

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Ezekiel 36:22–28 | Numbers 21:4–9 | 2 Corinthians 5:21

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 2.22.26

SUMMARY

Beginning in chapter 3, John presents a series of interactions between Jesus and certain individuals. The first is with Nicodemus, “a ruler of the Jews” (v. 1). He came to him “by night,” perhaps indicating this was a clandestine meeting of sorts; by this point in his ministry, Jesus was earning the ire of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Perhaps Nicodemus didn’t want his colleagues to know he was conversing with Jesus? Or perhaps John is signaling the reader that, though a teacher of the law, Nicodemus was still living in darkness. Either way, Nicodemus begins the conversation with Jesus with a compliment (v. 2), but Jesus doesn’t address his comments directly; instead, he cuts to the heart of the matter, telling Nicodemus one must be “born again” to see the kingdom of God. Though Nicodemus responds as if bewildered, Jesus alludes to ideas with which Nicodemus, a teacher of the law, should be familiar (v. 10). Being born again is not a concept far removed from the prophet Ezekiel speaking of the people of God receiving “a new heart, and a new spirit” (Ezekiel 36:26). There would come a day when the Lord would put his Spirit within them causing them to walk in newness of life, like being *born again*. Jesus revealed to Nicodemus that he is the Son of God, who came from heaven to usher in this transformative power. However, it would come at a steep cost, as the “Son of Man” would first have to be “lifted up” (vs. 14–15). With this statement, Jesus is fulfilling the word of the Old Testament, where the people of God were under God’s judgment, being bitten by poisonous snakes. Their suffering persisted until Moses, as instructed by God, “lifted up” a bronze serpent on a pole, and all who looked to the serpent would be healed (Numbers 21:4–9). It may be shocking to us that Jesus would liken himself to, of all things, a serpent. But, as the apostle Paul taught the church in Corinth, Jesus had to be made sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is how God showed his love for “the world” (v. 16), for those who stood in opposition to the kingdom of heaven: Jesus Christ was lifted up and suffered the humiliation of the cross, allowing his people to have new light (v. 21) and life, while glorifying the Father through it all.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of John 3:1-21.

Based on this passage, what is your understanding of what it means to be born again? How does this idea connect to Ezekiel 36:26?

With a better understanding of the context of this passage in John 3, what does it mean when Jesus said, “God so loved the world”? Who or what is Jesus referring to when he speaks of “the world”?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.