

Lighthouse Bible Church

October 7th, 2012

John 3: 11 – 15

‘Whoever Believes in Him’ *scripture reading Numbers 21: 4 - 9*

Stand – Read – Pray

Last time we saw that Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a leader of the Jews, the teacher in Israel, came to Jesus because He had heard and seen His miracles and concluded that He must be from God.

But Jesus knew Nicodemus’ heart because He knows what is in every man as Chapter 2 and verse 25 says. And the greatest need that Nicodemus had in his heart was not to understand how Jesus did the miracles but that he needed to be born again.

Jesus was telling Nicodemus, in essence, that he was a very religious man that had a great zeal for God but that he was lost in his sin and he needed to be born again into God’s kingdom.

Nicodemus had been doing all these religious works thinking that he was entering in or already in the kingdom of heaven and Jesus comes along and tells him that all of his religious works are filthy rags in God’s sight and that he needed to have a regenerated heart, a work that only the Holy Spirit could do.

There have been a lot of people and still are a lot of people like Nicodemus today that have been deceived by Satan into thinking that they can get to heaven on their own terms, by their own righteousness, by their own religious works or goodness.

When in reality, everyone who is ever born is born separated from God and **dead in trespasses and sins** as **Ephesians 2: 1** and they are an **enemy of God** as **Romans 5: 10** says and cannot, by their religious rituals or good works, save themselves.

As Jesus told Nicodemus, it is only through the washing of water through the word and the power of the Holy Spirit that can make a spiritually dead person spiritually alive, and can make an enemy of God at peace with God and a friend and child of God.

Nicodemus, because he was so steeped in his religion and religious practices, didn't understand this and he didn't teach it either. As THE teacher of Israel, he was responsible for many souls being deceived into believing the works righteousness system of salvation. That is why Jesus said in **Matthew 5: 20** **unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisee's you can not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

Nicodemus' response to Jesus was **how can these things be?** He didn't understand because He was trying to work his way into heaven. He didn't believe, initially, that you could be **saved by grace through faith and that not of yourselves** as **Ephesians 2: 8** says.

He didn't understand the spiritual truth behind what it takes to be a born again believer. Nicodemus is a living illustration of what **1st Corinthians 2: 14** says **the natural man or the unbeliever does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.**

That is why Jesus says in **Verse 12** **If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things.** Nicodemus' problem was one of unbelief.

So Jesus, in our passage, begins to explain to Nicodemus God's plan of salvation and when He finishes we never hear Nicodemus' response, as a matter of fact we don't hear from him again until Chapter 7 when he is defending Jesus before the Sanhedrin. So let's look at what He says to Nicodemus starting in Verse 11

Verses 11 - 12 Most assuredly, I say to you, we speak what we know and testify what we have seen, and you do not receive our witness.

Jesus says **WE speak, WE know, WE testify and witness to what we have seen and YOU plural** do not receive our witness, you do not believe us. You do not believe the **witness** of John the Baptist, Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael and Myself, Jesus says, because you chose not to believe.

It is no different in our day, people choose not to believe the saving gospel because they would either have to admit they were wrong in what they believed and practiced and admit they were a sinner in need of a Savior or resist and rebel against the truth.

Nicodemus did not know these things because he did not understand them so he chose not to believe them and that is why Jesus says what He does in Verse 12 **if I had told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** He says, just because you don't understand it doesn't make it not true, we speak what we know as true and testify to what we have seen is true and you just won't believe it. And you, are you not the teacher of Israel and you don't know these things, these **heavenly** things. What an indictment.

Remember what John said earlier in **John 1: 11** said **He came unto His own and His own did not (what) receive Him.** Now He is saying, you will not receive Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah and you will not receive our witness by what He says or does to prove who He is. So they just choose not to believe and choose to believe that their religious works get them closer to God's kingdom.

So look at what Jesus says in response to that in Verse 13.

Verse 13: No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man *who is in heaven*.

What He is saying is this; no one can find God on their own, by their own religious works. They can't ascend into heaven and understand heavenly things by the works they do on this earth.

He is saying that there is no amount of WORKS righteousness that will get you any closer to God. He says you are lost in your sin and separated from God and there is nothing you can do about it. Only when God comes down from heaven in the person of Jesus Christ and reveals Himself and His plan for salvation can you be reconciled to Him.

Think about this! Every religion, except Christianity, has some form or system of trying to reach up to God in an attempt to appease Him or please Him and someday be with Him. And Jesus says that no one can do that.

In saying this, Jesus is telling them that He came from God in heaven and that He is God's Son, God in human form and that someday He is going back to heaven. This is the first of many times Jesus would make such a profound statement.

Jesus said that He is the bread of life and in **John 6: 33** He says **for the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Verse 38 for I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. Verse 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven.**

John 13: 3 says Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God... He says it as clearly as He can in John 16: 28 when He says I came forth from the Father and have come into the world, again I leave the world and go to the Father.

Jesus is telling them His divine origin and He reveals Gods plan for salvation and tells them that no amount of religion can help them to find God. He is only found when He reveals Himself through the person of Jesus Christ, as found in His word and brought to light by the power of the Holy Spirit. No religion.

Jesus then want to explain to them, using the Old Testament that Nicodemus was so familiar with, how someone enters the kingdom of heaven, how someone is born again, and it is not through their religious practices but through Jesus Christ. Look at Verse 14.

Verse 14: As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

Jesus uses and Old Testament passage in **Numbers 21: 4 – 9** that Nicodemus would have been familiar with and compares it to what will happen to Jesus on the cross.

That term **lifted up** is a direct reference to Jesus' crucifixion and death. In **John 12: 32 - 33** it says, Jesus is talking here, **and I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. This He said signifying by what death He would die.**

Jesus is saying that I **must** die before you can have life, before someone can be born again, before someone can enter the kingdom of God. That's God's plan. Why, because the Bible says in **Romans 6:23** **for the wages of sin is (what) death. Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness** as **Hebrews 9: 22** says.

Jesus was predicting His own death that would pay for the penalty of our sins, not His, because He lived a holy, perfect, sinless life. He was the only one who could die in our place, be punished for our sins.

He was the one that Isaiah said **was stricken, smitten by God and afflicted and that He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we were healed.** We were healed from sin by Jesus' death not our religious works.

It is like what **1st Peter 2: 24** said **that He Himself born our sins in His own body on the cross, that we having died to sins might live to righteousness.** Nothing that we did or could do but what Christ did for us.

1st Peter 3: 18 says **Jesus suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.** Nicodemus so desperately wanted to work His way to God and it was all meaningless. He needed to humble himself, admit that he was a sinner, and in his case, admit that he had been lead astray and as the teacher of Israel, leading others astray, and admit he could do nothing to get closer to God.

Jesus said in **Matthew 26: 28** **this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.**

That is why we come to the Lord's table in celebrating what Christ, alone, could do for us that we could not do for ourselves; have our sins atoned for and forgiven, not **earned** away, **prayed** away, **bought** away, **worked** away **baptized** away or anything else.

Jesus alone saves us from the penalty and punishment of sin, like the serpent in the wilderness. They knew they had sinned against God by their complaining and rebellion and disobedience and they knew that they were being punished for their sin.

When they recognized that, they repented and turned to God and sought His mercy and God granted it. They only had to do two things. (1) look to something outside of themselves for the cure, and in this case the bronze serpent lifted up on a pole (it wasn't the serpent that saved them but God's promise of looking to it), and (2) believe that when they looked, they would be healed.

Do you see anything else that could save them from their sin and God's judgment? No! It is the same way today. When you come to the place where you recognize that you are a sinner, bitten by the serpent Satan, and deserving of God's judgment because of your sin and are willing to repent of that and look to Jesus and believe that He alone can save you through His death, burial and resurrection, then you too will not suffer the wages of your sin, which is physical and spiritual death.

Why does the Son of Man have to be lifted up, look at Verse 15.

Verse 15 THAT whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Whoever looks in faith to the crucified Christ will be cured from sin's deadly bite. They must **believe**, by faith, that Jesus is their sin bearer and Savior and died in their place, took the punishment for their sin, so they could have **eternal life**.

If you are a born again believer here this morning you have **eternal life** in Jesus Christ and because of Jesus Christ and nothing else. **Romans 5: 21** says **sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

By the way, the implication is, if you do not believe you will perish and not have eternal life, and that is where Nicodemus is right now. And that is where every person is right now that has never believed that Jesus died for your sins on the cross according the scriptures and was buried and that He rose again the 3rd day according to the scriptures and was seen by many.

If you have never trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior and Sin bearer then John says in Verses 15 and 16 that you will **perish**. You will die in your sin and you will suffer the judgment and punishment of Almighty God in hell, forever.

Matthew 25: 41 & 46 calls it **everlasting fire** and **everlasting punishment**. **Jude 1: 7** calls it **the punishment of eternal fire**. **Revelation 14: 10 – 11** says **they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone ... forever and ever and they have no rest day or night**. **Revelation 20: 10** says **...they will be tormented day and night forever and ever**.

For everyone in this room today, you are in one of the two categories listed in this passage. You are either a born again believer because you have put your faith and trust in Christ or you don't choose to believe because you think your religion or your goodness is enough to get you eternal life, when in reality you will perish in eternal fire.

If you are a born again believer then you are invited to come to this table to remember what Christ has done for you. If you are unsure or you are not a born again believer then please do not participate. If you are a believer, however there is something in your life that has broken fellowship with God or with others and

you have not confessed it or repented of it and it is still there, then, as **1st Corinthians 11: 27** and **Matthew 5: 23 – 24** says, don't partake in an unworthy manner until it is resolved.

Prayer and Lords Table

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Introduction and Review:

Ephesians 2: 1, 8, Romans 5: 10, Matthew 5: 20

Verses 11 – 12: You do not receive our witness

John 1: 11

Verse 13: No one has ascended to heaven but He who ..

John 6: 33, 38, 51, John 13: 3, John 16: 28

Verse 14: So must the Son of Man be lifted up

Numbers 21: 4–9, John 12: 32–33, Romans 6: 23
Hebrews 9: 22, Isaiah 53: 4 – 5, 1st Peter 2: 24
1st Peter 3: 18, Matthew 26: 28

Verse 15: Whoever believes in Him should not perish

Romans 5: 21, Matthew 25: 41, 46, Jude 1: 7
Revelation 14: 10 – 11, Revelation 20: 10

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