

John 3:1–17

“The Kingdom, Its King, and His Mission”

Did Jesus come from God to usher in the kingdom? Pastor leads his family in tomorrow’s “Hopewell @Home” passage. In these seventeen verses, we learn that the kingdom is an eternal kingdom that belongs to the next age, that the King is God the Son Who became man, and that His mission was to come to die for sinners.

Tuesday, March 2, 2021 ▪ Read John 3:1–17

Questions from the Scripture text: Who has ascended to heaven (v13)? Who came down from heaven? What did Moses lift up in the wilderness (v14)? Who must be lifted up? What happens when someone believes (v15)? Why did God give His only begotten Son (v16)? What will not happen to those who believe in Him? What will they have? What was not the reason that God sent His Son into the world (v17)? What was the reason?

Next week’s Call to Worship, Prayer for Help, Song of Adoration, and Prayer of Confession all come from John 3:13–17, so that we will see that we are singing God’s thoughts after Him with *As When the Prophet Moses Raised*.

How can you enter the kingdom? Jesus knew that’s what Nicodemus was after (v1–3), but Nicodemus didn’t understand that he was asking about a heavenly kingdom—and that entering it requires of us, while on earth, a heavenly birth (v4–12).

Who can ascend to heaven (v13)? Only the One Who is from heaven! Israel in the wilderness could do nothing to escape death, but God lifted up a salvation (the serpent in the wilderness, v14a) to which they could look and live. The evangelist here tells us that this pointed forward to Christ, Who would be lifted up (v14b) for sinners to believe in and be saved (v15).

What is this “believing”? The comparison to the bronze serpent from Numbers 21 makes it plain. This “believing” is to helplessly look to Christ, Who is given to us by God as the Savior Who has all salvation in Himself.

Why would God save helpless sinners? Is there anything in them that convinces Him to do so? No—even that is not in them. It is something in Him that sends Christ. For God so loved the world (v16).

By Whom does God save? By His Son (v16), Who is Himself. That which is begotten of man is man. That which is begotten of God is God. “only begotten” here translates a single Greek word that makes it clear that within the Godhead, there is just the One Who is begotten.

We mustn’t say more than the Bible at this point. God is One. He has one essence. But the one God exists in three persons. It belongs to the Father to beget. It belongs to the Son to be begotten. It belongs to the Father and the Son to send forth the Spirit. It belongs to the Spirit to proceed from the Father and the Son.

But the bottom line for us in this passage is this: the Man to Whom we must look for all of our salvation is One Who is God from all eternity, but Whom God gave (v16) by sending Him into the world (v17).

We would expect God, when He comes into the world of sinners, to condemn them. Indeed, we know that when Jesus the God-Man returns, He will do just that. But this is not why He was originally sent into the world. He was first sent to save sinners, whom He brings into this salvation by sending His Spirit to give them the faith to look to Him and live!

Why do you need a Savior from heaven? Why do you need a heavenly birth in order to believe in Him?

Suggested songs: ARP25A “To You I Lift My Soul” or TPH449 “As When the Prophet Moses Raised”

For more Hopewell @Home devotionals, please visit bit.ly/harpcHAH

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are welcome to listen to the audio recording, which you may find via tinysa.com/hopewellarp)

John 3 verses 1 through 17, these are God's words. There was a man at a Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him rabbi and we know that you are a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus answered and said to him most assuredly I say to you unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

Jesus answered most surely. I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit. He cannot enter the kingdom of God. But which is born of the flesh is flesh. And that which is born of the spirit is spirit do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again the wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes, so is everyone who is born of the spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said to him, how can these things be? Jesus answered and said to him, are you the teacher of Israel and do not know these things must surely? I say to you we speak what we know and testify what we have seen and you do not receive our witness.

If I have told you earthly things and do not believe how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things. No one has ascended to heaven but he who came down from heaven, that is the son of man who is in heaven? And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent work.

So nicotimus comes he's a Pharisee and he says rabbi teacher master we know that you are a teacher come from God and what he meant is

that God sent him the way that God had sent the other prophets he had been sent and the other prophets always prophesied about the kingdom all the way back even to Samuel who is and, Moses to some extent but the age of the prophets is understood after the age of the judges the transition comes a Samuel who's the last judge and the first of the the stream of prophets that is from Samuel to Malachi and so Jesus understands Nicodemus to be implying that he'd like to know when the kingdom is going to come or what aspect of the kingdom coming that Jesus was sent to tell them about.

When Jesus has two things to correct Nicodemus on first to correct Nicodemus's idea of the kingdom. That it is not some new age in the history of the Jewish state that you get into by being born a Jew or being converted to Judaism. And second Jesus wants to correct Nicodemus's idea of Jesus and who he is because Jesus did come to tell about the kingdom, but he came to tell about an everlasting kingdom that you cannot even enter unless you have a birth that is not from this world.

It's a kingdom that is from the next world and from heaven and you need a birth that is from heaven and, From God himself to interest. So that's the first problem that he has and Nicodemus is understanding of Jesus coming from God is true in a way that is infinitely bigger than Nicodemus could imagine because Jesus is God who entered the world and he is the one who can tell you the things that are from heaven because he himself is from heaven as I were because he is the king of heaven and he is the son of man who is both in heaven and on earth at the same time because he has a divine nature and, A human nature at the same time and then and then Jesus finishes this new teaching about the kingdom and the new teaching about the king by explaining his mission as the king which is to provide entrance into the kingdom by his death and entrance that has given to us when we believe in him.

So those are the three main sections of what Jesus is teaching Nicodemus here. First then correcting Nicodemus on the nature of the kingdom. It seems like a weird reply when Nicodemus says we know that you are a teacher come from God for no one can do the signs that you do unless God is with him so saying we know that you're a prophet because you're doing the signs of a prophet that haven't really been done for a long time no one's been gifted like this since one of the prophets.

So Jesus answers him most to certainly I say to you unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. So it's not just a new phase in the kingdom of Israel it is a different type of kingdom altogether. Nicodemus says to him, how can a man be born when he is old can he enter a second time in his mother's womb and be born?

So if being a Jew isn't good enough, what kind of birth are you talking about? Think Nicodemus understands what Jesus is saying to some extent. That he needs spiritual birth or some new different kind of birth altogether, but Nicodemus is offended that Jewish birth isn't good enough and perhaps he doesn't understand how this other kind of birth could happen.

And Jesus turns his question to keep explaining most surely. I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God now even in the Old Testament prophets and multiple places. The you know, the figure of water was used for God's supernatural life being given to the people this goes back even as far as in the wilderness.

God miraculously giving water from the rock and the apostle tells us that in 1st Corinthians 10 that Jesus was the rock who gives the water of life we have Jesus in the Gospels declaring himself the living water and pouring out his spirit just as in baptism. Water is poor debt and so there are all these illustrations and yet also God has designed us that when we are born part of our being born when you know, the baby is coming as when the water breaks and there is something similar to the the water breaking and the rock being broken in the wilderness and water gushing out of the rocks, so there's even connected to our physical human birth and, Nicodemus has brought up that you know, can you go back into your mother's womb and be born and be born again, you know, one of the this Nicodemus is kind of asking can the water break a second time and Jesus is responses, you don't understand nicotine this the illustration of water from the rock and spiritual life from heaven that we that I our father son and Holy Spirit.

We that we have designed even into the birth that you get as you come into this world that it that it is an illustration of the spiritual life that also God has told us about in the prophets and so there's all of that that is behind this most surely.

I say to you unless one is born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God that which is born of the flesh is flesh that which is born of the spirit. And he says you actually don't get to decide when you get to be born of the spirit the spirit is the one who gets to decide when you are born of the spirit and he says you don't get to decide when the wind blows on you so you don't get to decide when the earth wind blows on you you don't get to decide when God the spirit and spirit and breath and wind are the same word in Hebrew and they're the same word in Greek you can use the word Puma for all of those things just use you in Hebrew you can use the word.

Wall. For all of those things. And so the kingdom is something that is not of this world and it requires a birth that is not of this world. And it requires a birth that is not of your will. If you're ever worried that you have not yet been made spiritually alive that you are still spiritually dead and have never had genuine love in your heart to God.

Well, there's something you can do. You can cry out to God the Holy Spirit to give you that life because He doesn't when He will. He's not waiting on your willingness. Praise God. Because if He waited on our willingness, we'd never be made alive. And God the Holy Spirit doesn't wait on us.

So. There's the difference in understanding of the Kingdom. It's not a kingdom of this world. It's an everlasting kingdom of the next world and to enter we need first of all to have that birth from above that life from the Spirit. And what does the life of the Spirit do?

He gives us faith to believe into Jesus and that's the next correction that Nicodemus needs is correction about how it is in what manner it is that Jesus is from God. The Nicodemus answers him and says to him how can these things be verse 9 Jesus answered and said to him.

Are you the teacher of Israel? It's actually very high complement. Jesus is acknowledging Mitten maybe Nicodemus doesn't think he is but Jesus

is calling Nicodemus the top of all the Pharisees the top of all of the teachers says you're the best they got you don't understand that there's an everlasting kingdom in a world to come and that you need a new birth in order to have the kind of life that you will have and that kingdom.

Most assuredly I say to you we speak what we know and testify what we have seen and you do not receive our witness. You know, Nick Davis has come to Jesus at night. There's nobody else there and Jesus has suddenly using the first person plural. Why? Because he is speaking to him by the Spirit and as the only begotten of the Father which is about to mention in verse 16, he's speaking as the Trinitarian God.

So even before he talks about how he is both from heaven and still in heaven while he's on earth, which is all very marvelous to someone like Nicodemus who doesn't have a well-developed theology of the Trinity even before he gets to that part Justin his pronouns. His speaking as the Triune God.

How amazing. Nicodemus doesn't understand how privileged he and everyone who meets Jesus in his earthly ministry are that they are like Moses at the bush and the second person of the Trinity speaking to him from the bush that is not consumed or Joshua outside Jericho and the second person of the Trinity telling him to take off his shoes because suddenly his tiny patch of dirt outside the city of Jericho became holy or Abraham as his looking down from Mamra towards.

Thought him and these three men representing God the Father Son and spirit have come to him and and so forth. Nicodemus has one in front of him, who is the triune God. And whom we will one day lay our eyes upon and embrace because he's become a man. In order for us to be able to be joined to him in order for him and his sacrifice to be righteously justly counted for us to attend for our sin and.

So as marvelous most surly I say to you we speak what we know and testify what we have seen and you do not receive our witness and so we also as we read and have explained to us the Bible in our family worship times, are you read in your private worship time you or in the public worship we ought to we ought to say Lord help me that I will receive your witness.

Because when the Bible is read or taught rightly or rightly taught when the Bible is read or rightly taught it is God himself who testifies to us that's what it means when it says all scripture is breathed out by God and especially knowing that the word breath and breathe is from the word spirit and it's the spirit who gives that birth and you cry out Lord help me receive your witness help me not just be curious about what this might mean the way Nicodemus is curious about what this might mean, but help me to.

Do understand and receive it from you as what it really is the very words of God because that is the way in which God gives us his birth and the way in which God gives us faith so he says if I have told you earthly things and you do not believe how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things because I've just told you something that you already should know from your Bible you have.

Moses and you have the prophets and they have told you about the need to be born of water in the spirit to have a life from God that is miraculous and supernatural and given to you by his spirit if I were to start telling you about how the trinity functions in working and conspiring for your new birth and to give you faith and to give you salvation the inner workings of how.

God. Does the miracle of the new birth you wouldn't understand it. You don't even understand that you need one when you have everything you need on earth for that. So if I have told you earthly things and you do not believe how you believe if I tell you heavenly things no one has ascended to heaven but he who came down from heaven that is the son of man who is in heaven.

So you see what he's saying here, you're right. I'm a teacher come from God. But I'm you know, the teachers who are come from God. It's not like they went up to heaven and got a mess. Edge and came back down the way that Moses went up to the mountain and got a message and come back down.

The knowledge I have of the inner workings of the Godhead our mind Jesus says to Nicodemus because I am the second person of the Godhead I have my origin in the everlasting God I am Yahweh, the one who is and I have added humanity to myself in order to stand before you.

Now, he's also added humanity to himself for another reason. And verse 14, sorry. I should make sure we hit the end of verse 14. No one has ascended to heaven but he who came down from heaven, that is the son of man who is. In. Heaven. Now if you have any SV that's missing because the critical text and understand how that could be true at the same time and so the yeah Egyptian heretics and the others who he wrote the papyri that got sealed and jars and were later discovered and the paper is older than the the paper on which we have the copies of the New Testament as it was originally written and has been preserved by God throughout the ages, the who is in heaven is missing at the end.

But as a marvelous thing that Jesus says, right? No one has ascended to heaven but he who came down from heaven, so he's saying you're right. Nicodemus. I've come down from heaven. That is the son of man who is in heaven, but guess what? Nicodemus. I came from heaven.

I'm standing in front of you and I'm still in heaven. Isn't that marvelous how our Lord is both God and man at the same time. He couldn't stop becoming God in order to become a man like Wesley implies in some of his weirdo and theology can God ever stop becoming God.

Of course not. He exists outside of time. And he is perfect and he can't become imperfect. So it's ludicrous. And so Jesus is really telling Nicodemus and us here John the Evangelist by the Holy Spirit and recording this is telling us he is still God and man at the same time.

Well, what was one of the reasons that he became man verse 14 and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Even so must the son of man be lifted up he's talking of course about being put on a cross the serpent in the wilderness the the bronze serpent that was commanded and numbers chapter 21 was put on a post a bronze post as and like a cross and he said as Moses lifted up the serpent wilderness even so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him.

Should not perish but have eternal life. Now but had happened in numbers 21 was the people of Israel had sinned and God had sent venomous snakes into the camp and they were the the venomous snakes were biting the Israelites and everyone who was bitten would die now we too have as it were been bit by a serpent who tempted our first father Adam and we sinned in Adam and we fell in Adam and everyone who has participated in that work of that serpent dies eternally deserves, hell, don't we?

Well God gave the people of Israel that bronze serpent on that cross of that when they look to the bronze serpent if they get bit they would hurry up and look and if they just look they would be healed they wouldn't perish and they would have life until they died of something else in the wilderness because they were wicked and God was killing them all.

Jesus on the cross for us is something different, isn't it? We look to him and we live forever and it's very helpful. That he tells us whoever believes in him should not perish but heavy eternal life and we know the the way that the bronze serpent in the wilderness worked.

And we can say oh I learned something here about what faith is, have you wondered what believing in Jesus is like how that works what it is, well the evangelist here by the spirit tells us that it is to be totally helpless and know that you are about to receive a death that you deserve that you deserve hell and to be helpless in deserving hell and yet to be given by God one to whom you just look for help because you are helpless.

And as you look to him hoping for help that you would be saved by him, you know that all of the help is in him and not at all to your in your looking and that is the nature of saving faith that you would look to Christ like that and know that you have no help in yourself and he has all the help and in and just trust to get him.

Is the is the means by which all of your hell is taken away and you have eternal life given to you instead of eternal death and that is. That is what the Lord Jesus came to do for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten. Son so the Father has given the Son out of love that all the believing ones in Him and the believing ones are the ones in the spirit has given this birth that Jesus has talked about so that we would have faith and you see the work of the whole trinity here should not perish but have everlasting life.

That Jesus who is God did not come. As the vengeful judge which was naked what Nicodemus was hoping because he had a wrong idea of who of what the kingdom is, he thought it was just another age of of the kingdom of Israel and that that it would come by a judgment on the other kingdoms around them and he had a wrong idea of who Jesus is that he would just be kind of a new prophet or maybe a prophet king or maybe a prophet priest king maybe at all those things worked out after all he is the the teacher of Israel.

But if God himself comes with a judgment. Then that's bad news for everyone who's a wipe out everyone. And he says, no no, no. The kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and I am God himself in the flesh and I came the first time not. With my holy and righteous judgment and fury but to give myself.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world. I didn't come that time the father has not sent the son the first time for that but that the world through him might be saved. I have calm as the Godman to give a salvation, that is not just for Israel.

But for all of the believing ones from all of the nations of all of the world. So, Nicodemus is. Track. But he needed a renewed understanding of what the kingdom is a renewed understanding of who the king is and a renewed understanding of what the king came to do.

The kingdom is Jesus's everlasting kingdom. The king is God the son the second person of the Trinity who became a man added humanity to himself in order to die for us. And what he came to do was to give us that death that is all our hopes so that we can look to him and live because the spirit gives us the birth by which we have life to look to him.

Let's pray that the Lord would give each of us that life. Well, Holy Spirit, we ask that you who do whatever you will just as the wind blows whichever way it will. Would give us that life that the picture of water breaking from the rock. And the water of the life of God for us that you would give us that life and produce and us that faith that we might look to Jesus whom we know is God and man in the flesh knowing that his death was to take away the punishment that we deserve.

Lord I pray. Holy Spirit that you would have done this for everyone in our family from me and mom all the way down to Sophia that we would have that life from above so that we would have that life that is forever. And may rain as kings under Christ in the everlasting kingdom do this for us we pray in Jesus' name amen.