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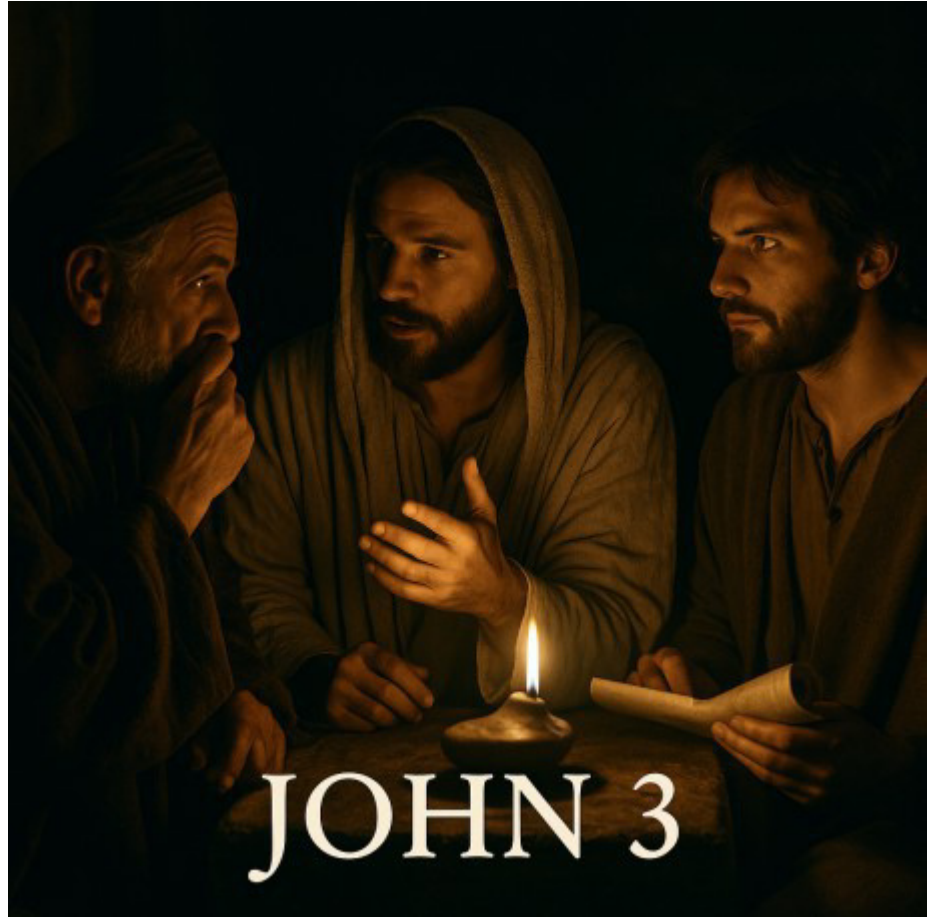
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By Dan Maines

John 3

John 3:1-2

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus at night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

† Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, approached Jesus secretly. His recognition of Jesus as teacher fell short of understanding Him as Messiah.

† Josephus (Antiquities 14.9.3) describes the Sanhedrin's authority, confirming Nicodemus' standing.

John 3:3

Jesus responded and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

† Jesus moved from signs to the necessity of new birth. "Born again" (or "born from above") pointed to the Spirit's work, not human effort.

John 3:4

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother's womb a second time and be born, can he?"

† Nicodemus misunderstood, interpreting physically what Jesus meant spiritually.

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

† "Water and Spirit" recalls Ezekiel 36:25-27, where God promised cleansing and a new heart by His Spirit. Baptism symbolizes this spiritual renewal.

John 3:6-7

"That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

† Flesh produces only flesh. Only the Spirit brings new birth. Jesus demanded spiritual transformation, not mere lineage or

law-keeping.

John 3:8

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but do not know where it is coming from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit."

† The Spirit's work is mysterious yet evident. Like the wind, its source and movement are unseen, but its effects undeniable.

John 3:9-10

Nicodemus responded and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

† Nicodemus, despite his learning, lacked spiritual insight. Scripture had foretold new covenant renewal, yet he missed it.

John 3:11-12

"Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and testify of what we have seen, and you people do not accept our testimony. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

† Israel's leaders rejected testimony of the Messiah. If they stumbled over earthly metaphors, they would not grasp heavenly truths.

John 3:13

"No one has ascended into heaven, except He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man."

† Jesus alone has heavenly authority. He descended from heaven and reveals the Father perfectly.

† Early church father Origen affirmed that Christ is the only true revealer of heavenly mysteries.

John 3:14-15

"And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes will have eternal life in Him."

† The bronze serpent in Numbers 21 prefigured Christ's crucifixion. Looking in faith brings life.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life."

† This verse encapsulates the gospel: God's love, His gift, and salvation through faith.

† Augustine declared this the "summary of the gospel."

John 3:17-18

"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

† The mission of Christ was salvation, not condemnation. Judgment falls on unbelief, not on those who embrace the Son.

John 3:19-21

"And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed. But the one who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds will be revealed as having been performed in God."

† The division is moral and spiritual: those who love darkness reject Christ, those who love truth come into the Light.

John 3:22-24

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and being baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

† Both Jesus' disciples and John were baptizing, showing continuity of preparation and fulfillment.

John 3:25-27

Then a matter of dispute developed on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all the people are coming to Him." John replied, "A person can receive not even one thing unless it has been given to him from heaven."

† John reaffirmed that all ministry is a gift from God. Popularity was not his concern; faithfulness was.

John 3:28-30

"You yourselves are witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' He who has the bride is the groom; but the friend of the groom, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the groom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. He must increase, but I must decrease."

† John likened himself to the friend of the groom. Christ is the true bridegroom of God's people. John's role was preparation, not competition.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls also use bride imagery for God's covenant, which John applies here to Christ.

John 3:31-33

"He who comes from above is above all; the one who is only from the earth is of the earth, and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies; and no one accepts His testimony. The one who has accepted His testimony has certified that God is true."

† Christ's authority comes from heaven. To believe Him is to affirm God's truth.

John 3:34-36

"For He whom God sent speaks the words of God; for He does not give the Spirit sparingly. The Father loves the Son and has entrusted all things to His hand. The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

† The Spirit's fullness rests upon Christ. Faith in the Son brings eternal life, while rejection brings wrath.

How it applies to us today

† New birth is essential: no one enters the kingdom without being born of the Spirit.

† Christ crucified, lifted up like the serpent, is the only way of salvation.

† God's love is universal, but salvation is for those who believe.

† Like John, we must decrease so that Christ may increase in our lives.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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- † Augustine, Homilies on John – John 3:16 as gospel summary
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