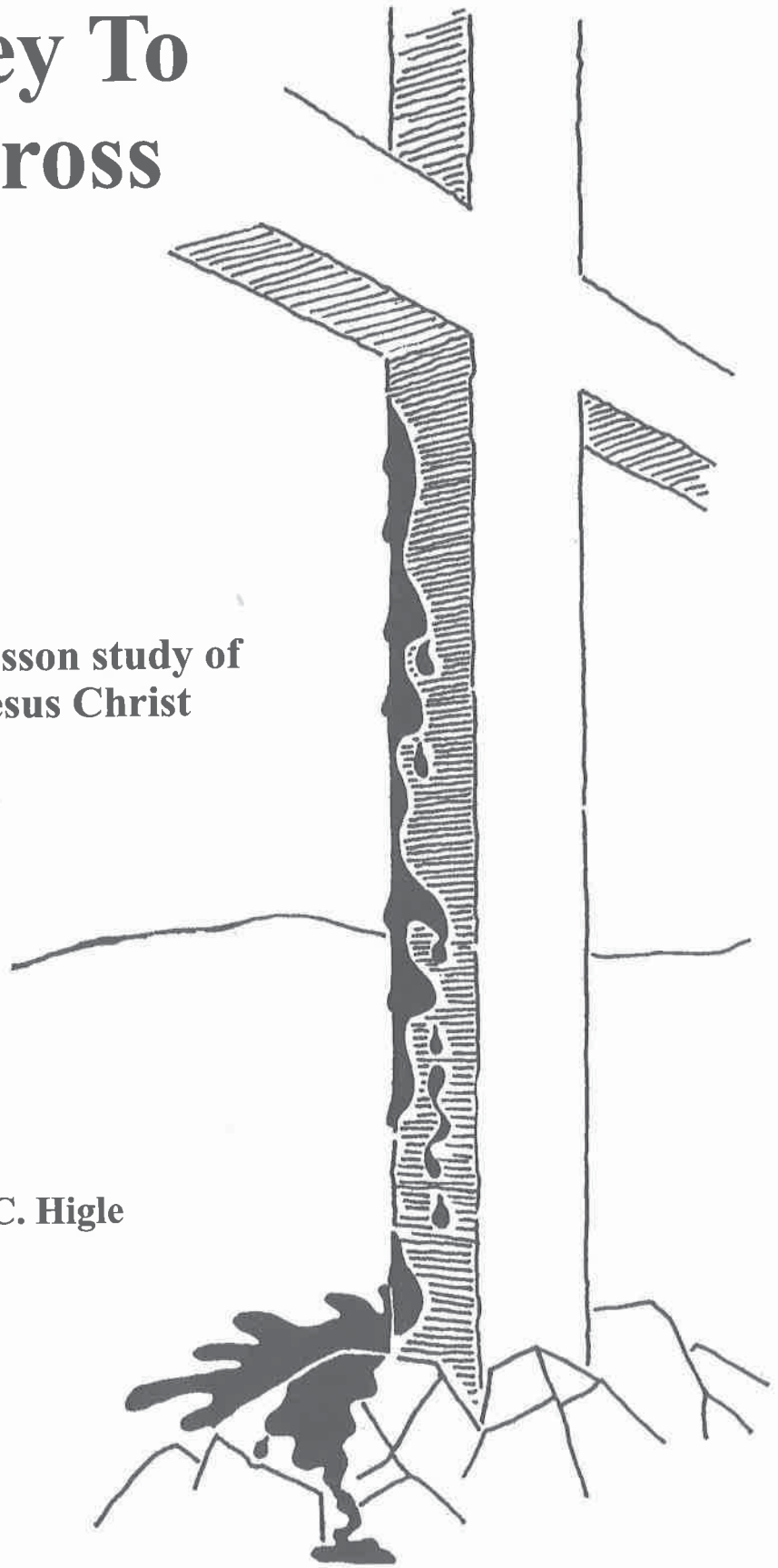


# Journey To The Cross

A twenty-six lesson study of  
the life of Jesus Christ

Tommy C. Higle



# Journey To The Cross

## LESSON 6 . . .

### III. HIS JOURNEY: The Beginning of the Earthly Ministry (Continued)

#### G. The Interview with Nicodemus *John 2:23-3:21*

After Jesus chased the moneychangers out of the temple in Jerusalem, a Jewish official named Nicodemus came to see Him at night.

This is perhaps the most interesting and surprising of all of Jesus' interviews. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and was deeply concerned with his religion. He was a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court. Unlike many of his colleagues, Nicodemus seemed to be impressed with Jesus. How does John 3:2 imply this?

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What was Jesus' reply to Nicodemus' statement (John 3:3)?

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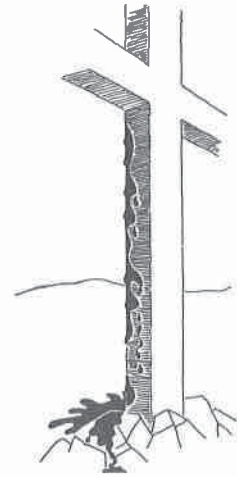
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Nicodemus had never heard anything like this before. When Jesus used the word *born*, Nicodemus could think of nothing but physical birth. Even with all his religious background, Nicodemus didn't understand this simple spiritual truth. Therefore, Jesus amplifies this statement in 3:5-7.

Jesus says in John 3:5, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* There are two possible interpretations of what Jesus means by this statement. One is that water is a symbol of the Word of God and its cleansing effect, a figure often used in the NT (see Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 1:23; John 15:3; Titus 3:5). However, many feel the contrast is between the natural birth and the spiritual birth, since Nicodemus had just inquired about that very point, asking if a second physical birth were possible. Why would John 3:6 support this interpretation?

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Notes

In John 3:16 & 18, how does Jesus clarify even more how we are saved?

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The word translated *believe* (PISTIS) in John 3:16 & 18 means to believe to the degree that it changes your life. It is not simply intellectual belief in a historic Jesus. For example, do you believe Adolf Hitler lived? If you do, are you a Nazi? In the same way, simply believing Jesus lived is not what makes one a Christian. We must believe to the degree that we commit our lives to Jesus Christ. Saving faith always reveals itself through a changed life (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Salvation comes to us by grace through faith (see Ephesians 2:8-9), not by good works, even the act of baptism. However, if someone claims to be saved and does not have a strong desire to follow the Lord in baptism, something is wrong with his or her faith. This is because being baptized is the clear command of Jesus. In John 3:16 & 18 Jesus is teaching that we don't enter heaven by trying to live better or by doing good works; we must be spiritually reborn.

## H. Beginning of the Judean Ministry

*John 3:22-36*

The Passover ended, and Jesus left Jerusalem for the open countryside of Judea. There His disciples began to baptize those who repented of their sins, and the disciples of John the Baptist became upset that Jesus' disciples were baptizing more believers than they were. How did John the Baptist explain the growth of Jesus' ministry (John 3:26-36)?

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## I. Jesus Withdraws from Judea

*Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:19-20; John 4:1-3*

From reading the above references, explain why Jesus ended His early Judean ministry and traveled to Galilee:

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From this point on, Christ's ministry will take place almost exclusively in Galilee.

## J. The Woman at Jacob's Well

*John 4:4-42*

It would be very difficult to find a greater contrast between two people than Nicodemus in John 3 and the Samaritan woman in John 4. He was a Jew; she was a half-breed Samaritan. He was a Pharisee who sat on the Sanhedrin; she had no religious affiliation. He was a scholar; she was apparently uneducated. He was one of the most respected people in town; she was one of the least respected. He had an influential name; her name is never mentioned.

As different as the two were, they both had the same need. They both needed to be born again. Nicodemus is an example that no one can rise to such heights where salvation is not needed, while the woman is an example of the truth that no one can sink so low they cannot be saved. Thus, it is by no accident that God put these two encounters of Jesus back to back at the beginning of John's gospel.

Why do you think Jesus said to the woman, *Give me to drink* (John 4:7)?

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Why was the woman so surprised at Jesus' request (John 4:9)?

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What did Jesus mean by *living water* (John 4:10; also, see John 7:37 and Revelation 21:6)?

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Just when the woman said, *Sir, give me this water . . .* Jesus told her to go get her husband and return. Why (John 4:17-19)?

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After Jesus had clearly revealed this woman's immoral life, she tried to change the subject by asking one of the most controversial religious questions of her day (see John 4:20). The Samaritans insisted God was to be worshipped in their temple on Mt. Gerizim, but the Jews required that He be worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus answered this complex question by explaining this disagreement was the result of both the Samaritans and the Jews misunderstanding the true nature of God (see verses 21-22). It is apparent both Samaritans and Jews were more concerned

about the place of worship than the manner of worship. According to verse 24, what is the proper manner of worship, and how does this resolve the problem about the place of worship?

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When the disciples returned to Jacob's Well, they were amazed to find Jesus talking to this Samaritan woman, which according to Jewish law resulted in ceremonial defilement. However, they did not question Jesus about His actions (see verse 27). Instead, they offered Him the food they had purchased, but he refused it saying, *I have meat to eat that ye know not of* (verse 32). To what food or strength was Jesus referring (see verse 34)?

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As a direct result of this woman's testimony, many Samaritans believed in Jesus. However, some would not be convinced by the testimony of a woman with such a questionable reputation. Yet, they at least became interested enough by her testimony to hear Jesus in person and then believe (see verses 40-42).

What truth do we find in this story to help us deal with all kinds of people (see verse 35)?

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