

“The Gospel of John: You’re the Best?”

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Scripture

John 3:9-21

9“Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "**Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?**"

11"Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. "**If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**"

13"**No one has ascended into heaven**, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **even so must the Son of Man be lifted up**; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life."

16"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

17"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that **the world might be saved through Him**. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

19"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light**, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But **he who practices the truth comes to the Light**, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Overview of the Gospels

- **Matthew** -> **Jewish flavor to the writing, portraying Jesus as the Christ and King**
- **Mark** -> **Jesus as the “Son of Man”, really Peter’s Gospel for the Gentiles**
- **Luke** -> **Jesus is Human and the Redeemer of Humanity**
- **John** -> **Jesus is the Divine “Son of God”**

Why Write the Gospel?

Matthew, Mark and Luke’s Gospels were already around. Why another one?

The Purpose for John’s Gospel

John 20:30-31

“Therefore, **many other signs Jesus also performed** in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have life in His name.”

Many events in John not recorded elsewhere

Many events recorded in the Synoptics not in John -> the Transfiguration, for example

The word "believe" ~100 times in John's Gospel

John 3 and John 4 -> focus is on Salvation

Last Week: We Don't Know!

- Nicodemus thought he had it all under control and knew the plan to get to Heaven
- We learned that the Spirit is the one that moves into lives for change
- We do not see the Spirit like we don't see the wind, but we can observe signs of His movement
- God sovereignly allows events to happen in our lives to direct us to Him as the only hope

Calvinism and TULIP

In short, Calvinism holds that **Salvation is a God-controlled event** -> **God is Sovereign**

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| T | -> Total Depravity | We are born sinners without hope |
| U | -> Unconditional Election | If God has chosen us, then we will be His (Romans 8:31) |
| L | -> Limited Atonement | Hell will be occupied – God will not save every person |
| I | -> Irresistible Grace | "All that the Father has given Me will come to Me" (John 6:37) |
| P | -> Perseverance of the Saints | You cannot lose salvation if you've been saved |

You're the Best?

John 3:9-10

9 "Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "**Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?**"

Continuing the conversation with Nicodemus, he picks his mouth up off the floor and asks in bewilderment

"How can these things be?" -> He means: **"You mean to tell me that I'm wrong?"**

Let's say you go into a classroom; after 15 minutes of listening to the teacher, you rise and say they're in error.

Nicodemus is floored to find out that not only has he been teaching error, but that HE doesn't know the way!

Jesus responds, "Are you **THE** teacher of Israel and **YOU** don't understand these things?"

You're the best that Israel has these days?

The Peril of Unbelief

John 3:11

11 "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of **what we know** and testify of what **we have seen**, and you do not accept our testimony.

Nicodemus's condition is **reflective of Israel's condition** – he questions how can he (how can THEY!) be wrong?

Jesus says that believers testify about what we know and what we have seen -> **it is personal evidence**

It's not because he isn't intelligent – he just didn't truly believe in what he couldn't see

Hebrews 11:1

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

We see this in our day, don't we? --> some people think faith in God **is for the uneducated**

The essence of John 3: **salvation and unbelief**

John 5:39-40

“You search the Scriptures **because you think that in them you have eternal life**; it is these that testify about Me; and **you are unwilling to come to Me** so that you may have life.”

John 3:12

"If I told you **earthly things** and you do not believe, **how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**

Nicodemus is rooted in earthly things, following man-made rules, and cannot understand anything else

Jesus has told Nicodemus that the Spirit (heavenly concept) is like the wind (earthly concept)

An earthly example -> Moses told the people that **God would give them the Land of Promise**

Numbers 14:4-12 (after leaving Egypt, the people rebel)

“So, they said to one another, "**Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.**"

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. **Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb** the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, **tore their clothes**; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.

8 "If the LORD is pleased with us, then **He will bring us into this land and give it to us**-- a land which flows with milk and honey. "Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." **But all the congregation said to stone them with stones.** Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel.

11 The LORD said to Moses, "**How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me**, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? "I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they."

Israel would not believe in God's promises – and decided to stone Moses and Aaron. **God is not pleased!**

John 3:13

13" **No one has ascended into heaven**, but He who descended from heaven: **the Son of Man**.

Where are you going to get this heavenly knowledge, Nicodemus?

No one has been where I have been! I am the only one with heavenly knowledge available to you!

Some Old Testament saints were taken to Heaven (Elijah)

Paul would, later on, get a trip to heaven (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

Jesus's point is: **If you don't trust Me, who ya got?**

The Basics of Salvation

John 3:14-15

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **even so must the Son of Man be lifted up**; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life."

Then, Jesus explains the how people will be redeemed -> **He has to be lifted up -> killed as a sacrifice**

Nicodemus is going to be familiar with the story in the Wilderness -> people were getting bitten by snakes.

Numbers 21:5-9

"The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So, the people came to Moses and said, "**We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us.**" And Moses interceded for the people.

8Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that **if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.**"

A look at the bronze serpent provided physical life...

A look to the Son provided spiritual life...

Whoever truly believes in the Son will have eternal life

Eternal life – everlasting life – the divine presence within you and the promise of future glory

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

I'm sure everyone knows the meaning of the verse – the **promise is no eternal separation from God**

The word "SO" shows the depth of God's love for the sinful world. It is unmatched in all history.

John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

John 3:17

17"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that **the world might be saved through Him**.

The purpose of the Incarnation was for **education and rescue**, not judgment...

John 3:18

"He **who believes in Him** is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

We've talked about what true belief is...

I wrote a blog entry about what true belief is...

- 1) It is not just knowing His name
- 2) It is not just knowing His story

It is knowing Him!

Philippians 3:7-11

"Whatever things were gain to me, those things **I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ**. More than that, I count **all things to be loss** in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and **count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ**, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith

10**that I may know Him** and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Oh, Paul exclaims, that I may KNOW Him! -> willing to experience His sufferings and His death

It's not my own self-righteousness – **that's a bunch of dung** -> that's not going to get me anywhere

It's not going to get Nicodemus anywhere, either.

There's only ONE thing that's going to get you anywhere -> true belief and trust in the Son alone

Sola Christus -> Only Christ -> why we sing "In Christ Alone, my hope is found..."

Unbelief means judgment -> many are already judged -> **Jesus Knows they will never come to faith...**

John 6:44

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Their future is judgment and eternal separation from God...

The Result of Unbelief

John 3:19-20 (John's summary point)

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light**, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

How do we see unbelief in action?

Men love the darkness rather than the Light – they revel in evil deeds

Not necessarily supreme wickedness, could be subtle evil...

Think about it -> **have you ever done something** that you pray no one would ever find out about?

Sure you have!

How about having a lifetime filled with that behavior? Always hiding, always fearing about being discovered.

The Light exposes the darkness

Revelation 1:12-16

“I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands, **I saw one like a son of man**, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and **His hair were white like white wool, like snow**; and **His eyes were like a flame of fire**. His feet **were like burnished bronze**, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and **His voice was like the sound of many waters**. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.”

He is dressed as a Priest and King -> He comes in Judgment -> He is no longer the Lamb but the Lion of Judah

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| White -> | His purity |
| Flame of Fire -> | He sees everything |
| Bronze-> | He brings judgment |
| Sound of many waters -> | His authority |

What will men try to do when He comes in judgment?

Revelation 6:15-17

“The kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man **hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains**; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “**Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb**; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

They'll try to hide...but there's nowhere to hide...

John 3:21 (John's conclusion)

“But **he who practices the truth comes to the Light**, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God”

But those who are His...they come to the Light. The Father draws them to the Light

They do not try to hide what they do -> **What time of day was Jesus tried?**

Ephesians 5:6-13

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; **walk as children of Light** (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. **Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them**; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.”

1 John 1:5-10

“**If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie** and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

Are you hiding anything that might be keeping you from getting closer to the Lord?

A Time of Reflection

Romans 12:3

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to **think so as to have sound judgment**, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith”

The Lord is available -> The Altar is open

Prayer & Benediction