

INVESTIGATIVE BIBLE DISCUSSION

John 3:1-16

[1] Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. [2] He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

[3] In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

[4] "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

[5] Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. [6] Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. [7] You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' [8] The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

[9] "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

[10] "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? [11] I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. [12] I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? [13] No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man. [14] Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, [15] that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

[16] "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Questions

1. Highlight the main and minor characters
2. Where or when does the story take place?
3. What are the key events, activities or ideas presented in this passage?
4. How did the characters respond to Jesus personally, to what he said, or to what they saw?
5. How is Jesus described (by himself or others, claims made, character traits displayed)?
6. What values were taught/demonstrated by Jesus?
7. What truths/principles, were taught or demonstrated by Jesus?
8. What conclusions or observations can you draw?

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BACKGROUND

During the period of Jewish history when the people left captivity in Egypt and were traveling in the desert, they rebelled against God. God in judgment sent a "fiery serpent" among the people resulting in many deaths. When the people confessed their sin, God told Moses to make a brass image of the serpents and place it on a pole in the camp. When those who were bitten looked at the brass serpent, they were restored to health.

KEY WORDS

Nicodemus: Held a very prominent position; member of the Sanhedrin; a scribe (teacher of the law); a Pharisee.

Rabbi: Master or teacher.

Kingdom of God: Used in various ways but always implying "the place where God rules."

Son of Man: A phrase used by Jesus to describe himself. It referred to the One who was coming again to rule the world. It was not as inflammatory as the title of Messiah but still conveyed both deity and humanity.