18-20). Jesus told Nicodemus that God's plan was to save the (entire) world. We the world, deserve to be judged and condemned, but Jesus was not sent to condemn or judge us. We were guilty both of breaking God's law and of coming short of God's glory. However, Jesus was sent to save us from perishing and save us to eternal life. The salvation we are to receive is only through Him.

3:18 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. —God sent His Son into the world to save the world, but this does not mean that everyone is automatically saved. The key word is "*believe*." The believer must believe on Jesus Christ and have committed his life to Him. The believer believes that Christ died for his sins in his place, as his substitute, paying the penalty for his sins (which was death). Now, on the other hand, the unbeliever is condemned already because he hasn't believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*" Acts 4:12 NIV. When is the unbelieving man condemned? – Already, right now. It is not that he is to be condemned; he is already condemned. Why is he condemned already? – There are those that ⁴prefer to continue to sin. They do not want to change what they do. So they do not want to know Jesus. They reject Him and they reject the Christian message.

3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. —The Light came into the world to give light to men, to enable men to walk out of the darkness of a sinful and perishing world. The Light came to show men the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Any man who does not turn and walk in the Light is naturally in the dark. Christ as the Light is rejected by a dark world because their deeds were evil.

3:20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. —

- The unbeliever loves his sin and does not want to turn and face the conviction of the Light.
- The unbeliever is full of pride.
- The unbeliever is enslaved, in bondage to sin and gripped by the darkness; he has been in darkness so long that he does not have the strength to break the enslavement.
- The unbeliever fears the shame, embarrassment, and consequence of his sin; he is uncomfortable in the Light.

Therefore, those that reject the Light also hate that Light, for their deeds are reproved and exposed. God's Word would express disapproval of them.

3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. —Those that carry out truth gravitate toward the Light to show that his works are wrought in God. The word "*wrought*" (*cirgasmena*) means to work, produce, perform, originate, manufacture, and to fashion from something. The man that comes to the Light escapes condemnation for when his deeds are evident and visible, they are produced, performed, and originate in God.

SUMMARY:

Nicodemus didn't understand the things Jesus was talking about, for Jesus spoke for Himself and those that knew these things and testified of the things they saw because they were all apart of this. However, Nicodemus couldn't receive their witness. As Jesus conveyed earthly things to Nicodemus, in which he failed to understand, Jesus knew he wouldn't believe heavenly things. Well Jesus explains to him that no one, yes no one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man which is in heaven. This that had occurred in the wilderness when Moses lifted up the brass serpent for the people to see and believe, so is it necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up for everyone to look on Him and believe, trust in, and receive the Salvation He is extending. For when you believe because you took action to receive Him, you will not perish but have eternal life.

God is the source of love and He extends it to the whole world. His sacrifice of love gave us His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. There He says it again if you didn't get it the first time! God is the initiator, He so loved the world and He sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world but that through believing in Him you might be saved. The guarantee is believing; for if you are an unbeliever you're already condemned because of unbelief. Doesn't that sound like those in the wilderness? For there is none other name to believe in but the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The reason for condemnation is that Light has come into the world but man ran from the Light for he loved darkness more than Light. They love their way of doing things; they loved their evil deeds more than pleasing or loving God. When light comes in they will hate the Light because the Light will expose them, will reprove them, and it would be very painful for them to enter in. However those that love truth, welcomes the Light of God. "*In him was life; and the life was the light of men*" Jh. 1:3. Just as Light exposes man's evil deeds it also manifests man's good deeds for good deeds originate in God.

APPLICATION:

God has revealed Himself to Nicodemus. Is Jesus, God's Son being revealed to you daily where you are able to take heed? His Word has come to save many lives. Take action to receive a new life in Him today!

⁴ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/john-ma-lbw.htm>