

The Gospel of John

Chapter 3:9-21

January 19, 1997

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**
 - Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
 - Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
 - Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth
- **Review & Introduction**

We return to the dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus. Last week we discussed the principle of regeneration and how it is the work of the Spirit. We do not beckon or direct the Spirit; He moves where He wishes.

- **Exposition**

John 3:9-21

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"¹¹ "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness."¹² "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

- Jesus' incredulous response was an indictment of Nicodemus. As the teacher of Israel, he should have been familiar with God's promise of spiritual renewal. The principles of renewal were certainly not new to Nicodemus (Ezek 11:19) and Jesus rebukes him for not being able to grasp His instruction.
- Nicodemus came to Jesus telling Him what he knew (that Jesus was sent from God) and even with that "knowledge" Nicodemus did not know who Jesus was nor understand His teaching. Jesus' remark is that His testimony is of things He knew and had seen yet, despite Nicodemus' confession, they rejected who He is. The "we" used by Christ is possibly Himself along with John or perhaps the long history of prophets. The word "you" used by Christ is interesting because it is plural by which Christ probably was referring to the entire group of teachers of Israel. Notice that Christ's testimony is true regardless of who believes it.
- The earthly things that Christ spoke of are the physical birth and the movements of the wind. Christ's response is quite instructive. We have a tendency to forget that the message we have to declare is spiritually understood and we will act ignorant of this by the way we will allow ourselves to be engaged in discussions that natural man will not understand.

13 "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."¹⁴ "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,"¹⁵ "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

- We may study heaven from a great distance and know of it only that which we have been told. However, our Lord has dwelt there and seen the things to which He testifies. When we declare our heavenly message its truth is not dependent upon who we are or what we have seen. The message we testify to has already been substantiated by those who first testified to it.
- Jesus gives an example of a heavenly teaching that Nicodemus probably would not have known; the serpent made by Moses and its use was a picture of the remedy that God had in mind for spiritual death. This story (from Number 21, 2 Kings 18) is not on its surface (the earthly level) a messianic story. But the Lord says that it was a picture of how He is to be lifted up.
- Jesus' death on a cross was not done in obscurity. The world knows about Christ but has rejected the message. God's intentions are to save a vast number of sinners from His wrath; not just a small handful but an innumerable number for the sake of the covenant made with Abraham.

16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."¹⁷ "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

- Not only has God declared His love for the world but His love has been substantiated by what He did; He gave His only son to die in our place and to become the sin of those whom He died for.
- The thought that God loves the entire world (each and every without exception) is a common one that actually has many pitfalls. Much of the problem comes from our definition of the word "world". Does this number refer to a quantity or to a magnitude. The answer must be found in the context of the verse or in the context of clear, related verses. The Greek

word for world used here is kosmos; notice the different ways that the word is used in the NT:

1. The Universe as a whole – Acts 17:24
2. The Earth – John 13:1, Eph. 1:4
3. The world's system – John 12:31, 1 John 2:15
4. The entire human race – Romans 3:19
5. The human race *except* believers – John 15:18, Romans 3:6
6. Gentiles and not Jews – Romans 11:12
7. Believers only – John 1:29, 3:16-17, 6:33, 12:47, 1 Cor. 4:9, 2 Cor. 5:19

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.¹⁹ "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

- Those who believe are the ones whom God loves. Those who do not believe are not loved by God and are accordingly condemned. Sometimes we would like to think that believing in God is just some personal choice that God has given us the autonomy to make on our own. The truth is that God gives the faith to be saved, and God grants repentance,. It is actually a very common concept in the Scriptures that God demands that which God provides.
- When God pours His wrath upon sin and sinners He is not demonstrating His love—it will be a terrifying act of hatred. While many modern Christians will say that God Hates sin, they will at the same time somehow separate the sin from the sinner. But Hell will have inhabitants with faces.

20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.²¹ "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."
NKJV

- The world hates God (notice my use of the word world) but the world knows enough not to say so. However, this verse says that those who practice evil hate the light; God is light.