

Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus

*MUST Be Understood Textually and Contextually
Brought Forth from Above, NOT from Below*

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles [‘signs’] that thou doest except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again [‘brought forth from above’], he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit [‘out of water and Spirit’], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again [‘brought forth from above’]...

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

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.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:1-7, 14-17).

The gospel of John is built around eight signs, having to do with supernatural manifestations of power, directed to the nation of Israel, pertaining to the proffered kingdom.

These signs were part and parcel with the message being proclaimed.

(Supernatural signs, performed by empowered individuals, are *FIRST* seen in Scripture during Moses' day, associated with his return to Egypt and the deliverance of his people. And this deliverance was with a view to their being established in a theocracy in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob [Ex. 3:1-10; 4:1-9, 21-23, 29-31; Deut. 6:22, 23].

A first mention principle pertaining to signs *was established at THIS point in Scripture, which can NEVER change*. Any time signs of this nature — signs performed by individuals empowered to perform the signs — are seen in Scripture, they *ALWAYS have to do with the SAME thing seen when they were introduced. They ALWAYS have to do with ISRAEL and the KINGDOM*.

Accordingly, in the gospel accounts and in Acts they had to do with *the message to ISRAEL pertaining to the proffered KINGDOM* [offered in the gospels, re-offered in Acts, attended by supernatural signs throughout].

The two were inseparably related after such a fashion that *the presence of one would necessitate the presence of the other*.

Or, the converse would be equally true. *The absence of one would necessitate the absence of the other*.

[Note what the preceding *ALONE* will reveal about the purpose statement for the eight signs in John's gospel (20:30, 31).

These signs have to do *with ISRAEL in relation to the proffered KINGDOM, NOT with the unsaved and the gospel of grace* (an erroneous view held by many)].

For additional information regarding the preceding, refer to the author's article, "Signs, Wonders, Miracles.")

“The kingdom of the heavens” — the rule of the heavens over the earth — was being offered to Israel, preceded by the call for national repentance.

And the *“signs”* were designed to show the Jewish people what they could have *IF the nation would heed the message and repent* — supernatural provision, protection, and blessings as the nation occupied her rightful place at the head of the nations within the theocracy.

And, *IF a person remains SOLELY within Scripture itself, NO question could possibly exist concerning WHAT kingdom was being offered to Israel.*

ALL that has to be done is set events in the first three chapters of Genesis alongside the message being proclaimed in the gospels, the account of Christ’s temptation/testing at the hands of Satan in Matthew chapter four (or, Mark 1 or Luke 4), and carry matters through to Rev. 11:15.

In short, *compare Scripture with Scripture. The SAME kingdom is seen in Genesis, Matthew, the other gospels, Acts, the epistles, and Revelation* — the kingdom ruled by Satan, “the kingdom of the heavens,” the rule of the heavens over the earth.

The first man, the first Adam, was created to take the scepter in Genesis, but Satan brought about his fall and resulting disqualification.

The second Man, the last Adam, was tested by Satan in Matthew (or Mark, or Luke) to show that he was fully qualified to take the sceptre.

And, as seen in Revelation, Christ will one day take the kingdom, and reign (the kingdom previously introduced in Genesis, which the Father will give to His Son [Dan. 7:13, 14]).

(For more information on the preceding, refer to the foreword and introduction in the author’s book, *Message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles.*

Also see “Exactly What Kingdom?,” Chapter V, pp. 70-72, in the author’s book, *The Acts Period.*)

The message being proclaimed to Israel, *attended by supernatural SIGNS, had to do with THIS kingdom*. And when Nicodemus came to Jesus in John 3:1ff, the issue *had to do with THESE signs, CHRIST'S identity, and, thus, the proffered kingdom*.

Nicodemus acknowledged that he and other Jewish religious leaders *KNEW Christ's identity* — “we know...” (v. 2). They *KNEW EXACTLY* Who He was. They *KNEW* that He was the “heir” of the vineyard — which is *WHY* they killed Him.

They, *KNOWING His identity*, were *NOT* going to “have this man to reign” over them (Matt. 21:38; Luke 19:14).

And Jesus, knowing the preceding, dealt with Nicodemus statement in a direct manner, succinctly providing a wealth of information *which Nicodemus SHOULD have known and understood, BUT DIDN'T* (cf. vv. 4, 9-12).

Christ began His response with one central subject in relation to the proffered kingdom — *the necessity of being brought forth from above* (vv. 3-8).

(For information on this subject, refer to the author's book, *Brought Forth from Above*.)

And Christ dealt with this subject by evidently alluding to one central sequence of events and then referencing a subsequent event, both in Jewish history.

First, Christ evidently alluded to events surrounding the Red Sea passage under Moses and the position of the Israelites beyond (vv. 3, 5; cf. Ex. 14:21-15:21 [“evidently alluded to” *because NO other sequence of events in Jewish history would contextually and completely fit Christ's statement (vv. 3, 5) like this one*]); and then, later in the discourse, Christ referenced a subsequent event — Moses lifting up the brazen serpent in the wilderness (vv. 14-18; cf. Num. 21:5-9)).

To illustrate the central subject — *brought forth from above* — Christ began and continued with events *BEYOND* the death of the firstborn in Exodus chapter twelve.

And all of the preceding could be further illustrated (actually, “initially” illustrated) by going back to the basic foundational type in Genesis chapter one and seeing that Christ dealt with corresponding events to those occurring on days two and three, *FOLLOWING* events occurring on day one.

Christ, drawing from Jewish history, dealt with *events occurring BEYOND the death of the firstborn in Exodus chapter twelve*, seen in verses three through five, then seen from a different perspective in verses fourteen through seventeen.

(The preceding is developed in the next two parts of this article: “John 3:3-5” and “John 3:14-17.”)

In short, the subject matter at hand throughout Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus *is in complete keeping with the subject matter at hand throughout the gospels* (along with the types which He both alluded to and referenced), which has to do with the theocracy in the types, with the proffered kingdom in the gospels, attended by supernatural signs both places.

ALL is about the SAME subject, the SAME goal.

ALL is about the same thing found beyond events on day one in Genesis chapter one, beyond the death of the firstborn in Exodus chapter twelve, and throughout the central message seen in the four gospels and beyond.

And ALL moves toward *EXACTLY the SAME goal which EVERYTHING moves in Scripture*—originally set forth in Genesis, reiterated after a different fashion in Exodus, set forth again in the gospels, Acts, the epistles, and realized in Revelation.

Events in Genesis move toward a seventh day, foreshadowing the earth’s coming Sabbath, when the Messianic Era will be ushered in, when the Son, with His co-heirs, will be in possession of the kingdom and will rule and reign.

Events in Exodus move toward an awaiting inheritance, to be realized through a theocracy to be established in the

land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *the earthly* aspect of the theocracy.

The kingdom in John chapter three though (vv. 3, 5) has to do with the proffered kingdom seen throughout the gospels and in Acts, the other aspect of the kingdom, *the heavenly*.

And this is the kingdom in Revelation which will one day be ruled by Christ and His co-heirs.

It was *ALL* set forth at the beginning, in the opening thirty four verses of Genesis, relating what Scripture is all about, with the end seen from the beginning.

The remainder of Scripture is simply commentary, providing all the sinews, flesh, and skin to cloth the skeletal framework set forth at the beginning.

(Note again that Christ came to a saved generation of Jews, proclaiming, *NOT* a message pertaining to salvation by grace, *BUT*, a message pertaining to a *KINGDOM* first mentioned 4,000 years earlier and numerous times beyond [centrally via types; e.g., I, II Samuel, Daniel, Jonah].

Had these Jews been unsaved, *NO* message of this nature could possibly have been forthcoming. Spiritual values, particularly of the nature seen here, are simply *NOT* proclaimed to a people who are spiritually dead.

Had the Jewish people been unsaved — spiritually dead — John the Baptist, Christ, the Twelve, and later the Seventy would have had to deal with them relative to this matter *FIRST*.

THEN and ONLY THEN could the message pertaining to the kingdom have been proclaimed.

BUT, the message throughout the gospels and Acts *BEGAN* and *CONTINUED* with an offer of the kingdom of the heavens, contingent on national repentance [Matt. 3:1ff].

Salvation by grace is simply *NOT* seen in *THIS* message.

For more information on the preceding, refer to Chapter IV, "The Israelites at the Time of Christ's First Coming, Saved or Unsaved?," in the author's book, *The Acts Period*.)

John 3:3-5

The expression, “born from above,” or, *brought forth from above*, is introduced in John’s gospel in chapter one (vv. 11-13) and then further dealt with in chapter three as Jesus opened His conversation with Nicodemus (vv. 3-8).

(Again, refer to the author’s book, *Brought Forth from Above*.)

The expression *is not* found elsewhere in John’s gospel; *nor* is it found in the three synoptics, *nor* in Acts.

And, the expression is found *in only* three epistles elsewhere in the New Testament.

It is found once in James (1:18), twice in I Peter (1:3, 23), and ten times in I John (2:29; 3:9 [twice]; 4:7; 5:1 [three times], 4, 18 [twice]).

The thought of being brought forth from above is introduced in the foundational type at the beginning of Genesis, then seen elsewhere in Genesis and in numerous parts of the Old Testament (*e.g.*, events beginning immediately following the death of the firstborn in Exodus chapter twelve [one complete, overall type, made up of many individual types, extending from that point in Exodus through Joshua]).

And Nicodemus, a leading teacher among the Jews [a teacher of the O.T. Scriptures], should have been quite familiar *with ALL of these things*, allowing him to understand Christ’s statement in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures.

BUT, Nicodemus failed to make the proper association, accounting for Christ’s sharp rebuke (vv. 9-12).

Then, though this expression, *brought forth from above*, is found in only four New Testament books, *the thought* being set forth by the expression, as in the Old Testament — *a saved person being brought forth from above rather than*

from below (cf. Matt. 16:15-17, 21-23; John 8:31-44) — can be found throughout the gospels, Acts, the epistles, and Revelation.

(The preceding, of course, is *NOT at all in keeping with the way that this expression has been used in Christendom over the years — in relation to the unsaved and the gospel of grace, NOT in relation to the saved and the continuing aspect of salvation.*

[Those dealing with this expression *in relation to the unsaved invariably relate matters to eternal verities (the possession or nonpossession of eternal life).*

Scripture though deals with the expression *in relation to saved individuals and the proffered kingdom — Jews in John's gospel, Christians in the three epistles where the expression is found.*

(To understand distinctions between “time” [the coming age, during which the proffered kingdom will be realized] and “eternal” verities [the endless ages beyond, during which the kingdom will continue, though following vast changes], refer to the author's article, “Biblical Subject and Structure”).

The expression, *brought forth from above*, dealt with in John's gospel relative to *the Jewish people* to which Christ came [1:11-13, 3:1ff], *has to do with actions of the Jewish people in relation to a kingdom being offered to the nation.*

Again, had the recipients of this message NOT already been saved, there could have been NO offer of the kingdom. Spiritual values are for individuals capable of spiritual perception.

And EXACTLY the same thing can be seen relative to Christians in the three epistles where the expression is found — EXACTLY the SAME thought on the necessity of being brought forth from above [rather than from below] and the SAME kingdom [previously taken from Israel (Matt. 21:43)] NOW being offered to Christians.

[Note particularly I John in this respect, where the expression, *brought forth from above*, is used ten times in a short, five-chapter book written to Christians about fellowship with the Father and His Son, keeping oneself clean through confession of sins, abiding in Christ, etc.

Ten references to salvation by grace would NOT ONLY be COMPLETELY out of place with the subject matter in I John BUT note what viewing a bringing forth from above in this erroneous manner does to the central message in this epistle.

Viewing the preceding in the light of the opening thirty-four verses in Genesis, ONCE BEYOND that foreshadowed by events on day one, an individual is to LOOK AHEAD to that foreshadowed by events on the succeeding five days, with a view to that foreshadowed by events on the seventh day.

And the person, as he traverses that foreshadowed by events on days two through six, is NOT to continually be looking back to that foreshadowed by events on day one, which, *looking at the ten references to being brought forth from above in I John as referencing salvation by grace and the unsaved, he WOULD be DOING.*

And the same thing could be said for the use of this expression in the three other N.T. books where it is found.

I John was used to illustrate the point because of the numerous times that the expression appears, the length of the book, and the plainly revealed subject matter of the book.

The Spirit used this expression ten times in a short book written to Christians, in a book having to do, in its entirety, *with things BEYOND those foreshadowed by events on day one in Genesis one*].

Using the expression in relation to the unsaved and the gospel of grace is NOT ONLY out of line with both the text and context at any place where the expression is found BUT an erroneous teaching of this nature — completely changing the contextual usage of this expression — destroys that which actually is in view.

In the preceding respect, in actuality, any knowledgeable Christian misunderstanding and misusing this expression might want to consider how Christ's words in John 3:10 might very well apply in their lives.)

And, with these things in mind, note in John 3:3, 5 that the introduced statement (actually, continued from ch. 1) pertaining to *the necessity of being brought forth from above, as it relates to the kingdom*, is explained by and inseparably connected with a bringing forth "out of Water and Spirit" in verse five (literal rendering from the Gk. Text).

The subject (a bringing forth from above) is raised and associated with the kingdom in verse three, and then the matter, continuing to be associated with the kingdom, is explained in verse five.

"...Except a man be born again ['brought forth from above'], he cannot see the kingdom of God."

...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit ['out of water and Spirit'], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (vv. 3b, 5b).

The way "water" and "Spirit" appear in the structure of the Greek text in verse five — two nouns connected by a copulative (*kai*, "and") and governed by a single preposition preceding the first noun (*ek*, "out of") — requires that both nouns be understood the same way, either in a figurative sense or in a literal sense.

Individuals attempting to explain how this verse deals with eternal salvation often ignore the requirements of the Greek construction, making one noun literal, the other figurative (*e.g.*, one such misuse of the Greek text is the translation proposed by some, "out of water, even Spirit," making the first noun figurative, the second literal).

But, time need not be spent on a misunderstanding of the subject and structure of the text, for the text *DOESN'T*

deal with eternal salvation.

The very wording of the text and context, having to do *with signs and the proffered kingdom, would, ALONE*, show that something is wrong when attempting to read eternal salvation into the thought of being brought forth from above, particularly when a leading teacher among the Jews was being addressed.

With the preceding in view, let's look at the typology of the matter in Genesis, then in Exodus. And the matter should then become clear, for types have been given to explain the antitype.

God, in His sovereign control of all things, brought matters to pass through using both events and experiences of the Old Testament saints, both brought to pass after a fashion that they would form types, which He could later use to draw from to teach His people great spiritual truths.

Matters begin this way in the opening verses of Genesis and continue this way throughout the first 2,000 years of human history (Gen. 1-11a), then throughout the history of Abraham and his descendants through Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons (Gen. 11b ff).

1) Genesis 1:6-13

Genesis opens with a very succinct statement, completely apart from any details whatsoever, regarding *the creation of the heavens, the earth, and the ruin of the earth* (Gen. 1:1, 2a).

It was only later that a few details were given (again, succinctly), allowing man to understand enough about what had occurred during the preceding age or ages that he could somewhat piece matters together. And this, in turn, would allow him to better understand God's plans and purposes for man.

Question: Why didn't God provide more information than has been given about the pre-Adamic history of the earth?

And that is a simple question to answer.

More information *has NOT* been provided because Scripture is *NOT* about events during time preceding the restoration of the earth and man's creation.

Scripture is about man and the earth following that which began to occur in Gen. 1:2b, beginning *NOT ONLY* the restoration of the earth *BUT* revealed events occurring during 7,000 years of time.

And *IF* one moves to the end of the 7,000 years, searching the Scriptures for events beyond this septenary structure of years, he will find little more (*e.g.*, the succinct nature of Rev. 21, 22) than he found about events preceding the 7,000 years.

Only enough is revealed about conditions and events beyond the 7,000 years to allow man to somewhat see and understand where things are headed beyond both Man's 6,000-year Day and the subsequent Lord's 1,000-year Day.

Scripture deals with events during "time," during 7,000 years of "time," *NOT with "time" EITHER preceding the restoration of the earth and man's creation OR with "time" following the Lord's Day, "time" during the endless ages beyond.*

That would evidently be one reason that *NEITHER* the Hebrew text of the Old Testament *NOR* the Greek text of the New Testament has a word for "eternal." Aside from brief references, or the two chapters ending Scripture (Rev. 21, 22), Scripture simply *DOESN'T* deal with the eternal ages. Scripture deals with "time," 7,000 years of time.

And the complete "time" dealt with in Scripture, showing what ALL subsequent Scripture is about — the 7,000 years — is set forth in an established, unchangeable manner in the opening thirty four verses, showing the end from the beginning.

(For information on the preceding, refer to the author's article, "Biblical Subject and Structure.")

Man's creation, ruin, and the way that he is to be restored

was set forth, unchangeably established, before man was even created. And this was done through the creation, ruin, and the way that the earth was restored.

God used six days for the restoration of the earth, and He is using six days as well, with each day 1,000 years in length, for man's restoration.

And the whole of the matter is with a view to the seventh day, the seventh 1,000-year period.

God restored the earth in a perfect, unchangeable manner; and the restoration of any subsequent ruined creation would, *of necessity*, have to follow the original pattern — *the pattern which God uses, which CANNOT be improved upon, for it was set PERFECT at the beginning.*

With that in mind, note events on day one as they would apply to man, *as God begins a work restoring ruined man, wherein, EXACTLY as the ruined earth, a complete ruin and total darkness existed.*

The Spirit of God moved, God spoke, light came into existence, and a division was then made between the light and the darkness.

THIS, as then, remaining today, was/is the initial work which God performed/performs to effect the restoration of the ruined creation (the earth then, man today).

This is where light shines out of darkness, man passes from death unto life.

NOW, events foreshadowed by God's restorative work on day two, followed by day three, can begin. And it is the events of these two days that relate to and parallel that which Jesus evidently referenced opening His conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:3-5.

In Genesis, events on day two had to do with God taking part of the waters covering the earth wherein light *NOW* exists and placing these waters above the atmosphere, leaving two bodies of water, one above, the other below.

On day one, light had been called into existence, and God divided between the light and the darkness.

In relation to man, now possessing spiritual life, a distinction is made between the state of his spirit and his soul.

Then, on day two, there is a division which corresponds to these two parts of man, along with Jesus' initial statement to Nicodemus (vv. 3, 5a), along with what will be seen occurring on day three.

The spiritual nature, with life now restored, associated with light, is connected with that which is above. *The soul-like nature*, having to do with the natural, remains in the sphere of darkness and has to do with that which is below.

The picture at the end of day two has to do with the earth still completely covered with water, with part of the original supply placed above the atmosphere (furnishing the waters above, which over sixteen centuries later fell back to the earth at the time of the Noachian Flood, providing part of the waters which flooded the earth).

Then, on day three, God *could ONLY* have begun to raise and lower different land masses (Ps. 104:5-9, ASV), *EXACTLY* as He later did at the end of the Noachian Flood (with water again covering the complete earth).

And, *EXACTLY* as later occurred during Noah's day, land masses rose up out of the water, with the water running into and settling in basins provided by the lowering of other land masses.

(Note that this part of the restoration of the earth would have had to occur after the same manner both times, for a pattern was set in Genesis one which *could ONLY* have been followed in Genesis eight.)

Then, following the appearance of land masses, vegetation began to appear. These land masses raised up out of the waters on the third day (the day connected with *resurrection*

in Scripture) began to bring forth.

And the vegetation brought forth would progressively grow upward toward the light and the waters above, *NOT* downward toward the darkness and waters below, toward a darkened, watery grave.

And *ALL* of this can be seen in Jesus' words to Nicodemus, seen more from the perspective of events occurring some fifteen centuries prior to Christ's words and some twenty-five centuries before that, seen on day three in Gen. 1:9-13, events resting on the foundation unchangeably established at the beginning in Genesis.

2) Exodus 12:8-11, 14-17; 14:21-15:21

As previously stated, and as will be shown, the typology involved in John 3:3-5 deals with that foreshadowed by events in both days two and three in Genesis chapter one.

BUT, the text from John's gospel, particularly verse five, evidently deals more specifically with a companion type — that foreshadowed by the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea and their experiences beyond in Exodus chapters fourteen and fifteen.

Again though, this companion type — the experiences of the Israelites under Moses — would rest upon and be in complete conformity to the foundational type in Genesis (as would any other type in relation to the foundational type).

In this respect, note particularly I Cor. 9:24-10:11:

“...*ALL* our fathers were under the cloud, and *ALL* passed through the sea;

And were *ALL* baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (10:1b, 2).

a) *Out of Water*

Born, brought forth, out of water from John 3:5, drawing from the type beginning in Exodus chapter fourteen, would

have to do with the Red Sea passage *FOLLOWING the Passover*.

The Israelites (who had experienced the death of the firstborn) were taken down into the Sea, symbolizing *burial following death* (taken down into the place of death) and raised up out of the Sea, symbolizing *resurrection* (raised up out of the place of death) and placed on the eastern banks of the Sea (Ex. 12-15).

They stood on the eastern banks of the Sea through *supernatural means, wherein resurrection power was exhibited*. And they stood in this position *with a view to an inheritance in another land, within a theocracy*.

The Israelites, passing through the Sea, *had gone down into the place of death. ONLY the dead are to be buried, and the death of the firstborn had just occurred*.

Thus, *a burial MUST also occur*. But beyond burial, with a vicarious death of the firstborn having occurred, *there MUST also be a resurrection*.

The Israelites, following the death of the firstborn, possessed spiritual life. Thus, they *had to be raised* from the place of death *to walk "in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:4) — something having to do with *the spiritual man ALONE*, for this resurrection *had NOTHING to do with the man of flesh. He was to be LEFT in the place of death*.

(Note how this was originally seen through the events of day three in God's work restoring the earth in Gen. 1:9-13, foreshadowing His subsequent work restoring ruined man.

The UNCHANGEABLE pattern was SET in Genesis.)

This is pictured during the present dispensation through the act of baptism. A person (a Christian), having experienced the death of the firstborn *vicariously (through the shed blood of the Paschal Lamb, Who died in his stead)*, is placed down in the waters. He then, within the symbolism involved, finds himself in *the place of death, beneath the waters*.

BUT, because the One providing the vicarious death conquered death, the Christian can be removed from the waters and find himself in the position of *having been raised with Christ* (Col. 2:12; 3:1ff).

And in this position — wrought through *supernatural, resurrection power* — the Christian is *to walk* “in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4), with a view *to an inheritance in another land, within a theocracy*.

It is going down into the place of death because of the death of the firstborn, and it is rising from this place, as Christ was raised, because *the person NOW possesses spiritual life*.

And this rising has to do *with the spiritual man ALONE*, for, again, *this resurrection has NOTHING to do with the man of flesh. He is to be LEFT in the place of death*.

(The Israelites under Moses in the type could walk out on the eastern banks of the Sea, in resurrection power, because of the totality of that seen in the previous death of the paschal lambs — *resurrection following a vicarious death*.

BUT, the pursuing Egyptian Pharaoh and his army were left beneath the waters of the Sea, *for there had been NO previous vicarious death of the firstborn*.

THEN, the antitype of either today — *those who HAVE and those who HAVE NOT experienced a vicarious death of the firstborn — is clear, allowing the complete matter to be quite readily seen and understood.*)

Note John 3:5 again: “out of water.”

Now, the continuing part of the text: “and Spirit.”

b) *Out of Spirit*

In John 3:5, Christ *NOT ONLY* referred to a *birth (a bringing forth) out of water* in the preceding respect, *BUT* He also referred to a *birth (a bringing forth) out of Spirit* as well.

In the type, this is seen both before and following the

Red Sea passage, along with the eating of the slain paschal lamb immediately following the death of the firstborn.

The eating of the lamb and subsequently being supernaturally led to the western banks of the Red Sea *could ONLY have to do with the beginning of the thought of being brought forth from above in John 3:3ff (cf. Ex. 12:8 ff).*

The typology of John 3:5 though, relative to "and Spirit," has to do with the Israelites *AFTER* the Red Sea passage ("out of water and Spirit," *in THAT order*). They stood in resurrection power on the eastern banks of the Sea, being led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, as they moved toward *an inheritance in another land, within a theocracy.*

And the antitype, relative to man today, is evident.

Immediately following the death of the firstborn (through belief on the slain Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ) there is to be a partaking of the Lamb and a following of the Spirit (John 6:30-58).

THEN, as the Christian moves toward the awaiting inheritance (heavenly), that foreshadowed by the Red Sea passage is the first order of obedience and faithfulness, which, *EXACTLY* as in the type, has to do with the burial of the old man, *with the new man ALONE raised to walk in newness of life.*

And a Christian, *raised from the waters* to walk "in newness of life," has the indwelling Spirit to lead him into all truth, as he moves toward *an inheritance in another land, within a theocracy.*

There MUST be a resurrection in view. Then, the one raised from the place of death *MUST follow the man of spirit*, allowing the Spirit to fill and lead him throughout his pilgrim journey (cf. Eph. 5:18, 19; Col. 3:16).

And the entire matter rests upon that initially seen and set forth *in an unchangeable fashion in Gen. 1:2b-25* — the ruined creation removed from its watery grave and com-

pletely restored over six days time by means of a work of the Spirit throughout.

This is why both “water” and “Spirit” are set forth side-by-side in John 3:5; and this is why the epistles, drawing from the types, go to such great lengths to call all the various facets of this matter to a Christian’s attention.

ONLY through this dual means can a Christian be successfully led to the goal of his calling. ONLY through this dual means can a Christian realize the awaiting inheritance in the kingdom of God.

(From the preceding, note how much is *NOT ONLY* missed *BUT* completely done away with through efforts to deal with the gospel of grace and eternal salvation in John 3:3-5.

Also note how much is missed *IF* an individual attempts to deal with these passages apart from the way God has structured much of the Old Testament and parts of the New Testament, which is highly typical.

IF a person is going to deal with salvation by grace, he needs to reference passages that deal with the subject [*e.g.*, events on day one in Gen. 1, or the death of the firstborn in Ex. 12], *NOT* to events beyond, or references to these events.

And, he needs to deal with the subject in line with the way God, through His Spirit, has structured His Word.)

John 3:14-17

John 3:16 is a mainstay for individuals dealing with the unsaved. And this is all good and well, for the subject matter and resulting latitude of the verse would necessitate such a usage, though a problem would exist in the way that this is too often carried out (referencing heaven, Hell, and eternal verities rather than that seen in the text and context).

Then, on the other side of the issue, John 3:16 can also be seen as a mainstay for individuals dealing with the saved, as Jesus was doing in His conversation with Nicodemus.

(Actually, as in the first part of this discourse, dealing with events surrounding the Red Sea passage and beyond [or events occurring on days two and three in Genesis 1], Nicodemus should have been familiar with that about to occur, referenced in John 3:14, 16.

After all, this was a major subject of O.T. prophecy, and he was a leading teacher among the Jews [*e.g.*, Gen. 4, 22, 37, Isa. 53; *cf.* John 11:49-52].)

As will be shown, both the wording and contextual setting of John 3:16 are *MESSIANIC*, in *EXACT* keeping with the way Christ *BEGAN* His discourse with Nicodemus.

And there was *NO* change in the subject matter in the latter part of this discourse, though there is an expansion of the subject. The complete discourse continues into verse sixteen and beyond *EXACTLY* as it began.

John 3:16 has to do with the events surrounding Calvary. *BUT*, something which often goes unrecognized, along with the exact wording and contextual setting of the verse, is the *dual nature* of the preaching of the cross.

In Scripture, there is a preaching of the cross *to the unsaved* (*dealing with salvation by grace*), and there is a preaching of the cross *to the saved* (*dealing with the continuing aspect of salvation*). And the latter is dealt with *FAR* more extensively in Scripture than the former.

Salvation by grace through faith, having to do with the preaching of the cross to the unsaved, as seen for example in Eph. 2:8, 9, is *NOT* the main message of Scripture:

“For by grace are ye saved [*lit.*, ‘you have been saved’] through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (vv. 8, 9).

Rather, the main message of Scripture is seen in *what salvation by grace through faith allows and where it takes an individual*.

Salvation by grace through faith, as seen in Eph. 2:8, 9 — a passing “from death unto life” (John 5:24; Eph. 2:1, 5) — *takes an individual to that seen in Eph. 2:10, which is another way of expressing the preaching of the cross to the saved:*

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (v. 10).

No single book in Scripture deals principally with salvation by grace through faith, *NOT* John’s gospel (as taught by many), *NOT* any of the Pauline epistles, Hebrews, the general epistles, *OR* any other book in Scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

Again, salvation by grace through faith, though usually dealt with extensively by man, *is simply NOT the main message of Scripture.*

(For information on the preceding, refer to the author’s article, “The Preaching of the Cross.”)

John 3:14-17, as clearly stated in the text, draws from an experience of the Israelites under Moses, seen in Num. 21:5-9.

The Israelites, dissatisfied with existing conditions in the wilderness, spoke out against Moses’ leadership, which was, as well — as seen in the text — speaking foremost against the Lord Who had placed Moses in this position.

Because of this, the Lord sent poisonous serpents throughout the camp, and many Israelites died.

The people then repented, changed their minds regarding their past actions, and cried out to Moses.

Moses laid the matter out before the Lord. And the Lord told him to fashion a brazen serpent, raise it on a pole, and all who had been bitten by serpents *need ONLY look at the raised brazen serpent to be healed.*

Numerous spiritual lessons can be drawn from this account.

In the type, serpents, resulting from sin, wrought *death*. *THEN*, the matter could be reversed, with *life* effected, through a brazen serpent (*brass speaks of "judgment"*) raised on a pole; and *ALL* an Israelite bitten by one of the serpents had to do was *LOOK*, and he would live.

In the antitype, though a serpent in Eden brought about man's fall, it was man's sin which resulted *in death*. Thus, in man's case, a Man *MUST* be raised up to effect *life* (John 8:28; cf. John 2:19-22); and, *EXACTLY* as in the type, *ALL* anyone has to do is *LOOK*, and he will live.

As previously stated, these verses in John's gospel, particularly verse sixteen, are perhaps the most widely used verses in Scripture by individuals working among the unsaved, dealing with the events foreshadowed by God's restorative work on day one in Genesis chapter one (whether they know it or not, most don't). And these verses, along with other related verses in John's gospel can be so used in this respect.

BUT...

And the "*BUT*" has to do with *HOW* these verses are too often used, ignoring the textual setting.

These verses are part of Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, which has to do with *signs and the proffered kingdom*. And this part of the discourse, as the previous part of the discourse, draws from events occurring beyond the death of the firstborn, in the wilderness.

And, in this instance, unlike back in verses three through five, *ALL* events are beyond the Red Sea passage.

And remaining with the primary interpretation, the matter can be seen from three respects — historical, present, and prophetic.

That is, *THIS* account can be seen and dealt with from the perspective of the message pertaining to signs, the Israelites, and the proclamation of the kingdom *at the time of this discourse, preceding the events of Calvary*.

THEN, THIS account can be seen and dealt with from the perspective of the proclamation of the kingdom during the Acts period, extending from there into the present time.

AND, THIS account can be seen and dealt with relative to NOT ONLY God's firstborn son, Jesus, BUT ALSO God's firstborn son, Israel, showing that which awaits BOTH Sons yet future.

1) The Gospel Accounts, Preceding Calvary

FIRST, note the context leading into the sixteenth verse, then the exact wording of the verse itself.

The expression, "the Son of man" is used in both verses thirteen and fourteen, which is a Messianic title taken from Ps. 8:4-6 and Dan. 7:13, 14.

There are over eighty appearances of this expression in the gospel accounts, used by Christ relative to Himself and the message being proclaimed.

Beyond the gospel accounts the expression is found only four places in the New Testament (Acts 7:58; Heb. 2:6 [a quotation from Ps. 8:4], and Rev. 1:13; 14:14).

Then note in John 3:14 that it is "the Son of man" Who is to be lifted up, crucified, NOT the paschal Lamb.

The paschal lamb was given to Israel, and it was given to Israel to be slain (Ex. 12:1ff). Had the Jewish people slain Jesus as the paschal Lamb rather than as "the Son of man," NO words of condemnation could possibly have been leveled against them (Acts 2:22, 23, 35, 36; 7:51, 52), for they would have done that which they were supposed to do.

And the Old Testament had made it quite clear that the nation's paschal Lamb was to be a Man (Gen. 4, 22; Isa. 53).

BUT, they crucified their "King," "the Son of man," though, in the process, they ALSO slew "the Lamb" (cf. John 11:47-52).

Further, in connection with the preceding, note the identity of the One Whom God gave in John 3:16 — "His only begotten Son."

“Sonship” implies *rulership*. ONLY “Sons” can rule in God’s kingdom, whether angels or man.

All *angels* are “sons” because of creation; *Adam* was God’s “son” because of creation (Luke 3:38), created to rule and reign (Gen. 1:26-28).

Israel was God’s son because of creation, then God’s firstborn because of adoption (Ex. 4:22, 23; Isa. 43:1; Rom. 9:4).

And *Christians* — brought into existence to be the recipient, as a collective entity (Christ’s bride), of that which Israel rejected at Christ’s first coming, the heavenly aspect of the kingdom — are presently “sons” because of creation (II Cor. 5:17), awaiting the adoption into a firstborn status (Rom. 8:23).

The coming kingdom, after Christ returns and takes the kingdom, will be ruled by three firstborn Sons — One begotten, and two adopted.

And the introduction of God’s “only begotten Son” (v. 16) by references to Him as “the Son of man” (vv. 13, 14) *simply continues the REGAL thought begun back in verse two of this discourse.*

Note essentially the same identifying statements in Christ’s question and Peter’s response in Matt. 16:13b, 15b, 16b:

“...Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”

“...But whom say ye that I am?”

“...Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (vv. 14b, 15b, 16b)

Then, note essentially the same thing seen in Matt. 16:16 and John 3:16 in the stated purpose for signs in John 20:30, 31:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

ALL of this had to do, first and foremost, with the message being proclaimed, *with Israel and the proffered kingdom*, NOT with the message of salvation by grace through faith, though, as previously stated, and as will be shown, John 3:14-17 lends itself to the proclamation of this message as well.

THEN, note how this is all set forth in the post-Calvary aspect of these verses in John's gospel:

2) *The Acts Period and Beyond, Following Calvary*

Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus occurred during the offer of the kingdom to Israel (30-33 A.D.), climaxed by events leading into the crucifixion.

Then, following Christ's resurrection, forty-day ministry, ascension, and the Church being brought into existence, there was a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, lasting for about the next twenty-nine years (33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.), beginning in Acts 2:4 and ending in Acts 28:28.

(Only the bare facts, as seen in the two previous paragraphs, will be given and dealt with in this part of the article.

For a full discussion of the proffered kingdom as it relates to Israel in the gospels and Acts, and to the Church in Acts and the epistles, refer to the author's books, *Message in the Gospels*, *Acts, Epistles*, *The Acts Period*, and *From Acts to the Epistles*.)

During the offer of the kingdom in the gospel accounts, the message was proclaimed *ONLY to the Jew* (Matt. 10:1-8; 15:21-28).

During the re-offer of the kingdom in the Book of Acts, begun at the time that the Church was brought into existence (Acts 2:1ff), *the Gentile was NOW ALSO in view* (but, an "offer" of the kingdom, not a "re-offer" [Acts 1:8]), though *the Jew still held priority* relative to the proffered kingdom throughout the time of the re-offer — "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10).

The Gentile, unlike the Jew during this period, was unsaved and would first have to be reached with the simple salvation message, the gospel of grace. *ONLY THEN* could the message that was “also to the Greek,” a message pertaining to the kingdom, come into view (cf. I Cor. 2:1, 2; 15:3ff).

Beyond the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel though (beyond about 62 A.D.), extending into modern times, the message pertaining to the kingdom *was/is solely to the one new man “in Christ,” made up of saved Jews and saved Gentiles.*

And, throughout this time, that seen in John 3:16, for both Jew and Gentile, would, of necessity, begin with the same, simple message pertaining to the gospel of grace.

Thus, beginning with the Acts period, when the message was carried beyond Israel to the Gentiles, until the present time, there has been a dual preaching of the cross — one to the unsaved, then continuing with the saved.

And it matters not which aspect is in view, the kingdom — to be realized on the seventh day, the seventh 1,000-year period set forth in Gen. 2:1-3 — *MUST be seen and understood as the GOAL in order for John 3:14-17 to be seen and dealt with in its correct Biblical perspective.*

That is to say, man has been saved for a revealed purpose, having to do with an inheritance in the proffered kingdom. And this has to do with occupying a position as co-heir with Christ after He returns and takes the kingdom.

And *to NOT* deal with the “purpose” for man’s salvation — whether dealing with the simple gospel of grace or the on-going salvation message — *is to deal with the subject apart from that set forth in John 3:14-17.*

(Again, refer to the author’s article, “Biblical Subject and Structure.”)

THEN, note that which lies in the future regarding the matter:

3) *God's Firstborn Sons, Yet Future*

For the prophetic aspect of John 3:14-17, note two types — the type in Num. 21:5-9, referenced in verse fourteen, and the typology surrounding Paul's conversion as he was confronted by the risen Christ en route from Jerusalem to Damascus (Acts 9:3ff; I Cor. 15:8; I Tim. 1:12-16).

a) *The Type in Numbers*

The type in Numbers, from which John 3:16 draws, succinctly provides the complete history of Israel.

In verse five, there is sin, disobedience in the camp, showing Israel's past condition, continuing into the present.

In verse six, God reacts by sending poisonous serpents throughout the camp, showing God's displeasure with His people's sin, disobedience.

Beyond this, once the people had been settled in the land under Joshua, extending through centuries, into modern times, God has used the surrounding Gentile nations to deal with His people in the preceding respect — subjection and persecution of His people both in the land (Book of Judges) and out of the land, with the Jewish people scattered among and persecuted by the Gentiles (from about the eighth century B.C. to the present time).

And whether in the type or the antitype, God's actions were/are *ALWAYS to effect correction*. This was seen in the type, and this will ultimately be seen in the antitype (during the coming Tribulation, when God's actions in this respect reach an apex, bringing to pass the same thing seen in the type).

In the type, in verse seven, God's actions (serpents sent throughout the camp) resulted in the Israelites coming to Moses and acknowledging what they had done.

In the antitype, God's actions (ultimately a type persecution without precedent at the hands of the Gentiles during the Tribulation) will result in the Israelites doing the same thing

as seen in this type or in a corresponding type — Joseph's brothers being driven to the place where they were forced to come to him and acknowledge in his presence that which they had done years before (Gen. 44:12-16).

Then, note what happened in the type in Num. 21:8, 9, which is the part referenced in John 3:14, laying the groundwork for verse sixteen.

And when the nation of Israel is brought to this same place near the end of the Tribulation, *ALL* of this will be worked out in the antitype, *EXACTLY as in the types*.

Following Israel's repentance, allowing for Christ's return, the Jewish people will look upon the One Whom they pierced, confessing *in His presence* that which happened years before.

That foreshadowed in Gen. 44:12-16 will be fulfilled; that seen in Num. 21:8, 9, fulfilled in the type, will, because of past events seen in John 3:16 (the Son dying in man's stead), be fulfilled in the antitype.

And the whole of the matter — type and/or antitype — was/is with a view to a theocracy, a kingdom out ahead (cf. Gen. 45:26).

b) *Paul's Conversion*

Paul was saved through Christ's personal appearance to him as he journeyed from Jerusalem to Damascus. And he saw Christ in a quite different manner than numerous individuals had seen Him throughout the forty days between His resurrection and ascension.

During these forty days, Christ's body *was NOT* enswathed in a covering of Glory, as Peter, James, and John had seen Him on the Mount in Matt. 17:1-5, or as He appeared following His being "received up into glory" (I Tim. 3:16).

But matters were quite different in Acts chapter nine, as they would have been when Stephen looked up into an

opened heaven in Acts chapter seven and saw Christ enswathed in Glory, *EXACTLY* as Paul saw Him in chapter nine.

Paul was blinded by the light emanating from Christ enswathed in this covering, a light which he later described as “brighter than the sun,” at mid-day (Acts 26:13).

Stephen, as well, could have been blinded by Christ’s appearance, immediately before he was killed. We’re not told.

And Paul was blind for three days, with his sight restored on the third day (Acts 9:9, 17, 18).

Paul later described himself, relative to his conversion experiences, as “one born out of due time” (I Cor. 15:8), and the matter is explained in I Tim. 1:15, 16:

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern [Gk., *hupotuposis*, a foundational type, “a prototype”] to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

Paul was saved as a type — actually, from the Gk. text, as seen, a foundational type, “a prototype” — of “them which should hereafter believe.”

In I Cor. 15:8, he was brought forth “out of due time,” that is, before it was time for the one whom he typified to be brought forth, *which could ONLY have been an allusion to the future bringing forth, conversion, of the nation of Israel.*

Israel will be saved *through the personal appearance of Christ in all His Glory.* And this will occur on the third day, the third 1,000-year period dating back to the crucifixion, with the nation’s sight (spiritual) restored on that day.

And Paul’s evangelistic efforts in the type will *THEN* be seen once again in the antitype through the evangelistic efforts of a converted and restored Jewish nation.

ALL will be EXACTLY as set forth in the foundational type.

And that seen in John 3:1-21 will continue to be worked out in the lives of individuals throughout the entire 1,000 years of the Messianic Era, in the lives of the unsaved first, then in the lives of the saved.