

## 20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 2 (January 4-10, 2015)

Each time New Year's Day rolls around, I am reminded that Jesus offers us a brand new start **every** day. We will feature a rich Jewish leader in looking at this concept this week.

**Sunday**, January 4 (read John 2:23-3:3)

*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. (John 3:2, emphasis mine)*

I want you to read the last few verses of chapter 2 so that you realize the type of person to whom Jesus "will not entrust Himself " and so that you will not become one of those. Chapter 3 could begin with the words, "For example" because Nicodemus is a great illustration of those who believe in Jesus with their heads because of miracles they have **seen**, but never surrender the control of their lives to Him. I call him "Nick at night" since he comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness. He does not want the other rich religious leaders to know that he is inquiring of their archenemy, Jesus Christ. Nicodemus uses the oldest trick in the book when he says, "Rabbi, **we** know you are a teacher who has come from God" (John 3:2a, emphasis mine). By these words, he implies that **all** the religious leaders agree with him so he is not alone in his inquiry. We will follow this story in tomorrow's devotion.

**Monday**, January 5 (reread John 3:1-3)

*In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)*

Liberal religious leaders of today will say that Jesus was merely a teacher who taught good moral values. When you ask, "Is He the **only** way to salvation?" they quickly reveal their lack of belief by a negative answer, thus denying the truth of John 14:6 and Acts 4:12. Nicodemus needs a **relationship** with Jesus Christ. Personally, he is rich, renowned and religious, but he does not know anything about true salvation. Jesus sees through his credentials to declare, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (v. 3). In other words, God does not need any of **our** personal accomplishments, but **we need Him** to forgive our sins and totally transform us into His image. The Bible refers to that as being "born again." Have you come to the place in your life where you've traded in all your personal credentials for a relationship with Jesus Christ? Heaven awaits your answer!

**Tuesday**, January 6 (read John 3:4-8)

*Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." (John 3:5)*

The question from Nicodemus (v. 4) has a sarcastic tone because he has no idea what Jesus is talking about. The Lord prefaces His answer with, "I tell you the truth" (v. 5) to emphasize the importance of the concept He is about to teach. He tells Nicodemus that he must be "born of water and the Spirit" (v. 5). The same truth is recorded in Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The water pictures the cleansing from your past sins (1 Peter 3:21) while the Spirit guides you into all truth (John 16:13). You have recently studied the battle between the flesh and the spirit, so you should understand the truth of v. 6. The best illustration of the unseen working of the Spirit is seen in the changes caused by the wind (v. 7-8). The **wind** cannot be seen, but the **results** of the blowing are visible to all! We will continue this vital lesson tomorrow.

**Wednesday**, January 7 (read John 3:9-15)

*"I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" (John 3:12)*

Jesus rebukes Nicodemus because he, an educated Jewish teacher, does not understand how salvation is granted (v. 9-10). Likewise, many preachers and teachers in today's churches are teaching **salvation by works**, instead of **salvation by faith alone** (Ephesians 2:8-9). Some even teach universal salvation, a belief that everyone goes to heaven eventually. Those of us who trust God's Word **know** for sure that salvation can never be earned or kept; instead, it is God's gift to anyone who accepts Jesus' death on the cross as full payment for all sin. We must speak what we know to be true, even though the politically correct world rejects our message (v. 11). If our eyes are not open to the unmistakable lessons God gives on earth through nature, we will not be able to understand what God is doing in heaven to establish His kingdom (v. 12). We will conclude this passage tomorrow.

**Thursday**, January 8 (reread John 3:9-15)

*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life." (John 3:14-15)*

Verses 13-15 contain one of the most vivid pictures of God's plan of salvation found anywhere in Scripture. The Jews who followed Moses out of Egypt grew impatient along the way and "spoke against God and against Moses" (Numbers 21:4-5). The Lord sent venomous snakes among them and many Israelites died as a result of the bites from the snakes. When the people repented and Moses prayed for them, God told His leader to make a bronze snake and hang it on a pole so that anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the replica on the pole and live (Numbers 21:6-9). This is an exact picture of the Lord's sacrificial death for us! Even though we have believed in Him, we still are bitten by sin while we are in the flesh. Since His death is once and for all, we only need to look to the cross to find forgiveness. Death has been defeated (see Hebrews 2:14-15), but we will be plagued by our old sin natures until the Day when we see Jesus face to face (see 1 John 3:1-3).

**Friday**, January 9 (read John 3:16-18)

*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. (John 3:16 KJV)*

What else can be said about the beautiful verse printed above? If this were the only verse God preserved for us, wouldn't it be enough to assure you of eternal life? Don't make the gospel more complicated than it is meant to be. Simply take Jesus at His Word and begin to live the life He has planned for you! God didn't send His Son to condemn you; He sent Him to save you (v. 17). Those who believe in Him will never be condemned (v. 18a; see also 5:24), but those who refuse to believe have no way to be cleansed from their sins, so they "are condemned already" (v. 18b). I want you to live in the security of His presence. Begin 2015 by learning to trust God's promises, and pray them back to Him with full assurance (see Isaiah 55:9-11).

**Saturday**, January 10 (read John 3:19-21)

*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)*

The verdict is in! Those who believe in Jesus and in His death and resurrection are those who seek to walk in the light and truth of His Word. Those who merely join the church and who have no desire to repent of their sins and learn from His Word do not have eternal life. Could God make it any simpler or plainer? A true Christian knows that Jesus provides eternal life to all who receive Him and that all other religions lead to eternal darkness. Since you are reading these devotions daily, I assume that you have eternal life and the accompanying desire to walk in His light. The year ahead will be a wonderful journey as we learn and grow in Him!