

“Doctrine: AHA! A Teaching Moment”

The Reflection Series

Scripture:

John 3:1-15 (NIV)

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” ³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]” ⁴ “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!” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^[c] 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.”^[d] ⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, 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.^[e] ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[f] ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”^[g]

Subject Question: What Three Aha-Facts are found in John’s account of Jesus’ teaching concerning eternal life to Nicodemus and us?

Compliment answer: Heaven has a Message, Heaven has a Method, and Heaven has a Messenger.

Big Idea: The Three Aha-Facts that are found in John’s account of Jesus’ teaching concerning eternal life to Nicodemus and us are: Heaven has a Message, Heaven has a Method, and Heaven has a Messenger.

Homiletical Idea: “AHA, Really? YES!”

Purpose: I want the congregation to consider the validity, efficacy, instruction and invitation that we find in Jesus’ teaching concerning eternal life.

Introduction: Knowing Christ and a life of walking with God, leads to many times, having “AHA” moments—moments when we are simply amazed at not only the actions of God, but more, the very character of this God whom we have grown to love and appreciate. Today we consider our 4th in our series as Jesus shares Heaven’s ultimate desire for all of humanity. This message however comes with an invitation that cannot be ignored.

(No greater invitation... has ever been uttered)

Ground Work: **Andrew Wommack Ministries**

“Eternal Life: There’s More To It Than You Think”

Everlasting life is a present-tense possession. It’s not something that begins when we get to heaven. There are a number of scriptures that speak of everlasting life as something we possess in this life (John 4:14; 5:24; 6:27; 6:40, 47).

So, the question remains, “What is everlasting life?” This is very important. John 3:16 says this is the reason that Jesus came.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Many people have mistakenly thought that the goal of salvation is the forgiveness of sin to avoid hell. That’s not what John 3:16 is saying. Sure, not perishing in hell is an important part of what Jesus came to do. He accomplished that by paying the debt for all our sins, past, present, and even the ones we haven’t committed yet.

If that’s all there is to salvation, that’s more than any of us deserve, and it would still be worth preaching. But salvation is much, much more than getting our sins forgiven so we can go to heaven instead of hell.

Let me say it this way. **If all you did was ask Jesus to forgive your sins so you wouldn’t perish in hell, then you are missing out on eternal life.**

Sin was a barrier that stood between us and a holy God. It had to be removed. That’s exactly what Jesus did, and He did it well. Sin is no longer standing between God and man (2 Cor. 5:17). But to what does that entitle us?

Sure, it entitles us to live forever with God in heaven. That’s wonderful. But there are tremendous benefits right here, right now, on earth. Eternal life is one of those benefits.

Jesus defined eternal life for us in John 17:3. That verse says,

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Eternal life is knowing God. You may be disappointed with that definition. You think you know God and you still aren’t satisfied. You want there to be something more. The key lies in understanding what the Bible means by this word “know.”

This was speaking of much more than just intellectual knowledge. It can be seen in hundreds of Bible scriptures, like, “Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain” (Gen. 4:1). Adam didn’t just know Eve intellectually. That won’t produce children. He had an

intimate, personal experience with her. This was speaking of a knowing between a man and a woman in the most intimate way possible.

Likewise, when Jesus said eternal life was knowing God, He was speaking of having an intimate, close, personal relationship with God. That's awesome!

Many people believe Jesus died to forgive their sins, but they still don't have a close, personal, intimate relationship with their Father God. They think that is reserved for heaven. They are content to muddle through life singing songs about how, when we all get to heaven, what a day that will be.

That is not to take anything away from heaven, but we are supposed to have eternal life (close, intimate, personal relationship with God our Father and Jesus Christ His Son) right now. It's not "pie in the sky by and by" but rather "steak on your plate while you wait." Jesus said in John 3:16 that God loved the world so much, He gave His only begotten Son so those who believed on Him wouldn't perish but have everlasting life. **If all you have done is believe on Jesus so you won't go to hell, then you are missing out on the everlasting life the Lord wants to have with you right now.**

Why is this so misunderstood? It is because the church has changed the message of salvation. They have placed a period after the word "perish" in John 3:16. They have told the world that the reason God sent His Son to die for their sins was so they wouldn't perish, PERIOD. That excludes the true message of eternal life and intimate relationship with God as the goal of salvation.

Faith comes from hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17). If we don't hear that Jesus came to bring us back into intimate relationship with God, then we won't have faith for that and we won't experience it. This describes the modern-day church to a tee.

We have many people who have come to the Lord and received the forgiveness of their sins, but they are saved and stuck. They are just waiting for heaven so they can really start living. That is missing the main point of salvation.

If there was no afterlife, if there was no heaven or hell, John 3:16 reveals that Jesus would still have come and died for our sins so we could once again have an intimate relationship with Him and His Father right now, in this present evil world (Gal. 1:4).

This was one of the main differences between the first-century church and our modern church. Those people knew God intimately. They had a relationship with the Lord that wasn't waiting to start in heaven, but was working in them while they were still in this world. They didn't have the advantages of radio, television, internet, or any other modern means of communication. They never even put a bumper sticker on a camel. Yet, these believers turned the known world upside down with the truths of the Gospel in just thirty years (Acts 17:6). They impacted their world much more than we are impacting our world today. Why? **They had such a depth of relationship with a Living God that it was contagious.** In Rome, Christians knew their God so intimately that they sang His praises as they were burned at the stake. There are historical accounts of Nero the emperor sticking his fingers in his ears and saying, "Why must these Christians sing?"

They had much more than a doctrine and a hope. They had a present-tense relationship that allowed them to endure with joy terrible atrocities. There are historical accounts of Romans, when witnessing the joy of these Christians who were being martyred, jumping out of the stands and rushing to them. They knew they would be doomed to the same fate, but they

willingly accepted death so they could know God in the same close, intimate, and personal way as these Christians.

Let me ask you this question. It's not intended to condemn you, but to enlighten you. **How many people would die to have what you have? Is anyone envious of your relationship with the Lord?** If not, then may I suggest to you that you aren't experiencing eternal life as the Bible describes it and as our Lord Jesus died to give you.

This isn't something for the select few. This is normal Christian living. In fact, if this isn't your experience, you aren't really living. This is what drove the Apostle Paul (Phil. 3:10) and all the early Christians. It's still what drives victorious Christians today. It's all about personal relationship with a Person, not just some doctrine.

J.I. Packard **“Regeneration”**

Regeneration is the spiritual change wrought in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit in which his/her inherently sinful nature is changed so that he/she can respond to God in Faith, and live in accordance with His Will (Matt. 19:28; John 3:3,5,7; Titus 3:5). It extends to the whole nature of man, altering his governing disposition, illuminating his mind, freeing his will, and renewing his nature.

Regeneration, or new birth, is an inner re-creating of fallen human nature by the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8). The Bible conceives salvation as the redemptive renewal of man on the basis of a restored relationship with God in Christ, and presents it as involving "a radical and complete transformation wrought in the soul (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) by God the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:24), by virtue of which we become 'new men' (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), no longer conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9), but in knowledge and holiness of the truth created after the image of God (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Rom. 12:2)" (B. B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 351). Regeneration is the "birth" by which this work of new creation is begun, as sanctification is the "growth" whereby it continues (I Pet. 2:2; II Pet. 3:18). Regeneration in Christ changes the disposition from lawless, Godless self-seeking (Rom. 3:9-18; 8:7) which dominates man in Adam into one of trust and love, of repentance for past rebelliousness and unbelief, and loving compliance with God's law henceforth. It enlightens the blinded mind to discern spiritual realities (I Cor. 2:14-15; II Cor. 4:6; Col. 3:10), and liberates and energizes the enslaved will for free obedience to God (Rom. 6:14, 17-22; Phil. 2:13).

The use of the figure of new birth to describe this change emphasizes two facts about it. The first is its decisiveness. The regenerate man has forever ceased to be the man he was; his old life is over and a new life has begun; he is a new creature in Christ, buried with him out of reach of condemnation and raised with him into a new life of righteousness (see Rom. 6:3-11; II Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:9-11). The second fact emphasized is the monergism of regeneration. Infants do not induce, or cooperate in, their own procreation and birth; no more can those who are "dead in trespasses and sins" prompt the quickening operation of God's Spirit within them (see Eph. 2:1-10). Spiritual vivification is a free, and to man mysterious, exercise of divine power (John 3:8), not explicable in terms of the combination or cultivation of existing human resources (John 3:6), not caused or induced by any human efforts (John 1:12-

13) or merits (Titus 3:3-7), and not, therefore, to be equated with, or attributed to, any of the experiences, decisions, and acts to which it gives rise and by which it may be known to have taken place.

In the NT the thought of regeneration is more fully individualized, and in John's Gospel and First Epistle the figure of new birth, "from above" (another: John 3:3, 7, Moffatt), "of water and the Spirit" (i.e., through a purificatory operation of God's Spirit: see Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5; cf. 3:8), or simply "of God" (John 1:13, nine times in I John), is integral to the presentation of personal salvation. The verb *gennaō* (which means both "beget" and "bear") is used in these passages in the aorist or perfect tense to denote the once-for-all divine work whereby the sinner, who before was only "flesh," and as such, whether he knew it or not, utterly incompetent in spiritual matters (John 3:3-7), is made "spirit" (John 3:6), i.e., is enabled and caused to receive and respond to the saving revelation of God in Christ. In the Gospel, Christ assures Nicodemus that there are no spiritual activities, no seeing or entering God's kingdom, because no faith in himself, without regeneration (John 3:1ff.); and John declares in the prologue that only the regenerate receive Christ and enter into the privileges of God's children (John 1:12-13). Conversely, in the Epistle John insists that there is no regeneration that does not issue in spiritual activities. The regenerate do righteousness (I John 2:29) and do not live a life of sin (3:9; 5:18: the present tense indicates habitual law-keeping, not absolute sinless-ness, cf. 1:8-10); they love Christians (4:7), believe rightly in Christ, and experience faith's victory over the world (5:4). Any who do otherwise, whatever they claim, are still unregenerate children of the devil (3:6-10).

Paul specifies the Christological dimensions of regeneration by presenting it as (1) a life-giving co-resurrection with Christ (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13; cf. I Pet. 1:3); (2) a work of new creation in Christ (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; Gal. 6:15). Peter and James make the further point that God "begets anew" (*anagennaō*: I Pet. 1:23) and "brings to birth" (*apokyeō*: James 1:18) by means of the gospel. It is under the impact of the word that God renews the heart, so evoking faith (Acts 16:14-15)

- A. Heaven has a Message (Vs.1-5) *Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.^[a]" ⁴ "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!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit*
- B. What intrigues me about Jesus' conversation here is not his declaration that heaven exists... there is life after life... all of humanity shares an innate sense that there is something beyond the here and now. What intrigues me is the fact that Jesus is stating two truths that are often misunderstood. First, there **are** stipulations concerning going to heaven. You mean all good dogs don't go to heaven...or all good people. What

did Jesus say? Verse 3 and verse 5 state the case the same way... no one can see heaven and no one can enter heaven **unless**... and it's that **unless** that speaks volumes concerning stipulations... and more, should arrest our attention and arouse our curiosity. It's Jesus who says the things that we don't want to hear: that there are requirements, conditions, and provisions.

- C. What Jesus is conveying to Nicodemus and to you and to me is this: that yes, heaven has a message and that message is simply this--Our heavenly Father wants you, yes you; longs for you, yes you; desires with all His heart for you, yes you, to be with him in His beautiful abode beyond the grave and beyond the stars in a place called heaven... But, but... But you can't come if you're not prepared. Why? Because citizenship in Heaven is not a right... it's a privilege and it's an invitation and it requires a response on our part.
- D. Which leads us to the second truth; there may be stipulations but Heaven itself intervenes on our behalf to prepare us to be able to enter our Father's house. Jesus said unless... you are born again; unless you are born of the spirit... Those stipulations seemingly take out the possibility of me or you being a good enough people, or me or you doing more good deeds than bad ones. Or if we want to take it a little further, to even believe in God. It's not about believing in God, anyone can do that--No, it's about coming to realize that God believes in me, and God having His way in me. Let's talk about that.

(No greater invitation... has ever been uttered)

- A. Heaven has a Method (Vs. 6-12) *Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^[b] gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You^[c] 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."^[d] ⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, 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?*
- B. Jesus answers His **unless**... statement by stating emphatically in verse seven, *You must be born again.* ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννῆται ἄνωθεν (except a man be born from above). You must not do right as much as you must be made

right. Heavens method is not about humanity turning over a new leaf... isn't by putting new wine into old wine skins. No, heavens method of making you and I right and acceptable and cherish-able and completely acceptable to be in God's holy Presence in God's Heavenly Abode is an inside job. What's more, the making of you and I acceptable is heaven initiated and heaven accomplished. It's God who changes us! We don't, we can't, in our own strength, change ourselves enough to please God! Even more, being- born, regenerated, having a changed heart and a changed attitude, again, is all God's idea... all God's way of bringing us to a new place in our lives where we can see and relize that the God of the universe has always been, and will always be on my side— He has always had me in mind. His love for me knows no bounds and His care for me stretches from the womb to the WOW of heaven. What is this Being born-again, or regenerated as Jesus said we must experience? J.I. Packard writes:

Regeneration is the spiritual change wrought in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit in which his/her inherently sinful nature is changed so that he/she can respond to God in Faith, and live in accordance with His Will (Matt. 19:28; John 3:3,5,7; Titus 3:5). It extends to the whole nature of man, altering his governing disposition, illuminating his mind, freeing his will, and renewing his nature.

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- C. God must change your heart. Basically Jesus is saying that to be able to see the Kingdom of God, to be able to enter the Kingdom of God, God must first see you and enter your heart. How then, can one be born again? The key is found Revelation 3:20 where Jesus speaks of the

heart: *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Did you notice that Jesus did not say, if anyone hears me knocking, but rather, If anyone hears my voice? Why is that? It's Jesus extending the message from heaven to you personally, calling you by name. Let me enter your heart, let me change your heart, and I'll change you and invite you to be with me in our Fathers heaven for ever—it's that plain and simple. Before we can entertain the thought of entering heaven, the reality is that we first have to entertain and to respond to Christ's knocking to enter us.

(No greater invitation... has ever been uttered)

- A. Heaven has a Messenger (Vs.13-15) ¹³ *No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.*^[e] ¹⁴ *Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,*^[f] ¹⁵ *that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.*^[g]
- B. What is boils down to, isn't so much does heaven have a message, or does heaven have a method, they do. In fact it's not really whether or not Jesus is Heaven's messenger to the world—He is, always has been. But the real question is do you not only know about Jesus, but do you really know Him and more does He really know you? Have you been born from above? Are you ready! If you are then maybe the words of this cling reading will encourage your heart.

WHAT JESUS MEANS TO ME!

He is the First and Last, the Beginning and the End!

He is the keeper of Creation and the Creator of all!

He is the Architect of the universe and the Manager of all times.

He always was, He always is, and He always will be...

Unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeated, and never undone!

He was bruised and brought healing!

He was pierced and eased pain!

He was persecuted and brought freedom!

He was dead and brought life!

He is risen and brings power!

He reigns and brings Peace!

The world can't understand him,

The armies can't defeat Him,

The schools can't explain Him, and The leaders can't ignore Him.
Herod couldn't kill Him,
The Pharisees couldn't confuse Him, and the people couldn't hold Him!
Nero couldn't crush Him,
Hitler couldn't silence Him,
The New Age can't replace Him, and talk shows can't explain Him away!
He is light, love, longevity, and Lord.
He is goodness, Kindness, Gentleness, and God.
He is Holy, Righteous, mighty, powerful, and pure.
His ways are right,
His word is eternal, His will is unchanging, and His mind is on me.
He is my Redeemer,
He is my Savior,
He is my guide, and
He is my peace!
He is my Joy,
He is my comfort,
He is my Lord, and
He rules my life!
I serve Him because His bond is love,
His burden is light, and His goal for me is abundant life.
I follow Him because He is the wisdom of the wise,
the Power of the powerful, the Ancient of days,
the Ruler of rulers, the Leader of leaders,
the Overseer of the overcomers, and the Sovereign Lord of all that was and is
and is to come.
And if that seems impressive to you, try this on for size...
His goal is a relationship with ME!
He will never leave me, never forsake me, never mislead me, never forget me,
never overlook me, and never cancel my appointment in His appointment
book!
When I fall, He lifts me up!
When I fail, He forgives!
When I am weak, He is strong!
When I am lost, He is the way!
When I am afraid, He is my courage!
When I stumble, He steadies me!

When I am hurt, He heals me!
When I am broken, He mends me!
When I am blind, He leads me!
When I am hungry, He feeds me!
When I face trials, He is with me!
When I face persecution, He shields me!
When I face problems, He comforts me!
When I face loss, He provides for me!
When I face Death, He carries me Home!
He is everything for everybody, everywhere, every
time, and every way.
He is God, He is faithful.
I am His, and He is mine!

My Father in heaven has whipped the god of this world.
So, if you're wondering why I feel so secure, understand this . . .
He said it and that settles it!
God is in control, I am on His side, and that means all is well with my soul.
Everyday is a blessing for GOD Is!
I love the Lord and thank Him for all that he does in my life. Yes, I do love Jesus.
He is my source of existence and Savior. He keeps me functioning each and
every day. Without Him, I will be nothing. Without Him, I am nothing.
But with Him I can do all things. Philippians 4:13