

Lesson 2**THE "LIFTED UP" SAVIOUR
(JOHN 3)****A Simple Outline of John Chapter 3**

- 1A. YOU **MUST** BE BORN AGAIN (John 3:1-12).
(See Verse 7)
- 2A. JESUS **MUST** BE LIFTED UP (John 3:13-21).
(See Verse 14)
- 3A. THE LORD JESUS **MUST** INCREASE AND JOHN
THE BAPTIST **MUST** DECREASE (John 3:22-36).
(See Verse 30)

They Believed But Jesus Did Not Believe

At the end of John Chapter 2 we learn about an interesting group of people. We are told that "many _____ in His Name" (John 2:23). Why did these people believe (see John 2:23)?

- a. Because they knew that someday Christ would die for them on the cross and rise again.
- b. Because they knew that they were lost sinners and that Jesus was the only Person who could save them.
- c. Because they saw the miracles which Jesus did.
- d. Because they loved Jesus and wanted to follow Him with all their hearts.

Their faith was based on the miracles which they saw! Did Jesus get all excited because of this group of "believers"? Did He say, "This is wonderful! Look at all the new followers I now have!"? No, the opposite was true: "But Jesus did not _____ Himself unto them" (John 2:24).

The word "believed" in John 2:23 is the same word as the word "commit" in John 2:24. We could say it this way: "Many **believed** in Jesus, but Jesus was not **believing** in them." They had faith in Him (because of the miracles they saw) but He did not have very much faith in them! Jesus knew that they were not to be depended on because "He _____ all men" (John 2:24). The same Jesus who knew all about Nathanael (John 1:47-48) is the same Person who knew all about these men. Jesus knew that these people were not true believers. He did not receive these seeming believers with open arms because "He _____ what was in man" (John 2:25). He knew these people through

and through and He knew that their hearts were not right in God's sight. Even though they had faith, they did not have the kind of faith Jesus wanted them to have. They needed to be born again!

In John Chapter 3 we are introduced to one of these men. We are introduced to a man who believed in Christ because of the miracles which he saw: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these _____ that thou does, except _____ be with him (John 3:2). Nicodemus was a "believer in miracles" but Jesus told Nicodemus: "Ye must be _____ (John 3:7).

Religious But Not Saved

What kind of a man was Nicodemus? He is described in John 3:1.

He was a *Pharisee*. This means that he was a religious person. He prayed. He read the Bible (the Old Testament). He went to the synagogue and to the temple. He tried to keep the 10 Commandments.

He was a *Ruler* (John 3:1). He was not just an ordinary Jew, he was a leader of the Jews. He was a member of the highest ruling body within the nation (see John 7:45-50) which was called the Sanhedrin. He was a man who enjoyed a high position.

He was a master or *Teacher* (John 3:10). If anyone should have had the answers, he should have! And yet, even though Nicodemus taught others, he needed to be taught himself. He needed to have a lesson on "being born again," taught by the greatest Teacher of all (John 3:2)!

Even though Nicodemus was a *Pharisee*, a *Ruler* and a *Teacher*, he was traveling on a road that was headed straight for hell. Nicodemus was not saved. Nicodemus did not have eternal life. He had many things but he did not have the most important thing. Jesus' message to Nicodemus was very clear: "Except a man be _____, he cannot see the _____ of God" (John 3:3). There is only one way to enter the kingdom! You must be BORN AGAIN!

What Does It Mean To Be BORN AGAIN?

A person does not need money to get to heaven. A person does not need education to get to heaven. A person does not need rank or high position to get to heaven. But there is one thing that is needed if anyone is to get to heaven: A NEW BIRTH! Those who are not BORN AGAIN will never see God's Kingdom (John 3:3).

Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant by the words "BORN AGAIN" (see John 3:4). He asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Certainly he can't enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" (John 3:4, this rendering reflects the Greek text). He knew that a person could not reenter his mother's womb and be born a second time in a physical way. This would be impossible. What did Jesus really mean?

Look at the answer Jesus gave to Nicodemus in John 3:5-6. Jesus made it very clear that He was talking about a spiritual birth ("born of the Spirit"), not a physical birth. Man's first birth was physical ("born of the flesh") and man's second birth must be spiritual ("born of the Spirit"). It is something that the Spirit of God must do!

"Born of Water and of the Spirit"

What did Jesus mean when He said that a person must be born of water and of the Spirit (see John 3:5)? This is a verse of Scripture that has often been misunderstood. In fact, there are many who believe that "the water" refers to WATER BAPTISM. They would say something like this: Unless you are baptized in water you cannot enter into the kingdom of God and you cannot be saved. This is not true. Water baptism is important, but water baptism does not save anyone. Water baptism is not something that a person does to be saved. Water baptism is something that a saved person does!

[For a detailed study on this question see our study **Does Water Baptism Save?**]

Jesus was not talking about physical water which can only cleanse a person on the outside. In John 3:5 Jesus was talking about SPIRITUAL CLEANSING (something that must happen on the inside of a person). To be clean on the outside a person must take a bath and use soap and water! To be clean on the inside there is another kind of bath that is needed. Soap and water can never remove the filth of sin! God must do something on the inside of a person. Let's see what the Bible says about being born of water and of the Spirit:

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| John 3:3 says that if a person is going to see the kingdom he must be _____ | ↔ | John 3:5 says that if a person is going to enter the kingdom he must be _____ of _____ and of the _____ |
|--|---|---|

Therefore, being *born again* means the same thing as being *born of water and of the Spirit*. If a person has been born again, then this person has been born of water and of the Spirit.

Water is the one thing we use whenever we wash something. **Water is the universal cleansing agent.** If you *wash* your car, what do you use? _____ If you *wash* your face, what do you use? _____ To make your clothes bright and *clean*, what do you use? _____ To make your teeth *clean*, you not only use toothpaste, but you also use _____. It is easy to see how WATER can be symbolic of CLEANSING (making something clean)!

Sinners need to be *washed* and *made clean*. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know something very important: **NO UNCLEAN PERSON CAN ENTER GOD'S KINGDOM!** God says that **NO UNCLEAN PERSON** has any inheritance in the _____ of Christ and of God (Ephesians 5:5 and see also Galatians 5:21 and Revelation 21:27). To enter the kingdom a person must be CLEAN and WASHED on the inside (sins forgiven!). No unwashed people will be admitted! No unclean person will enter the kingdom of God. Only *cleansed sinners* will be allowed in heaven! You must be born of water! You must be washed!

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Will any unclean or unrighteous people inherit the kingdom?
 _____ Will washed sinners enter the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:11)? _____

Whenever you think of John 3:5 you should also think of Titus 3:5. Both of these verses are found in chapter 3 verse 5, so they are easy to remember! Both of these verses talk about being BORN AGAIN (the word "REGENERATION" in Titus 3:5 is a big word that simply means "born again"). Both of these verses talk about the WATER and the SPIRIT. Look at Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the _____ of regeneration (that's the **WATER**) and renewing of the Holy Spirit (that's the **SPIRIT**)." The born again person is the person who has been thoroughly cleansed and renewed by the Spirit of God!

Let's look at three verses which talk about the WATER and the SPIRIT:

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| <i>John 3:5</i> "born of (1) water and of (2) Spirit" | <i>1 Corinthians 6:11</i> "ye are (1) washed . . . by the (2)spirit" | <i>Titus 3:5</i> "(1) washing (water) of regeneration and (2) renewing of Spirit" |
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All of these verses are talking about that wonderful work which God does on the inside of a person, making it possible for us to enter God's kingdom!

Notice the water in John 13:5. Jesus was using this water to be a symbolic picture of an important spiritual truth. Was Peter a "washed" disciple? Was Peter CLEAN on the inside (John 13:9-10)? _____ Who was the disciple who was never born of water? What was the name of the disciple who was unwashed and unclean and who had never been born again (John 13:10-11 and compare John 13:2)? _____ Would this man ever enter the kingdom? _____

The **WATER** is also mentioned in Ephesians 5:25-26: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and _____ it with the _____ of _____ BY THE _____." How is a person washed? BY THE WORD!

The **WORD OF GOD** is an essential part of the cleansing process. The WORD OF GOD is the mirror that shows us how dirty we really are (because of sin). Not only does the Bible show us our sin, but it also points out the only Saviour and His promises to save those who truly believe on Him. Without the Word of God a person could never be saved and could never be born again. The following verses show how important God's Word is:

1) **Psalm 119:9** – "How shall a young man _____ his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy _____."

2) **John 15:3** – "Now ye are _____ through the _____ which I have spoken unto you."

3) **1 Peter 1:23-25** – "Being _____ not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the _____ of _____ which liveth and abideth for ever."

4) **James 1:18** – "Of His own will begat He us with the _____ of truth."

God's Word does two things: 1) It shows man how great a sinner he is (Romans 3:10-23) and 2) It shows man how great a Saviour Christ is (Romans 3:24-26)!

Nicodemus was a Jew who should have been familiar with the Old Testament. In John 3:9 we see that Nicodemus still did not understand what Jesus was talking about. In John 3:10 Jesus told Nicodemus that he should have known these things! He should have understood about the WATER and the SPIRIT! He should have been familiar with EZEKIEL 36:25-29. Does this passage talk about the WATER? _____ Does this passage talk about being CLEAN and being CLEANSED? _____ Does this passage talk about the SPIRIT? _____ In this passage God promised to do a wonderful work ON THE INSIDE (see Ezekiel 36:26-27)! See also Jeremiah 4:14 and Isaiah 1:16.

How A Person Is Not Born Again

When you were born the first time you became a part of your human family. You became a child of your parents. When a person is born again, he becomes a part of God's family--A CHILD OF GOD (John 1:12). In John 1:13 we learn three ways in which a person is *not* born again:

1. "Not of blood"

There is a "bloodline" between parent and child, and there are many things that parents can give to their children: color of eyes, color of hair, facial features, body size, etc. But there is one thing that parents can never give to their children: THE NEW BIRTH! Your parents can give you your first birth, but they can never give you your second birth! Christian parents do not give birth to Christian babies! Born again parents do not have born again babies! If you are related by blood to a Christian, this does not make you a Christian! Salvation is not passed down from parent to child. Someone has said, "God has many children but He has no grandchildren." This means that the only way a person can become a child of God is to receive Christ by faith (John 1:12). A parent's faith can do nothing to bring a child into God's family. Each person must believe on his own. Christian parents wish they could believe for their children but they cannot.

Many of the Jews thought that they were saved because they had descended from Abraham (Matthew 3:9; John 8:39). Were they correct (compare John 8:44)? _____ Parents can pray for their children and teach their children and live godly before their children, but parents cannot give them a new heart and a new birth.

2. "Not of the will of the flesh"

All of man's efforts and exertions will never make him a child of God. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is _____" (John 3:6). No matter how much man may desire to change, he cannot change himself. Just as a leopard cannot change his spots and an Ethiopian (African) cannot change the color of his skin, so a person with a sinful heart cannot change his evil nature (see Jeremiah 13:23). Only God can bring about such a change.

3. "Not of the will of man"

For many years the early Christians were persecuted by the Roman emperors and many were put to death. Finally a man by the name of Constantine came to power (about 300 A.D.). This man wanted to make Christianity the official religion of the empire. He wanted the people in his kingdom to all be Christians, but did this make them Christians? _____ No King or President or Priest or Pope or Pastor can make a person a child of God! The most powerful person on earth is unable to give a person a clean heart and a new life. Only God can do this!

The Work of God

Being born again is not man's anything, but it is God's everything (John 1:13--"but OF GOD")! It is that wonderful, supernatural work of God by which a person becomes a child of God (John 1:12). By his first birth man became a member of Adam's fallen race; by his second birth man becomes a member of God's family. When a person is born again he receives a NEW LIFE (John 3:15), a NEW HEART (Ezekiel 36:25-27) and a NEW NATURE (2 Peter 1:4). The born again person is a "NEW _____" (2 Corinthians 5:17)! To be born again and to become a child of God, what must a person do (John 1:12)? _____

The Spirit and the Wind

In John 3:8 Jesus compares the work of the Spirit of God to the wind. The wind is invisible. You *cannot see* the wind but you can see what the wind does. You can see the leaves blowing across the lawn. You can see the sailboat being pushed across the lake. You can see the flag blowing in the breeze.

The same is true with the Spirit of God. You cannot see the Spirit of God when you look at a Christian, but you should be able to see what the Holy Spirit does! If the Holy Spirit is really at work in a person's life, this should be seen! Although people cannot see the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, are they able to see the *fruit* of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9)? _____ People can certainly see the way we live and act and speak and they can see the evidence of the Spirit at work in our lives! Can the "sound" of the Spirit be heard in the way you live and act and talk day by day?

The Serpent in the Wilderness

In John 3:14 an important comparison is made between the serpent that was lifted up on a pole and Christ who was lifted up to die on a cross: "as Moses lifted up the _____ in the wilderness, even so must the _____ of _____ be lifted up" (John 3:14). The snake that Moses lifted up was meant to be a picture of Christ dying on the cross.

The Old Testament passage that tells us about "the serpent in the wilderness" is found in Numbers 21:4-9. The children of Israel were discouraged because they had to take a long detour and go many miles out of their way (Numbers 21:4). Instead of trusting God in this difficulty they complained and sinned against God (Numbers 21:5). Because of their great sin, God sent fiery _____ (snakes) among the people (Numbers 21:6). Did these snakes bite (Numbers 21:6)? _____ Were they poisonous (Numbers 21:6)? _____ Did the people admit that they had sinned (Numbers 21:7)? _____ Did they cry out for help (Numbers 21:7)? _____ As we read about the serpent in the wilderness, four facts become clear:

1. They had sinned against God.
2. They were perishing.
3. There was nothing they could do to save themselves.
4. They knew that only God could help them.

Are these four facts true ABOUT YOU? _____

God had a solution! God had a remedy! God had a cure! God told Moses to do something very unusual (Numbers 21:8). God told Moses to make a bronze replica of a snake and put it high on a pole so that all could see it. If you were one of those Israelites who had been bitten, what must you do to live (Numbers 21:8)? _____

The person who was bitten must look to the bronze serpent lifted up high on the pole. He must not look at himself. He must not look at his wounds. He must not look at all the poisonous snakes that were crawling all over him. He must not look at the others who were dying around him. He must not look at Moses. HE MUST LOOK DIRECTLY AND ONLY AT **GOD'S REMEDY**. To look anywhere else was to perish! To look at the serpent on the pole was to live! There was nothing they could do to cure themselves. Their only hope was to look at an object completely outside of themselves.

Now we are ready to read John 3:14-16. Everyone of us has been bitten by the serpent of sin, "and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth _____" (James 1:15). Adam was bitten by the serpent and the poison has spread to every member of the human race (Romans 5:12). Recognizing our lost condition, we must cry out to God and say, "I HAVE SINNED!" God's answer is very clear: "I have a SOLUTION! I have a REMEDY! LOOK to the One who was lifted up to die on the pole of Calvary's cross! He is God's only CURE for the sin problem! If you look anywhere else you will perish! LOOK TO JESUS AND LIVE!"

Those who look to God's Son lifted up on the cross and believe in Him will not _____ but will have everlasting _____ (John 3:15-16)!

Life is short;
Death is sure!
Sin the cause;
CHRIST THE CURE!

The Gospel in a Nutshell

John's gospel contains one of the most beloved verses in the entire Bible: *JOHN 3:16*. Have you memorized this verse? Have you allowed the truth of this verse to speak to your heart?

JOHN 3:16 –

GOD – *the greatest Lover*
SO LOVED – *the greatest degree*
THE WORLD – *the greatest number*
THAT HE GAVE – *the greatest act*
HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON – *the greatest Gift*
THAT WHOSOEVER – *the greatest invitation*
BELIEVETH – *the greatest simplicity*
IN HIM – *the greatest Person*
SHOULD NOT PERISH – *the greatest deliverance*
BUT – *the greatest difference*
HAVE – *the greatest certainty*
EVERLASTING LIFE – *the greatest possession*

John 3:16 is a wonderful verse, but it does not really do you any good until you can make it PERSONAL. Can you put *your own name* in each of the following blanks? "For God so loved _____ that He gave His only begotten Son, that (if) _____ believeth in Him (then) _____ should not perish but _____ (will) have everlasting life!" You need to take John 3:16 and make it your very own!

The God Who is in the Saving Business

Did Christ come into the world to judge the world or to save the world (John 3:17)?

_____ He came on a SAVING MISSION not on a DAMNING MISSION! He came to rescue, not to destroy!

What kind of person is not condemned or judged (John 3:18)?

_____ What kind of person is condemned already?
 _____ Some people believe that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. In John 3:18 we discover that this is not really true. BELIEVERS (even those who were quite sinful and bad) GO TO HEAVEN AND UNBELIEVERS (even those who tried to be quite religious and good) GO TO HELL. The key question that every man must answer is this: *WHAT WILL I DO WITH JESUS CHRIST?* Will I receive Him or reject Him? Will I believe on Him or not?

If a sailor falls overboard and is perishing in the waves and his fellow sailors throw him a lifeline and the drowning man refuses to grab it, why does he perish? It is because HE REFUSED TO HANG ONTO THE ONE THING THAT COULD SAVE HIM! Jesus Christ is the only LIFELINE that men have. To hang onto Him is to be saved. To refuse to hang onto Him is to perish. In John 3:19-20 we read about people who refuse to grab the LIFELINE. Instead of coming to the light they would rather stay in the dark!

Christ Must Increase

The followers of John the Baptist had a problem. They knew that Jesus was becoming more and more popular. More and more people were coming to Jesus and less and less people were coming to John the Baptist (compare John 4:1). Finally they told John about their concern: "ALL MEN COME TO HIM (JESUS)" (John 3:26).

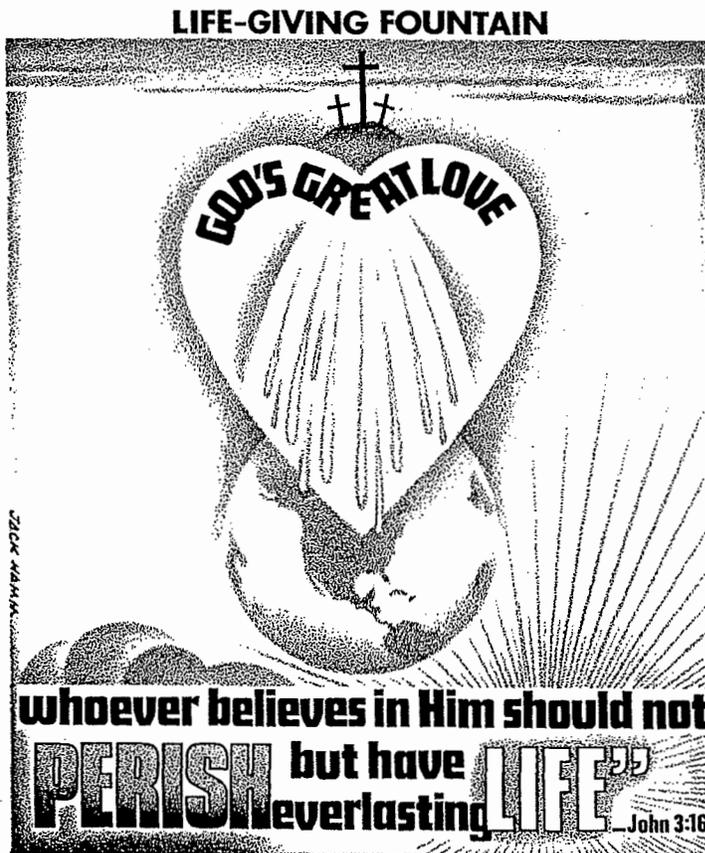
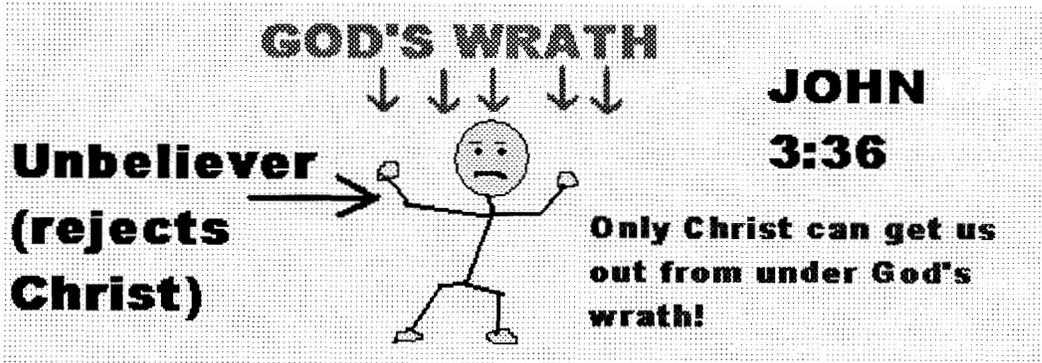
John's amazing answer is found in John 3:27-30. Was John the Baptist jealous of Jesus?
 _____ Was he envious of the popularity that Jesus had? _____ JOHN KNEW THAT THERE WAS NO RIVALRY BETWEEN JESUS AND HIMSELF! He did not consider himself to be in a popularity contest. John knew that anything he had was merely a gift from heaven (John 3:27). He was just an ARROW, one who was to point to Christ. He was not the C _____ (John 3:28), he just pointed to the Christ!

In a wedding, who gets more attention, the bridegroom or the friend of the bridegroom (the best man)? _____ John considered Jesus as the bridegroom and he thought of himself as merely the friend of the bridegroom. John wanted Christ to get all the attention: "HE MUST _____, BUT I MUST _____" (John 3:30). As the sun rises the stars must fade! John considered himself as a fading star. He wanted the SON of God to increase more and more. John knew that he wasn't anything but HIS SAVIOUR WAS EVERYTHING!

- 1) He is above all (John 3:31);
- 2) He has the Word of God and the Spirit of God in full measure (John 3:34);
- 3) All things have been given into His hand (John 3:35);
- 4) He is the difference between LIFE and DEATH (John 3:36).

Have you believed on the Son of God? If so, what do you have (John 3:36)?

_____ If you have NOT believed on Him then do you have life (John 3:36)? _____ It is very dangerous to continue in UNBELIEF! Put your trust in Jesus Christ today! God's wrath is presently resting down on every unbeliever:



*God loved
and gave*

*Man believes
and lives*

GOD'S SIDE

MAN'S SIDE

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

Pace

**THE BIBLE IN
A NUT-SHELL**

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| FOR GOD | the Lord of earth and heaven |
| SO LOVED | and longed to see forgiven, |
| THE WORLD | in sin and pleasure mad |
| THAT HE GAVE | the greatest Gift He had: |
| HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON | to take our place |
| THAT WHOSOEVER | oh, what grace! |
| BELIEVETH | placing simple trust |
| IN HIM | the Righteous and the Just, |
| SHOULD NOT PERISH | lost in sin, |
| BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE | in Him. |