

“A Fresh Start”
September 23, 2012

John 3

PROP- Jesus offers so much more than a “self-improvement” program—He brings a radical upgrade to an entirely new life!

1. PHARISEES (“separate”; built barriers to keep world out)

Established some time after the Babylonian captivity (approximately 500 years before Christ), this group sought to:

- **Preserve the OT Law**
- **Rigorously studied the Law**
- **Adhered to an external code of ethical behavior**
- **Believed in angels & demons, the coming of the Messiah, resurrection...**
- **Politically conservative, opposed Roman polytheism, heroes of the common people (unlike the elitist Sadducees)**

Jesus pointed out revealing things to them—due to His great love for them: (Matt. 15:11- “What comes out of a man defiles him.”)

- a. **Performance-driven- “To be seen by men” (Matthew 6:1,5) Result: “they have their reward in full”**
- b. **Self-sufficient- You “diligently study the Scriptures...yet you refuse to come to Me to have life” (John 5:39)**
- c. **Critical & competitive (“*Jealousy & selfish ambition*” James 3:16) With other people (“*God, I thank you that I am not like other men*” Luke 18:11) and with Jesus (*Flattered Him in order to “trap Him in His words”* Matthew 22:15-18)**
- d. **Misguided zeal- SEE Matthew 23:15, 23, 25-27**
 - a. **Evangelized- Yet, made converts “twice the son of hell”**
 - b. **Tithed**
 - c. **Cleaned up the outside- while dead, empty, & defiled inside**
- e. **Swayed by the fear of man- Did not arrest Jesus because they were “afraid of the crowd” (Matthew 21:46); yet, they plotted to kill Jesus because they were afraid of the Romans (John 11:47-53)**
- f. **Huge discrepancy between what they say & how they live- SEE Matthew 23:3-4 [NOTE: They had “words”—but Jesus has “the words of life”]**

2. JESUS

(v. 3) “I want you to see—to inspect, experience, and gaze into—the fullness of who I am and the world I live in. I want to fill your life with wonder and discovery. But this can happen only one way. When I say ‘Except...’ I am saying there are no exceptions. This is vital. Mandatory.

You must be spiritually reborn. Right now you are spiritually dead—unaware of an entirely new way of living your life. But I can change all that!”

(v. 4-7) The Holy Spirit can so do this! This should come as no surprise to you! In all of your striving to do what is “right”—you have come face-to-face with your own “unrighteousness” and your own inability to overcome it on your own.

(v. 8) So...let Me launch you into this wonderful, adventurous, exhilarating, unpredictable life...which will be the experience of “everyone born of the Spirit!”

(v. 10-13) I am not speaking theoretically. I know this as a certain reality. I experience this continually. You see, “eternal life” is not just something to be experienced later. It is a life to be experienced always. Starting NOW! I have “come from” heaven. And I have brought My world with Me!

(v. 14-15) I was so excited to come. In fact, I was dropping hints of My coming throughout the history of My people, Israel. You, Nicodemus, as “Israel’s teacher” should understand this! I am the One—hanging on a tree—who will heal all who look to Me. The poisonous lies of the serpent will be completely cleansed from their system!

(v. 16) This is totally motivated by love! Available to “whoever believes in Me.” They will no longer merely exist as aimless, withering beings—hopeless and helpless—separated from us! No! My Father, the Holy Spirit, and I are all in this together. This grand gathering. Restoring your hearts to ours!

(v. 17) I didn’t come to condemn you—to point out what’s wrong and doom you as unchangeable! No, I came to fully restore everyone in the whole world—no matter what their current condition is.

(v. 18) Believing in Me breaks the condemnation cycle once and for all. But whoever refuses to receive Me will go on living a condemned life—vainly attempting to ignore their own sense of guilt/shame—or constantly striving to compensate for it through religious effort.

(v. 19-21) You see, I’ve brought everything to light. Yet, some choose the way of Adam—remaining in hiding. But those who step into the light discover 2 liberating realities:

- (1) They cannot change themselves
- (2) I can change everything!

RESPONSE

*“You must be BORN...”- to arise; to enter into a whole new exciting way of life
“...AGAIN”- from above; from a higher place [English- “in addition”; a GAIN;
not simply “repeat”—but “INCREASE”]*

*“Nicodemus” (victorious one)—“How would you like a fresh start?”
(As an entirely new species of being—a race of people never seen before
Jesus set foot on the planet)*