

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 4TH - 5TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

BORN AGAIN (JOHN 3:1-4) A GOOD PHARISEE?

The Pharisees are the antagonists of the NT, but an influential Pharisee named Nicodemus "came to [Jesus] at night" to talk with Him.

- Though it is possible that Nicodemus was worried about meeting with Jesus in the daylight, it is more likely that Jesus was just too busy during the day.

"RABBI, WE KNOW THAT YOU...COME FROM GOD"

When Nic called Jesus "Rabbi," he was placing himself in the position of a student. This showed **humility** because Nic was educated (especially in the Word), wealthy, and powerful.

- This conversation will lead to Nic gaining eternal life (salvation). We see **salvation begins with a posture of humility.**

BEING "BORN AGAIN"

Nic assumed that God's presence in our lives was only evident in physical miracles, but Jesus corrected him by saying one can only "see the kingdom of God" if they're "born again."

- **Looks can be deceiving** (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus isn't anti-miracle, but **salvation is from a personal relationship with God.**

RELIGION CAN ALSO BE DECEIVING

Nicodemus struggled to understand a simple principle that we need to personally know God because his **religion got in the way.**

- **The knowledge of Jesus and even repetitious acts are meaningless without a desire to know Him and grow in His teachings and principles** (sanctification).

"HOW CAN ANYONE BE BORN WHEN [THEY'RE] OLD?"

This second question was probably literal. If so, we must learn from Nic that **we can't respond to spiritual truths with natural limitations.**

- Our salvation and change do not make sense if viewed from just a logical standpoint. **Jesus miraculously saves, changes, and provides for His followers.**

THE SPIRIT (JOHN 3:5-8)

THE ANSWER TO THE SECOND QUESTION

V3 tells us we must be "born again" in order to see the Kingdom. V5 tells us the process by which we're born again. First, we're "**born of water.**"

- This most likely refers to the cleansing of sin through **repentance and baptism, which are a part of the Christian's journey and spiritual re-making.**

"...AND THE SPIRIT."

The Holy Spirit was active in the OT, but He wasn't mentioned as part of the personal regeneration process. **The coming of Jesus, His death, and resurrection opened the door for the Spirit to be personal for everyone.**

- **Not only is sin removed, but God is active in our lives.**

FLESH VS. SPIRIT

Jesus alludes that we have the choice to live in "flesh" or "Spirit." To live in the Spirit means we live in an **obedient relationship with Jesus.**

- Living by the Spirit is **living by Kingdom principles and power.** This means **we're able to experience things in this life (and eternity) not possible by human means.**

BASICALLY, DEATH VS. LIFE

To live in the flesh is to give in to a way of living that eventually yields death in this life (the ramifications of sin) and in eternity (Hell).

- **When we live in the Spirit, we view life through the lens of God, and we experience things unobtainable to the world, like peace, joy, and real love.**

"THE WIND BLOWS WHERE IT PLEASES..."

The analogy Jesus uses about wind alludes to the fact that the Spirit may be physically invisible, but His force and power are felt and witnessed even amongst evil societies.

- **We're not to live in fear and isolation of the world, but in the insulation of the Spirit so we can enact change.**

LIFTED UP (JOHN 3:9-15)

"HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?"

Nic's third question leads to the most important answer: **The only means of eternal life is through the cross and a personal relationship with Jesus.**

- The OT (Isaiah 53) should have led Nic to see that a sacrificial Savior was coming, but Jesus said many didn't "accept our testimony."

WHAT "EARTHLY THINGS"?

When Jesus says "earthly things," He is referring to the regeneration (making new) and the person who chooses to follow Him.

- Essentially, Jesus is saying that **if one doesn't believe they can change, why would they believe what Jesus and the Word say about spiritual matters?**

THE SNAKE SITUATION

Jesus ends this section with a reference to Numbers 21 when poisonous snakes came and killed the Jews that didn't appreciate and rebelled against God.

- In a similar manner, **the cross will provide salvation from the poison of the "snake" (Satan) that infiltrated man's soul.**

NOT BY MAN, BUT BY GOD

Nic came from a religious tradition that taught our works earn our salvation. One of the biggest takeaways from these verses is Jesus' point that **salvation comes from His work, not ours.**

- **We're saved by God's grace and mercy, which are activated by our faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our part is to simply trust and obey.**

REVEALED (JOHN 3:16-21)

THE CENTER OF THE BIBLE?

Nic had deep religious training but little spiritual insight. So, Jesus presents the simple yet profound answer to life and eternity in John 3:16.

- Jesus classified everyone into two groups: those who believe and those who don't. **For those who believe, Jesus becomes the path to eternal life with God.**

THE DEEPEST KIND OF LOVE

The verb Jesus uses for **love** is *agapao*, the deepest love that shows the highest concern for the recipient. God shows His love by giving His only Son to be the **atonement** (payment) for our sins.

- **Jesus didn't simply die for the world's evil, but for our individual sins. He is personal!**

TO FREE US FROM CONDEMNATION

There is a misconception that Christianity condemns, but Jesus makes it clear that truly following Him frees us from condemnation because our poor choices have enslaved us.

- **Jesus frees us from the ramifications of our evil decisions, but we must believe in Him, which means obediently following.**

"THIS IS THE JUDGMENT ..."

It's not that the path isn't clear or Jesus' power can't change us. The problem is many have **"loved the darkness rather than the light"** and are choosing to do things that destroy them.

- Many hide in shadows in fear of being exposed or because they've fallen in love with evil things. **This condemns both now and forever.**

HOW COULD A LOVING GOD SEND US TO HELL?

We're already on a sinking ship because our path is imperfect, selfish, and evil. In Jesus' love for us, He offers us salvation from the consequences of our bad decisions!

- **Our eternity is us receiving what we already chose to live for: an existence with God OR completely devoid of Him.**

"BUT, ANYONE WHO LIVES BY THE TRUTH..."

Those who want not only to be freed from the consequences of sin but also to know their Creator welcome the light that exposes their evil so they can be forgiven and made new.

- **When we desire a change, we respond to truth with a relationship with Jesus and our works are evidence of our salvation.**

ARE WE HUNGRY FOR MORE?

- Nicodemus had it all by the world's standards, but he was still unfulfilled and hungry for something more.
- Whether we have a lot or virtually nothing, **are we seeking truth?** Do we care where we came from and how to know our Creator? **Are we asking the biggest questions?**

THE ONLY PATH

- When we **objectively ask** the big questions and **seek out the answers with humility**, we will come to the conclusion that Jesus is the only pathway to salvation in this life and an eternity with our Creator in the next.
- **We must then decide if we are willing to trust Jesus through our obedience.**

OUR WAYS SIMPLY AREN'T WORKING

- Many will struggle with the exclusivity of Jesus, absolute truth, and the temptation to not give up their desires and wants.
- But that begs the question, **how have we done in the absence of God and His commands? On a personal and societal level, how is our way working?**