

# John 2:23 - 3:15

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Preacher: Kent Leonard

[0:00] Good morning. I'm Kent. I'm a member here at Shoreline, and I am very thankful that I get to open up God's word to John chapter 3 this morning.

! Thanks Brad for that. So it is Mother's Day, so Happy Mother's Day. I do want to say that, but we know that this is also a difficult day.

This is my wife's first Mother's Day, but I think it's the first time in three years that we've been on a Mother's Day. So we know how difficult it is to struggle with infertility, but the book of John is a comfort in these times of evil.

And that is one of the questions, like the greatest question that Christians face. Why evil? And I think John gives us a really clear answer of that.

I might not be able to, you know, give any philosophical word about why evil. You know, that question can really dig deep into our minds.

[1:19] If God is, we say that God is all loving, or at least loving, gracious. He's all powerful. He's all knowing. And that question is, then why evil?

Why does he allow certain things to happen? But the picture in John is that it's not God sitting back and watching us in our suffering, but it's the word becoming flesh and joining us in our suffering.

And that's a beautiful picture. And so in the book of John, he wrote this to encourage people who were suffering, in a sense. He wrote around A.D. 90, somewhere between A.D. 90 and A.D. 95 to be precise.

And he saw the struggle of Jews. In A.D. 70, the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. So they had nowhere to worship. And John is writing this for evangelical purposes, to Jews and those who either have already converted to Judaism, or were thinking about converting to Judaism.

And he's saying that the temple doesn't matter. We have a better temple. We have Jesus. We have Jesus now. And Jesus in chapter 2 is the Lamb of God, who doesn't just cover our sins, but takes away completely our sins.

[2:48] He's a better Lamb of God. Isn't that awesome? And then here in John chapter 3, he doesn't just... Our hearts are not just cleansed.

Our hearts are not just covered by the blood. Our hearts are made completely and totally new. And that is such a cool picture. Our hearts are turned from hearts of stone to hearts of flesh through the work of God.

But let's start with reading this text, starting in verse 23 of chapter 2. So John 2, 23.

And it says, 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 Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people, and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 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.

[4:06] Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 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? Jesus answered, Truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from, or where it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 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. If I have told you earthly things, and you do not believe me, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

[ 5 : 14 ] No one has ascended into heaven, except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Let's pray. God, we open up your word, and we pray that you speak to us right now. God, impress upon us the importance of these words, and all the words in your word.

Let us submit to your authority, God. Change us according to your word. Sanctify us in your truth. I pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. All right, so, oh, that's wrong. Oh, of course. So, principles of the new birth.

So, first, the necessity of the new birth. Let's look at, starting in chapter 3, I'm going to introduce you to one of the main characters, Nicodemus.

[ 6 : 28 ] Right? And I lost my notes. Of course. Well, we're going to go with it. So, Nicodemus.

Who is Nicodemus? Starting in verse 1. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. First of all, he was a man. Right? What an astute observation.

But I'm not talking about his gender or his sex. He is a man, but he is a created being. Right? And he's in contrast to Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh.

But also, it moves this, this, now there was a man, actually moves the context through. For some reason, and I don't know if you know this, and I'm sure I don't have to say it, but I'm going to, chapter sections were not original to the original text.

Right? John did not put in verses or chapters, and the guy who did, very thankful for him, but he didn't necessarily do a great job every time. And this is, this is one of those times, right?

[ 7 : 37 ] So, chapter 3 probably should have started at verse 23 of chapter 2. So, now when he was in Jerusalem, I'm going to read verse 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 Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people, and needed no one to bear witness about man. For he himself knew what was in man, and there was a man of the Pharisees.

So, it flows right in to Nicodemus. So, he's a man, and the idea is that Nicodemus is this representative of the people in verse 23, who, when they saw, you know, Jesus' signs and heard his teaching, they believed in his name, right?

And when we see that, we would say, you know, praise God, that's awesome. They believed in his name. But keep reading in verse 24, it says, but Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people, and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

So, Nicodemus is kind of a picture of these people from Jerusalem who saw signs and believed in his name, but they did not believe unto salvation.

[ 9 : 01 ] So, the idea is that the way that they believed was just intellectual ascent. It wasn't a movement of the heart. It wasn't a movement of the spirit. It was just something that they saw with their eyes and believed with their heads.

It did not penetrate into their hearts, right? And let me go back just a little bit. So, I said that it's a contrast between God, Jesus in the flesh, God in the flesh, Jesus, and a man.

So, think about what it says here, for he himself knew what was in man. Who knows what is in man? God. Psalm 44, 20 through 21, If we had forgotten the name of our God, or spread out our hands to a foreign God, would not God discover this?

For he knows the secrets of the heart. 1 Kings 8, verse 39, it says, For you and you only know the hearts of all the children of mankind.

God. So, Jesus is, or John is emphasizing the deity of Jesus. Jesus. And so, Nicodemus.

[ 10 : 13 ] Back to Nicodemus. He's a man. He is a Pharisee. He's a, so the Pharisees are a religious political party in Palestine, the New Testament.

And just briefly, let's forget about all of our presuppositions that we have of the Pharisees.

Obviously, they're not, not great, right? Jesus called them a brood of vipers.

John called them a brood of viper. Vipers. They were hypocrites. But let's, let's see this text through the eyes of the reader, the recipient of, of this gospel, of this narrative in AD 80, 80, 90, and at Jesus's time in AD 30, 33.

So let's think of the Pharisees through those eyes. They were, they were known for insisting that the law of God be observed exactly as the scribes interpreted it.

That sounds great. Like what God's word says, we should live by it. We should, we should live by exactly what God's word says. And they were also known for their special commitment to keeping the laws of tithing and ritual purity.

[ 11 : 23 ] Like these sound like really great things. But as a Pharisee, Nicodemus would have been very highly respected. So continue on.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. And that is most likely referring to the Sanhedrin. And the Sanhedrin was the highest ruling body and court of justice among the Jewish people in that time.

And he was also an observer of Jesus' ministry. So 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.

So he's seen signs. He's seen, he's heard teachings. We don't know exactly the signs that, that Jesus has, or that Nicodemus has seen. So far up to the narrative, we've had one miraculous sign and one messianic sign.

The miraculous sign is the turning the water into the wine. And that was actually not at the Passover. That was in Cana of Galilee, which is far north of Jerusalem.

[ 12 : 31 ] And it was likely that Nicodemus wasn't there. And it was kind of quiet. So Nicodemus probably didn't see that. So we don't know exactly what signs that he has seen, but obviously they were impactful on him.

So he was an observer. He observed the signs that Jesus did. He observed, he heard the teachings. And then in verse nine, Jesus says, Jesus calls him the teacher of Israel.

Actually, it's verse 10. Jesus answered him, are you the teacher of Israel? And yet you do not understand. This could possibly be a title for Nicodemus.

At the very least, it shows that he was one of the greatest and most respected teacher of the day. So he is highly respected, right, by these people who would be reading this text and the people of Jesus's day, highly respected.

And to kind of sum it up, Nicodemus was the moral elite, the intellectual elite, and the spiritual elite of his time.

[ 13 : 48 ] But despite all of this, despite his position, his education, his outward spirituality, Nicodemus still needed to be born again, right?

That's exactly what Jesus says. Jesus kind of skips the introduction that would be normal, and he just jumps right in. You must be born again.

It's kind of, I think, a weird way to start a conversation, right? And evangelistically, I don't think that's the way that we would generally start a conversation with somebody, just jump right into the problem.

Maybe it's a lesson. I don't know. But, so Nicodemus still needed to be born again. And not just Nicodemus, but everyone.

The you, in that phrase that Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, is actually a plural you. And so, he's referring, most likely, to you, as in all those who saw the signs, and believed, not unto salvation, all of them must be born again.

[ 14 : 55 ] But even further, it is referring to every single one of us. So Nicodemus is like this picture of the best of all of us. You think you're moral? Nicodemus was far more moral than you could ever be.

You think you were, you were, you know the law? Not more than Nicodemus. You think you're religious or spiritual? Not more than Nicodemus.

But you still need to be born again. And, that's the main idea of the text, right? That, John shows, that fallen man, no matter how religious, and moral he is, needs a heart transformation, performed by God alone.

So, Nicodemus, what would Nicodemus have known about the sinfulness of man? If he was such an intellectual, according to the law, what would he have known about the sinfulness of man and

our position before God as sinners, before a holy God as sinners?

So, in the Old Testament, I'm just going to go through these really quick. There's a few verses that I want to point out. Genesis 6, 5, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

[16:18] Psalm 51, 5, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and sin did my mother conceive me. So, even from birth, we're affected by sin. The wicked are estranged from the womb.

They go astray from birth, speaking lies. Isaiah 64, 6, We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like polluted garments.

And then Jeremiah 17, 9, The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? Jesus. But to speak of corruption at the level of the heart is to speak of a sinful nature, a moral deadness, and that is exactly what the New Testament calls it.

So, in Ephesians, chapter 2, it says, And you were dead in the trespasses and sin in which you once walked. Right? You were dead. Spiritual deadness.

And John, chapter 1, and I want to read that. So, if you can turn back a page, starting in verse 6. This is, this is beautiful.

[17:26] So, there was a man sent from God whose name was John. John the Baptist. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

So, what John is saying is that we are so spiritually blind that we don't even see when the light comes into a dark world. And, this is a quote from a theologian that I don't know the name of.

But, he says, and this is beautiful, when the sun is shining in all its beauty, who were the ones that are unconscious of the fact? Who needs to be told it is shining?

[18:30] The blind. How tragic then, when we read that God sent John to bear witness to the light. How pathetic, that there should be any need for this. How solemn, the statement that men have to be told the light is now in their midst.

And that is, a damning picture of man. Right? And this, this is not a popular topic among, we'll say, pop theologians, pop Christians.

One pastor, I think, he still, is a pastor of the largest church in America. It was on Oprah Winfrey a few years ago, and she asked him about why he doesn't preach on sin. And he said, well, we want to build up.

We want to, we want to build up their self-esteem. We don't want to bring them down. But, that's not, that's not scriptural. That's, the Bible throughout shows of man's position before a holy God.

So, the Bible's description apart from grace, the, the, the Bible's description of sin, I'm sorry, apart from grace, is terrible. So, when we see sin apart from God's grace, it destroys hope.

[19:50] But, the Bible still encourages us to consider our sinfulness so that, when we take away, so that it may take away the hope of any kind of solution within ourselves.

Right? So, we need to see sin at its worst in order to appreciate best what Christ has done for us. Afterwards, we must quickly turn to Christ for the Bible's depiction of sin is for that purpose.

To move us, to turn to Christ, to deliver us from ourselves. So, when we see this doctrine of sin, what it should, what it should do is point us to Christ.

Right? So, Francis Schaeffer, he's a theologian, an apologist, a scholar. He was once asked, what would you do if you met a really modern man on a train and you just had one hour to talk to him about the gospel?

He replied, I've said over and over, I would spend 45 to 50 minutes on the negative to really show him his dilemma that he is morally dead. Then I'd take 10 to 15 minutes to preach the gospel.

[21:00] I believe that much of our evangelistic and personal work today is not clear simply because we are too anxious to get to the answer without having a man realize the cause of his sickness, which is true moral guilt in the presence of God.

So, we have no hope whatsoever apart from the working power of God in our hearts. No hope whatsoever. So, that first truth, the necessity of the new birth, it is necessary for all people.

and then the second, the source of the new birth, and that is God alone. So, first, let's define what this word means. What is the new birth?

I'm going to bring up my actual sermon outline. So, what is the new birth? So, Wayne Grudem, theologian, he says, the new birth is a secret act of God in which he imparts new life to us. It comes first in the order of salvation. It comes even before belief. Right? And if we, if we look at the testimony of scripture that we are dead in our trespasses and sin, what can a dead man do? [ 22 : 23 ] Can he do anything? So, and again, I don't know where this came from. I actually googled it, but I couldn't find a source, but I was told this one time and it stuck with me.

A lot of times when we consider salvation, I see a, we see a waterfall and Jesus is at the top of that waterfall and he's standing on the shore and I kind of picture him as a, as a hip, cool Jesus with flip-flops and shorts and tie-dye and he's got this life-saving device, right?

The circle ones, it's kind of like a frisbee, which is why I think he's hip. But he's super, super accurate and he can, he can hit whatever from a distance and we are in the water and Jesus is there on the shore and he's tossing this life-saving device and all we have to do is grab onto it and that's kind of the picture of salvation that a lot of people think it's not true, right?

What this is saying, what God's word is saying is that we are actually at the bottom of that waterfall and we are under the water, we're not breathing, and we are completely dead and Jesus comes down and he lifts us out of the water and he pulls us onto the shore and he miraculously and supernaturally breathes life back into us.

That's the picture of scripture and I hope that sticks with you, it's stuck with me for like 15 years but, so, God is the source of this new birth, right?

[ 23 : 52 ] So, it is a sovereign act of God. Let's look at the text again, verse 3, Jesus said, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

So, what does that mean? And it's super vague, right? Because there's no other usage of this term, born again, in the Old Testament, so he's talking to Nicodemus, the scholar, and probably, rightfully so, Nicodemus would have been like, what are you talking about?

And his answer shows that confusion. 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? So, that phrase, born again, can also mean born from above.

So, again, emphasizing not any work that we could do, but a work from outside of us, a work from God. So, it's nothing that we can do to attain this.

He goes on and he kind of clarifies for Nicodemus, he says, in verse 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.

[ 25 : 03 ] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. 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. And I got to wave for myself, but really the focus is unless one is born of the water and the Spirit.

And that has caused a lot of issues, interpretations in the past. So what does that mean? Is it talking about natural birth when the water breaks? Most likely no.

That's not how they would have thought of birth in that time period. Is it talking about baptism? That would be the most natural thought. Again, most likely no.

Definitely not Christian baptism, right? This is before the cross. This is before Christian baptism became even a thing. But most likely, since we're talking to Nicodemus, an Old Testament scholar, it would have been a picture of a couple Old Testament prophecies.

[ 26 : 09 ] First, starting in Isaiah chapter 44 verse 3, you see the two ideas, water and spirit together. It says, I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground.

I will pour my spirit upon your offspring and my blessing on your descendants. And then in Ezekiel 36, 25-27, we see six I will statements.

God saying, I will do this, I will do this. And again, water and the spirit put together. I will sprinkle clean water on you. And this is talking about the new covenant.

I will sprinkle water, clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses. And from all your idols I will cleanse you, 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. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

[ 27 : 15 ] So that's the picture that Jesus is using. These Old Testament prophecies where God works within his people giving them new hearts, taking that heart of stone, the dead heart, and bringing it to life and then placing his spirit within them.

And then he goes on, let's see, verse 6, so that which is born of the flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. So in the same vein, it says that you must be, Jesus says you must be born of the spirit. So this is a continuation of being born of water and spirit.

Being born of the flesh is not enough for entrance into the kingdom of God. And so for Jesus to tell Nicodemus, who was a great Jew, that you have to be born again to go into the kingdom, it probably would have upset Nicodemus' worldview, because really all you had to do if you were a Jew is just be a good Jew.

You couldn't be a terrible person and do terrible sins. You just had to be a good Jew and follow these ritualistic things of the Old Testament, and you were going to enter into the kingdom of God at the end of the age.

[ 28 : 36 ] But Jesus is saying that that's not enough. That's not enough. You have to be born again. So flesh here has a negative moral connotation as elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul uses that word a lot.

So the old birth from sinful parents gives rise to a sinful child. Ordinary birth does not deal with sin. It doesn't deal with sin at all. It just keeps it going. But birth by the Spirit creates children with the qualities of the Spirit, children with a new life.

life. So it is an act of God. The new birth is an act of God. But it's also a secret act of God.

And you kind of see that picture in verses 7 to 8. So do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear it sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

[ 29 : 33 ] So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. And this is a tough doctrine. So we say that the new birth comes before faith.

And the question is, I don't know if you've asked it, but in my mind, the first thing I ask, and it's a difficult one, is how does this not counteract our free choice or our choice to follow Christ? But we are dead in our trespasses and sin, right? And we can do nothing unless God acts within us. And we say, with confidence that salvation is of God.

It is not of man. So we say that with confidence. So John 3, 7-8 emphasizes the mysterious of the event, the moving of the Spirit. So do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear it 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. So we know that somehow we who were spiritually dead have been made alive to God in a very real sense.

[ 30 : 41 ] We have been born again. But we don't understand how this happens or what exactly God does to give us this new spiritual life. And how do you know whether someone is born again?

It's not a visible event, right? So Jesus says that the regenerating work of the Spirit is like the blowing of the wind. You don't see it, you don't know where it comes from or where it goes. But as with the wind, you can see the results. Though you cannot be infallibly sure that regeneration has taken place. And in my mind, this affects evangelism, right?

So when we share the gospel with somebody, we do one thing. We tell them how to be saved. We don't tell them that they're saved, we tell them how they're saved. Because this is a mysterious event, and we can't, it's not something that we see, right?

It's like the wind. And we also can't control it. But, so, truths of the new birth, it is necessary for all people, right?

[ 31 : 48 ] It is an act of God, and God alone. He is the source of that new birth. And then finally, there are radical results of the new birth.

birth. So, there are radical results. So, the new birth is a renewal of the whole person. Again, we go back to the idea of being born again, or being born from above.

Paul, speaking of the same thing, he says that we are a new creation, right? In 2 Corinthians 5, 17, we are a new creation. The reformer, John Calvin, he explains this idea, he says, by the term born

again, he means not the amendment of a part, but the renewal of the whole nature. Hence, it follows that there is nothing in us that is not defective. So, it's a radical renewal of our whole person. So, it's not just Jesus taking something that is broken, replacing a few stripped screws, applying some glue, it is a complete replacement of the heart. is also followed by radical faith. So, there are radical results of the new birth, a renewal of the whole person, and then followed by radical faith.

[ 33 : 12 ] So, in verse 8, let's read that again. It says, the wind blows where it wishes and you hear it 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.

So, you hear the sound and see the effects of the wind, just like we see the effects of the spirit in a person's outward life. And this is the picture, if you think in the book of Luke, Luke, he wrote both the gospel of Luke and the acts of the apostles.

And the last time we see Peter, he is denying our Lord three times, and that's in the book of Luke, the last time we see him in the book of Luke. But the first time that we see him speak in the book of Acts, he is preaching to 3,000 people being saved, and then shortly after that he is standing before the Sanhedrin with the possibility of death, not denying Christ.

So, we see a radical faith that follows the new birth. so, it's followed by radical faith, and then also Hebrews chapter 11, and we want to read that, starting in verse 32, and what more shall I say for time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David, and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weaknesses, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

[ 35 : 13 ] They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword, they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves.

And that is faith. That is what faith in Christ does. And so, also, finally, the results of the new birth. it brings about submission to Christ's authority. And we're going to bring it back around to Nicodemus, who is a picture, he's actually a very poor example of that, right?

So Nicodemus, he doubts the authority and the veracity of Christ's words. In verse four, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb?

In verse nine, how can these things be? Like, he's doubting the authority of God himself, but also he says that Jesus is a teacher come from God.

[ 36 : 14 ] So he's doubting the authority and veracity of Christ's words. Nicodemus is a picture and an illustration of the Israelites in the book of Numbers.

So think about verse 15, 14 and 15. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

And so this picture of Christ being the serpent doesn't just end there. It actually covers the whole of this text, this picture of the people in the book of Numbers of Israel.

So the Jews in Numbers 21, the Israelites in Numbers 21, they were in the wilderness and like Nicodemus were grumbling and doubting God's word.

So what did God do? He sent fiery serpents to bite the Israelites and infect them with their venom, judgment for their sin in the desert. So Nicodemus, just like the Israelites in the desert, distrusts Yahweh.

[ 37 : 19 ] He distrusts Yahweh in the flesh. He also distrusts the prophet of God. I mean, he just said that he was a teacher of God. He distrusts God's word and he distrusts God.

But unlike Nicodemus, what we want to do is fall under the authority and submit to God's word. And that's what we do when the spirit brings new life to us.

And then here's the beauty of the gospel. So although Nicodemus has refused to submit to Christ's lordship, Jesus still gives him an offer of hope in the cross, right?

So he says, and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have everlasting life. So despite Nicodemus' rebellion, his refusal to trust and submit to Christ's authority, here's Christ again picturing himself on the cross

saying that if you believe and look on me, you will be saved.

So in closing, Nicodemus was a person who heard the words of Christ, right? We said that he was an observer of Christ's teaching and of science.

[ 38 : 42 ] He portrays a character whose life has not been completely penetrated by Christ. And I hope and pray that that is not you. Let the words of Christ dwell in you richly, right?

Let them penetrate your heart and change your soul, change the way that you act. So let us submit to Christ's authority as God in flesh and allow him to speak into our lives through his word, through his word.

That's how we hear God speak, through his word. Let us not be like Nicodemus who doubted, but let us welcome the truth of God's words and act on them. And then bringing it back to the beginning, let us understand the depths of man's rebellion and his sin before God.

let us remember God's holiness and wrath towards that sin. So when we talk about God's holiness, right, there's two sides to it, and actually it covers all of God's attributes, but two sides in my thinking that on one side of the coin, God is just, he has to punish sin, but on the other side he is loving and he has given us Christ who has taken the penalty of our sin.

So the final application there is if you have not put your faith and trust in Christ, if you have not been completely penetrated by Christ's words, let that happen now.

[ 40 : 09 ] So let's pray. God, we thank you so much for who you are, and we thank you for your word. We pray that you would be magnified through this text.

It shows you as a loving and gracious, merciful God who has dealt with us patiently.

Despite our rebellion against your authority, against your lordship, you have sought us out. You have not left us in our sin, but you pursued us.

And you came in the flesh, the one whom all things are dependent upon. You became dependent upon a mother and a father, upon water and food, sleep and rest.

You suffered with us, and then ultimately you suffered in our place, taking the wrath of God. God, and we praise you, and we lift you up, God.

[ 41 : 24 ] Be magnified in our hearts, and be magnified as we live out the truths of your gospel. We pray these things in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Kent.