

Stage III. The Early Judean Ministry

C. The First Passover of Jesus' Ministry

5. Jesus' Conversation With Nicodemus, Part III: The Father's Role in the Work of Salvation

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #040
JN 3.16-21

16 For God (the Father) loved every person in the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, in order that whoever keeps on believing in him will not perish, but will continue to have God's own kind of eternal life.

17 For God did not send his Son into the world for the purpose of judging the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever continues to believe in him is not condemned, but whoever continues to refuse to believe stands condemned already, because they have made their decision not to believe in the name of God's one and only Son.

19 This is their judgement: Light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness instead of the light, because their deeds were evil.

20 Everyone who is practicing evil keeps on hating the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth continues to come into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been fully accomplished in them by God.

NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April, 30 AD (Month Three)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage III: The Early Judean Ministry
	C. The First Passover of Jesus' Ministry
Title	5. Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus, Part III: The Father's Role in Salvation

COMMENT:

Having described the role of the Spirit (3.1-10) and his own role in salvation (3.11-15), Jesus turned in today's reading to describe the Father's role. The Father was the origin of the love-plan to save all who believe in his Son through the power of the Spirit. God the Trinity's plan operates from, through, in, and for love.

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John 3.16 is probably the most widely quoted and well-known saying of Jesus in the Gospel. We give it our full attention in the notes we have provided on today's reading. Here we consider just the subject-phrase of the passage: **"For God loved the world..."**

Jesus transitions into this verse with the particle "For"... This little word means that what follows it is the cause or reason for what precedes it.. That is, the work of the Spirit and Son in our salvation (what precedes the "for") originates with the Father's love-plan. Specifically, the Father's love is the source of the Spirit and Son's work in salvation.

Throughout the Scriptures the Father is the source of all things, even within in the Trinity. Each Person of the Godhead is co-equal and co-existent as God, but they each have different roles that function together in seamless unity. The Father's role is the origin of all, so He is also the source of salvation as the One who initiated the Love-plan. This is important.

Even as the ability to experience a "second birth from above" is dependent upon the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, and is impossible for man in His own strength, making a plan that will save the human race is impossible in our own wisdom. It all depends upon God, from beginning to end. A plan that begins in the Father-God is sure and effective, for He never makes mistakes, and His love never fails. This Divine origin of salvation in the Father's love insures its efficacy for all who believe.

But there is more. The Father-God's plan of salvation is grounded in love for **"the world."** In the gospel of John "the world" almost exclusively refers to people who live as enemies of God through unbelief in Him, and persistent rejection of His will. It is the society of sinners who are perfectly content to remain disobedient to God..

The "world" is first mentioned in JN 1.10: **"He was in the world, and even though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him."** This inability to recognize Jesus as God makes "the world" His functional enemy. John continues to add to his characterization of "the world" in his gospel, and none of it is good. So the Father's plan of salvation is rooted in nothing less that God's own kind of unconditional love for His enemies. *God is love; therefore He reaches out to save even His enemies with unfathomable mercy and grace.* John uses the rest of this section (and indeed, the rest of his gospel) to illuminate this priceless truth.

Jesus went on to explain three other glorious aspects of the Father's love in verse 16. He then explained four truths about judgement in verses 17 to 20. The Father's loving plan was intended to save everyone who believes in his Son from all condemnation and fear of judgment. These truths give us great confidence regarding our freedom from all condemnation as believers, and equip us to witness effectively. Finally, Jesus wrapped up his entire explanation of the Trinity's gift of salvation (3.1-21) in verse 21. It is the perfect conclusion to the most important words ever spoken on the subject of true salvation.

It is no surprise that John 3.16 is the most loved verse in the Bible for many people. Understanding the entire section (3.16-21), and its importance in the greater context of 3.1-21 enables us to more fully see the glory of the Father's love for us. For this reason I urge you once again to access [the pdf version](#) of my commentary on 3.16-21, download, print, and then study it. In fact, this final section describing the role of the Father in providing our salvation is probably the most important section of the conversation with Nicodemus. Please take the time to read through it. You will see truths about the love of God, and the nature of sin that you never considered before.

Nicodemus's contemporaries considered people like him to be the closest to God. If anyone was worthy of salvation on his own merits, it would be someone like this esteemed Bible Teacher. Jesus' strong declaration that salvation is wholly of God, by faith alone, meant that even the "best" people in the world--represented by

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Nicodemus--are totally unable to save themselves. No one is good enough to meet God's standards of perfection on their own. The highest human efforts are useless in themselves to achieve salvation from sin.

The good news from Jesus is that the Father, Son, and Spirit all work together in perfect harmony, each with their own distinct role, to save all who believe in him. This salvation cannot be earned. It is a free gift of pure grace to every one who realizes their deep need for it, and comes by faith to Jesus to receive it. We all qualify, for no one can earn a true gift.

This extended conversation with Nicodemus shows us the way Jesus routinely witnessed to people. Nicodemus was steeped in the Scriptures and theology, therefore Jesus used Biblical and theological language to communicate with him. The next extended conversation will be with a Samaritan woman. Jesus adjusted his approach to communicate best with her, using the object lesson of the water in the well at hand to present his salvation to her.

The irony is that the great Biblical scholar did not understand and immediately respond to Jesus' message. Later on he did believe, but first he had to struggle with his pride. In contrast, we will see that the lowly Samaritan woman was surprisingly open to the revelation of Jesus, quickly received him by faith, and went on to become the most effective witness of Jesus' earthly ministry. She had no pride to hold her back.

It was this kind of personal conversation with seekers that characterized the Early Judean Ministry. Can you imagine what it was like to sit down with God in the flesh and have him lovingly communicate the most important truths of your entire life to you, in a way tailored uniquely to your own mind, experiences, interests, and heart condition? This is what he did. This is what he continues to do with us today through the work of his Spirit--the same work he explained to Nicodemus.

APPLICATION:

Jesus deliberately spoke to every person in the world through his conversation with Nicodemus. That means everyone desperately needs to hear the message of John 3:1-21. How will that happen?

Three things need to occur in order for the entire world to hear Jesus' authoritative message about true salvation. First, we believers need to personally experience the Spirit's power, the Son's sufficiency, and the Father's love to the full extent that the Trinity longs to pour into each of us.

Second, every believer needs to fully master every aspect of the truth that Jesus declared in these precious verses.

Third, every believer needs to become a Spirit-filled witness to what they have personally experienced of God's salvation, according to everything Jesus said about it. After these three things happen, the gospel will reach every person on planet earth.

How are you doing in these three areas? In what area do you need to grow? What is your plan for doing it?