

developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

Water baptism is very important. John is known as John the Baptist-- a man known for his ministry of baptizing. Yet Jesus baptized more people than he did.

To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less."

The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.

The only way you can really be at peace about Christ's testimony is if you are born again.

Then you can "see" or understand him, you have faith in Jesus, and can certify that He is true.

For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

Jesus was given the Holy Spirit without limit. The rest of us receive what we can handle-- enough for prayer or faith or simply living. Some people have done miracles or have prophesied. Jesus did all of it without limits.

The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Here is another place where it is very clear how important it is to believe in, to trust Jesus.

If you believe in Jesus, you have eternal life. If you don't believe in Jesus, you don't have eternal life, and even worse, God's wrath is waiting for you.



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A RELIGIOUS LEADER LEARNS FROM JESUS

JOHN, CHAPTER 3

This chapter starts out with a Jewish leader visiting Jesus at night. He may have been busy during the day, but probably it would hurt his reputation to be seen with Jesus.

There are always people who are embarrassed to be identified with Jesus.

Since he says, "we know," he probably wasn't the only leader who had these thoughts.

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

Here Jesus says to him, "The only reason you can see these miracles are from God is because you are born again;" or, "To really see what God has in mind you have to be born again."

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

You don't get it yet, Nick.

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Physical birth -- need to be a person. Spiritual birth -- born into God's kingdom.

You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

You can't see the Spirit of God any more than you can see the wind. But you know about the wind because of the movement the wind causes. In the same way you can know about the Spirit of God.

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

Nick was confused. He had come to a man sent by God to learn more about God. He found out that learning more isn't the answer-- being connected to God via the Spirit of God is more important. Some scholars of today who translated this section of the Bible, for example, aren't born again. But a person who can't even read it can be born again. The scholar may have eternal life, but the believer does.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

Moses was leading the nation of Israel in a wilderness and there was a plague. He made, then lifted up on a stick, a bronze serpent. Everyone who looked at it was healed. It is an example that those who look to Jesus for life will find it.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever

believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The previous verse was John 3:16, one of the most important verses in the Bible.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Here we see that believing in Jesus is the key for life.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

When we are born again, a process starts-- we are "pulled" into the light by Jesus, little by little leaving darkness behind.

After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument