

Chapter 3

D. Revelation 4: The New Birth,¹ 3:1–15

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| <p>1. The setting: Nicodemus approached Jesus</p> | <p>There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:</p> |
| <p>a. He came on behalf of the religionists: “We”</p> | <p>2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.</p> |
| <p>b. He acknowledged Jesus only as a teacher from God</p> | |
| <p>c. He asked, “Who are you?”</p> | |
| <p>2. The new birth: A necessity</p> | <p>3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.</p> |
| <p>a. The strong assertion</p> | |
| <p>b. The importance: A person can never see God’s kingdom unless he is born again</p> | |
| <p>3. The new birth: A spiritual event</p> | <p>4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?</p> |
| <p>a. Its source: Being born of the Spirit²</p> | <p>5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and <i>of</i> the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.</p> |
| <p>b. Its importance repeated: No one can enter God’s kingdom unless he is born again</p> | |
| <p>c. Its nature: Spiritual, not physical or material</p> | <p>6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.</p> |
| <p>d. Its absolute necessity: Reemphasized</p> | <p>7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.</p> |

1. The setting: Nicodemus approached Jesus (vv.1–2).
2. The new birth: a necessity (v.3).
3. The new birth: a spiritual event (vv.4–8).
4. The new birth: a true experience (vv.9–11).
5. The new birth: rejected (vv.11–12).
6. The new birth: revealed only by Jesus (v.13).
7. The new birth: secured by two acts (vv.14–15).

Deeper Study # 1

(3:1–15) **New Birth—Born Again—New Creation—Regeneration:** a spiritual birth, a rebirth of one’s spirit, a new life, a renewed soul, a regenerated spirit. It is the regeneration and renewal of one’s spirit and behavior (2 Co. 5:17). It is the provision or infusion of a new life, of a godly nature (2 Pe. 1:4). The new birth is so radical a change in a person’s life that it can be spiritual birth, a birth beyond the grasp of man’s hands and efforts. It is so radical, so life-changing, and so wonderful that it can be wrought only by the love and power of God Himself.

The New Testament teaching on the new birth is rich and full.

1. The new birth is a necessity. A person will never see (Jn. 3:3) nor ever enter (Jn. 3:5) the Kingdom of God unless he is born again (Jn. 3:7).
2. The new birth is a spiritual birth, the birth of a new power and spirit in life. It is not reformation of the old nature (Ro. 6:6). It is the actual creation of a new birth within—spiritually (Jn. 3:5–6; see Jn. 1:12–13; 2 Co. 5:17; Ep. 2:10; 4:24). (See notes—Ep. 1:3; 4:17–19; Deeper Study # 3–4:24.) A person is spiritually born again:
 - a. By water, even the Spirit (see Deeper Study # 2—Jn. 3:5).
 - b. By the will of God (Js. 1:18).
 - c. By incorruptible seed, even by the Word of God (1 Pe. 1:23).
 - d. By God from above (1 Pe. 1:3). The word *again* (*ana*) in the phrase “born again” also means *above*. (See Jn. 1:12–13.)
 - e. By Christ, who gives both the *power and right* to be born again (Jn. 1:12–13).
3. The new birth is a definite experience, a real experience. A person experiences the new birth:
 - a. By believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:1; see Jn. 3:14–15).
 - b. By the gospel as it is shared by believers (1 Co. 4:15; Phm. 10).
 - c. By the Word of God (1 Pe. 1:23) or by the Word of Truth (Js. 1:18).
4. The new birth is a changed life, a totally new life. A person proves that he is born again:

- a. By doing righteous acts (1 Jn. 2:29; see Ep. 2:10; 4:24).
- b. By not practicing sin (1 Jn. 3:9; 5:18).
- c. By loving other believers (1 Jn. 4:7).
- d. By overcoming the world (1 Jn. 5:4).
- e. By keeping himself (1 Jn. 5:18).
- f. By possessing the divine seed or nature (1 Jn. 3:9; 1 Pe. 1:23; 2 Pe. 1:4; see Col. 1:27).

1 (3:1–2) Nicodemus: Nicodemus approached Jesus. Note these facts about Nicodemus.

a. He was a ruler (archon) of the Jews. This means he was a senator or a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews (see Deeper Study # 1—Mt. 26:59).

1) He was a Pharisee (see Deeper Study # 3—Acts 23:8).

2) He was the *master of Israel* (v.10, *ho didaskalos*); that is, he held some official position of the highest rank. He was either the *leading official* or the *leading teacher* of Israel who was either authorized or accepted as such by the public.

3) He apparently was wealthy. He spent a great deal of money on the burial of Jesus (Jn. 19:39).

4) He was silent at the trial of Jesus, saying nothing to defend Jesus, but he boldly stepped forth after the Lord's death to publicly help in the burial of Jesus (Jn. 19:39–42).

b. He came in behalf of the religionists. He said, "We know." Some of the religionists wondered if Jesus were the true Messiah, thinking that perhaps He was. Some eventually become believers (see Lu. 13:31; Acts 6:7; 15:5; 18:8, 17). Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah and performing the spectacular works that were prophesied of the Messiah; therefore, He was the talk of everyone throughout the nation. The rulers were questioning and wondering: Is He really the Messiah? (See notes—Mt. 21:8–9; 21:23.) This was the question, the thing that Nicodemus felt compelled to find out. (See Deeper Study # 2—Mt. 1:18.) Note that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. He apparently did this because he *feared* the other leaders who opposed Jesus. John seemed to be saying this at the burial of Jesus (see Jn. 19:39).

c. He acknowledged Jesus only as a teacher from God. He and others saw the miracles Jesus did, and they knew something: only a man from God could do such miracles.

d. In essence, Nicodemus was asking, "Who are you? The miracles show that God is *with you*, but you are claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Are you—truthfully—in all honesty?"

Note that Jesus did not answer Nicodemus directly. He saw into the empty, searching heart of Nicodemus and saw the honesty of his question. So Jesus went right to the heart of the matter. Miracles and signs were not what was important. What was important was for Nicodemus to be changed: changed spiritually, changed within, and changed completely—to undergo such a spiritual change that it could only be described as being born again.

2 (3:3) New Birth: the new birth is a necessity, an imperative. Two facts show this:

a. The strong assertion, “Except a man be born *again*.” The word “again” (anothen) has three different meanings in Greek. It means ...

- *From the first*: from the beginning or completely and fully (see Lu. 1:3)
- *Again*: a second time, a repeated act (v.4) (see Ga. 4:9)
- *From above*: from the top, which means from God (see Jn. 19:11)

The point is this. A man must be “born *again*.” He must be ...

- born completely and fully, a complete and full change
- born all over *again*, in the sense of a second time
- born *from above*, from God

b. The importance of the words, “cannot see the kingdom of God.” One must be “born again” or else he will never “see” (v.3) nor “enter” (v.5) the Kingdom of God. It is an absolute imperative that a person be born again (3:7). (See Deeper Study # 3, *Kingdom of God*—Mt. 19:23–24.)

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn. 3:18).

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro. 6:23).

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (De. 30:19).

3 (3:4–8) New Birth: the new birth is a spiritual birth. (See note, pt.2—Jn. 3:1–15.) Nicodemus was puzzled by the words “born again.” He did not know what Jesus meant. He understood Jesus to be saying that a man must be born a “second time.” Jesus answered Nicodemus by doing five things.

a. Jesus gave the *source of the new birth*. It was being born of water, even of the Spirit (see Deeper Study # 1, pt.2—Jn. 3:1–15. Also see Deeper Study # 2, *Water*—Jn. 3:5 for discussion.)

b. Jesus *repeated the importance* of being born again. Note what v.3 says: a man “can never see” (grasp, understand, know, experience) the Kingdom of God; v.5 says a man “can never enter” (gain entrance to) the Kingdom of God.

c. Jesus gave the *nature* of the new birth. It is spiritual, not physical and material (see notes—Ep. 1:3; 4:17–19; Deeper Study # 3—4:24). The flesh cannot bridge the gap between flesh and spirit. Flesh is only flesh; it has no power to be born again, to become spirit (see Deeper Study # 1, *Flesh*—Jn. 1:14).

d. Jesus reemphasized the absolute necessity of the new birth. “Ye *must* be born again.” The word *must* (dei) means absolute necessity, an imperative.

e. Jesus illustrated the point by picturing the wind. The Spirit of God works just like the wind. We may not know how the wind works, but we can see the effects. It is the same with the Spirit of God: we may not know *how* He works, but we can see the effects of His working.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn. 1:12–13).

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit. 3:5).

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (Js. 1:18).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again [caused us to be born again] unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pe. 1:3).

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pe. 1:23).

“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (1 Jn. 2:29).

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 Jn. 3:9).

“Beloved, let us love one other: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 Jn. 4:7).

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him” (1 Jn. 5:1).

Deeper Study # 2

(3:5) **Water—Spirit:** the word “*and*” (kai) can also be translated “*even*.” The way it is translated here is left up to the translator. In light of the rest of Scripture, it probably should be translated “*even*.” This would mean that water with all of its cleansing power is a symbol of the Holy Spirit: “Except a man be born of water, even the Spirit, He cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” A strong argument for this is in the very next verse. The new birth is spiritual, apart from any natural phenomenon. It has nothing to do with any physical substance, including water. It is not of the flesh, not of any material thing. It is of the Spirit (see Ro. 8:11; Ep. 2:1).

Is it possible that *water* means “baptism” here? When John was writing the gospel, he and the readers of his gospel would have known what was meant by *Christian baptism*. However, when Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, there was no such thing as Christian baptism. It is unlikely that Jesus would say something that Nicodemus could not grasp and understand. Jesus was not out

to confuse him, but to lead him to be born again. There was no way Nicodemus could be baptized in order to be born again—not then—for Christian baptism had not yet been instituted. (Regardless of our position on baptism, honesty demands that we note this.)

4 (3:9–11) New Birth: the new birth is a true experience, a definite experience (see Deeper Study # 1, pt.3—Jn. 3:1–15). Nicodemus’ heart was touched by what Jesus was saying, and he wished to know what was meant by being “born again.” Note: he did not know, but he wished to know. (Think how many do not even care to know.)

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Co. 2:14).

Note the great tragedy of Nicodemus. He was *the* master of Israel, yet he did not know about spiritual things (see note, pt.1—Jn. 3:1–2). Note the strong assertion of Jesus: “We do know ... we have seen” (v.11. See note—Jn. 3:13 for how Jesus knows about the new birth.)

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Ro. 8:16).

“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Ga. 4:6).

“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1 Th. 1:5).

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Ti. 1:12).

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 2:3).

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him” (1 Jn. 3:18–19).

“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 Jn. 3:24).

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 Jn. 4:13).

“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth” (1 Jn. 5:6).

5 (3:11–12) New Birth: the new birth is rejected. There are two tragic facts here.

a. There are the statements: “ye receive not our witness” and “ye believe not.” Apparently, Nicodemus did not believe and receive Jesus at this point in his life. He did what so many do: he rejected Jesus.

b. It is man’s nature not to believe (see 1 Co. 2:14. See note—Jn. 2:24.)

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son” (1 Jn. 5:10).

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Jn. 1:11).

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48).

6 (3:13) New Birth—Jesus Christ, Son of Man—Mediator: the new birth is revealed only by Jesus. Jesus said two things.

a. He came *down from* (ek, out of) heaven. No man can ascend up into heaven; no man can penetrate the spiritual world. Flesh is flesh, that is, born of the earth; therefore, it is earthly (1 Co. 15:47). However, Jesus Christ was different from all other men. His origin was *out of* heaven, out of the spiritual world and dimension of being. (See Deeper Study # 1—Jn. 3:31; note—1:18; Deeper Study # 1, 2, 3—14:6 for discussion.)

b. He is timeless. “The Son of Man which is in heaven” means His existence and experience are timeless. He is eternal (see note, *Son of Man*—Jn. 1:51).

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.... For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Jn. 6:33, 38).

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (Jn. 6:50–51).

“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me” (Jn. 8:42).

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God” (Jn. 13:3).

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (Jn. 17:5).

7 (3:14–15) New Birth: the new birth is secured by two acts.

a. The first act is Jesus’ death. Jesus illustrated His point by using the Old Testament story of Moses lifting up the bronze serpent in the wilderness (Nu. 21:4–9). The children of Israel had begun to murmur and grumble about the trials of the wilderness, wishing they had never left Egypt. God disciplined them by sending fiery serpents to plague them. The discipline worked; the people repented and begged for mercy. God met the people’s need by telling Moses to make a bronze image of a serpent and to hold it up upon a pole in the midst of the people. The person who looked upon the *lifted up* serpent was healed.

Jesus said that He must be lifted up just as the serpent was lifted up. What did He mean? There are several pictures here.

1) The people of Israel had great need, for they were dying from the poison of the fiery serpents. Men today are dying from the poison of the serpent, the deadly poison of sin.

2) The serpent is a symbol of the evil one, Satan (Ge. 3:1f; Re. 12:9; 20:2). Jesus Christ destroyed the works of the devil by being lifted up (He. 2:14–15); therefore, the serpent’s hanging upon the pole

symbolized the defeat of Satan. By looking upon the *defeated evil* (the serpent), Israel was healed. Today man is healed by looking upon the Son of Man who has been lifted up upon the cross.

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (Jn. 12:31–32).

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (He. 2:14–15).

3) The serpent was a cursed creature from the very beginning (Ge. 3:14–15). Jesus became a curse for man (Ga. 3:13).

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Ga. 3:13).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pe. 2:24).

b. The second act is man’s belief in Jesus. The man who believes in the Son of Man being lifted up ...

- will not perish (see Deeper Study # 2, *Perish*—Jn. 3:16)
- but will have eternal life (see Deeper Study # 2, *Life*—Jn. 1:4; Deeper Study # 1—10:10; Deeper Study # 1—17:2–3).

Note: if an Israelite believed God’s message (the good news of healing), he looked upon the lifted up serpent, and he was healed. If a man did not believe God’s message, he did not look, and he died. Thus it is with us today: every man must believe the message of Christ in order to be healed, that is, be born again.

“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” (Jn. 3:16).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Jn. 5:24).

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:5).

E. Revelation 5: God’s Great Love, 3:16–17

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| <p>1. The fact: God so loved¹</p> <p>2. The evidence: God gave</p> <p>3. The purpose: To save</p> <p>a. From perishing²</p> | <p>16 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.</p> |
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- b. To eternal life
- c. By believing

4. The proof: God sent His Son (the Incarnation)

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

- a. Not to condemn
- b. To save man

5. The means: Through Him

E. Revelation 5: God's Great Love, 3:16–17

(3:16–17) **Introduction:** this is the world's most well-known Scripture. Brief and to the point, Jesus revealed God's great love.

1. The fact: God so loved (v.16).
2. The evidence: God gave (v.16).
3. The purpose: to save (v.16).
4. The proof: God sent His Son (the Incarnation) (v.17).
5. The means: through Him (v.17).

1 (3:16) God, Love of: God so loved the world. He loved the whole world. Note several facts.

a. The idea that God loves the whole world is a new idea. The Jews believed God loved the religious (the true Jew) and hated the non-religious (the Gentiles). The same thoughts are held by many in every generation, especially by *religionists*. The fact that God truly loves is shocking to many. Some wonder and others question how God could possibly love the ...

- vile person
- murderer
- immoral person
- wife beater
- child abuser
- prostitute
- thief
- alcoholic

- street person
- oppressor
- enslaver
- bitter, vengeful

Thought 1. God loves *every man*, not just the religious and the good. He does not love only the people who love Him. He loves everyone, even the unlovely and the unloving, the unbelieving and the obstinate, the selfish and the greedy, the spiteful and the vengeful.

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (Jn. 10:16).

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Ro. 10:12–13).

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Ti. 2:4).

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pe. 3:9).

b. The basis of God’s love is His nature. God is love (1 Jn. 4:8, 16); therefore, He loves. He acts, demonstrates, and shows His love.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Ro. 5:8).

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.... And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 Jn. 4:8, 16).

c. Love acts; it expresses itself. Love does not sit still, doing nothing. It is not dormant, complacent, inactive. If love actually exists, it has to act and express itself; it has to do something good. Love is *loving*; that is, love is always demonstrating love to others. Therefore, God’s love acts and reveals Him to be love.

Thought 1. God wants man to know His love. He wants to reach everyone in the world with His love.

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us” (1 Jn. 3:16).

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 Jn. 4:9).

Deeper Study # 1

(3:16) **God Loved:** past tense. A past, proven fact. An outline of the greatness of God’s love is seen in this verse. (1) Height: God loved. (2) Depth: so loved. (3) Length: God gave. (4) Breadth: whosoever. (See note—Jn. 21:15–17.)

2 (3:16) God, Love, of: there is the evidence of God’s love—God gave His only begotten Son. Note several points.

a. God demonstrated His love in the *most perfect way* possible: He gave His only begotten Son to the world. As God, He is perfect, which means His love is perfect. Therefore, God not only loves, but He *so* loves. He loves to perfection, loves to the ultimate degree. Whatever the ultimate degree and the perfect act and expression of love is, God shows it. Without question, the greatest act of love is the sacrifice of a man’s own life; therefore, God sacrificed the life of His own Son to save man.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13).

b. The word *gave* (edoken) has a twofold meaning. God gave His Son to the world, and He gave His Son to die. The idea of *sacrifice*, of great cost, is in both acts. It cost God dearly to give His Son *up to the world and up to the cross*.

1) He gave up His Son to be separated from Him, *allowing Jesus to leave His presence*, to leave the majesty and glory, worship and honor of heaven. (See note—Mk. 9:2–3.)

2) He gave up His Son to be separated from Him, *allowing Jesus to come to earth ...*

Into a world that was ...

Into a world full of ...

- | | | |
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| • fallen | • darkness | • selfishness |
| • depraved | • hostility | • greed |
| • wicked | • bitterness | • immorality |
| • rebellious | • wrath | • barriers |
| • revolting | • anger | • sin |
| • apostate | • war | • shame |

3) He gave up His Son to be separated from Him, *allowing Jesus to die* for the sins of men (see Deeper Study # 2—Mt. 26:37–38).

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:5).

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6).

“In due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Ro. 5:6).

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Ro. 8:32).

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Co. 15:3).

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Co. 5:21).

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2 Co. 9:15).

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Ga. 3:13).

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (He. 2:9).

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (He. 9:28).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pe. 2:24).

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pe. 3:18).

c. A most glorious evidence of God’s love is that God took the *initiative* to save man. Man did not seek to save himself; God sought to save him. God gave His Son so that we might be forgiven and saved. God is the seeking *Savior*.

God is not ...

- angry
- unloving
- unforgiving

God does not ...

- hate men
- have to be persuaded to love men
- have to be convinced to forgive men

“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (Je. 31:3).

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Ep. 2:4–5).

d. The most glorious truth is that God gave His *only begotten Son*. This is the most remarkable proof of God’s love. It magnifies and shows how great His love really is. He was willing to give the thing most dear to His heart in order to save the world. Note this: God even planned to give His Son throughout eternity.

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Ac. 2:23–24).

3 (3:16) Salvation: there is the purpose of God’s love: to save men. God’s purpose in giving His Son was threefold.

a. To save men from perishing (see Deeper Study # 2, *Perish*—Jn. 3:16).

b. To save men to eternal life (see Deeper Study # 2—Jn. 1:4; Deeper Study # 1—10:10; Deeper Study # 1—17:2–3).

c. To save men through belief (see Deeper Study # 2—Jn. 2:24). Note: this fact says that salvation is conditional.

Deeper Study # 2

(3:16) **Perish—Perishing** (apoletai): to be lost, to destroy utterly, to lose utterly, to lose eternal life, to be spiritually destitute, to be cut off.

1. Perishing means to be in a lost state in this world. It means to be ...

- aging, deteriorating, decaying, dying. (See Deeper Study #2—Mt. 8:17; notes—1 Co. 15:50; Col. 2:13; Deeper Study #1—2 Pe. 1:4.)
- without life (purpose, meaning, significance). (See Deeper Study #2—Jn. 1:4; Deeper Study #1—10:10; Deeper Study #1—17:2–3.)
- without peace (assurance, confidence, security in God’s keeping). (See note—Jn. 14:27.)
- without hope (of living forever). (See Deeper Study #1—2 Ti. 4:18.)

2. Perishing means to be in a lost state in the world to come. It means ...

- having to die
- facing judgment
- being condemned
- suffering separation from God and all loved ones
- experiencing all that hell is

(See Deeper Study #2—Mt. 5:22; Deeper Study #4—Lu. 16:24; Deeper Study #1—He. 9:27.)

4 (3:17) God, Love of: there is the proof of God's love, the Incarnation. God actually sent His Son into the world (see notes—Jn. 1:14).

a. Christ was not sent to condemn or to judge the world. That was not His purpose. However, we, the world, deserve to be judged and condemned.

⇒ We are guilty both of breaking God's law and of coming short of God's glory (Ro. 3:23).

⇒ We are convicted (Ro. 3:9–18; see Ro. 1:18–32).

b. Christ was sent to save the world. His purpose was to save us from perishing and to save us to eternal life. (See Deeper Study # 1—1 Co. 1:18.)

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Lu. 2:11).

“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28).

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lu. 19:10).

5 (3:17) Salvation—Jesus Christ, Mediator: there is the means of salvation. Salvation is *through Him* (Christ Jesus) and through Him alone.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Ti. 1:15).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Ti. 2:5).

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 Jn. 4:14).

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Tit. 3:4–7).

“Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (Jn. 4:42).

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6).

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Ac. 4:12).

“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Ac. 5:31).

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (He. 7:25).

F. Revelation 6: Man's Condemnation, 3:18–21

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|--|--|
| <p>1. Who is condemned: Not the believer but the unbeliever</p> | <p>18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.</p> |
| <p>2. When is he condemned: Already</p> | |
| <p>3. Why is he condemned</p> | |
| <p>a. He has not believed in Christ, the Son of God</p> | |
| <p>b. Light has come into the world</p> | <p>19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.</p> |
| <p>c. He loves darkness; loves his evil, his sin</p> | |
| <p>d. He does not come to the light</p> | <p>20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.</p> |
| <p>4. Who escapes condemnation</p> | <p>21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.</p> |
| <p>a. He who practices truth</p> | |
| <p>b. He who comes to the light</p> | |
| <p>c. He whose works are done through God</p> | |

F. Revelation 6: Man's Condemnation, 3:18–21

(3:18–21) **Introduction:** God sent His Son into the world to save the world, but this does not mean that everyone is automatically saved. In fact, some are condemned and doomed. Jesus reveals man's condemnation.

1. Who is condemned: not the believer but the unbeliever (v.18).
2. When is he condemned: already (v.18).
3. Why is he condemned (vv.18–20).
4. Who escapes condemnation (v.21).

1 (3:18) Condemnation—Faith: Who is condemned? Not the believer, but the unbeliever.

a. The believer is not condemned. Note three facts.

1) The critical importance of belief cannot be overstressed. Belief stays, prevents, arrests, and stops judgment. The person who *believes on Christ* ...

- is acquitted as though he never sinned
- is released
- is not to be captivated again (by guilt, fear, bondage, shame)
- is not to be condemned (judged)
- is not to be dealt with in justice

2) The believer is saved. He is as guilty as the unbeliever, but there is one critical difference: the believer believes on Jesus Christ and has committed his life to Him. The believer is actively and diligently seeking Christ (He. 11:6). God will save any man who will believe and seek and honor His Son (see Jn. 12:26. See Deeper Study # 2—Jn. 2:24; note—3:17.)

3) The believer is released from condemnation because he believes on Christ. The believer believes that Christ died for his sins, in his place, as his substitute, paying the penalty for his sins (which was death).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Jn. 5:24).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Ro. 8:1).

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Ro. 8:34. See Deeper Study # 1, 2—Ro. 4:22; note—5:1.)

b. The unbeliever is condemned. Note two critical points.

1) Note who the unbeliever is. He is the person who has “not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” God has *only one* begotten Son. The man who *has not already* believed on God’s Son is the unbeliever. It does not matter who the man is or where he is; he is an unbeliever if he *has not already* believed on the only begotten Son of God.

2) Note what it means to be condemned or judged. (See Deeper Study # 2, *Perish*—Jn. 3:16 for discussion.)

2 (3:18) Judgment—Condemnation: When is the unbeliever condemned? Already, right now. It is not that he is to be condemned; he is already condemned. At least three things are meant by being “judged already” (*ede kekritai*).

a. Condemnation is a sure fact. The unbeliever’s judgment is sure, so sure it is as though he has already been condemned. Nothing can change or stop the judgment from coming upon the unbeliever. Ignoring,

denying, and struggling against the great day of judgment will not change one detail of the day. It is coming, and every single unbeliever will be judged.

b. The unbeliever is *already* under the present curse of sin. He is ...

- without Christ
- an alien from the people of God
- a stranger to the promises of God
- without hope
- without God in the world (Ep. 2:12)

(See Deeper Study # 2, pt.1, *Perish*—Jn. 3:16 for a description of what this means.)

c. The unbeliever already stands guilty of all the sins he has ever committed; he is already condemned. The law of God already exists. Every time a man breaks the law of God, he immediately becomes guilty and is condemned. The judgment is already pronounced. The unbeliever must pay the penalty for every transgression of God's law. He is already *under the curse, the full force* of the law.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Ga. 3:10).

“And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them” (Ga. 3:12).

3 (3:18–20) Condemnation: Why is the unbeliever condemned? Four reasons are given.

a. The unbeliever has not believed. The great sin of unbelief is that it neglects, ignores, denies, abuses, and rejects God's Son.

- ⇒ The dignity of God's Son is ignored (see note—Jn. 1:1–2).
- ⇒ The truth of God's Son is not believed (see notes—Jn. 1:14).
- ⇒ The goodness of God's Son is not embraced (see notes—Jn. 1:14).
- ⇒ The dearest thing to God's heart is denied (see notes—Jn. 3:16).
- ⇒ The name that is above every name is abused and cursed (Ph. 2:9).
- ⇒ The only begotten Son of God is rejected (Jn. 3:16–19).

Christ is the great remedy for man's sins. Therefore, unbelief—rejecting and refusing to believe Him—is the great damning sin.

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn. 3:36).

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (Jn. 8:24).

b. The unbeliever is condemned because Light has come into the world. The Light came into the world to give light to men, to enable men to walk out of the darkness of a sinful and perishing world. The Light came to show men the way, the truth, and the life:

⇒ The Light shows man the way God intends for him to live.

⇒ The Light shows man the truth of life, that is, the truth of God and of man and of the world that surrounds man.

⇒ The Light shows man the life, that is, how to save his life and avoid the things that cause him to stumble and lose his life.

The point is this: the life of Jesus Christ now stands in the world to give Light. Any man who does not turn and walk in the Light is naturally in the dark. He is condemned to the darkness and to all that happens to those who walk in the darkness. (See Deeper Study # 1, *Light*—Jn. 1:9; Deeper Study # 1—8:12.)

c. The unbeliever is condemned because he loves darkness. Why would he love darkness? Because his deeds are evil, and to turn and walk in the Light would expose his evil deeds for what they are: immoral, unrighteous, and disobedient to God. There are at least four reasons why man prefers to walk in darkness and prefer to hang on to his sins.

1) The unbeliever loves his sin and does not want to turn and face the conviction of the Light. If he turned to the Light, He would have to give up his sin; and he loves the feeling, the stimulation, the comfort, the ease, the challenge, the recognition, the power, the fame, the possessions, the things which the sin brings. He loves it all too much to give it up.

2) The unbeliever is full of pride. He does not want to confess his sin, the fact that he is in darkness and short of what God demands. He denies he is in darkness, refusing to turn to the Light (Christ).

3) The unbeliever is enslaved, in bondage to sin and gripped by the darkness; he has been in darkness so long that he does not have the strength to break the enslavement.

4) The unbeliever fears the shame, embarrassment, and consequence of his sin. In some cases he would like to confess his evil and correct it, but fear keeps him from coming out and facing the Light (Christ).

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.... And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ep. 5:3–6, 11).

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night” (1 Th. 5:4, 6–7).

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 Jn. 1:6).

“They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course” (Ps. 82:5).

“The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble” (Pr. 4:19).

d. The unbeliever is condemned because he does not come to the Light. Whatever his reasons, the unbeliever refuses to come to the Light; therefore, he is condemned.

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Ro. 13:12).

“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mt. 15:14).

“Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord” (Je. 23:12).

“And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung” (Zep. 1:17).

Thought 1. The unbeliever is uncomfortable in the Light. Therefore, he shuns everything that presents the Light to him: the church, believers, the Bible, prayer, and spiritual conversation.

Note that unbelievers are said to hate the Light. They ignore, reject, deny, and fight the Light. They speak and write against it, ridicule and curse it, persecute and seek to stamp it out.

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (Jn. 1:4–5).

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12).

“Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth” (Jn. 12:35).

“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (Jn. 12:46).

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Co. 4:6).

“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Ep. 5:14).

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Is. 9:2).

4 (3:21) Condemnation: Who escapes condemnation? The man who does three things.

a. The man who practices truth and lives righteously escapes condemnation. He knows what is right and he does it. The verb is continuous action. He practices truth, continually and habitually. Note two things about this man.

1) This does not mean he lives perfectly, without ever sinning. No man is or can be perfect. It means that the man directs his life toward truth: diligently seeks the truth and seeks to be truthful. He may slip and sin, but he immediately turns back to God, repenting and hanging on to his integrity.

2) Christ said that the man who does truth hears His voice (Jn. 18:37; 1 Jn. 1:6). Only the man who desires truth is saved, and every man who comes to the truth is saved. Christ is truth.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:32).

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6).

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:6–7).

“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father” (2 Jn. 4).

“For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth” (3 Jn. 3).

“For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth” (Ps. 26:3).

“Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name” (Ps. 86:11).

b. The man who comes to the Light escapes condemnation. Only the Light (Christ) can dispel the darkness in a man’s life (see Deeper Study # 1—Jn. 1:9).

c. The man whose works are wrought in God escapes condemnation. The word *wrought* (eirgasmena) means to work, produce, perform, originate, manufacture, and fashion from something. The idea is that the man *comes to Christ* (the Light) so that his works will be “wrought,” originated, and worked in and of God. The man who comes to Christ lives close to God. He walks and talks and listens to God (His Word), and he does what God says (see 2 Co. 1:12).

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 5:16).

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (Jn. 14:21).

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1 Ti. 6:17–18).

“In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Tit. 2:7).

“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (He. 13:16).

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Js. 2:17).

DIVISION III

The Revelation of Jesus, the New Master, 3:22–36

III. The Revelation of Jesus, the New Master, 3:22–36

1. The setting for the revelation

a. Jesus & His disciples were baptizing in Judea

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

b. John & his disciples were baptizing close by

23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

c. The two basic questions of life were asked by John’s disciples

25 Then there arose a question between *some* of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying.

1) Who really purifies man’s heart?

2) Who is the supreme Master, the One who should be followed?

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him.

2. Answer 1: Jesus alone was God’s appointed Messiah

a. God alone appoints men

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

b. God had not appointed John as the Messiah but as the forerunner

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

3. Answer 2: Jesus alone was the Bridegroom

- a. He is the One by whom the friend stands
- b. He is the voice that is to be heard
- c. He is the cause of joy

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

- d. He is the only object of loyalty

30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

4. Answer 3: Jesus alone was from above—from heaven

- a. Meaning: "Out of"¹
- b. Result: Jesus is above all

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

5. Answer 4: Jesus alone was God's Spokesman

- a. He testifies
- b. Some reject His testimony
- c. Some accept & seal His testimony^{DS2}

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

- d. Proof: He was sent from God & speaks God's Word^{DS3}

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

6. Answer 5: Jesus alone had the Spirit without limit

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.

7. Answer 6: Jesus alone determines man's destiny

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| a. | To believe Him brings eternal life ⁴ | 36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting |
| b. | Not to believe Him brings wrath ⁵ | life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. |

(3:22–36) **Introduction:** this passage does one thing—it points to Jesus Christ as the New Master, the One whom God has set before man as the only Master worthy of serving.

1. The setting for the revelation (vv.22–26).
2. Answer 1: Jesus alone was God’s appointed Messiah (vv.27–28).
3. Answer 2: Jesus alone was the Bridegroom (vv.29–30).
4. Answer 3: Jesus alone was from above—from heaven (v.31).
5. Answer 4: Jesus alone was God’s Spokesman (vv.32–34).
6. Answer 5: Jesus alone had the Spirit without limit (v.34).
7. Answer 6: Jesus alone determines man’s destiny (vv.35–36).

1 (3:22–26) Jesus Christ, Baptized: the setting for the revelation. After His interview with Nicodemus, Jesus moved out into the country districts of Judaea.

a. Jesus and His disciples were baptizing. The word *tarried* (diatriben) means to spend time with. It has the idea of spending *much time* in sharing and ministering. Note the statement: He baptized. This is the only place in Scripture where Jesus is said to baptize, though strictly speaking it was His disciples who actually did the baptizing (Jn. 4:2). It was His baptizing that set the ground for what was now to happen.

b. John and his disciples were also baptizing in Aenon, which was near to Salim. Nothing is known about either place beyond what is mentioned here.

People began to flock from John to Jesus. This decline in John’s popularity gave the religionists an opportunity to attack John. They attacked him by asking his disciples a crucial question, and in their questioning, they stirred the two basic questions of life.

c. The religionists questioned the purifying value of John’s baptism. They thought he must be a sham, a false prophet. If John’s baptism were really cleansing the people’s hearts and giving them a sense of cleanliness, why were the people now flocking to Jesus? If his baptism were really meeting the people’s needs, they would continue to come to him for cleansing. Instead, they were deserting him and flocking to Jesus.

This charge, of course, cut John’s disciples to the core, so they asked John why all men were now turning to Jesus instead of remaining with him.

Note how the question of purifying strikes at the two basic questions of life.

- 1) There is the question of purifying and cleansing. Can the human heart really be cleansed? Can the need of men for cleansing really be met?

2) There is the question of supremacy, of a man's Master in life. Who is man to follow? To whom should men turn for cleansing? To other men such as religious leaders, or to Jesus Christ?

Thought 1. Note two tragic facts.

(1) Every man seeks the cleansing of his heart from someplace. He seeks release from sensing wrong and failure; He seeks some dissolving of guilt. However, few seek cleansing in Christ. They seem to seek cleansing everywhere except in Christ:

- ⇒ in religion
- ⇒ in attending church enough to salve their conscience and give a feeling of acceptance by God
- ⇒ in giving to charity
- ⇒ in doing some good deed for others
- ⇒ in being loyal to some good man's teaching or leadership

(2) Every man follows some master and gives his allegiance to something, whether person or thing (see Mt. 6:24; Lu. 16:13; Ro. 6:16).

Thought 2. Note a significant point: only Christ can purify a man's heart and give him true cleansing from sin.

2 (3:27–28) Jesus Christ, Messiah—Ministers: first, Jesus alone was God's appointed Messiah. John answered the questions by pointing to Jesus Christ. He alone was Messiah, God's appointed One.

a. God is the One who appoints men.

- ⇒ He is God, so He has the right to appoint men
- ⇒ He calls men to be His servants
- ⇒ He appoints those men to a particular service and equips those men with gifts

No man can receive a *true* appointment, a *true* service, or a *true* gift unless it is given from heaven, that is, from God Himself. All appointments and gifts that have not come from heaven *are false*.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Js. 1:17).

"And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability" (Mt. 25:15).

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us" (Ro. 12:6).

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Co. 4:7).

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Co. 12:4).

"But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Jb. 32:8).

b. God did not appoint John to be the Messiah but to be the forerunner. John was clear about this. He was not the Messiah; Jesus Christ was. Note several points:

⇒ John's strong witness about Christ's being the Messiah

⇒ John's clear understanding of who he himself was and what his specific appointment and ministry were (the forerunner)

⇒ John's humility

Thought 1. Jesus Christ is the Messiah; He *alone* is the One appointed from heaven. This is the strong declaration of John.

“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 16:15–17).

“But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mt. 26:63–64).

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Lu. 24:25–26).

“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he” (Jn. 4:25–26).

“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him” (Jn. 8:28–29).

Thought 2. The true servants of God are appointed to their service and ministry by God. This says several things.

(1) The servant serves God and God alone.

(2) The servant can trust God to take care of him and his ministry.

(3) The servant should be humble.

⇒ He should not envy others, for every servant's ministry is special to God and necessary to His plan of salvation.

⇒ He should be satisfied in his service and ministry, for he is there by God's appointment.

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (Jn. 15:16).

3 (3:29–30) Jesus Christ, Bridegroom—Humility—Ministers, Purpose: John declared that Jesus was the Bridegroom. The bridegroom is the One who has the bride (the church, the followers of God). The friend is important, but he is not the bridegroom. John said four things about Jesus as the Bridegroom.

a. The Bridegroom (Christ) is the One by whom the friend stands. It is true that the friend (God’s servant) is important, for he takes care of matters for the bridegroom, and he has the privilege of bringing the bride to the bridegroom. But there is only one Bridegroom, and He is the focus of the friend’s attention.

b. The Bridegroom’s (Christ’s) voice is the voice to be heard. His voice is the important voice. His will is the will to be done: serving Him and doing what He says are what is important.

c. The Bridegroom (Christ) is the cause of joy. It is not the friend who brings joy to the bride or to the guests and community; it is the Bridegroom. Everyone’s joy is found in seeing the Bridegroom’s will done and in seeing Him pleased.

d. The Bridegroom (Christ) is the only object of loyalty. The words “He” and “I” are an *emphatic contrast* (v.30). That is to say, there is a *compulsion* to lift up the Person and the honor of the Bridegroom. In no sense nor in any place does the servant try to draw attention, praise, or honor toward himself.

⇒ The servant draws back and shrinks from attention, decreasing himself in the eyes of all. He does nothing for himself but does *all for the Bridegroom*, for His honor and increase.

⇒ The servant focuses attention upon the Bridegroom: pushes Him out front, increases His presence and stature before everyone.

“All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (Jn. 5:23).

“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” (Ro. 14:9).

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Ph. 2:5–9).

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).

“For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house” (He. 3:3).

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Re. 5:13).

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Re. 19:7).

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 29:2).

“O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Ps. 34:3).

“Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders” (Ps. 107:32).

“O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth” (Is. 25:1).

“Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord” (Obad. 4).

4 (3:31) Revelation—Heaven: third, Jesus alone was from above, that is, from heaven. Note two things.

a. The meaning of “from above” is significant (see Deeper Study # 1—Jn. 3:31).

b. The words “above all” are mentioned twice; they are very important. They mean superior and preeminent. Jesus, who came from heaven (out of the dimension of heaven), was the Superior and preeminent One. He was above all. The reasons He was “above all” are twofold.

1) His origin was “from above.” He was not of the earth, not earthly. Men are. Men are born of the flesh, that is, they are born of a man and woman who live on earth. Therefore, men are of the earth and are earthly. But not Jesus. He was “from heaven”—*out of* God Himself. Therefore, He was superior and preeminent. (See Deeper Study # 1, *Flesh* pt.4—Jn. 1:14.)

2) A man can only speak of the earth and of earthly things. He comes *only* out of the earth; therefore, he can know *only* earthly things. When he speaks of heavenly things, he only shares his *ideas* and *speculations*, for he has never been to heaven. Therefore, the only conceivable way for man to know anything about heaven is for Someone from heaven to come and tell him. (See notes—Jn. 1:18; 3:13; Deeper Study # 1, 2, 3—14:6.)

Deeper Study # 1

(3:31) **“From Above”—Jesus Christ:** Jesus came *out of* (ek) the spiritual world into the physical world, out of the heavenly dimension of being into the earthly dimension of being. Jesus came out of ...

- the incorruptible world into the corruptible world
- the glorious world into the dishonorable world
- the powerful world into the weak world
- the spiritual world into the natural world (see 1 Co. 15:42–44.)

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (Jn. 3:13).

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.... For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Jn. 6:33, 38).

“The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?” (Jn. 6:41–42).

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (Jn. 6:50–51).

“This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever” (Jn. 6:58).

“What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” (Jn. 6:62).

“And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world” (Jn. 8:23).

“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me” (Jn. 8:42).

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God” (Jn. 13:3).

“Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God” (Jn. 16:30).

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (Jn. 17:5).

“The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven” (1 Co. 15:47).

5 (3:32–34) Jesus Christ, Apostle; God’s Spokesman: fourth, Jesus alone was God’s Spokesman. Jesus was “from above,” *out of the dimension of heaven*; therefore, He had seen and heard the truth of heaven.

a. Jesus testified, revealed, and proclaimed what He had seen and heard. He was the Spokesman of God who revealed heaven and the truth of it. (See Deeper Study # 3, *Kingdom of God*—Mt. 19:23–24.) He is the only One who can share heaven with men.

b. Most men reject His testimony. Note the words “*no man*”—this simply means the vast, vast majority of men (see v.33 where some few do receive His words). So many men reject the Lord’s words that it can be said that “no man” receives His message.

c. Some few men do receive and seal the Lord’s testimony (see Deeper Study # 2—Jn. 3:33).

d. The proof that Jesus was God’s Spokesman is clearly stated without any equivocation.

⇒ Jesus was sent from God. He was the *Apostle of God* (see Deeper Study # 3—Jn. 3:34).

⇒ Therefore, He spoke the Words of God. Whatever He said was the Word of God. How can we be sure? Because God sent Him and gave His Spirit *without measure* to Him.

1) He was the Apostle of God.

“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Jn. 6:38).

“But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me” (Jn. 7:29).

“I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me” (Jn. 8:42).

“Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (Jn. 10:36).

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jn. 17:21).

2) He is the Spokesman of God.

“He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God” (Jn. 3:34).

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (Jn. 6:63).

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68).

“Never man spake like this man” (Jn. 7:46).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death” (Jn. 8:51).

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48).

“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me” (Jn. 14:24).

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me” (Jn. 17:8).

“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away” (Mk. 13:31).

“And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?” (Lu. 4:22).

“And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power” (Lu. 4:32).

Deeper Study # 2

(3:33) **Seal:** a man’s seal was affixed to a document to show he agreed with it. He reckoned it as legal, binding, valid, authentic. A seal guaranteed that the record was true and genuine. When a man receives the testimony of Jesus, he shows that God is true. Conversely, the only way a man can show that God is true is to accept the testimony of Jesus (see Jn. 6:27).

Deeper Study # 3

(3:34) **“God has Sent”—Jesus Christ, Origin:** Jesus is the Apostle of God. He is God’s Ambassador, God’s perfect Spokesman. It should be noted that God poured out His Spirit *without measure* upon Jesus—the only apostle upon whom this was ever done. See Jn. 4:34; 5:23–24, 30, 36–37; 6:38–40, 44, 57; 7:16, 18; 8:16, 42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44–45, 49; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.)

6 (3:34) Jesus Christ, Fullness of Spirit: fifth, Jesus alone had the full measure of the Spirit. There was no limit to the Spirit’s ...

- presence
- call
- equipping
- blessings
- fullness
- appointment
- work

The Spirit was of the same Being with Jesus, in perfect harmony, communion, and fellowship with Jesus. He was given to Jesus in a way far different than He was given to other men. There was no measure of His presence with Jesus. Jesus had the perfect and full measure of the Spirit. The purpose for the full measure was clearly stated by Jesus.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lu. 4:18–19).

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Ac. 10:38).

7 (3:35–36) God, Love for Christ—Man, Destiny: sixth, Jesus alone determines man’s destiny.

a. There has never been a more tender statement than “the Father loves the Son.” God loves His Son beyond anything that could ever be understood. How much does God love Him? So much that He has given all things into the hands of His Son: all power, all authority, all rule, all reign, all supremacy, all dominion, all honor, all glory, all praise, all worship, all service. As clearly and as simply as can be said, all things have been given to God’s only Son. There is nothing existing that has not been given to Him.

“[Jesus Christ] who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Pe. 3:22).

b. There are four primary reasons why God loves His Son so much.

⇒ Jesus is God's *only* Son, the Son in His very own bosom (see note—Jn. 1:18).

⇒ Jesus is God's only *begotten* Son, the Son who willingly partook of flesh and came into the world to save men, thereby fulfilling the will of God perfectly (see notes—Jn. 1:14).

⇒ Jesus gave Himself as an *offering* and a *sacrifice to God Himself*. (See note—Ep. 5:2.)

⇒ Jesus willingly learned perfect obedience by the things which He suffered (see notes—Jn. 13:31–32; He. 5:5–10).

c. The man who believes *on* the Son has everlasting life (see Deeper Study # 2—Jn. 1:4; Deeper Study # 1—10:10; Deeper Study # 1—17:2–3). God will receive and honor anyone who receives and honors His Son whom He loves so much. It does not matter who the person is or what the person has done. If the person believes on God's only Son, God gives everlasting life to him.

d. The man who does not believe the Son faces two things.

1) He will not see life. He perishes (see Deeper Study # 2, *Perish*—Jn. 3:16).

2) The wrath of God abides on him (see Deeper Study # 5—Jn. 3:36).

Deeper Study # 4

(3:36) **Believe Not** (ho apeithon): to obey not. If a person does not obey, he does not really believe. Conversely, if a person really believes, he obeys. (See note and Deeper Study #2—Jn. 2:24; Deeper Study #1—He. 5:9.)

Deeper Study # 5

(3:36) **Wrath** (orge): anger, temper, indignation. It is not an uncontrolled, unthinking, violent reaction. It is deep, permanent, settled, thoughtful, controlled anger and temper.

There is another Greek word which also means wrath (thumos), and it is also used of God's wrath. Thumos is anger that arises more quickly, blazes forth, and just as quickly cools down. It is an anger that is more turbulent, more sudden, but the agitation lasts for only a short period of time. This simply means that God does not dodge His responsibility to execute justice and to punish injustice and sin (see Ro. 1:22). His wrath is His ...

- anger against sin
- reaction against unrighteousness
- opposition to the injustices of men
- punishment of evil and wicked men

The wrath or anger of God is aroused for four reasons

1. Men do not believe on the Son of God. They allow their hearts to become hardened and impenitent (Ro. 2:5). They spurn and wound God's love—rejecting, abusing, cursing and denying His Son, the dearest thing to His heart (Jn. 3:36; 2 Th. 1:7–9. See notes—Jn. 3:18–20; 3:35–36.)
2. Men reject God's mercy, which is ever attempting to reach out and save them (Ro. 2:3–6).
3. Men transgress God's law (Ro. 1:18f; Col. 3:6).
4. Men sin and come short of God's will, violating His holiness (Ep. 5:6).

God's wrath is real and active. God is holy, righteous, and pure as well as loving, gracious, and merciful. He executes justice as well as love. He shows wrath and anger as well as compassion. His wrath is both present and future.

1. God's wrath is present and active in this life. His wrath abides upon men now. His wrath is manifested against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Ro. 1:18). God punishes sin in this life by giving men up ...

- to uncleanness
- to vile affections
- to reprobate minds

2. God's wrath is future and it is to be actively executed in the next life (see Deeper Study #2—Mt. 5:22; Deeper Study #4—Lu. 16:24; Deeper Study #1—He. 9:27). God will punish sin by giving men up ...

- to everlasting fire (Mt. 25:41; 25:46)
- to hell (Mt. 5:22)
- to outer darkness (Mt. 8:12)
- to weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12)
- to the Lake of Fire (Re. 20:15)

3. God's wrath will be especially manifested and active in the last days (see Re. 6:16; 11:8; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15).

DIVISION IV¹

¹ Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2004). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (pp. 58–76). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.