

John 3:1-21 - Am I a Christian?

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[0 : 00] This is John chapter 3, verse 1 to 21. Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

! He came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one who could perform the signs that you are doing, if God were not with them. Jesus replied, Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. How can someone be born when they are old? Nicodemus asked. Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born.

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

You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear it sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.

[1 : 01] So it is everyone born of the Spirit. How can this be? Nicodemus asked. You are Israel's teacher, said Jesus. And do you not understand these things?

Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know and we testify of what we have seen. But still, you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe. How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven. The Son of Man, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict.

[2 : 08] Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Anderson. If we have not met, my name is Seth Campbell. I get to be the pastoral trainee here at West Kilburn.

Very exciting job and very excited to be here with you this morning. If you have a Bible, go ahead and turn it there to John 3. We'll be looking at the passage multiple times. If you don't have a Bible, you can grab one of those blue ones, maybe in a chair in front of you or in the pew beside you, or you can look it up on your phone if you trust yourself.

So it is indeed the season of new, right? Kids, you just started a new year. How many of you are excited to start a new year at school? That sounds about right.

[3 : 20] Parents, how many of you were excited that your kids started back to school? Fair enough. Fair enough. So here at the church, we are going to be starting a new sermon series next week going through the book of Romans.

I very much encourage you to come back and to see Steve go through that. But as we start this term off, we wanted to start with something simple because I know you guys, your brains have been kind of churning a little bit as you go back to school.

So we're going to just make something really simple for us today. And what I want it to be simple. So it's going to be just a one-point sermon. Now I know some of you, and you just heard that, said,

hey, that may mean that we get out of here a little bit early, huh?

And to that, I say, we'll see. But the one point that I want to make today is really a question. And I want you to answer this question.

The question is, am I a Christian? When you walked in, you should have gotten an order of service. It's that sheet of paper that's in front of you. I want you to open it up. And on the inside there, I want you to write that question.

[4 : 32] Everybody in the room, I want you to write this question here. Am I a Christian? Now I know for some of us, that answer to that question just popped up right on top of our head, right?

You're like, Seth, I wouldn't be here at 11 a.m. on a Sunday if I wasn't a Christian. But then maybe others of you that are in this room, and your worst nightmare may have just come true.

You may say, ah, I knew I shouldn't have come. I knew they were going to single me out. Wherever you are on that spectrum, I want you to wait about 20 minutes to answer that question.

See, church, if you've been in church for any amount of time, you've probably heard one of those verses that we just talked about, right? John 3.16.

When I was a kid, going to Sunday school, I memorized it in the good old New King James Version. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

[5 : 41] This verse is one of the most popular verses in the Bible, right? You can find it on signs, wristbands, car decals.

You can even find it in the street. See, this verse, John 3.16, is a microcosm of the gospel. The German reformer, Martin Luther, even said that.

He said, John 3.16 is the gospel in miniature. So this verse, right here, this one verse, has the power to change your life.

And the question that we are asking today, and that we need to answer, is, has it? See, in Western Christianity, in 2025, I believe that there is a lot of people that have misunderstood what it means to be a Christian.

I think we think of Christianity as our get-out-of-hell-free card. We said a prayer, and we think we say a prayer one point in time, and then we can live our lives however we want, and then we get to the end of our lives, big bad God, when he comes to punish us for all of our wrongdoings, and say, hey, not me.

[6 : 51] I prayed that prayer that one time. I'm good. No thanks. No hell for me. Church, I want you to listen to me here. That is not Christianity.

You will never find that described in the Bible. So, I want to ask the question, and I want us to answer it honestly.

Am I a Christian? We're going to look at one person in two illustrations to help us answer that question.

So, let's go ahead and dive in. We're going to start where Scripture starts, with Nicodemus. So, Nicodemus, in verse 1, it says that he's a part of the Jewish ruling council. You can also know that, call this the Sanhedrin.

These are the people that dedicated their lives to the Scriptures. So, if you had a question about interpreting the Scriptures, you went to the Sanhedrin. You went to these guys. When you hear these guys, when you hear the word Sanhedrin, I want you to think these guys had power.

[8 : 05] See, these were the people that the nation of Israel would have looked to for rulings on religious matters. And Nicodemus, he was a part of these people.

And so, Nicodemus, he comes to Jesus, and he says, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher of God. Well, first of all, where did this we come from, Nicodemus?

It's just you and Jesus. See, Nicodemus, when he says we, he's referring to me and the Sanhedrin, this powerful group of people, we've been thinking about it.

And we think we figured you out, Jesus. We think that you are a wise teacher. There's two things wrong with this phrase.

Number one, the title Rabbi. Now, the word Rabbi was a title of respect in the first century. It meant teacher or wise one or my great one. So there's inherently nothing wrong with Nicodemus calling Jesus Rabbi here.

[9 : 10] But when he pairs it with the second part where he says, we know you are a teacher of God, there's some subtext that comes with that. Nicodemus is calling Jesus a teacher.

He is defining, Nicodemus is defining who Jesus is and what role Jesus is going to play in his life to Jesus.

As I was thinking about this, it reminded me a bit, imagine you have a toddler, three, four years old, and your toddler comes up to you as a parent and says, Mom, Dad, listen, I've been reviewing the numbers and I'm just not liking what I'm seeing.

My bluey intake has been down by 34%. And honestly, you've started introducing these things into my diet called vegetables. And honestly, I'm not a fan.

So here's what I'm going to do. You can still cook me dinner because honestly, who wants to be bothered with cooking dinner, right? But vegetables, not so much.

[10:16] Every dinner needs to have chicken nuggets. And then, when it comes to entertainment choices, I'll take care of that. Don't worry about that. I got that under control. If you genuinely think about it, it's preposterous, right?

You think, what? You can't do those things. And yet, is that not what Nicodemus is doing to Jesus here? And if I can push just a little bit further, is that not what we will do the same thing to Jesus? We come to Jesus with our predetermined definitions of who he is. And hey, we're not rude about it. We honor him, right? We say, hey, he is a great teacher. That's stuff that he said about loving your neighbor.

Man, that stuff is amazing. I want to put that into my life. What about his way of leadership? Oh man, I'd love to put that and implicate, put that into my work and replicate it.

But not once do we ask Jesus, do we go to Jesus and do we ask him who he really is? Instead, we want to put him, got a handy little prop here, we want to put him into a little box, right?

[11:29] And so we put him in this box and say, hey, where can you benefit me in this Jesus? And see, we want to put him in this box and then when it comes to work, we want to put him over to the side.

But when something goes wrong in our life, we want to take this box out, we want to pull Jesus out of it and say, Jesus, something is wrong with my life. Can you fix it? Will you fix it?

Why is this going wrong? So Nicodemus pulls out his box to Jesus and he looks at his box and he says, Jesus, where do you fit in here?

How does Jesus respond? Jesus tears through the box. He says, I will not be defined by your box, right?

He says, no one, look at the passage, he says, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. Jesus doesn't even address Nicodemus' question.

[12:35] He says, Nicodemus, you are in the wrong postcode. I don't fit into your box. I don't fit into anyone's box. I am not just a teacher. I am your savior.

So let's look now at two illustrations that are going to help us understand what Jesus means by savior. Help us to answer that question that we posed earlier.

Am I a Christian? Let's look at the first example. Look in your Bible at verse 7. It says, you should not be surprised at my saying you must be born again.

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit. I have to admit when I first read this I had no idea what Jesus meant here.

It's like, Jesus, we were just talking about new birth. Where does the wind fit in with all of this? But if you take a closer look, Jesus is saying the wind is mysterious but it is felt.

[13:44] We have a lot of technology today, right? We can forecast with a decent amount of accuracy wind speed and direction. In fact, if you're ever having trouble sleeping at night, tune into something called the shipping forecast.

Anybody ever heard of that? This is literally just a radio broadcast of a man talking into a microphone and saying wind speed, direction, and roughness of the seas around England.

So we have a lot of technology, but can technology correctly predict the wind all of the time? No.

And if I was to ask you a question a little bit deeper, do you even know where the wind comes from?

Now, before any amateur meteorologists get on to me, I know it has something to do with currents and fronts and blah, blah, whatever, but when you're sitting in your garden or at the park on a warm September evening, and the breeze blows past your face, do you know where that breeze comes from?

See, you can't handle the wind with your hands. You can't even see the wind with your eyes, right? But you do know it's there.

[15:01] I may not be able to identify the spot where it started or the exact spot where it's going to end, but I do know it is there. I can see the effects of it, all around me.

Maybe it's your hair blowing in the wind, maybe it's the leaves rustling in the trees, or maybe since we're in London, it's rubbish skipping by. Whatever it is, you can see the effects of the wind, right? Jesus is saying the same thing is true of the Christian that is true of the wind. Salvation is mysterious, yes. We're not going to know all the ins and outs of salvation until the very end of the age.

But there is one thing that you cannot deny from the scriptures, and Jesus says, if you say you're a Christian, you should be able to tell that you're a Christian. J.C.

Ryle, a pastor in Liverpool, he says it like this, the new birth is something that cannot be hidden. there will always be visible fruits of the Spirit in everyone that is born of the Spirit.

[16:09] So if you're going to answer that question, am I a Christian, with a yes, your life has to look different than it was before you were a Christian.

Let's take a look now at the second illustration, which is going to be light and darkness, if you're taking notes. That starts in verse 19. So look at the verse 19 back in your Bible. It says, this is the verdict.

Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light, because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. So the end of our passage here, we're going to end with the motif of light and darkness to help explain what it means to be a Christian.

But what does light and darkness mean here? Well, light is Jesus. Jesus came into the world to be the light of the world, to save people.

[17:18] He came to shine in the darkness, to give hope. Later on in this same gospel, in John 1, Jesus says he is the light of the world. world. In 1 John 1, the apostle says that God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.

So if we run to the light, all we have to do is run to the light and we will be saved. But what do we as human beings prefer? We prefer the dark.

See, every use of the word darkness in the gospel of John, the apostle is talking about moral and spiritual darkness. It means that every person that is in darkness, that's what this means, every person that is in darkness will be lost.

Paul says in Romans, he says it this way, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Every single one of us is in darkness, to borrow from bane, and the dark night rises, right?

I was born into darkness. I was molded by it. Decided not to do the voice. But just like that villain, see, we actually like the darkness, don't we?

[18:43] See, to be exposed to the light would be painful. See, the light refines, it purifies, it shows our defects. So in order to answer the question, am I a Christian, I'm going to have to expose myself to the powerful, cleansing, pure light of Christ.

But see, when you do this, don't think that darkness just automatically goes away. Darkness wants to hang on. The enemy will tell you, hey, you don't have to give up everything. That bit of you, maybe that addiction that you hold on to, you don't have to give that up.

Maybe that disdain that you have for your coworker, you don't have to give that up. For kids in the room, they can say, hey, you don't always have to listen to your parents. Parents, you can thank me for that one later.

The enemy wants to hold on. But if we're going to be obedient to Jesus, we have to fully surrender ourselves to the light.

put in Tammy's! Tammy's! the point of this sermon is in order to answer yes to the question, am I a Christian, you need to go home and clean up your life. You say, yes, yes, that's what I'll do. I'll go home. I'll work harder. I'll be nicer to my parents. I'll smile more at the office. I'll say sorry to the people that I was rude to. And by this time next week, I'll come back into this room and I'll be able to answer that question, am I a Christian, with a yes. Can I ask you to listen carefully one more time? That's not Christianity either. So then where does this leave us? If my works do not save me, and

just saying that I am a Christian does not save me, how do I become a Christian? In this passage, Jesus tells Nicodemus, in order to be a Christian, you have to be born again. Well, Jesus, what does it mean to be born again? It doesn't literally mean that you have to be born out of your mother's womb again. Jesus answers that in the next verse. But what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, and what he means is in order to be a Christian, you must be completely new.

[21 : 33] If you're going to be a Christian, you cannot just remodel parts of your life. You have to give everything over to him. You have to be a completely new creation.

So how? How do you become that new creation? You have to believe in Jesus. That's what John 3.16 says, right? For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him, believes in him, shall not perish but have eternal life. In order to be a new creation, you must believe. Believe what, Seth? Look again at John 3.16. Believe that you were so precious and so valuable in the eyes of God that he sent his Son for you. Believe that when he sent his Son, that Son lived a perfect life and died on the cross for you. Believe that when Jesus died on the cross, the wrath and shame that we deserve was laid on Jesus' shoulders. And believe that the shame and wrath that we deserve was buried in the grave with Jesus in his death. And then believe. Believe three days later that Jesus did not stay dead, but he rose to show who has ultimate victory over this world. Come on, church. Who has ultimate victory over this world is Jesus. And you just have to believe.

If you believe this, you cannot be condemned. But if you reject this, you'll be left alone to defend against a perfect, holy, righteous God at the end of your life.

So look at that question one more time. Am I a Christian? Has your life been radically changed by Jesus Christ? Have you believed and realized that you bring nothing to the table in salvation? Instead of what Jesus did on the cross that saves you? Have you believed that Christ is the one and only Savior? And then because of that, you become a new creation and your life is different now than it was before?

[24 : 12] Here in just a moment, we're going to have a moment of reflection as we take the Lord's Supper. If you answered that question, am I a Christian, with a yes, then what we're about to do is a glorious, glorious, glorious covenant that God has made with us.

So as we go to this time of reflection, I invite you to stop. If you answered yes to that question, am I a Christian, I invite you to stop and to think about our Savior and the great sacrifice that he made for us.

I want you to reflect on his graciousness and love towards you and the sacrifice that he made. But if you looked at that question and says, am I a Christian, and you would honestly answer it no, no, then listen, we are extremely glad that you are here.

We believe that the good news that I just shared is for everyone, and we want you here to hear it. But what we're about to do in the Lord's Supper is not for you.

It's not because we're some exclusive club, but because the Lord's Supper is a sign of a covenant that God made with us. It would be no more appropriate for you to take this cup and this bread than it would be for you to wear this wedding ring that's on my finger.

[25 : 44] So as the band is going to come up and sing, I invite you to reflect as well. I've heard a lot of pastors say that there'll be people that miss heaven by 18 inches, the distance between your head and your heart.

You say that there is a God. Great. Later on in the Bible, the book of James, James says even the demons know there's a God. But have you believed that God came to save you, and he is worth giving everything up for?

Reflect on that as we move to the supper. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you that this word that you have given us is true yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

God, I thank you that the hope that is in these verses is nothing that I have done, but everything that you have done. God, it does not depend on me.

But when my life has been changed by you, I can't help but to show it to those around me. So Lord, I pray as this light shines today, Lord, if there are people in this room that would say that they are in darkness, I pray that you'd bring them to life, God.

[27 : 06] Bring them into the light. Yes, it will be painful at times, but God, you can do it. Lord, for those of us that are in the light, that are followers of you, Lord, I pray that we would never take this good news lightly.

Jesus lightly. What you have done for us changes our life. God, we thank you for that. As we come to a moment here to reflect on what the cross means and what it means that you took on our sins, God, we pray this moment, there would be people in the room that would not have any shadow of a doubt on what side of the light and dark they are on.

Lord, and we pray that you would bring people to you. God, thank you for this day. Thank you for this church. Thank you for your word and your son. Pray this in your name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.