

## John 3 and the Gospel

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The most important subject in the Bible is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news about how people can get right with God, how we can be saved, be forgiven of our sins, receive eternal life, an eternal relationship with God, and how we can go to heaven instead of hell.

- Acts 20:24. The gospel was Paul's single most important message, the message he was proclaiming and preaching to the people. Rom. 1:16

- Matt. 4:23. The gospel was Jesus' #1 message too. And the gospel message speaks about the kingdom of God, and those who are saved become members of the kingdom of God.

- In Mark 1:15, Jesus said, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*"

Now Jesus clearly and continually explains the gospel in the gospel of John. He wants to make sure that we know what it means, that we're not in error about the gospel message, and so we can then clearly share the gospel message to others. Now the devil hates the truth, and he hates the gospel message, and he uses his demons and people on earth to share a false gospel, a message that leads people away from God, that doesn't save people, and that actually leads people to hell. Matt. 23, 2 Cor. 11:1-4

- Well let's look at some passages about the gospel from the book of John.

John 3:1-8. What do we learn here about the gospel?

1. God wants to save individual people. Every person in the world is unique, is important, and God doesn't save crowds of people, but individuals, and in this case, it's Nicodemus.

2. God works in peoples' heart, moving in their heart to save them. Here's Nicodemus and he was a Pharisee, and he was looked upon as important, for he was part of the Sanhedrin, the most important religious body in Israel, made up of 70 political and religious leaders.

Why was Nicodemus coming to Jesus? Because God was speaking to him, and drawing him to Himself. A person doesn't get saved unless God works in his heart. John 6:37-39, 44

3. A person who is saved has been physically born at some specific time, but then during his life, he has a spiritual birth, which also takes place at some specific time. Every person who's saved is born again, but not every person who's saved knows exactly when he was born again. Now Jesus says, "*truly, truly.*" By saying this, Jesus is being emphatic, he is stating loud and clear that this is the truth, that people need to be born again.

4. A person who is born again is born of the Holy Spirit. That is, a person is only saved by the Spirit working in his heart. The Spirit convicts a person of his sin, and makes him realize that he's guilty, and therefore, deserves to be punished. The Spirit also enables a person to understand the gospel. Jn. 16:13. Only by the Spirit can a person really know who Jesus is, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Christ, and that He physically died on a cross to pay for our sins, to forgive us of our sins.

- Finally, the Spirit applies the work of Christ to a person's heart. Yes, Christ died to pay for our sins, but the Spirit applies what Christ did on the cross to our own lives. Titus 3:5-6. We are renewed, we are regenerated, we are born again by the work of the Holy Spirit.

5. A person who is born again enters the kingdom of God. A person who is not saved, who is not born again is not saved, and is not in the kingdom of God, but is in the domain of darkness, the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of the devil and his demons. Once a person is born again, he immediately and supernaturally is taken, is transferred from the devil's kingdom to God's kingdom, and he becomes a member of His kingdom. And Jesus of course, is the King, the leader of His Kingdom. For Christians this is now a spiritual kingdom, but in heaven, it's spiritual and physical, and in the age to come, it will also be both spiritual and physical, for Jesus will be King over this whole earth, and you will be an important and active member of His kingdom. Rev. 11:15

6. John 3:8. This speaks of God's work in saving people. And it's a spiritual, sovereign, and unseen work. God is directing the Spirit, and people on earth can't see what God is doing. We don't tell God what to do, we have no influence over God when it comes to the work of salvation. God does what He wants, what He planned to do in eternity past, and no one can stop Him or keep Him from saving the people He has chosen to save. 2 Thess. 2:13

John 3:9-14. These vss. explain how we're saved. We learn that Jesus descended from heaven, and became a man. This is what we call the Incarnation, that God became flesh, that Jesus became a Man. John 1:14

- And Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of Man - He wanted people to know He was the Son of God, but also the Son of Man. And as a man, He could relate to us, identify with us, and be tempted like us. But yet, He did not sin, He was a perfect man. Therefore, He could be a mediator between God and man. And what specifically was the work of Christ, the mediator? 1 Timothy 2:5

Vs. 14 says Jesus must be lifted up, and this serpent being lifted up is referring to when the Jews sinned against God, and God had Moses make this bronze serpent, put it on a pole, and have it lifted up. And all the Jews who wanted mercy looked at it and were shown mercy. But here we're talking about Jesus being lifted up, and this is referring to when Jesus was nailed to a cross and was crucified, and everyone could see Him hanging there on that cross, and then He died and He died to save people from their sins.

Here are some vss. that talk about this: Heb. 9:28 - *"Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a 2<sup>nd</sup> time for salvation."* 2 Cor. 5:21 - *"God made Him (Christ), who knew no sin, to be sin, that we might become the righteousness of God."* 1 Pet. 3:18 - *"Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit."* Rom. 5:8

But what do people need to do to be saved, to be born again? So far we've talked about what God does, and what God did through Jesus, but what are we supposed to do?

- John 3:15-18. Vs. 15 says you need to believe in Christ, you need to believe Jesus Christ is both God and man, and that He died on the cross to pay for all your sins. And if we believe in Christ, we receive eternal life, and our sins are forgiven, and we're saved.

And this believing is not just head knowledge, what you know in your head, but what you believe in your heart and soul, what you're convinced is true. And this believing means you're trusting in Christ and aren't trusting in yourself. It means you're relying and depending on Christ to save you from your sins because you know there's nothing you can do to save yourself - you know if your salvation was all left up to you, then you could not and would not go to heaven, but instead, go to hell.

Now when you believe in Jesus Christ, it means you know there's nothing you can do to save yourself. It means you know your good works won't save you, and that you only need to look to Christ and believe that He died for you.

- Titus 3:5, Eph. 2:8-9. This word faith is a synonym for believe; when you believe in Christ, you're putting your faith in Him, and in Him alone. Salvation is not faith in Christ plus your works, which is what some churches teach. Salvation is not, I repeat, is not, by your works, but only by your faith in God and in the work of Christ. Salvation is by faith in Christ alone.

Now John 3:15-16 says you receive eternal life. There are many results of believing in Christ, of being saved, but one of the main ones is that God gives you eternal life.

- John 17:3. Eternal life is knowing God and Christ, is having this eternal relationship with Them, where They know you and you know Them, where They love you and you love Them.

- Phil. 3:7-10. This too says you are saved, not by your works but by your faith in Christ. The result of your faith is that you're righteous, you're holy, you're forgiven, and you know Christ. You have eternal life, this personal and eternal relationship with God and Christ.

John 3:16-18. Now what else do we learn about the gospel from these vss.?

1. That salvation is God's idea and plan. It's sure not our idea – no person in their own fleshly thinking wants to get saved. In eternity past, way back before this world was ever created, God planned to save people from their sins, and have His Son's death on the cross be the means by which people could be saved.

2. One of God's primary motivations in saving people is that He loved us. His love was an agape love, an unconditional, supernatural, and eternal love for people who sinned against Him. God was compassionate towards people - He saw the miserable condition we were in, and His love was the reason He sent His own Son to this earth to be our Savior, to save us from sin and death and hell and yes, from the devil too. 1 John 3:7-10

3. God gave His only begotten Son to us. That is, our salvation is a gift from God to us. We don't deserve to be saved, but instead, deserve to be damned, to be in hell for our sins. We couldn't work for our salvation, we couldn't pay for our salvation. Ps. 49:7-9, 18.  
- And so, God freely gave His Son to us to save us. Rom. 6:23, Eph. 2:4-9

4. Those who don't believe are ones who perish. The word perish means to destroy. That is, people who don't believe in Jesus Christ, who don't look to Him to be saved from their sins, will be in hell forever, will be righteously punished forever for their sins. - 2 Thess. 1:9 says, "*These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord.*" This is one of the most sobering things you can think about, that a person will be apart from God and forever be punished for his sins.

5. People who don't believe in Christ love the darkness, love their sin. They don't love God, they are idolaters, and they don't humble themselves before God and repent of their sins, but instead, hate God by sinning against Him, and by not repenting of their sin. 2 Th. 1:6-9. Sinners love their sin. It is their choice, their desire, to love their sin, to love the darkness, and to hate Christ. And so they can't blame their sin on God, or on any person but only themselves. They only have themselves to blame. And that's the truth. Ezekiel 18:4

John 1:12 – This is an important gospel verse. Those who are saved have received Christ, and receive means to take hold of, to obtain, to grasp. A person who gets saved wants Christ, looks to Christ, spiritually takes hold of Christ, and receives Christ. And he believes in His name, and the word name is referring to the totality of Christ, who Christ is and what He does, that He is God and man, that He is Savior and Lord. And the person who gets saved believes in Christ, trusts in Christ, relies on Christ. And he is not just saved from his sin but becomes a child of God. And that is a most amazing and incredible thing that we are children of God.

And so people need to receive Christ and believe in His name, but salvation is still the sovereign work of God in the heart of a person. We read that your salvation is not by blood, that is, you are not saved because of the family you were born in or your race, your skin color. And you are not saved by your flesh, by your own desire. And you are not saved by the will of man, by some man-made system, or by what some person can do for you, or by what someone might pray after you are dead. 2 Macc. 12:39-46 - Salvation then is by the will of God, for God chooses who gets saved, and God saves a person by His grace, by His power, by His Spirit working in a person's heart. John 1:29