

## John Ch 3 Vs 8-21

“Believe, Believe, Believe!”

No less than 7x in this brief portion of scripture Jesus uses the words, “Believe”, “Believes”, or “Believed.” and When it comes to the topic at hand (which is eternal life, what it means to be born again) when I see such vast repetition of a single prerequisite, I do well to tune in and pay attention to it. Because it seems to me that Jesus is trying to tell us something here. You know it’s like when someone just (maybe from frustration of trying to explain something) and they finally just get incredibly blunt and spell it out no holds barred, and you go, “What are you trying to say?” It’s like, “Quit beating around the bush and tell me what’s on your mind.” “How do you really feel?”

So when it comes to being born again of the Spirit of God, and we come across these word, “Believe”, “Believes” and “Believed” over and over again, what could it be that the Lord is seeking to communicate to us that is the necessary requirement regarding eternal life? That we....(what)...believe. We don’t read the words, “Baptize”, “Baptizes”, and “Baptized”, baptism isn’t brought up once in this passage, however, “Belief” is.

When we run across this word, “Believe” in this narrative we need to understand that what’s not implied is a mental assent, or affirmation. The word “Believe” that’s used in this passage speaks of placing all of your confidence in, to be persuaded of, it speaks of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of his soul. (From Thayers Greek Lexicon)

So it goes well beyond a consent to a set of facts, but it’s demonstrated in what I do with my life, it speaks of transferring one’s weight entirely. So that you might tell me that you believe that chair you’re sitting in can hold you up. But that’s not the type of faith, or belief that this is speaking, the type of belief this is speaking of causes you to place, or transfer all of your weight into that chair, and be solely dependant upon that chair to hold you up, to bear you up, now you truly believe in that chair. Because you’ve placed all your trust, all your confidence and conviction into that chair and it’s ability to hold you and keep you from hitting the ground. Everyone here has committed with out reservation by faith in the chair in which you sit. and That’s what we’re speaking of here when we run across this word “Believe.” Not the consent to the fact that you “believe” the chair could hold you up, but rather your belief is demonstrated by your placing your substance, all your weight into that chair and depend upon it completely.

So as we tune back in to, “Nick at night” here, we remember that Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus about entering the Kingdom of God. and The rule is that with out exception you must be born again, there is no work, or regimen, a code of ethics, or religious morals that you can uphold to gain a satisfactory standing in the eyes of God and gain acceptance into the Kingdom. Because the fact is (Vs 6), that which is born of the flesh is flesh. You baptize flesh, you’ve got wet flesh, it’s of the flesh, but the kingdom is of the Spirit, and being born of the Spirit. It’s not about this life; it’s about an altogether new life.

As Nick is sitting there getting his mind blown, Jesus begins to use the analogy of the wind to seek to further amplify His point, maybe as they were hanging out a cool breeze began to blow over them and Jesus picked up on it and used it as a further illustration to try and clarify the concept of being “born again” to Nicodemus. and So we read in vs 8 (read).

Now last week we spoke of the fact that no one understands the express nature of the, “How to’s” and “Why for’s” of the Spirit. But how we can sense the effects of the Spirit in one’s life, and that we don’t need to fully comprehend it all to benefit from it.

So in a very real way Jesus is saying, “Nick, don’t try and rationalize this whole thing, just believe Me.” Heb 11:6 Tells us that with out faith it’s impossible to please God. and So Jesus is saying, “Quit trying to figure it all out and just believe, if you’ll believe you’ll be a beneficiary of the Kingdom, you’ll enter in to it.”

But there’s something more here as well, Jesus is speaking a bit ambiguously to Nicodemus and we don’t really see that in the English, but if you have a Greek help it becomes very clear. Now you have to remember that Nicodemus was a biblical scholar, when it came to the black and white of the bible, he was incredible familiar with what it said; he was the primary teacher of Israel. and So Jesus is seeking to trigger something in him, to take him back to the scriptures that he might gain understanding from a vantage point of which he was very familiar. Because in the Greek, the same word that’s translated, “Wind” is used for the translation of the word “Spirit” it’s the word, “Pneuma” like “Pneumonia”, it’s also translated, “Breathe” or “Breath” and of course we know that, “*The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*” Gen 2:7 That which had no life was suddenly made alive by the breath or the “wind” or the “Spirit” of God.

Jesus here is making a play on this word “Wind” and the word “Spirit.” Life given as by the “Wind”, or the “Spirit.” and Nicodemus being a student and scholar of the scriptures should’ve immediately picked up on this and been taken back to that passage of scripture that every Jewish scholar knew so well. Because it spoke of a “New covenant” and “New life,” (that they were just looking for and waiting for) as by the “Wind”, as by the “Spirit.” The passage, Ezek 37; the setting, Ezekiel set by the Spirit in a valley, and it’s full of all these bones, (death), and the bones (it says) were very dry. and The Lord says to him, “Can these bones live?”and He says, “I don’t know.”

So God says, “Prophesy to these bones” and so as Ezekiel begins to prophesy, the Lord gives him utterance, and he begins to speak of the breath that will come into them, and the muscles and ligaments, and the skin that will cover them. and As he’s prophesying he begins to hear this massive noise, and the bones begin to connect one to the other, muscles and ligaments begin to wrap around them and skin begins to cover them.

But the breath of life wasn't in them, and so we read, "*Also He said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"*" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army." Ezek 37:9-10 Now if you read the OKJV where it says "Breath" in this version you'll read, "Prophecy to the wind," why? Because the words "Breath" and "Wind", and "Spirit" in the Hebrew are the same as well, it's the word "Ruach." and So these dry bones were in essence "Born again" as by the "Wind" as by the "Spirit." and Here Jesus is saying, "It's like the 'wind' Nick, and new life comes by the Spirit just like the wind that blows over you, just like you read about there in Ezekiel, it's the Spirit that breathes new life into your dry bones."

### Vs9

The dots just aren't connecting for Nicodemus, he's still not tracking with the Lord and the Lord has been very clear on multiple levels seeking to bring this "Born again" idea together in Nick's heart and mind. and I don't think that Nicodemus is being condescending; I think he just doesn't understand. and For lack of a better way to say it, it's almost as though Jesus is surprised, if not frustrated with him because he's not getting it. and He's supposed to be the bible answer man, he's the call in host of, "To every man an answer" and he's not getting this concept of that's been presented in the word of God long before Jesus came along.

The scriptures testified of new life, and a new covenant. and So Jesus is going to bring it down another level even still (and personally I'm kinda glad Nicodemus wasn't following because it caused the Lord to get so incredibly basic in His explanation that even I get it). But before He brings about the revelation, He brings on the rebuke. and I wonder how many times the Lord gets frustrated with me because He's seeking to communicate something to me that I just don't get. and He's all, "Look, don't you read My word, don't you understand these principles, and precepts?" How we need to study to show ourselves approved, workmen that need not be ashamed, but rather rightly dividing the Word of truth. But in vs 9-13 the explanation is put on hold and the exhortation is brought on, then in vs 14-17 He gives the revelation, and then in vs 19-21 He speaks about condemnation.

### Vs 10-13

Some texts don't include these words "Who is in heaven" and so there's some debate over whether or not Jesus actually said it or if He ended His statement with the words, "The Son of Man." If He said it, then it could be a reference to His Omnipresence, or simply an emphasis upon the fact that He came down from Heaven. But that's a peripheral issue to the text; the main thing that's in view is the spiritual ignorance of Nicodemus who is supposed to be the primary Bible teacher in Israel.

So Jesus rebukes him. He says, “How is it that you’re the teacher of Israel and you’re not getting what I’m saying?” and In vs 11 where Jesus says “We” is He associating Himself with His disciples and the things they’re speaking of there in Jerusalem, or is He speaking of the witness of the scriptures and what the prophets before Him have spoke? I tend to believe He’s speaking of the latter, He’s saying, “Look, I’m only echoing what the prophets have already spoken, and bringing to mind passages that you should readily be familiar with. and We’re speaking of what we know and what we’ve seen and you won’t receive our witness.”

Again in a court of law on the testimony of 2-3 witnesses a thing is established as fact. and Jesus is saying, “We’ve all borne witness to the reality of these things and you won’t receive our witness.” We spoke Wednesday evening about how readily we’ll receive man’s word, but how reserved we are when it comes to God’s Word. If you tell me you’re going to do this, or be there, or take care of that, and you want me to meet you on a certain day at a certain time, I take you at your word, trusting you’ve taken care of the situation and you’ll be where you said you’d be and so by faith I go where you said you’d be to meet with you there. Now, no offense, but you’re a liar, and a deceiver, and it’s not altogether uncommon that you fall short of even your own standard, I’m the same way. and The question is, if I’m so willing and eager to trust a liar like you, and you’ll place stock in someone who falters like me, then why do I have such trouble taking God (who is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent) at *His Word*? How much more eagerly should I place my faith in what God tells me, should I receive His witness, and Jesus is saying here, “Nick, I’m telling you the truth, I’m speaking to you what I know, and testifying of what I’ve seen and you won’t receive My witness.” (and Vs 12, read)

Now enters that little word, “Believe” we see it twice here in this vs. and Jesus is saying, “If I’m speaking to you about physical birth, and the things of nature, the wind and all, and you can’t put the clues together, than how can I elevate you to a higher level on the spiritual plane? If you’re not able to believe Me when I’m showing you how it works in the practical, than how will you believe Me when I begin to speak to you of the deep things of God in the realm of the spiritual? When it goes beyond the rationale and takes pure unadulterated faith, untainted by the human rationale?”

Vs 13 is Jesus’ endorsement saying that He has the authority to speak on heavenly issues because that’s where He came from, we get a 1<sup>st</sup> hand eye witness report concerning the things of God from Christ because He *is* God, and came down *from* heaven. Remember ch 1, He is the “Ladder” between Heaven and earth, bridges the gap between the 2 and can speak authoritatively concerning both.

Now that Jesus has given Nicodemus the *exhortation* regarding his need to believe what He’s saying to him, He begins to give the explanation, or the *revelation* in answer to the question Nick posed in vs 9. “How can these things be?” “How can a man be born again?”

## Vs14-15

Couple of things, not only do I want you to keep track of this word, “Believe” as we venture through the text, (mentioned here for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time) and remembering what it means, to place all your weight and trust in. But take note of this word, “Must” because the word, “Must” speaks of *non-negotiable necessity*. So that when we read in vs 7, “You *must* be born again.” and In vs 9 Nick says, “How can these things be?” and Jesus says in vs14, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up.” We’re seeing a direct correlation between the, “Born again” process and the lifting up of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Or to understand it another way, it’s impossible that man should be born again if Jesus doesn’t subject Himself to the cross. One necessitates the other, and I know it’s a familiar portion of OT scripture to many of you, but let’s look quickly together at Num Ch 21; long story short, the people had been griping about God’s provision and so God sent these fiery serpents throughout the camp and as the people would be bitten, it send an intense burning sensation through them, they’d convulse and die. Notice vs 7-9.

So really what we have here is the gospel message, it’s an account of sin, judgment, intercession (one standing in the gap between God and man), grace, and salvation through faith. and As you know *bronze* or *brass* in the scripture is a picture of judgment, the serpent epitomizing their sin, now that serpent on the pole had no venom in it, nor had it done anything to anyone. But it was the expression of their sin having been judged, God in His grace judged their sin and in essence dealt with it at the pole. and Now as one would be bitten by one of those serpents all they needed to do was look to that serpent lifted up on that pole and they wouldn’t die, they’d be saved alive. God didn’t take away the serpents; He provided a remedy for the condition that demanded an exercise of faith.

I’m sure that there were people who would be lying there convulsing and people would be begging them to look to the brass serpent and they’d be all, “I don’t need a brass snake, I need medicine, someone get me a doctor.” and Because of their hard hearted rebellion to the means of escape that God had initiated regarding their sin against Him, they’d die. They wouldn’t just look to that brass serpent by faith.

Warren Wiersbe makes the observation, “In the camp of Israel, the solution to the ‘serpent problem’ was not in killing the serpents, making medicine, pretending they were not there, passing antiserpent laws, or climbing the pole. The answer was in looking by faith at the uplifted serpent.” and The parallel is obvious, the entire human race has been bitten by the serpent of sin. and, “*The wages of sin is death.*”

But God has provided a remedy, not by taking sin out of the world, but in the cross of Jesus Christ and the atoning blood that He shed, so that if we'll just look to Jesus Christ and the finished work of the cross by faith, we'll be saved, and made alive in Christ. But people perish because they refuse to look to Christ; they think that sounds foolish, but the bible is clear, "*The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.*" 1 Cor 1:18 Salvation doesn't come by seeking to legislate righteousness, or pretending you're ok, I'm ok, we're all ok, right and wrong is relevant to each individual's perspective. It's not about climbing our way up to God by means of works, it's about looking to the cross of Christ and by faith receiving, and believing in His work on our behalf. Now just in case Nick still isn't with us Jesus puts it in the most basic way one could ever say it, and God's heart, God's plan, and God's will is summed up in 25 words.

Vs 16

How can one be born again? By believing, that is, transferring one's entire weight, and no holds barred trust in Jesus Christ "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." and Of course being one of the most well know vs in all the scriptures there so much we could say regarding this vs. But I'll just point out a few, #1 It's God who initiates the relationship with you. It doesn't say that after the world was tired of sin and fell in love with God, He gave His only begotten Son. No, God so loved the world. In other words we weren't seeking Him, He sought after us, and this is His heart, the bible tells us that, "*God is love.*" 1 John 4:8 So many have this idea that the Father is full of wrath and fury, and judgment, but Jesus made a way for Him to love us. and That couldn't be more diametrically opposed to the heart of God. It's because God loved the world that Jesus came, He's not the means of God's love; He's the expression of His love.

This vs tells us the scope of His love, it's not just to Israel, it's not God so loved America, God so loved "the world." There's not a soul on this planet that God is not desperately in love with. and Yet because it's impossible for a holy God, to fellowship and have a love relationship with sinful man; this vs reveals His plan. "He gave His only begotten Son." What kind of love is God's love, it's a love that gives that places the priority on others, not self. and This wasn't plan B, like, "Oh no, they'd sinned, now what'll we do?" Peter tells us regarding Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God with out spot and blemish and His sacrifice of Himself for the sin of the world, "*He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world.*" 1 Peter 1:20 So before the world was ever created, much less mankind, the cross was established in the heart and mind of God.

Who then can be saved? This is where God's will is revealed, "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter Ch 3 tells us that God's not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. So then how many is that that God desires to be saved? All, so the doorway of salvation is open to whoever chooses to believe, God's made it as simple as He can, salvation requires nothing of you, everything of Him and He's done the work, now just believe Him. Place your trust in Him, you see, it's that simple.

I want you to see the fact that everlasting life isn't something you'll get when you die, it's given to you in the now and just carries over with you. We're speaking of a quality of life, this is a present tense expression, when you believe in Jesus Christ you'll "have" at that moment for all eternity beyond that, everlasting life.

Vs17

Jesus didn't come here to put people down, but to raise people up. Not for condemnation but for salvation, the bible says, who is he who condemns? It is God who justifies, it's Christ who died for you, that's why, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*" Rom 8:1 If Jesus wanted to condemn you all He had to do was nothing, just stay in Heaven and we'd have all been hell bound, condemned to eternal separation from God.

Vs18

Notice the words, "Believes", "Believe", and "Believed" used 3x in this vs alone, what's He trying to say? Underline this 1<sup>st</sup> statement, "He who believes in Him is not condemned." You guys there's no way to improve on that, or make it any clearer, it has nothing to do with baptism, certain prayer rituals, knocking on doors, or anything else. It's about believing in Jesus Christ

"But he who doesn't believe is condemned already", why? "Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Now we're talking here about salvational matters, and forgive me if I'm beating a dead horse, but baptism isn't even in the picture here, it's all hinging on belief. Faith, trust, confidence in the person and atoning work of Jesus Christ and I just don't know how people who preach baptismal regeneration deal with this. Vs 19 spells out condemnation quite clearly and it's not, "and This is condemnation, that you weren't baptized." It doesn't say that.

Vs19-21

Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*" John 8:12 Jesus Christ came into the world but people refuse to come to Him. Why, because they're not sure where Cain got his wife? Because they can't buy the gospel intellectually? Or they struggle with it philosophically? No, it's not about evolution, predestination, or any of those things. Jesus makes it clear, the one and only reason why people refuse to come to the light is because they love the darkness because their deeds are evil. In other words, it's about the fact that there's sin in their life, and they love their sin, and would rather hang onto and cling to their sin rather than the cross of Jesus Christ let's just cut through the chase and say it like it is.

People would rather have their sin, than their Savior, take note of the word, “Practicing” in vs 20. We all stumble, we all fall from time to time and blow life, but Jesus is talking about that which defines us, or characterizes our person, what’s my practice or habits in life. and If it’s sin, then I don’t want anything to do with Jesus because He confronts my sin and forces me into a position where I have to make a choice, to repent of *it*, or repent of *Him*. Do I want my sin in my life, or my Savior?

Vs21

3 John 11, “*Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.*” The one who abides in Christ has nothing to hide, his life is an open book and ready for scrutiny, he leads his life in a way that when closely examined, God will be glorified. Again John said, “*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*” 1 John 1:7 What does it mean to walk in the light? David said, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*” Ps 119:105 Walk in the Light of God’s Word, receive His witness, and believe in Jesus Christ

I don’t know how the message could be stated any more plain, what makes or breaks the difference between everlasting life and eternal separation from God is simple matter of trust and confidence. Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Him. and As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross so that whoever would look to Him and believe upon Him by faith would not perish but have everlasting life. So if you’re a “whoever” you qualify, God loves you so much, and He demonstrated that by allowing His Son to absorb the penalty of your sin. Will you believe it? Jesus is willing to receive you, that’s not the question, the question is, are you willing to receive Him?