

John 03 - Nic at Nite; Brazen Serpent; How Complicated is Salvation?; Last Testimony of John the Baptist

II. Public Ministry (John 1:19—11:57)

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John 3

- (4) Born Again Discourse (3:1-21)
 - (A) Credentials of Nicodemus (3:1)

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

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

1 Now there was a man from the Pharisees, a leader of the Jews, whose name was Nicodemus.

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

— "...a man of the Pharisees" means that he belonged to the best group in Israel. They believed in the inspiration of the OT, they believed in the coming of the Messiah, they believed in miracles, and they believed in the Resurrection.

— However, their entire religious hope rested on their lineage, their physical descent from Abraham. The emphasis of this racial heritage will be contrasted with the "new birth" in this chapter.

— "man" - connects Nicodemus with "mankind" (2:25)

- To understand the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, you must first understand 2:23-25. Nicodemus is an amplification or example of the young believers referenced in 2:23-25.
- "...Nicodemus" - he was a Pharisee; disciplined and respected. He was wealthy and from a distinguished family.
- He was also a ruler (in the Sanhedrin) and a teacher...but despite all of this, he was still "in the dark" before he met Jesus!
- "...a ruler of the Jews" - not just any Pharisee (there were maybe ~6000 Pharisees in Jesus' day), but a *ruler* of the Pharisees
- His legalism was a disadvantage to him; the Pharisees were more interested in their own traditions and regulations (*Mishnah & Talmud*) than they were divine truth
- As is typical with legalism, when you become entangled in it, you become ignorant of divine truth (Mark 7:20)

Nicodemus

The Talmud records Nicodemus as one of the four richest men in Jerusalem and a disciple of Jesus. Hoskyns records that Nicodemus was a member of the aristocratic family that had furnished the Hasmonean king, Aristobulus II, with his ambassador to Pompey in 63 BC. His son apparently was the man who negotiated the terms of surrender to the Roman garrison in Jerusalem prior to the final destruction of that city in 70 AD.

Nicodemus' Spiritual Progression

- Visited Jesus at night (3:2-10)
- His defense of Jesus at Sanhedrin (7:51-52)
- He anointed Jesus' body for burial (19:39-42)

(B) Confession of Nicodemus (3:2)

2 this man came to Jesus **atnight** and said to Him, "**Rabbi, we know** that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

2 He came to Jesus at night and told him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher, because no one can perform these signs that you are doing unless God is with him."

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.

- Something about Jesus, likely the cleansing of the temple, drew Nicodemus to Christ

- This is not a surprise because the purpose of John's Gospel is to reveal the identity of Christ through His multiple signs (20:30-31)
- "...at night" - curious, but not committed. He was not against Jesus, but neither was he convinced Jesus was the Messiah.
- "...Rabbi" - a respectful title that recognized Him as a teacher. It was one rabbi coming to another Rabbi for a discussion.
- The title ("teacher") also indicated the extent of his faith. He did not call Jesus "Messiah," "Son of God" or "Lord."
- "...we know" - *oidamen*, plural, possibly speaking for a private group among the Sanhedrin (Pharisees) that was impressed by Jesus' signs. Possibly part of the sponsorship of the group that questioned John the Baptist (John 1:19f).

(C) Command to Nicodemus (3:3)

3 Jesus **responded** and said to him, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

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

3 Jesus replied to him, **"Truly, I tell you emphatically, unless a person is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

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.**

- Notice that Jesus deals with Nicodemus with a higher level of severity than He deals with others (Cf. the woman at the well) because Nicodemus was a spiritual leader and had access to the truth, but chose to ignore it

— God holds spiritual leaders to a higher level of accountability; to whom much is given, much is required

- "...responded" - Jesus didn't answer his words, but his thoughts; Jesus did this often (Cf. Matt 9:3-4; John 1:47-51)

- "...Truly, truly, I say to you" - used with Nicodemus in v5,7,11; this phrase is always used by Jesus when He is about to disclose divine truth. It's a command to listen and heed what He is about to say.

— Jesus used these words to indicate a basic misunderstanding Jesus' listeners needed to overcome

- "...born again" - *gennao anōthen*; *anōthen*, regeneration; the impartation of divine life (Titus 3:5). Used 13x in the NT, with four different meanings:

1. "...from the top" (John 19:23; Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38)
2. "...from above" (John 3:31; 19:11; James 1:17; 3:15,17)
3. "...from the first; from the beginning" (Luke 1:3; Acts 26:5)

4. "...again" (Gal 4:9)

- Regeneration occurs at the point of faith in Christ, when a person has come to the realization and made the decision to believe/trust in Christ for the salvation of their soul
- "born" - used here, along with 1:13; 3:5,7 in the aorist tense, emphasizing an instantaneous work
- "again" - Nicodemus understood *anothen* (again) to mean "again" (#4), leading him to conclude that Jesus was speaking of a second physical birth
- Same word is used in 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,5,18 in the perfect tense, emphasizing an action that was completed in the past but continues unchanged to the present
- Jesus' reply was cryptic and abrupt. He informed Nicodemus that no man could even see the kingdom of God without a *spiritual rebirth*. Birth is our mode of entrance into the world and brings with it the potential equipment for adjustment to the world.
- This isn't a statement as to the timing or arrival of the kingdom, it simply the means the requirement for entrance into the kingdom once it's established
- To be born again, or "born from above," means a transformation of a person so that he is able to enter another world and adapt to its conditions
- "...see" - *horaō*, to perceive; implies discernment or comprehension of meaning rather than simply registering a visual image, whereas *blepō* means "to have the power of sight"
- The implication is that without spiritual rebirth one cannot even perceive the reality of the kingdom of God
- "...kingdom of God" - when kingdom is left undefined, as it is here, its meaning must be developed from the OT references: the earthly messianic kingdom that will be the earthly phase of God's eternal heavenly kingdom.
- To "enter the kingdom of God" means to "obtain eternal life" (Mark 9:43,45,47)
- This is the only passage in which John mentions "the kingdom of God" in this gospel. This is understandable since he evidently wrote the gospel late in the 1st century, when it was clear that God had postponed the kingdom. He's not writing to prepare his readers for the future, but to instruct them in how to obtain eternal life.
- In v9-10, Jesus expresses incredulity that Nicodemus, Israel's teacher, did not comprehend the new birth as an essential prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom
- Ezek 36:24-27 clearly explains the necessity of the new birth before entrance into the kingdom is permitted

Nicodemus seemed to think Jesus would simply lead him further along in his good religious life. Yet, Nicodemus lacked any type of spiritual life. All his knowledge, morality and social position were inadequate. He could not even "see" the kingdom of God, let along "enter" it. Paul explained Nicodemus' problem in 1 Cor 2:14.

Regeneration

The necessity of the new birth grows out of the incapacity of the natural man to "see" or "enter into" the kingdom of God. However gifted, moral, or refined, the natural man is absolutely blind to spiritual truth, and impotent to enter the kingdom, for he can neither obey, understand, nor please God (John 3:3,5-6; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; 1 Cor 2:14; Rom 8:7-8; Eph 2:3).

The new birth is not a reformation of the old nature (Rom 6:8; Jer 17:9), but a creative act of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; 1:12-13; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10; 4:24). The condition of the new birth is faith in Christ crucified (John 3:14-15; 1:12-13; Gal 3:24). Through the new birth the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature and the life of Christ Himself (Gal 2:20; Eph 2:20; 4:24; Col 1:27; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:10-12).

The results of regeneration are:

- Eternal life (John 3:16)
- A new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10; 4:24)
- Eternal security (Phil 1:6)
- A new life and nature (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18)

See [Holy Spirit](#) for a complete description of Regeneration.

(D) Confusion of Nicodemus (3:4)

4 Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a person be **born when he is old**? He cannot enter his mother's womb a second time and be born, can he?"

4 Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

4 Nicodemus asked him, "How can a person be born when he is old? He can't go back into his mother's womb a second time and be born, can he?"

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?

- One of the biggest problems that Jesus had during His ministry is that when He spoke about spiritual realities, people (even religious leaders and teachers) did not understand what He was saying, because they did not have spiritual truth given to them by the Holy Spirit, which is the only way the human mind can understand spiritual things

— The same thing happened in 2:19-21, when Jesus was talking about destroying the temple of His body and it raising it back up in three days. The religious leaders thought He was talking about the temple complex.

— Many of the statements that Jesus makes during His ministry would not be understood until after the Holy Spirit's indwelling of believers at Pentecost

(E) Clarification for Nicodemus (3:5-8)

(a) Physical illustration (3:5-7)

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is **born of water** and **the Spirit**, he cannot **enter the kingdom of God**.

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, I tell you emphatically, unless a person is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

5 Jesus answered, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

– "...born of water" – various interpretations, but from the context, we must consider the interpretation based on the following:

1. "Born of water and the Spirit" must be synonymous to being born "again" or "from above," since Jesus used this phrase to clarify the process of the "new birth" for Nicodemus.
2. The definite article "the" before "Spirit" is absent in the Greek. It was inserted to clarify the interpretation as the Holy Spirit. A more literal translation would be, "born of water and Spirit."
3. The construction of the phrase in Greek indicates that "of" governs both "water" and "Spirit," meaning that Jesus used both terms to describe the new birth. He was not saying that two separate things have to be present for regeneration to happen. It has but one Source.
4. Jesus' criticism of Nicodemus for not understanding that a new birth was necessary (v10) indicates that what He taught about the Source of regeneration was clear in the OT.

— Contextually and grammatically John treats both "born of water" and born of the Spirit" refer to a single concept, not two separate births. They encompass a single event, not two separate events.

— The view that "born of water" somehow refers to physical birth is untenable. There are exactly zero references to this referring to physical birth in Jewish or Greco-Roman literature. In addition, Jesus corrects Nicodemus' understanding, He doesn't build on his misunderstanding.

— While there are baptismal overtones to this passage, those who believe that one must be baptized in order to be saved use the phrase "born of water" to mean water baptism. However, this is unlikely since water comes before Spirit in this verse, and water baptism cannot come before Spirit indwelling. Also, Christian baptism post-dates Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

— The most decisive factor in coming to the proper interpretation is Jesus' allusion to Ezek 36:25-27. In that passage, water refers to cleansing from impurity and Spirit refers to inner renewal and empowerment. Both are acts of God in the New Covenant.

— Further evidence is John's consistent use of "water" to refer to symbolic cleansing throughout his Gospel. Consistently, water points to purification and life (John 2; 4; 7; 13; 19) and it is often replaced or fulfilled by the Spirit. Thus "water" here fits into John's broader theology.

- This phrase is a reference back to Gen 1:2, when the Spirit was hovering over the waters. Both the Spirit and the waters were works of God during original creation. Here we have again both Spirit and water, this time in connection with Christ's next great work: redemption

— Just as God brought forth physical creation as a miracle, He will do the same thing again in the hearts of men and women through spiritual creation, which is just as real and just as miraculous as physical creation

- "...the Spirit" - notice that the prerequisite for entering the kingdom is the Holy Spirit; earlier the point was made that one could not even understand spiritual things without the Holy Spirit (2:23-25)

- "...enter into the kingdom of God" - notice the two-fold repetition of "the kingdom of God" (v3,5)... "cannot see" the kingdom (v3) and "cannot enter" the kingdom (v5)

— Kingdom Now theologians use this to say that once you're born again, you enter the kingdom of God spiritually. They use this to argue that we're currently in the kingdom because people are born again and they "see the kingdom" and they "enter the kingdom" so Jesus setup a spiritual kingdom when He was here the first time.

— However, Jesus was not dealing with "when" the kingdom would come, He's talking about "how." He's talking about how someone enters the kingdom once it comes, He's not saying that the kingdom is here now.

— His point is that spiritual rebirth is absolutely necessary in order to enter the kingdom

- Thus, a summary conclusion of this verse is the following:

- "born of water and Spirit" refers to one single divine act of regeneration, not two births or stages
- This phrase draws primarily on OT New Covenant imagery, primarily from Ezek 36
- "Water" symbolizes cleansing/purification while "Spirit" symbolizes transformation and life
- Any reference to water baptism is secondary and not the primary meaning
- Jesus is teaching Nicodemus, the "teacher" of Israel, about the need for radical inner renewal by God beyond knowledge of the Torah or religious status
- This verse describes the eschatological work of God's Spirit, which is required for entrance into the messianic kingdom

6 That which has been born of the **flesh is flesh**, and that which has been born of the **Spirit is spirit**.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

— "...flesh is flesh...Spirit is spirit" - another reference back to Gen 1, this time to the fact that everything produces "after their kind" (Cf. Gen 1:12)

— The flesh can't generate anything other than works of the flesh; only the Spirit generates the things of the Spirit. The flesh has no capacity to generate spiritual things (that is religion).

— See note: **"After Their Kind"** in Gen 1:11

7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You **must** be born again.'

7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

7 Don't be astonished that I told you, 'All of you must be born from above.'

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

— "...must" - *dei*, in the Bible, it refers to something that is an absolute necessity; it is something that is unequivocal, cannot be altered, is not an option. It is something that in the mind of God is absolutely mandatory.

— Being "born again" is not one option among many options; there are not multiple pathways to God

— Born again is not just a denomination in Christendom...there are not Baptist Christians, Methodist Christians, Bible Church Christians, then born again Christians

— If you're not born again, you're not a Christian; if you are not born of the Spirit of God, you are not a Christian

— This should've been obvious to Nicodemus. The OT spoke of spiritual birth in addition to physical birth in Ps 87:5-6 & Ezek 36:25-28.

— Nicodemus needed spiritual life. He needed to experience the new birth. He had evidently viewed acceptance by God like so many of his Jewish contemporaries did. He thought that his heritage (ancestry, position, works, all that made him what he was) was adequate to get him into the kingdom and make him acceptable to God. He had to realize that he needed a complete spiritual cleansing and renewal—that only God could provide by His Spirit!

(b) Natural illustration (3:8)

8 The **wind** blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it is coming from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the

Spirit."

8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

8 The wind blows where it wants to. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. That's the way it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

- Jesus analogizes the Holy Spirit to wind

- "...wind" - *pneuma*, the same word Jesus uses in v5 to describe the Holy Spirit

— It is used 370x in the NT and 369x it is used of the Holy Spirit

— The word play with the Greek word *pneuma* can mean either "spirit" or "wind," though it usually means "spirit." Jesus is saying that the *pneuma* (Spirit) operates as the *pneuma* (wind).

— Jesus used this idiom to illustrate how the Spirit regenerates. Emphasizes the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. He is not subject to our devices, but is sovereign.

- There are three similarities between the Spirit and the wind:

1. Both the Spirit and wind operate sovereignly. Man cannot control either one.
2. Man cannot explain the actions of either the Spirit or the wind. We perceive their presence by their effects.
3. We cannot explain their actions because they arise from unseen and partially unknowable, mysterious factors. A person "born of the Spirit" is similar to both the Spirit and the wind in that it is impossible for unbelievers to understand or control them.

— This is what the life of the Spirit is like in the newborn child of God. The Holy Spirit comes upon individuals and convicts them of their need for Jesus Christ (16:7-11). The person responds by faith, then the Holy Spirit enters them. All of these things are invisible to the naked eye.

— The mistake we make is that we assume that just because we can't see something, it's not real. There are a number of things in the spiritual world that we cannot see, but they are just as real as anything physical that we can see.

— Just as the wind is not subject to human control, neither is the spiritual birth as God convicts people of their need for Christ

- Calvinists pull this verse and say that the wind blows wherever it wishes, man has no control over the wind...same thing with the new birth. It happens spontaneously in the elect, without their having made any decision whatsoever for Jesus Christ.

— To them, the wind is a mystery, cannot be controlled, and same thing with how salvation occurs (in the elect). The wind (the Holy Spirit) comes arbitrarily upon pre-selected (elect)

individuals, forcibly regenerating them, regardless of personal choice.

— But like most verses used as proof-texts by Calvinism, if you put this verse back in its context with the rest of John 3, it's very clear that the people who experienced this "wind" (the Holy Spirit) first believed (were born again).

— This is so clear when you read this chapter that it's difficult to understand how anyone can come up with a different interpretation

John 3:12: **If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**

John 3:15 **so that everyone who believes will have eternal life in Him.**

John 3:16: **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.**

John 3:18: **The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**

John 3:36: **The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey [Christ's instruction to believe] the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."**

(F) Chastening of Nicodemus (3:9-13)

9 Nicodemus responded and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

9 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"

9 Nicodemus asked him, "How can that be?"

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

- With his vast knowledge of the OT, many Scripture promises of the new birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit should have filled Nicodemus' mind (Cf. 1 Sam 10:6; Is 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:25-28; Jer 31:33; Joel 2:28-29)

10 Jesus answered and said to him, **"You are the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?**

10 Jesus answered and said to him, **"Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?**

10 Jesus answered him, **"You're the teacher of Israel, and you can't understand this?**

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?**

- "...the teacher" - notice the definite article "the"...Nicodemus was not "a" teacher, he was "the" teacher of Israel

— Nicodemus was one of the top, if not *the* top, teacher/rabbi/religious leader in all of Israel

- Jesus is rebuking him and holding him accountable because a person in such a position should have been aware of and understood such a rudimentary spiritual principle as the new birth. This principle was disclosed over and over again in the OT (Cf. Ps 143:10-11; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-28; Joel 2:28-29; Zech 13:1), which is the Scripture that Nicodemus knew and taught.
- Why was Nicodemus blind to a basic spiritual principle? The reason why a man like Nicodemus did not understand the spiritual birth taught in the OT was due to legalism...his heart was for keeping the rules, the Pharisaical traditions, not for the Word of God.
- The hardest person on planet earth to reach with the gospel is the legalist...harder than the atheist, the agnostic, or a cult follower. God has to do a miracle to get through to them because that person is not interested in truth, not interested in the Word of God, they are only interested in their traditions/religion.
- Yet as we see here with Nicodemus, there is hope for the legalist...even though it takes a miracle to reach them, Jesus is in the miracle business

Why Didn't Nicodemus Understand Ezek 36?

First century Judaism was wrapped up in a bunch of man-made traditions instead of the Word of God. They were not reading the pages of God's Word, they focused on their extra-biblical traditions, which came into existence during the inter-testamental time period. Sabbath violations are what caused Judah (southern kingdom) to be taken into exile. They rejected the sabbath requirements of the Mosaic Law for 490 years, so God told them "you owe Me 70." Not wanting to violate the sabbath and go into exile again, the Pharisees passed so many man-made laws that no one will ever break the sabbath again. So Phariseeism started off well-intentioned, but spiraled way out of control because of their departure from the Word of God. This is why Jesus is always running into conflict with the Pharisees about the sabbath...He would heal someone or do some other good deed, and the Pharisees would go nuts. But who passed the laws about working or doing good deeds on the sabbath? The Pharisees did, these regulations are not found in the Word of God. This focus on man-made laws, to avoid another exile for sabbath violations, was the reason why Nicodemus was unaware of the new birth requirement to enter the kingdom (Cf. Mark 7:13).

Ezek 36:24-28:

24 For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

- Political restoration...

25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

These verses not only reveal the necessity of the spiritual birth required to enter the kingdom, they also explain the specific time in history when the kingdom will be established. To understand this, along with the background of Ezekiel, see [The Coming Kingdom 51_Born Again to Enter Kingdom \(John 3:3-5\); No Death Until Kingdom Comes \(Matt 16:28\)](#).

11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and **testify** of what we have seen, and **you people do not accept our testimony**.

11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.

11 Truly, I tell you emphatically, we know what we're talking about, and we testify about what we've seen. Yet you people do not accept our testimony.

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

- "...testify" - Jesus is claiming to be a eyewitness to heavenly things
- "...you people do not accept our testimony" - Nicodemus and his fellow Pharisees were not accepting of this testimony at this point in time
- Nicodemus and the Pharisees could not accept this testimony because they were not walking by faith. They "did not believe" (v12).
- Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). If someone does not accept by faith what God has revealed, you cannot please God, you cannot understand His teaching, and you cannot experience the new birth.

12 If I told you **earthly things** and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

12 If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

12 If I have told you people about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

- "...earthly things" - Jesus just described this "earthly thing": the new birth, spiritual birth, being born again
- Jesus tells Nicodemus that if he does not believe, does not accept by faith, the reality of the spiritual birth, which happens on the earth, how in the world can Jesus trust Nicodemus or anyone else who doesn't believe, with additional spiritual truth
- If we can't trust God's Word about earthly things, how are we going to trust it about heavenly things (i.e. the Rapture, spiritual warfare and the armor of God, the Bema Seat judgment of believers, the Great White Throne judgment)
- This speaks to the doctrine of "Partial Inerrancy" which believes that the Bible contains errors about geography, science, etc., but it is inerrant on spiritual things
- The doctrine of (full) Inerrancy holds that the Bible is not a science textbook, but where it talks about science, it is 100% accurate. It is not a history book, but where the Bible talks about history, it is 100% inerrant.
- The reason why this matters is because if the Bible had one minor error in it about science, geography, or history, we could not trust it to be accurate about things unseen, spiritual things.
- If the Bible is not trustworthy and 100% accurate in everything it says about the physical realm, which can be validated, everything it says about the spiritual realm, which is unseen, is placed under a cloud of suspicion
- The proper way to approach Scripture is not partial inerrancy and partial inspiration, but full inerrancy and full inspiration

13 No one has ascended into heaven, except He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

13 No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

13 "No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

- Is Jesus qualified to reveal to us heavenly truth? Yes, because He is from heaven, and He is the only One who has ascended into heaven.

— John covers this in his prologue (1:1-18), the fact that Jesus has a heavenly genealogy as well as an earthly genealogy (Matt 1; Luke 3)

— There is no one more qualified to reveal heavenly things to man than the God-Man, the Man who took on flesh and dwelt among us, but who was originally from heaven

— Jesus challenged Nicodemus to go beyond merely recognizing Jesus as a teacher sent from God. To receive His witness, he needed to acknowledge Jesus' divine authority.

— His heavenly origin is why He could speak authoritatively about heavenly things. No teacher had ascended to heaven and returned to teach about heavenly things.

(G) Clarification for Nicodemus (3:14-15)

14 And just as Moses **lifted up** the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

14 Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

- "...lifted up" - *hypsoō*, a word used elsewhere for crucifixion (Cf. 8:28; 12:32-34)

- Jesus just authenticated Moses as the author of Numbers. Unfortunately, this fact has confused many mainline denominational seminaries today, which teach that Moses did not write all five books of the *Torah*.

- Jesus is referring to an incident that the Israelites experienced during their 40 years in the wilderness (Num 21:5-9)

- This is Jesus' earliest recorded prediction of His death

- To help Nicodemus understand how Jesus' death on the cross would bring salvation and eternal life, He referred to a well-known event in Israel's wilderness wanderings

- The Israelites murmured and complained against God about the food and water situation, and that they didn't like the food He provided. God sent snakes to torture and bite the Israelites, and many died.

— The people realized that they sinned against the Lord with their complaining, so they asked Moses to intercede for them to turn away the snakes, so that no one else would die

— Moses did, and the Lord told him to make a fiery serpent, set it on a pole, and anyone who is bitten by one of the snakes, if he looks at the snake on the pole, he would not die

- From this event, Jesus illustrates for Nicodemus what it means to believe in Him for everlasting life

— Just as the Israelites had to acknowledge their sinful, snake-bitten condition and look in faith to the bronze serpent, which was God's symbol of judgment upon their sin, even so lost people today must look in faith to Christ-crucified as God's provision for their own snake-bitten, sinful condition

— All that was required of the Israelites was a look of faith, and they were instantaneously and permanently healed. They were not required to *keep on* looking at the brass serpent for the rest of their lives in order to stay healed (Arminianism) or to prove that they were truly healed initially (Calvinism).

- How many times did the people have to look at the serpent to be healed? Just once. One look prompted by faith was enough. So it is with Calvary. How many times must one look at Christ in faith to be saved? Just once. The faith that heals or saves is an act, a completed event, not an attitude. [Gromacki]
- And the purpose of lifting the serpent up on the pole was so that everyone in the camp could easily see it. Healing for them was not hidden, nor did it require anything more than a single look, in faith, at the snake on the pole in order to be healed.
- Notice how easy deliverance was for those who were bitten by snakes...simply *look* at the bronze serpent that Moses created and placed on a pole, and you would not die. But if the Israelites decided for some reason that this was too easy, and they didn't want to look at the bronze serpent, but instead wanted to do more, to make deliverance more difficult to obtain, they would die.
- If the Israelites deviated one millimeter from what God (through Moses) instructed them to do, they died. But why die when the remedy for life is so easy?
- Jesus' point is that in the same way there is a snake bite on the human race from the serpent in Eden, and to be saved from the curse, instead of looking at a snake on a pole, we're to look to the Savior on the tree. A simple look of faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross in dying a substitutionary death for one's sins, rather than relying upon one's own human goodness or works.
- This two-verse mention by Jesus to Nicodemus illustrates the simplicity of salvation, and the need for one-time faith in Christ in order to be saved. Nowhere in this short illustrative story does it teach the need for a Christian to persevere in order to remain saved or prove they are saved.
- In fact, the Israelites "proceeded with lives of rebellion" against the Lord after their look of faith at the bronze serpent in Num 21. The wilderness generation of Israelites was infamous for its ongoing idolatry, unbelief, and rebellion against the Lord, despite having initially believed in Him and His Word.
- Read the Bible's description of that generation:

Ex 14:31: When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

Ps 106:12-14: 12 Then they believed His words; They sang His praise. 13 They quickly forgot His works; They did not wait for His plan, 14 But became lustfully greedy in the wilderness, And put God to the test in the desert.
- Consequently, a few chapters after the incident of the brass serpent in Num 21, Moses goes on to say that the Israelites "began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab...and bowed down to their gods," so that "Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the

Lord was aroused against Israel" (Num 25:1-3). God then sent a plague that killed 24,000 Israelites (Num 25:9).

— This sad account demonstrates that genuine believers do not necessarily persevere to the end of their lives in faith and holiness (1 Cor 11:28-32). However, this account also illustrates that God in His sovereignty and grace is still willing to save (Ex 4:31; 14:31) and heal (Num 21:5-9), simply on the basis of a one-time look of faith, knowing full well in His omniscience that rebellion and sin leading to death may transpire afterward.

15 so that everyone who believes will have eternal life in Him.

15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

15 so that everyone who believes in him would have eternal life.

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

- The solution to not die for the Israelites in the wilderness was to simply look at the bronze snake on a pole; the solution to us today to not die spiritually is to look at and trust in the Son of Man who was lifted up on a cross

— Jesus Christ is the only means of healing for those who are bitten by the poison of sin, and the only way to obtain healing is to look upon the Son of Man, who was lifted up on a cross, and trust in the sacrifice that He made, that it was sufficient and complete to satisfy God's wrath against me for my sin

— There's no need to tamper with the instructions...God told them to look at a bronze serpent and they'd be healed. Simple. And there's no need to tamper with our instructions either...that if we "believe" we will have eternal life in Him. We don't need to add in additional instructions or prerequisites...the sole condition for salvation is belief in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

13 of the Greatest Truths from the Greatest Verse in the Bible

1. The Greatest Being - God
2. The Greatest Motive - *love*
3. The Greatest Object of Love - *the world*
4. The Greatest Act - *He gave*
5. The Greatest Gift - *His only Son*
6. The Greatest Invitation - *everyone*
7. The Greatest Decision - *believes*
8. The Greatest Person - *Him*
9. The Greatest Deliverance - *will not perish*
10. The Greatest Contrast - *but*
11. The Greatest Assurance - *have*
12. The Greatest Possession - *life*

13. The Greatest Promise - eternal

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

16 "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his unique Son so that everyone who believes in him would not be lost but have eternal life.

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.

- "...God" - *theos*, the Greatest Being; Gen 1:1: In the beginning, God...

— The story of the Bible is not what man has done or can do for God, but what God has done for man

— God is *always* the Initiator; all we need to do is respond by way of faith to the initiation begun by God

— "...loved" - *agapaō*, the Greatest Motive; describes the heart of God toward the human race

— It is the highest, most noble form of self-sacrificing love that you can possibly have

— God's core character is love (1 John 4:8). God doesn't do loving acts, He doesn't speak loving words...these are simply an outpouring of who He is, His core nature. God is love.

— "...world" - *cosmos*, the entire world, the Greatest Object of Love, the scope of which includes every human being who was ever conceived

— 1 John 2:15-17 indicates that most of the world is Christ-rejecting, yet God still loves them

— 1 John 2:2: and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the *sins of the whole world* (1 Tim 2:6; Heb 2:9)

— There is nothing in this verse or the context that would limit this to any particular group; it refers to every person ever conceived in the history of the world

— However, Calvinism will send you to John 12:19 to argue that "world" doesn't always mean everyone. However, that is an Illegitimate Totality Transfer (importing a word from elsewhere that does not fit the context). Instead of defining "world" from the John 3 context, they are defining it from a John 12 context.

— This is an amazing statement, not because the world is so big, but because it is so bad

— "...He gave" - *didōmi*, the Greatest Act; God's love is not just an emotion He has, it is expressed in something tangible, sacrificial and practical (Gal 1:3-4; 2:20; Eph 5:25)

— "...His only Son" - the Greatest Gift; when God the Father sent for God the Son to become Incarnate as a Man to pay the penalty for our sin and resurrect from the dead, there was not a greater gift that He could have possibly given (Matt 21:33-45; Rom 8:32)

- "only begotten" [NASB95] - *monogenēs*, Cf. 1:14,18; for "begotten" see note on 1 John 4:9
- *mono* = only, alone; *genēs* = kind, species; *monogenēs* = one of a kind. In Heb 11:17, Isaac is said to be Abraham's *monogenēs*—which clearly cannot mean "only begotten son" since Abraham was also father to Ishmael and a number of other children through Keturah (Cf. Gen 25:1-2).
- But Isaac is Abraham's "unique" son, his special and well-beloved son.
- *genēs* is completely disconnected and unrelated to the verb *gennaō* (to begat, to create); this is where people (especially cults like Mormonism) get confused. Jesus was not "begotten" as Abraham "begat" Isaac. He is one of a kind, unique. See notes on 1:12.
- "...everyone" - *pas*, all who, whoever; the Greatest Invitation (Matt 11:28)
- This word (or the alternate translation "whosoever") is found 183x in 163 verses in the Bible and in every instance it means "whoever" or "whatever person," there are no alternate meanings
- Calvinism requires that in certain places this word actually means "the elect," but it doesn't; wherever salvation is offered to whosoever will believe in Christ, it refers to every single human being who has ever existed
- The Bible consistently puts the responsibility to believe on man, not on God (Cf. 1:12-13; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom 3:21-22,25-26; 4:3-6; Eph 2:8. The Bible also consistently puts the responsibility for not believing on man (Cf. 3:18; 5:40).
- "...believes" - *pisteuō*, present tense, to trust, depend upon, to rely on, to have confidence in; the Greatest Decision
- Belief in the Bible is more than intellectual ascension to a set of facts...it is a reliance or dependence upon something, to have confidence in something or to rely on something
- Belief in Jesus Christ is the sole prerequisite to salvation and eternal life; this is confirmed 99x in John's Gospel, and over 150x in the NT
- The present tense of *pisteuō* in salvation passages (Cf. John 3:15-18,36; 5:24; 6:35,40; 7:38; 11:25-26; 12:44,46; 20:31; also Acts 10:43; 13:39; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:5; 9:33; 10:4,10-11) is often used by Calvinism and Lordship Salvation proponents to argue that eternal life requires continual, enduring belief.
- But Greek verb tenses do not specify a certain *kind* of action, as if the present tense necessarily means *continual action*. This is frequently misunderstood and often used to bolster false doctrinal conclusions. The Greek tense simply convey the writer's viewpoint on an action (the aspect), not the kind of action itself (*aktionsart*). So the present tense of *pisteuō* does not automatically refer to an on-going action or state.
- "...in Him" - *eis autos*, the Greatest Person
- Faith is only as good as the object we put our faith in. If we put our faith in the wrong person, the wrong message, which many people do, then you're trusting in someone or

something that has no power to deliver on the promise.

- The tomb of the Person that Christians put their faith in is empty...no so with Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, or any other supposed deity (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5)
- "...will not perish" - *mē apolλymi*, the Greatest Deliverance. There is nothing more God can do to save us from our predicament in Adam than what He has already done. He's pulled out all the stops, He has nothing left, He's put everything on the table.
- "perish" - an eternity separated from God, in a state of conscious torment (Rev 14:11)
- It does not mean to experience annihilation, but ruin, failure to realize God's purpose, and exclusion from His fellowship
- The only two options are life or perishing; there is no other final state
- "...but" - *alla*, the Greatest Contrast
- The Bible is full of contrasts: the wide road and the narrow road; angels and demons; sheep and goats; everlasting life and everlasting torment; heaven and hell
- "...have" - *echō*, a present tense verb; the Greatest Assurance
- The reason *echō* is in the present tense is that believers receive eternal life at the point of faith (Cf. 5:24)
- "...life" - *zōē*, the Greatest Possession
- "life" - a relationship with God; the life of God through the Holy Spirit comes into a human being. It's a restoration of the spiritual life that died in Eden (Gen 2:17; Eph 2:1).
- This spiritual life, recovered from what was lost in Eden through faith in Christ, is the most precious possession we can ever obtain
- "...eternal" - *aiōnios*, the Greatest Promise (Cf. Rom 16:26); John uses this phrase 16x in his Gospel
- When we receive the gift of eternal life at the point of faith, we possess it forever. If it were possible that we could remove ourselves from this promise, the promise is not eternal (Cf. 10:27-29).
- The Greek *aiōnios* with noun *zoe* ("life") implies that eternal life begins at the moment of faith and never ends. You don't have to wait until you die to have eternal life—you have it now! It's more than endless existence: it's sharing the Divine Life.

How Complicated is Salvation?

Paul's answer to the Philippian jailer's question was astonishingly simple: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." There is only one verb for the lost person to fulfill before he can receive salvation: "Believe." Nothing in Paul's answer reveals other conditions that are commonly inserted into modern evangelistic messages, such as baptism, church membership, good works, walking an aisle, praying a specific prayer, Godly sorrow, forsaking sins, etc. And *not once* does John even suggest that this guarantee can be disallowed if there are no good works in a believer's life.

If you study Scripture, the simplicity of Paul was by no means an isolated case. There are more than 150 NT passages which singularly condition a lost person's salvation upon belief alone in Christ (John 3:16; 6:28-29; Rom 1:16; Eph 2:8-9). The Gospel of John makes it clear to his readers that if one would simply *believe*, they would have life in His name. But believe *what exactly*? John's Gospel is clear about that too.

John uses the term "to believe" (*pisteuō*) 99x in his Gospel, and 40x he includes the object of that belief:

1. 1:12—believe in His name
2. 2:11—believed in Him
3. 2:23—believed in Him
4. 3:16—believes in Him
5. 3:18a—believes in Him
6. 3:18b—believes in the name of the only begotten Son of God
7. 3:36—believes in the Son
8. 4:39—believed in Him
9. 6:29—believe in Him
10. 6:35—believes in Me
11. 6:40—believes in Him
12. 7:5—believing in Him
13. 7:31—believed in Him
14. 7:38—believes in Me
15. 7:39—believed in Him
16. 7:48—believed in Him
17. 8:24—believe that I am He
18. 8:30—believe in Him
19. 8:31—believed Him
20. 9:35—believe in the Son of Man
21. 9:36—believe in Him
22. 10:38—you do not believe Me, believe the works...
23. 10:42—believed in Him
24. 11:25—believes in Me
25. 11:45—believed in Him
26. 11:48—believe in Him
27. 12:11—believing in Jesus
28. 12:36—believe in the Light [John called Jesus the Light in 1:9]
29. 12:37—not believing in Him
30. 12:42—believed in Him
31. 12:44—believes in Me

32. 12:46—believes in Me
33. 14:1—believe in God, believe even in Me
34. 14:10—believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me
35. 14:11—believe Me
36. 14:12—believes in Me
37. 16:9—they do not believe in Me
38. 17:20—believe in Me
39. 17:21—believe that You sent Me
40. 20:31—believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

These passages and the tremendous weight of evidence they represent help us to understand that eternal life does not come by works, nor by intellectual belief of some general facts, but rather by belief *in Him*. He is the Christ, the Son of God. Believe in Him, and we have eternal life. John's Gospel is just that simple.

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words says:

pisteuō, "to believe," also "to be persuaded of," and hence, "to place confidence in, to trust," signifies, in this sense of the word, *reliance upon, not mere credence*. So when we talk about faith or belief, we're talking about being persuaded about something to the point where you place your trust in that object. Synonyms for belief or trust include: to trust, to have confidence in, to depend upon, or to rely.

So a definition for salvation would be: trust, dependence or reliance in Jesus alone for one's eternal destiny, for the safekeeping of the soul. This is what must be communicated to the unsaved person. We can throw the word "believe" at them, and they don't know what it means to believe. We need to take the word "believe" and put it into words that they can understand.

To help us understand what information we need to know in order to believe in Him, Paul describes the good news in 1 Cor 15:3-8 as including information about the person of Jesus (that He is the Christ—the God/Man Messiah described in the Hebrew prophets) and His work (died to pay for sin, was buried in proof of His death, rose again in proof of His qualification, and appeared to many).

2 Cor 11:3 [NASB95]: But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from **the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ**.

What Must We Believe About Jesus to be Saved?

John 8:24: **Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins."**

- This audience had to believe that Jesus was the "I AM" (Cf. Ex 3:14), which is a divine name of which God disclosed Himself to Moses

- Later in 8:58, Jesus claims to be the "I AM"; the Pharisees, knowing this meant that Jesus was claiming to be God Himself, took up stones to kill Him because they thought He was blaspheming
- So the content of saving faith must include the belief that Jesus is God, and therefore has the power to do what you're believing (relying on) Him to do

John 20:30-31:

30 So then, many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name.

- In this verse, the requirement for saving faith is that one must believe that Jesus is the Messiah
 - You don't fully (or even partially) understand the doctrine of the Trinity when you get saved, but you have to believe that Jesus has the power to do what He says, and what you're trusting Him to do for you

1 Cor 15:1-4:

1 Now I make known to you, brothers *and sisters*, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand,

2 by which you also are saved, if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of **first importance** what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

- "...first importance" - the basics Paul gave to them so they could be saved:
 - Man is a sinner ("our sins")
 - Jesus is the Savior
 - Jesus died as their substitute ("Christ died for our sins")
 - Jesus was raised from the dead ("He was raised on the third day")
 - These things happened according to OT prophecy

4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Why has God made salvation so simple?

1. God has designed salvation as a free gift (Rom 4:4). If there was some human action to be performed beyond belief then salvation becomes something that we do rather than what God does. Such a human insertion reduces salvation's free gift status by making it something we earn.

2. God has specifically designed salvation so that the principle of human boasting is eliminated (Rom 3:27; 4:2). Yet, if the unsaved could do anything to merit salvation beyond simple belief, then he has contributed to the salvation process and thus has something to boast over. God cannot allow this to happen given His aversion to pride of any sort.
3. The unsaved person is dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) and thus incapable of doing anything of spiritual value, such as obey, submit, forsake, etc. By making these other things the conditions of salvation rather than simply believing, obstacles are placed in front of the unbeliever that he or she is incapable of fulfilling. The lost are capable of doing only one thing that is pleasing to a holy God: trusting in His provision for salvation.

(H) Conclusions of Nicodemus (3:16-21)

(a) Belief vs unbelief (3:17-18)

17 For God did not send the Son into the world to **judge the world**, but so that the world might be saved through Him.

17 For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

17 Because God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world would be saved through him.

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

- Jesus is speaking here, but He's drawing the conclusions about what He is saying for Nicodemus to consider
- This verse is an amplification of v16
- "...judge the world" - when God sent His Son into the world to become a Man 2000 years ago, He did not do it so that Jesus could judge (condemn) the world
 - His overarching purpose was to procure salvation for the world, to absorb the wrath of God
 - Many people today will only look at Jesus piecemeal, taking one verse here or there that they like, and put together a doctrine that only shows one side of who God is
 - John wrote this verse, but he also wrote the book of Revelation, which details God's wrath upon mankind. It's true that Jesus did not come to judge/condemn the world in His first coming, but that doesn't hold true in His second coming (2 Thess 1:7-8; Rev 19:11-16).
 - When you consider who Jesus Christ is, you have to take into account the whole counsel of God, not just a few hand-selected verses that peak your emotions
 - What the Bible is telling us, and John specifically in these verses, is that yes we're currently in the age of grace, where God is long-suffering so that all may come to Him, but

you better be on the right side of the ledger when Christ returns because after that, it's game over (Ps 2:10-12)

- "...might be saved" - *sōzō*, subjunctive mood, indicating that salvation is a possibility, something that may or may not occur, depending on the circumstances
- "...through Him" - the only way to not stand in judgment for your works
- He is the *only* way (14:6). Just as there was one door in Noah's Ark, if you wanted to get into the ark and be rescued from death, but you didn't want to go through the door, you'd be out of luck.

1 st Coming	2 nd Coming
Forgive	Punish
Spills own blood	Spills others' blood
Savior	Judge
Grace	Justice
Lamb	Lion
Suffering Servant	Reigning King

How do we reconcile v17 with John 9:39, where Jesus said that he came into the world for judgment (Cf. John 5:37)? Judging was a secondary duty associated with salvation, but salvation was always Jesus' primary purpose (Dan 7:13-14). Jesus came into an already-condemned world to save some; He did not enter a neutral world to save some and condemn others.

18 **The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**

18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the **only begotten** Son of God.

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God's unique Son.

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.

- "The one who...the one who" - notice how the Bible consistently puts the responsibility to believe on man, not on God (Cf. 1:12-13; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom 3:21-22,25-26; 4:3-6; Eph 2:8. The Bible also consistently puts the responsibility for not believing on man (Cf. 3:18; 5:40).

- How do we know that God will judge the world? Because He's already done it once through the Flood.

— This is why the unsaved mind is doing everything in its power to erase any evidence of the Flood today. There is Flood evidence all over the world, right in front of our faces every day, but the unsaved mind rejects that evidence. There are tales of a global flood in just about every culture around the world, as well as in many extra-biblical writings.

— The unsaved mind rejects this evidence because once they acknowledge the possibility that a global flood occurred in the past, they have to consider that if God judged the world once, He may judge it again. So they dismiss any record or evidence that God has already judged.

— Yet the Bible tells us that just as God judged the world the first time, the judgment of God is headed to planet earth a second time. It's not a matter of *if*, it's a matter of *when*.

- "...believes" - *pisteuō*, dependence on, trust, reliance; used 100x in John's Gospel to describe the single condition that a person must satisfy in order to restore our relationship with God

— The only detour away from God's coming judgment is through belief in His Son, Jesus Christ

- "...judged already" - someone has to pay the price for sin: through belief, I'm allowing Jesus Christ to pay the punishment for my sin, which He has already accomplished. If someone chooses to not allow Christ to pay the price/punishment for their sin, they will have to pay it themselves. One way or another, someone has to pay for my sin.

— How can someone be judged already when they are still alive? Consider the difference between the guilt phase and the penalty phase of a legal trial. After a jury of your peers sees the evidence and hears the testimony in a trial, they deliberate and come to a verdict. The verdict against all mankind is: guilty. At this point they are judged (convicted).

— Then there is typically some time that passes, and the trial goes into the penalty phase. So the person has been judged and found guilty, but the penalty has not yet been exacted on them. If a person is in unbelief, they have already been judged and found guilty. Now they are awaiting the penalty phase; the penalty has not come yet, but the judgment has been entered.

— We need to understand that this is how God sees the unsaved world. The judgment does not get reversed until, by faith, they respond to the provision of God through His Son and

allow Him to take the penalty for our guilt in our place, which He has already done.

- "...he has not believed" - the unpardonable sin; unbelief in the provision that God has provided to take the penalty for our sin in His Son Jesus Christ is the only sin for which there is no remedy other than eternal punishment

— And on the day of judgment, the unbeliever cannot blame God for his own unbelief by saying, 'It was impossible for me to believe' because God gave mankind everything necessary in order to believe

- "...the name" - who and what we put our faith in, our belief in, matters. It is only in the name of Jesus that salvation is found (Acts 4:12).

- "...only begotten" [NASB95] - *monogenēs*, see notes on v16, 1:14,18

- "...Son of God" - unique/distinct from the Father in personage, but sharing in the same essence

(b) Light vs darkness (3:19-21)

19 And this is the **judgment**, that the **Light** has come into the world, and **people loved the darkness** rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil.

19 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

19 And this is the basis for judgment: The light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light because their actions were evil.

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.

- "...judgment" - *krisis*, verdict

— The judgment, according to John, is that Light (Jesus Christ) has come into the world

— In Gen 1, God brought in physical light; at His Incarnation, He brought in spiritual light. Spiritual light can only be found in Him.

- "...the Light" - *phōs*, Jesus Christ is the Light of the world (8:12). Light does two things:

1. It's a source of irritation: if you've been sleeping all night and someone turns on the lights, it is a source of irritation because we are accustomed to the darkness.

2. It exposes: light reveals something, not as we think it should be or want it to be, but how it actually is, in fact, in time, and in history. One of the things spiritual light makes us aware of is the reality of sin. And the closer we get to Christ, the more obvious our sin becomes to us.

- "...people loved the darkness" - the exposing nature of spiritual Light is a problem for the unsaved man, and it's also a problem for the believer who is wrapped up in sin

— The unsaved person or the believer living in rebellion loves to sin. Why? Because sin is fun, sin is enjoyable, there is a window of enjoyment we get from sin. If sin was never

enjoyable, we'd never be drawn to sin. But what is never disclosed is that this window of enjoyment is very short lived. It disappears very quickly.

— And sin brings into our lives long-lived consequences, which are around long after the pleasure of sin has ceased (Cf. Gal 6:7-8; Heb 11:25). You can choose your sin, but you don't get to choose your consequences.

20 **For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed.**

20 **For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.**

20 **Everyone who practices wickedness hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his actions may not be exposed.**

20 **For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.**

— "...everyone" - this is a universal truth; it doesn't apply to just American unbelievers or African unbelievers. This is a worldwide, all-encompassing spiritual truth: evildoers hate the Light because it exposes their evil deeds.

— As a person practices evil, which they love (v19), they will repel the Light, they will hate the Light, they will be irritated by the Light, they will try to get away from the Light

— What did Adam & Eve do just after the Fall in Eden? Were they seeking God? No, they were running and hiding from God, and God was seeking them! They ran and hid because the Light of God in their presence exposed their sin.

— "...evil" - *phaula*, worthless; evil people reject Jesus because He exposes the vanity of their lives. It shows that they have no meaning, worthy goal, or hope for the future.

— They know that coming to the Light would convict them. Immorality lies behind unbelief.

— People don't come to Jesus because they don't want their sin exposed. They do not want Jesus to change them or deliver them from the darkness and sinful habits that imprison them.

— "...hates the Light" - when Light came into the world, it was not greeted with joy, applause, and praise...for the most part, it was greeted with resentment. It was rejected because it exposed the things (sin) that people wanted to keep under wraps, to remain hidden, because men and women love sin.

— So how does this verse relate to the mature, faithful believer today? I'm walking with the Lord, reading my Bible, active in church and ministry, so what does this matter to me? Jesus tells us in Matt 5:14-16 that we are the light of the world, so we should let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify God in heaven.

— As ambassadors of Jesus Christ in a dark world that has mostly rejected the Light, we represent His Light. Eph 5:8 says that we were formerly in darkness, but not we're in the

light, therefore walk as children of light.

— Eph 5:11 says that believers should not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but expose them. As we represent the light of God in the world, we will have a natural tendency to irritate the unsaved world as we expose darkness.

— We are to radiate the Light in every area of life: finances, science, politics, economics, religion, psychology, business, banking, sales...whatever your field or expertise, wherever God has placed you, you are to radiate the light of God. As you do this, many will appreciate it, others will not because your very presence is exposing their darkness and irritating them. We should not expect the world to welcome the light that we shine (Cf. 15:20).

21 But the one who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed as having been **performed in God.**"

21 But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may become evident that his actions have God's approval."

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

- Those who do evil, who reject the Light, are uncomfortable with the Light; it's an irritation to them

— But those who practice truth are comforted by the Light, they are not irritated by the Light, because they have right motives

- "...performed in God" - brought forth in God, wrought through us by God

— This is a huge topic in John's Gospel, which Jesus will lay out clearly during the Upper Room Discourse (John 15)

— In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus calls Himself the "vine" and we (believers) are the "branches." How does a branch bear fruit? It simply stays connected to the vine. As long as the branch is connected to the vine and obtains its nourishment from the vine, it will bear fruit.

— Consequently, as long as a Christian is connected to the Lord in faith, walking in fellowship with Him, the good deeds come forth from us spontaneously and naturally, sometimes with little effort on our part, because we are drawing from a power source that is not our own.

— Christians are not called to *produce* fruit, we're called to *bear* fruit. A branch on an orange tree does not have to concentrate on producing oranges, the oranges come forth naturally because the branch is attached to the power source ("vine").

— Many Christians go out and attempt to produce good works on their own, not understanding that good works are the result of abiding in Christ. Our command is to abide, not to produce fruit. When we abide, the fruit comes naturally.

The reaction of people to the light of God is to hide or run for cover. Why? Because sinfulness is exposed when it comes into the presence of God Almighty. When humanity comes into the presence of God, they are standing in front of a Being who has the power and right to judge them. It's like seeing a police officer, it's a comfort to you. But if you're driving 85 on I-10, the sight of a cop is no longer comforting, it's fearful. It's the same way when human beings come into the presence of God. This is why the doctrine of the transferred righteousness of Christ is so critical. If I can't stand before God in the transferred righteousness of Christ, all I'm left with is abject fear.

I don't plan to stand before God on my own righteousness, because it's not worth anything. I plan to stand before God in His Son's righteousness, the righteousness of God. If I stand in His righteousness, that was transferred/imputed to me as a gift at the point of faith alone in Christ alone, I can stand. I can't stand before the Lord in my fallen state. The same fear that overtook Adam & Eve, Isaiah, and John would quickly overtake me.

Heb 10:31: It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

We have lost sight of the holiness of God. The church has emphasized the love of God so much that we've lost sight of the holiness of God. We've emphasized the grace of God to the point that we've lost sight of why we need that grace.

(5) John Must Decrease (3:22-36)

(A) Argument (3:22-26)

22 After these things Jesus and **His disciples** came into the **land of Judea**; and there He was **spending time with them** and **baptizing**.

22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing.

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside. He spent some time there with them and began baptizing.

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

- "...His disciples" - Jesus had not yet commissioned the twelve disciples, so these may be His followers and may have included some or all of the twelve

- "...land of Judaea" - Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus occurred in Jerusalem, which is in Judea; this refers to the Judean countryside, outside of the city

- "...spending time with them" - the most valuable thing you can give yourself to is to spend time with Jesus Christ. Jesus here has moved away from the hustle and bustle of

ministry to simply spend time with His disciples.

- Mary and Martha had Jesus as a guest in their home (Luke 10:38-42), and while Martha worked, Mary sat at Jesus feet. Martha was upset with Mary not helping her and complained to Jesus, but Jesus told her that Mary, by spending time with Him, had chosen the better way.
- Sometimes we get so busy with Christianity that we fail to spend time with Christ
- It's a radical thought that the Creator of the universe, the One who spoke the universe into existence, knows your name and desires to spend time with you
- "...baptizing" - 4:2 clarifies that Jesus wasn't baptizing the people, His disciples were doing the baptizing
- This was not yet "Christian baptism" but rather baptism expressing repentance (the baptism of John the Baptist)

23 Now John also was baptizing in **Aenon, near Salim**, because there was an abundance of water there; and *people* were coming and being baptized—

23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized—

23 John was also baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there. People kept coming and were being baptized,

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

- While Jesus was baptizing in Judea, John the Baptist was also baptizing nearby
- "...Aenon, near Salim" - an unknown location today, likely somewhere further north in Samaria, but no one today knows for sure

24 for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

24 for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

24 since John had not yet been thrown into prison.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

- This event took place during a time in John's ministry before the government clamped down on him

— John the Baptist spoke out about an unbiblical marriage by one of the Herods, and was in turn thrown into prison

— Some today say that pastors or other ministers should not speak out against evil in our leaders, government, etc. If that's so, how do you explain John the Baptist speaking out against an unbiblical marriage by Herod?

— John the Baptist spoke out against Herod because of his incestuous relationship with Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother Philip (Matt 14:3-10; Cf. Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:19-20)

- John the Baptist let God's Word speak to things outside of the four walls of the church
- The synoptics begin their narratives of Jesus' public ministry beginning with John the Baptist's imprisonment (Mark 1:14)

25 Then a matter of dispute developed on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification.

25 Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification.

25 Then a controversy about ritual purification sprang up between a certain Jew and John's disciples,

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

- While John the Baptist was baptizing, one of his disciples (of which he had many) got into a discussion with a Jew about water purification

— The Jews revered water purification very highly; they had a complex array of water purifications (Mark 7:3-4)

— The question was specifically around the relationship of John's baptism to other ceremonial washings, which other Jewish authorities espoused

26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing and all *the people* are coming to Him."

26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him."

26 so they went to John and told him, "Rabbi, the man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, the one about whom you testified—look, he's baptizing, and everyone is going to him!"

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.

- As this conversation between John's disciples and a Jew about water purification rites was taking place, others came to John and told them that Jesus' disciples were also baptizing, and that all the people were going to Him

— John's disciples likely recalled John's baptism of Christ, and John's identification of Him, and now they are concerned that Christ's ministry has taken off, and it was impacting John the Baptist's ministry. Instead of being baptized by John, people were instead going to Christ to be baptized, He's now baptizing more than you are John, and His ministry is growing more than yours.

- The source of the disciple's consternation seemed to be some sort of jealousy
- John's reply (v27-30) suggests they felt jealous of Jesus' popularity, and that they failed to grasp the purpose of John's ministry

(B) Affirmation (3:27-36)

(a) John as the best man (3:27-30)

27 John replied, "A person can receive not even one thing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven.

27 John replied, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to them from heaven.

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

- John the Baptist quickly corrects his disciples by telling them that Jesus' ministry is taking off, He's now baptizing more than I am, because His ministry has an anointing from heaven (Cf. 1 Cor 4:7; James 1:17)

— John tells them that it's by the sovereignty of the Father that Christ's ministry is growing, so don't worry about it

28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.'

28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.'

28 You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him.'

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

- John goes on to tell them not to be upset that Christ's ministry is eclipsing his own because remember, I told you that I am not the Messiah (1:6-8,20), but I am a forerunner for Him (1:23)

— John the Baptist embodied the cardinal rule of ministry: it's not about you, it's about Him

— We need to keep in mind that the primary role of the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is to magnify and point people to Christ

— If our prayers go something like, Lord, make me a worldwide evangelist, make me a best-selling author of Christian books, make me a great theologian, make me a great businessman and philanthropist where I can give money to all sorts of worthwhile

projects...the Holy Spirit says, I'm not interested in that, or that, or that, because the Holy Spirit's role is to glorify the Son.

— But if we come to the Lord in contriteness and humility and say, Lord I don't know what You're going to do with my life, but I want You to use my life in some way that You see fit, to glorify Jesus Christ. I don't know how you're going to do it, when you're going to do it, but I'm ready, willing and able to be used as You see fit. And the Holy Spirit says, That's a prayer I'm interested in answering because now I am cooperating and walking in harmony with what God is doing on the earth. I'm in line with His purposes.

— John did not want any personal kudos...he wanted those to go to Jesus Christ

29 He who has the bride is **the groom**; but the **friend of the groom**, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the groom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.

29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.

29 It is the bridegroom who gets the bride, yet the bridegroom's friend, who merely stands by and listens for him, is overjoyed to hear the bridegroom's voice. That's why this joy of mine is now complete.

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.

- John now develops the point further with an analogy of a groom and best man...to describe to his own disciples what his role is, and that they should not be upset that Jesus' ministry is beginning to transcend John's ministry.

- "...the groom" - Jesus will also use this metaphor of Himself as the Bridegroom (Mark 2:19); Paul also develops it (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-32), as well as John (Rev 19:7; 21:2)

- "...friend of the groom" - the best man

— The best man is usually the one who introduces the bride and groom. His job is not to upstage the groom, but to point the attention and the congratulations to the groom. The best man derives his joy from knowing that he has united two people in lifelong love.

— This is what John the Baptist is doing...he is going around attempting to unite the remnant with the Groom in a lifelong relationship. Once he does that, he gets out of the way.

— John the Baptist is doing exactly the opposite of what a false teacher does...false teachers are not interested in pointing people to Christ, but rather drawing away disciples to themselves. They are the star attraction. They are interested in their own power, their

own popularity, and expanding their own sphere of influence. They are interested in using the people of God for their own purposes.

- But not so an individual controlled by the Holy Spirit, who seeks to unite people with Christ and get out of the way
- Paul, when speaking about false teachers, said that after he left, savage wolves would come in among them, not sparing the flock, and even from among themselves (in the church), men will speak perverse things to draw disciples away to themselves (Acts 20:29-30).
- False teachers do not seek to feed the flock of God, but to fleece the flock of God. He is not interested in bringing together bride and groom, but is interested in upstaging the event and bringing attention to himself.

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

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

30 He must become more important, but I must become less important."

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

- "...must" [2x] - *dei*, something that is absolutely essential; it describes something that is an iron clad certainty; it's not something that is optional

— The outworking of this increase/decrease concept in the life of Paul is described in Gal 2:20. There Paul says that I am no longer even living my own life...Paul's ambitions have been put to death because of his faith in Christ to the point that he is no longer in control, and Jesus is living His life out through Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

— The more I am occupied with Christ, the less shall I be occupied with myself

Gal 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

(b) Christ's identity (3:31-36)

(i) From heaven (3:31-32)

31 "He who comes from above is above all; the one who is *only* from the earth is of the earth and speaks of the earth. **He who comes from heaven is above all.**

31 "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

31 The one who comes from above is superior to everything. The one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is superior to everything.

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.

- John continues his affirmation by stating very clearly who Jesus Christ is...

— John had this subservient attitude toward Jesus Christ because he clearly understood who Jesus Christ is

— In v31-36, John puts together eight concepts (phrases or words) that accurately describe the identity of Jesus Christ. If you have any doubt about who Jesus Christ is, the eight concepts in these six verses will

- "...He who comes from heaven is above all" - John says that, in contrast to Jesus Christ, I am of the earth, I am earthly, therefore my knowledge is earthly and I'm only able to speak earthly words and understand earthly concepts

— But by contrast, Jesus is from heaven (1:1-18), therefore He speaks of things that are heavenly, and in fact He's the only man in the history of the world who is qualified to talk about heaven, since that's where He's from

32 What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies; and no one accepts His testimony.

32 What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

32 He testifies about what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony.

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

- Jesus, being from heaven, has seen heavenly things and thus can testify to heavenly things

— Unfortunately, by and large the human race is not interested in Jesus' heavenly testimony, heavenly truths, heavenly things because we are in love with the things of this earth, things we can see and experience here and now.

(ii) True (3:33)

33 The one who has accepted His testimony has certified that God is true.

33 He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true.

33 The person who has accepted his testimony has acknowledged that God is truthful.

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

- Where can we get truth today? From politicians, from the media, from the universities, from scientists, from doctors? We live in a truth vacuum where truth is very hard to come by on just about any topic.

— Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life...(14:6). The only place we can find truth today is in God's Word.

— If you are interested in spiritual truth that has not been tampered with or re-written by some man-made agenda, you go to Jesus Christ because that is the only place where such

truth is available

- (iii) Sent from God (3:34a)
- (iv) Speaks God's Word (3:34b)
- (v) Possesses the Spirit unlimited (3:34c)

34 For He whom God sent speaks the words of God; for He does not give the Spirit sparingly.

34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.

34 The one whom God sent speaks the words of God, because God does not give the Spirit in limited measure to him.

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

- "...He whom God sent" - the concept of Jesus being sent to earth by God is given 39x in John's Gospel

— God wants us to understand sent this Man Jesus Christ into the world, and it was none other than God the Father

— "...speaks the words of God" - people say that Jesus was a good philosopher and teacher, but He wasn't the Son of God. What NT are you reading?

— When Jesus opened His mouth to speak, what came out were the very words of God. To believe the words of Jesus Christ is to believe the words of God.

— This is how Jesus can claim to be the ultimate source of truth...because He spoke God's Words. He didn't speak *for* God, He spoke *as* God. He did not editorialize or sensationalize anything...He spoke *as* God.

— "...He does not give the Spirit sparingly" - Jesus walked under the full power of the Holy Spirit every day of His life

— Jesus is not only the One who ascended to the right hand of the Father and bestowed gifts to believers, but He is also the One who walked in the fullness of the Holy Spirit every day of His life

— No one has ever had the indwelling Spirit to the fullness that Jesus Christ had it...He had complete fullness of the Holy Spirit operating in His life 24/7/365 (1:32-33; Cf. Is 11:2; 61:1; Luke 4:1)

Work of the Spirit in the OT

	OT/Gospels	Today
Reception of all of the Spirit at the moment of salvation?	Subsequent to salvation (Ex 31:3)	At moment of salvation (Rom 8:9)
How long is the indwelling?	Temporary indwelling (1 Sam 16:14; Ps 51:11)	Permanent indwelling (John 14:16)
Who is indwelt?	Selective indwelling (Joel 2:28)	Universal indwelling (1 Cor 12:13)

(vi) Loved by the Father (3:35a)

(vii) Has received all things from the Father (3:35b)

35 The Father **loves** the Son and has entrusted all things to His hand.

35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.

35 The Father loves the Son and has put everything in his hands.

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

- "...love" - *agapaō*; interestingly, John 5:20 repeats the same thought about the Father's love for the Son, but there John uses the Greek word *phileō* without any discernible shift in meaning.

- As parents we think about how much we love our kids...we can't imagine how much more a person could love another human being, but they we consider how much God loves His Son and we cannot even fathom it. It's a love that is incomprehensible to us.

- Jesus is not only loved by the Father, but the Father has given Him all things, including the role as Judge at the end of the age (5:27)

(viii) Gives life (3:36)

36 The one who believes in the Son **has eternal** life; but the one **who does not obey the Son** will not see life, but the **wrath of God remains** on him."

36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

36 The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who disobeys the Son will not see life. Instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

36 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.

- He has the power to give life to those who believe by faith, and that faith has to rest in the second member of the Trinity, God the Son

- "...has" - present tense, meaning eternal life is a current possession of the believer (Cf. 5:24)

— You don't have to spend your days worrying if you're saved and going to heaven...you can know that right now, today, based on this promise...your eternal life in heaven is something that you possess today!

— This is the backbone of the doctrine of Assurance of Salvation

- "...eternal" - *aiōnios*, eternal means that this life that we have right now, we will continue to have for eternity. It cannot be shaken loose, it cannot disappear because of something I say or do...it is mine forever. It is a promise of God that I cannot lose.

— If I can do something to lose it, it means the gift is not eternal...that's why it is called eternal life (10:27-29)

— "...does not obey the Son" - is this some type of works salvation? No, obedience to the Son is defined earlier in the verse: belief in Christ.

— When you believe in Christ, you are obeying the Son (Cf. Acts 5:32). If you are not in faith, you are in abject disobedience to the Son of God and you will not see the life described earlier in this verse. Instead, the wrath (*orgē*, white hot anger and uncontrolled passion) of God that is on you now will remain on you for eternity.

— In v18 it says that unbelievers have been judged already...they have been pronounced (born) guilty, and now are just awaiting the penalty phrase where they will be judged and sent to eternity in hell, experiencing the eternal wrath of God

— Unless we are saved from some real peril, there is no meaning in salvation. The concept of salvation makes no sense unless you realize that you are saved from something. The very concept of being saved is that there is some type of good news instead of bad news. The good news is v36a, the bad news is v36b.

— Sometimes we're so eager to get out the good news that we neglect the bad news. The good news is meaningless unless it is accompanied by the bad news.

— The Bible consistently puts the responsibility to believe on man, not on God (Cf. 1:12-13; 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom 3:21-22,25-26; 4:3-6; Eph 2:8. The Bible also

consistently puts the responsibility for not believing on man (Cf. 3:18; 5:40).

– "...wrath of God" – since the context is eternal life, this is referring to eternal punishment, not the Great Tribulation (Cf. 1 Thess 5:9)

— This is the only place, in any of John's epistles or his Gospel, that he uses the word "wrath" (*orgē*); he uses it 6x in Revelation

– "...remains" – *menō*, abides; a present tense verb, meaning that the wrath of God is currently hanging over the heads of unbelievers (Cf. v18)