

A Light for Nic' at Night: John 2:23–3:21
Jaunting thru John: Message

Grace Chapel
INTRODUCTION

Dr. John Niemelä

February 17, 2008

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN'S ~~GOSPEL~~ TESTIMONY

AUTHOR: THE APOSTLE JOHN: beloved to the Lord

DATE OF WRITING:

1. **Prior to A.D. 70:** John 5² . . . *there is a pool*. It does not say “There was a pool.”

2. **Prior to A.D. 44 (Acts 10)**

Absence of reference to Jesus' ministry to Gentiles

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE FOR WRITING:

The readers/hearers (*you*) need to believe in Christ and they need life. In other words, the intended readers/hearers were unbelievers.

20³¹ But these [eight signs] are written that you may believe **that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that by believing [this] you may have life in His Name.

REVIEW OF THE PROLOGUE (John 1:1–18)

THE FIRST DISCIPLES (John 1:19–51)

FIRST SIGN WITNESSED BY JOHN (John 2:1–11)

FIRST CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (John 2:13–22)

BACKGROUND: MANY, INCLUDING NICODEMUS, BELIEVE (John 2:23–3:21)**Chronology of John 2:13–3:21**

During the eight-day feast, many believed in His name (2:23)							
Passover (1 day)		Feast of Unleavened Bread (7 days)					
Cleanse Temple	Fri Apr 7	Sat Apr 8	Sun Apr 9	Mon Apr 10	Tues Apr 11	Wed Apr 12	Thur Apr 13
			?	?	?	?	?
			One night Nicodemus came				

The first cleansing of the Temple was just before Passover (2nd cleansing = 3 years later)

After seeing Jesus' signs during the eight-day feast many believed in Jesus' name

Jesus did not leave Jerusalem until John 3:22, when He went to *the Judean countryside*

John 3:1 starts with *Now/But*, so Nicodemus came to Jesus during the eight-day feast

Connection between John 2:23–25 and John 3:1ff. (Bad chapter break)

Note the two uses of *man* in 2:25 and the one use of *man* in 3:1

The implication is that Nicodemus is one of these new believers (mentioned in 2:23)

A new look at Nicodemus

He represents a group of Pharisees who recognize that Jesus is God-sent

John 3:2

John 3:3 & 3:7

John 3:10 & 3:11

Nicodemus rebukes his fellow Pharisees (John 7:50)

Nicodemus risks his life to give Jesus a royal burial (John 19:38–39)

John 12:42–43 does not describe Nicodemus; it describes other rulers

NEW EXPOSITION:

Many believed during the eight-day feast because of the signs (2:23)

Jesus did not entrust Himself to these new believers, because He knows everyone and has no need for anyone to testify of humanity (2:24–25)

The problem is not that they believed because of seeing signs

The problem is not that they believed in Jesus' name

They possess everlasting life

The problem is that they are still baby believers (as we would expect)

Now, specifically, there was one man (of those who came to believe), Nicodemus, a Pharisee who ruled in the Sanhedrin (3:1)

Nicodemus perceived from the signs that Jesus was God-sent (3:2)

Jesus made everlasting life the core issue: the new birth (3:3)

Nicodemus admitted that he did not understand Jesus' point (3:4)

**Jesus reiterated the need for everlasting life and personalized it (3:5–7)
Explanation of being born of water and the Spirit**

Jesus acknowledges Nicodemus' puzzlement over the new birth (3:8)

Nicodemus admits again that he does not understand (3:9)

Jesus tells Nicodemus that (as a teacher of Israel) he should know these things (3:10)

Jesus told Nicodemus that He (and His disciples) can testify of these things that Nicodemus admitted that he could not testify about and that Israel (as a whole) does not accept (3:11)

Jesus has told Nicodemus of things within his reach (that he has not yet believed), so he would be overwhelmed, if Jesus were to tell him things that are beyond his reach (3:12)

Jesus provides an explanation of Proverbs 30; which Nicodemus should grasp (3:13)

Jesus compared receiving everlasting life through faith in Christ in terms of the serpent lifted by Moses (3:14–15)

Jesus explained that the way that God loved the world was by giving His only begotten Son so that believers would have everlasting life, rather than continuing to perish for all eternity as unbelievers will do (3:16)

Furthermore, God's purpose in sending the Son (first time) was not to condemn the world, but that unbelievers might be saved (have everlasting life) through believing in Him (3:17)

Believers (have everlasting life, so they) are not condemned, but unbelievers are already under the condemnation of death because they lack everlasting life (3:18)

The explanation of their condemnation under death is that men loved darkness, not Christ's enlightenment: that they could only have everlasting life by believing in Him (3:19)

Evildoers fear reproval by Christ, so they avoid Him (at their own risk) (3:20)

I see a partial chiasm in 3:20–21, because 3:20 addresses two types of people who avoid Christ, but verse 21 only explicitly discusses rewardable believers. The bracketed A' statement discusses unbelievers at the Great White Throne. This passage (I would argue) anticipates John 5:28ff).

A Unbelievers who avoid Him refuse His enlightening message of everlasting life

B Bels who avoid Him refuse His enlightening message of abundant life

**B' Deeds of bels who come to Him (for abundant life) = *done in God* (3:21)
(rewardable)**

**[A' Deeds of unbels (who avoid Him) are not done in God: worthless at GWT]
(such works merit nothing. Certainly, they do not merit life)**

CONCLUSION