**Monday Evening Bible Study**

**February 27, 2023 – John 3:1-17**

**Immediate Context**

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| John 1:1-18 The Prologue | **John 3:1-21 Nicodemus visits Jesus** |
| John 1:19-34 John the Baptist and Lamb of God | John 3:22-30 Jesus and John the Baptist |
| John 1:35-51 Jesus calls the first disciples | John 3:31-36 The One Who Comes from Heaven |
| John 2:1-12 The Wedding at Cana | John 4:1-42 Jesus and the Woman of Samaria |
| John 2:13-25 Jesus Cleanses the Temple | John 4:43-54 Jesus Returns; Heals Official’s son |

**Summary of John 3:1-17**

A leader of the Pharisees and member of the Sanhedrin, named Nicodemus, whom Jesus calls “The Teacher of Israel”, visits Jesus at night and Jesus explains how one must be born of God in order to see the Kingdom of God and have eternal life.

**Suggested Course of Study**

* Read the Prologue to John’s Gospel – John 1:1-18.
* Read the assigned reading – John 3:1-17 – and listen for echoes of John 1:1-18 within it.
* Look to see where else Nicodemus appears in the gospel of John (see John 7:50 and 19:38-42).
* Look to see where else you can find the notion of being born from above (see John 1:12-13).
* Look to see where else you Jesus talks about “eternal life” (see John 5:24 and John 17:3).
* Read the story about Moses and the Bronze Serpent (see Numbers 21:1-9) and consider how this story connects with the story of Jesus being lifted up on the cross.

**Helpful Scriptures**

**Numbers 21:1–9 (NRSV)**

*1 When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. 2 Then Israel made a vow to the Lord and said, “If you will indeed give this people into our hands, then we will utterly destroy their towns.” 3 The Lord listened to the voice of Israel, and handed over the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their towns; so the place was called Hormah. 4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. 5 The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” 6 Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. 7 The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” 9 So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.*

**John 1:1–18 (NRSV)**

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ”) 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.*

**John 5:19–29 (NRSV)**

*19 Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. 20 The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. 21 Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. 22 The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. 24 Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. 25 “Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; 27 and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

**John 7:10–53 (NRSV)**

*10 But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret. 11 The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, “Where is he?” 12 And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds. While some were saying, “He is a good man,” others were saying, “No, he is deceiving the crowd.” 13 Yet no one would speak openly about him for fear of the Jews. 14 About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. 15 The Jews were astonished at it, saying, “How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?” 16 Then Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. 17 Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. 18 Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him. 19 “Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?” 20 The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?” 21 Jesus answered them, “I performed one work, and all of you are astonished. 22 Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man’s whole body on the sabbath? 24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” 25 Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? 26 And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? 27 Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.” 28 Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. 29 I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.” 30 Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come. 31 Yet many in the crowd believed in him and were saying, “When the Messiah comes, will he do more signs than this man has done?” 32 The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering such things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple police to arrest him. 33 Jesus then said, “I will be with you a little while longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. 34 You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.” 35 The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? 36 What does he mean by saying, ‘You will search for me and you will not find me’ and ‘Where I am, you cannot come’?” 37 On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ ” 39 Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. 40 When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, “This is really the prophet.” 41 Others said, “This is the Messiah.” But some asked, “Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? 42 Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?” 43 So there was a division in the crowd because of him. 44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. 45 Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not arrest him?” 46 The police answered, “Never has anyone spoken like this!” 47 Then the Pharisees replied, “Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? 48 Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? 49 But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed.” 50 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 51 “Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?” 52 They replied, “Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.” 53 Then each of them went home,*

**John 17:1–26 (NRSV)**

*1 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. 6 “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. 20 “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 25 “Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”*

**John 19:38–42 (NRSV)**

*38 After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. 39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. 40 They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. 42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

**Key Words/Phrases**

**NICODEMUS** – Νικόδημος the name means “Innocent Blood” or “Conqueror of the People”. He was a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin whom Jesus calls “The teacher of Israel”. He appears in John 7:50 and John 19:38-42 as sympathetic to Jesus.

**NIGHT** – Light and darkness are key themes in John’s gospel. See John 1:3-9; John 3:19-21: John 8:12; John 11:9-10.

**SIGNS** – In the gospel of John, the miracles of Jesus are called “signs”; they are signs that he has come from God; that the presence of God is with him. See John 2:11, 18, 23; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30.

**KINGDOM OF GOD** – Appears only in two places in John’s Gospel (also in John 18:36). John prefers to use “eternal life” when speaking about the kingdom of God.

**FROM ABOVE** – ἄνωθεν meaning either “from above”, “anew”, or “again”. The intended meaning must be “from above” based on what we find in the prologue of John’s gospel (see John 1:12-13). The same word is found in John 3:31; 19:11; and 19:23 and in each place it means “from above”. Also, see 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, and 18 for the notion of being born of God.

**BORN OF WATER –** The phrase “born of water” reminds us of baptism; John in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord calling Israel to repentance. It also reminds us of the Israelites as they were led out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. Both times they had to pass through the waters (of the Red Sea, Exodus 14 and of the Jordan River, Joshua 3). See also John 7:38-39.

**BORN OF THE SPIRIT** – Reminds us of the Genesis story where the Spirit of God (ר֣וּחַ ruah in Hebrew, πνευμα pneuma in Greek meaning wind, breath, spirit) blows over the waters to bring order out of chaos. Also reminds us of the story in Ezekiel about the Valley of Dry Bones (see Ezekiel 37:1-14). See also Isaiah 44:3 that talks about both water and the spirit being poured out. See Acts 2:1-4 for the Pentecost story. For Spirit, see also John 6:63; 7:39; 14:17-27; 15:26-27; 16:13; 20:22.

**LIFTED UP** – The story of Moses and the bronze serpent is found in Numbers 21:1-9. God takes something that is meant for death and turns into something that brings life and health. Just like the cross; something meant for suffering and death becomes something that brings health and life. See Genesis 3:1-19; Exodus 4:1-9; and Exodus 7:8-13 for more snake/serpent stories.

**ETERNAL LIFE** – Referred to usually in the present tense. See John 5:24. Jesus defines “eternal life” in John 17:3.

**GOD’S LOVE** – See 1 John 4:7-19.

**WORLD** – From κοσμος. See John 1:9-10, John 1:29, John 7:4-7, John 12:19, 25, 31, 46-47 and John 17.