

John 2v23-3v15

NO ENTRY

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NO ENTRY

John 2v23-3v15

Recap...

The theme for this section, that runs from Chapter 2 vs 1-11 (the Banquet) to Chapter 4 vs 48-54 (the conquering of Death), is all about Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy written by Isaiah, 700+ years before Christ's birth:

Isaiah 25 vs 6-9:

⁶ On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

⁸ He will swallow up death for ever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

⁹ It will be said on that day,

“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

Jesus =

➤ v 6: **“the Lord of Hosts”**

➤ The ‘Bridegroom’ who will bring about God’s Kingdom:

○ **“for all peoples”** - the ultimate wedding

“a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.”

➤ v 8: able to **“swallow up death forever”**

In other words...vs 9: **“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”**

This raises two questions:

- WHO enters the Kingdom? ... and
- HOW does a person enter?

We deliberately start this time by going back to John 2 v 23, effectively to remove the chapter division which has divided the clear theme that JOHN intended!

NO ENTRY! ... no matter who you are!!

JOHN 2v23-3v15: ²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

JOHN 3

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

There are 4 key questions we should ask ourselves about Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus:

- 1) When the Son of God arrived on earth – how would you expect people to respond to him?
- 2) What's the surprise in JOHN 2 vs 23-25?

Even though...

v 23: ***...many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.***

Jesus...

vs 24-25: *But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.*

- 3) What kind of man is Nicodemus?

ch 3 v 1: ***Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews***

ch 3 v 10: ***Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”***

4) So... how successful would you expect Nicodemus to be in responding to Jesus rightly/correctly?

- He was not just a ‘high up’ in the Jewish leadership – he ranks as an equivalent to a Chief Rabbi – ***‘the teacher of Israel!’***

So... Jesus won't entrust himself to those who only believe in the signs...

...Or even to those who believe he is a ***teacher come from God!***

v 2: ***“...we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”***

Even when it's the Chief Rabbi who's saying this...

...Jesus is looking for something more.

NO ENTRY! ... except by new birth!!

JOHN 3 v 10: *Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”*

- Jesus is saying to Nicodemus– ***“YOU (of all people) should understand from the Scriptures that you need more than just the signs!”***
- After all - where did Nicodemus rank as a teacher to the Jews?!

So let's look at the Old Testament to see what Nicodemus should have known:

EZEKIEL 36 vs 24-28: *I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. ²⁸You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

God's people are in exile – thrown out from Israel for their repeated rebellion (sin) against God.

This prophecy is from God - that he will restore his people by bringing:

- Forgiveness – symbolised by the washing with water -
- And God’s presence - by the Holy Spirit within them.

The Jewish people had been longing for the fulfilment of God’s promises ...

- Referring to these famous prophecies would have resounded with them like the readings we have at Christmas!

Nicodemus should have known:

- that no-one can enter God’s Kingdom without God’s forgiveness
- AND God himself coming by his Spirit to bring v 26 : ***a new heart and a new spirit.***

Clearly this is Divine open heart surgery!

Listen up!!

Jesus uses the words “**truly, truly**” three times (v3, v5 and v11) in his conversation with Nicodemus – it’s his way of saying, “*Listen up! Pay serious attention!*” It’s a “marker” that what he’s about to say is very important...

v 3: ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”***

Let’s go back and unpack Jesus’ ‘Sunday School’ lesson for Nicodemus:

JOHN 3 vs 5-6: Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

- To be “**born of water**” is to receive the spiritual washing of sin spoken of in...

EZEKIEL 36 v 25: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.”

John the Baptist's baptism symbolized the need for this inner washing.

- To be v 5 "**born**" of "**the Spirit**" is to receive the fresh start and the heart transplant of...

EZEKIEL 36 v 26: *"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."*

JOHN 3 v 6: **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."**

- What does "**flesh**" or "man" create?**flesh**
- And what does "**the Spirit**" create?!**spirit!**

So... what needs to happen if Nicodemus is to enter the Kingdom?

JOHN 3 v 8: *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

- Where does the wind blow?
 - "**where it wishes**"
- So who does this work of "washing" and providing a "fresh start"?
 - God does it – by his Spirit – where and when he wants.

Let's just go back to compare this with John's "summary" in chapter 1, and vs 9-13, particularly vs 12 and 13:

JOHN 1 vs 9-13: *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Jesus – the Creator God – is ESSENTIAL in bringing the new birth:

....Only he – as God – can give such a gift

....and therefore provide the "**born again**" new life that he describes in:

JOHN 3 v 3: *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

What a massive shock to Nicodemus....No wonder we get John 3 v 9:

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”

Who doesn't get it and who needs to be born again?!

JOHN 3 v 10: *Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”*

Yes... even “**the teacher of Israel**” – who would NOT receive Jesus' word:

JOHN 3 v 11: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.”*

Summary verse so far:

JOHN 3 v 5: *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*

We have **signs**:

JOHN 2 v 23: *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.*

- But the signs are not enough – we also need FORGIVENESS (washing) AND God's Spirit blowing into our life... to give us a heart transplant and a brand new start.
- Providing new life ... literally - entry into v 3: **the Kingdom of God!**

NO ENTRY! ... Except by FAITH!!

Let's keep on unpacking this...

Jesus pinpoints... it's all about Nicodemus' willingness to **believe** if he is ever to 'get it'...

JOHN 3 vs 12-13: *“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.”*

Nicodemus needs to remember that no human being can ever get to God, or understand God...

- Without God stepping down from Heaven to work a miracle in their life...
- Through “**The Son of Man**” – another title for God's King...
- Hence v 13 ... Jesus tells Nicodemus that God's King has stepped down out of Heaven.

Again....NO ENTRY! ... Except by FAITH!!

Vs 14-15 explain how entry into God's Kingdom/new birth is made possible:

JOHN 3 vs 14-15: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Jesus takes us back to a part of scripture when a NO ENTRY sign was hanging over the promised land of Israel and God's people were stuck out in the wilderness... It was a spiritual disaster zone.

God's people had rebelled against God 'big time'! God therefore judged them by sending deadly serpents amongst them... The punishment for sin and rebellion in the Bible is always death.

But... in the Old Testament book of Numbers we learn that God provided a way by which his people could be saved from his judgment - IF they turned back to God and trusted him...

Numbers 21 vs 8-9: And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

How? ... If they looked at the bronze serpent which was raised up on a pole, then they would be safe!

It's a brilliant lesson for God's people:

- God HIMSELF provided a way of rescue for them as they looked at his answer to their punishment ... raised up on a pole!
- Their punishment was death, by snake bite.
- On the pole was a snake...
- By TRUSTING God and looking at the pole they were TRUSTING that God would remove his punishment.
- And we? – Well... all we have to do is face THE CROSS and have FAITH in God that he will remove HIS punishment at OUR sin through Christ's death on the cross.

So - in John 3 vs 9-14 Jesus has taken Israel's teacher, Nicodemus, back to Sunday school!

The big lesson?

v 15: “...*that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*”

- The defeat of sin and death - through God’s Son dying on the Cross.
- Jesus v 14 **lifted up** for us – in our place – carrying in his own body God’s punishment for our rebellion... providing victory over death!

So – *are you listening Nicodemus?*

- Turn and TRUST in Jesus (and his forthcoming Cross) ...
- ... and he will grant you v 15 **eternal life.**

Remember that Nicodemus wouldn’t yet have had a clue as to how Jesus would be ‘**lifted up**’ on the Cross... as foretold in v 14 – “**so must the Son of Man be lifted up**”

BUT... by the end of John’s Gospel, we will see that Nicodemus did seemingly come to understand fully who Christ is, by the way that he dealt with his death.

What comes next...

Jesus says to Nicodemus what have become some of the best known verses in the Bible:

JOHN 3 v 16: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*”

John 2v23-3v15

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