

### A summary of John 3:14-21

1. John 3:14-21 may be considered as the structure or framework of Jesus's speaking to Nicodemus in 3:1-13. It is an elaboration of how to be born again or born above, referred to in 3:3 and 3:5. What does it mean to be born of water and of the Spirit? Nicodemus, as a Pharisee well versed in the Old Testament scriptures, must have known the significance of water, used for purification by the Jews, and a symbol of death or termination. Therefore, when Jesus referred to Moses lifting up the bronze serpent in the wilderness (see Numbers 21:4-9), He used that account as an analogy of His own death on the cross to deal with the serpentine nature of man. When the children of Israel murmured against God and Moses, God sent "fiery" or "poisonous" (according to the Hebrew word) serpents to bite the people. God then told Moses to make a fiery serpent and put it on a pole. Whoever was bitten and looked or beheld the bronze serpent would live. In the same way Jesus, as the bronze serpent, in the "likeness of the flesh of sin" (Romans 8:3) but without the sin nature, was crucified on the cross in order to condemn sin in the flesh and nullify the poison of sin. Jesus was telling Nicodemus that anyone, no matter how humble, reputable or knowledgeable concerning the Bible and even God, needed to be born of water, that is to go through death in order to enter into the kingdom or realm of God. Therefore, to be born of water is related to the need for us to be terminated and to have no reliance on ourselves or our humility to enter the kingdom of God
2. To be born of the Spirit is related to the matter of faith or believing, not only in God, but in the Son of man (3:15) and in the Son of God (3:16-18). We may believe in God, like Nicodemus, but not have faith or entrust ourselves to Jesus as the Son of man and as the only begotten Son of God. In John 14:1, Jesus tells His disciples that they believe in God, but that they also need to believe in Him. Is not Jesus God? Yes. Then what is the difference between believing in God and believing in the Son of God and the Son of man? To believe in God, like Nicodemus, may be outward. We may look for teaching or knowledge of the Bible, and we may even fear God. But we may not have a subjective knowledge or relationship with God where our lives change and we begin to live in a different realm. How can this happen? Through revelation. The Word became flesh. God is revealed through His Son (the Son of God in His divinity) and through the Son of man (His humanity). As the Son of man, He was able to die to deal with our sin and our sin nature. As the Son of God, He is able to impart His resurrection life into us so we can be born of His Spirit. It is only through believing (faith) into Him as the Son of God and man that we can know God subjectively.
3. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world (3:17). However, sin is already in our flesh. If we do not believe in Him, we are already condemned. God does not need to condemn us. Actually, the sin in us, manifested through our evil deeds and our love of darkness (3:19 and 3:21), automatically exposes us and condemns us. What is sin or evil? Not believing in the Son of God (3:18). Who we are in Adam is already condemned positionally, and merely confirmed when we act out our Adamic nature. We should never blame God for situations we may end up in. God never condemns us. Rather, it is our own deeds that expose and accuse us. Instead, we should come to the light (3:21) to be exposed and perfected. It is our choice to walk in darkness or light. We can never blame God for the path we eventually take. We know the truth, but we don't always practice it. The proof that we are born again is that we come to the light and walk in the light. When we practice the truth, we find that we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous (1 John 2:1). We can come back to Him. We are not afraid to come to the light. Our entire Christian journey is one of coming back to the Lord. The truth in us will not let us continue in darkness.
4. God so loved the world (3:16). The Greek word for "love" is *agapao*, a divine love, the deepest love. Paradoxically, the same Greek word is used for "love" in 3:19, referring to men loving darkness rather than light. This shows the contrast between God's love, the deepest and the highest, which caused Him to give or yield up, commit, deliver up, even to smite with the hand (according to the Greek word) for our sake, and the deepest love of men for a life in darkness apart from God. Such a contrast should cause our hearts to melt and motivate us to preach the gospel much more. Every sinner can come to Him. Whoever believes has eternal life.
5. In 3:17, God sent His Son into the world to save the world. The Greek word for "sent" has the meaning of being sent out on a mission, or ordered (as in the military). This is similar to 1:6 concerning John the Baptist who was sent by God. This shows us God's heart and purpose, that He would not spare His only begotten (unique) Son, but would give Him up for us, without reservation, and according to strict orders. Are we willing to respond in the same way to Him, to be sent or ordered by God to preach the gospel and be with people? The Greek word here is different from John 14:26, 15:26 and 16:5 and 16:7, where the thought is not just to send but also to accompany or go with. Perhaps this shows the two aspects of God's sending. On the one hand, He sends us, by order, to carry out His purpose and raise up His testimony. This aspect emphasizes obedience. On the other hand, we do not go alone, but He accompanies us, to carry out in us and through us what He desires. This aspect shows the union of the Father with the Son and His union with us in sending us.
6. We may compare Nicodemus with Philip and Nathanael. Both Philip and Nathanael knew the Scriptures. We know that Philip, Andrew and Peter were looking for the Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures, and they had a revelation of Jesus (1:49-50). However, in John 3, there is no apparent record that Nicodemus believed. Are we interested in the teachings of Jesus or the Bible, or do we want to come to the Son of God? We may come to the Bible in order to try to understand it, but lack revelation, that is faith in the only begotten Son of God. In all fairness to Nicodemus, it appears that he did believe, as seen in his defense of Jesus before the Sanhedrin in 7:50-52, and later in his touching offering of myrrh and aloes and his collaboration with Joseph of Arimathaea to take the body of Jesus and bury it (20:38-40). With Nicodemus, it was a process of faith.
7. Do I believe Jesus is everything? Yes, I believe in the Son of man and the Son of God, but do I believe every moment, in every situation? Do I believe God's word? Do I touch God in every matter? Do I trust in God in my studies, my job, my family life, my decisions? If not, I am in darkness. My deeds are evil. We face what Nicodemus faced. If we don't believe in Jesus, the wrath of God abides on us (3:36).