

## STUDY #8

## INTERVIEW WITH NICODEMUS (PART B)

**John 3:9-21 (ESV)—**

<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?<sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.<sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,<sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.<sup>20</sup>For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

**Key Words:**

**“We...our” (v. 11)**—these plurals encompassed Jesus’ disciples and even John the Baptist, who understood and testified to the truth of salvation. **“you” (v. 11)** is also plural and indicates that Nicodemus’ unbelief was typical of the nation as a collective whole.

**Son of Man (v. 13, 14)**—Jesus uses this term to emphasize His humanity and time of humiliation.

**Eternal life** (vs. 15 &16)—the believer’s participation in the blessed, everlasting life of Christ through their union with Him.

**Perish** (v. 16)—to perish is to receive God’s final and eternal judgment.

**Related Passages:**

John 6:38—“<sup>38</sup>For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

Numbers 21:5-9—“<sup>5</sup>And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup>And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.”

Romans 8:1,3—“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh...”

Psalms 119:105—“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Ephesians 5:8-10—“<sup>8</sup>...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup>and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”

## Discussion Questions

### Read vs. 9-13

1. Why is Jesus a trustworthy source of “heavenly things”? (v. 11-12, John 6:38) (I) Though from heaven, Jesus calls Himself the “Son of Man.” Why? (I)

\*2. What was Jesus communicating to Nicodemus when he said “...**you** do not receive **our** testimony”? (I) In what way was Jesus’ words a drawing of a proverbial “line in the sand”? (I) John Philips wrote: “The fact that Jesus came into the world provides all people with the ultimate test of believing or disbelieving.” What are the two sides of the proverbial “line in the sand”? (A) Is this a truth that is easily accepted by the world? (A) Why? (A)

3. Later on in this book (John 7:40-52 & 19:38-42), we see that Nicodemus did become a true follower of Jesus. Even though Nicodemus had the opportunity to converse with the Son of God face to face and to observe His signs, he did not believe right away. How can that encourage/challenge us in how we interact with those who have not yet come to faith? (A)

### Read vs. 14-15

\*4. Read Numbers 21:5-9. Why did God send the fiery serpents? (O) What was the remedy for the fiery serpent bites? (O) Do you think that would have sounded like a reasonable or foolish remedy to the Israelites? (I) What was the point of Jesus referencing this Old Testament account? (I) By referencing scripture, what example is Jesus giving us? (A)

5. Think about Nicodemus—a Pharisee and Teacher of Israel who kept and upheld the Law religiously—hearing these words. Do you think that simply believing in the name of the Son of God for eternal life sounded reasonable or foolish to him? (I) Think about the world today, is belief in Jesus for salvation considered reasonable or foolish? (O) Why? (I)

Study #8

11/07/17

**Read v. 16-18**

\*6. The whole of the redemptive work of God is summed up in John 3:16. It is also the most referenced, most preached-on verse in the Bible. How can we guard against being so familiar with it that we lose sight of the great treasure that it contains? (A) How can meditating on the truths in this verse increase our affections for God? (A)

7. A part of meditating on the truths of these verses is looking at the details...

Who is the "world"? (I)

What was God's motive for sending Jesus? (O) (v. 16)

What was Jesus' mission? (v. 17)

Why does the world need to "be saved"? (I)

Though Jesus did not come to condemn the world, in what way is condemnation a natural consequence?

Underline the benefits of believing. What are they?

Circle the consequences of disbelieving. What are they?

How serious is the sin of unbelief?

\*8. Based on the truths found in these verses, how would you respond to someone who says that they will go to heaven because he/she does good most of the time and believes that people can believe in whatever higher power they want? (A)

**Read vs. 19-21**

\*9. What is the fear of unbelief? (v. 20) (O) Why is being exposed such a debilitating fear? (I) What does doing "what is true" and "coming to the light" look like for believers? (I/A) See Psalm 119:105 & Ephesians 5:8-10. Though we believe, are there times (maybe even daily!) we might *not* do "what is true" and therefore *not* "come to the light" because we are afraid our "works should be exposed"? (A) Can you think of an example in your own life? (A)

O= Observation

I = Interpretation

A= Application

**PRE-STUDY #9**

**HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE**

**John 3:22-36 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup>After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. <sup>23</sup>John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized <sup>24</sup>(for John had not yet been put in prison).

<sup>25</sup>Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. <sup>26</sup>And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." <sup>27</sup>John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup>You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' <sup>29</sup>The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. <sup>30</sup>He must increase, but I must decrease."

<sup>31</sup>He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup>He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. <sup>33</sup>Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup>For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup>The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. <sup>36</sup>Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

**Key Words:**

**"baptizing" (v. 22, 26)**—Jesus' disciples were baptizing. See John 4:2.

**"prison" (v. 24)**—see Mark 6:14-29

**"purification" (v. 25)**—perhaps the value of baptism or the various Jewish rituals of cleansing.

**"friend of the bridegroom" (v. 29)**—his job was to ask for the hand of the bride, to arrange the

preliminaries of the wedding, and to oversee the reception of the bride & bridegroom.

**"above" (v. 31)**—same word translated as "born again" in 3:3,7. Here it refers to Jesus as the One who comes down from heaven.

**"Earth/earthly" (v. 31)**—speaking of human limitations

**"no one receives his testimony" (v. 32)**—John is using hyperbole to emphasize that the world in general rejects Jesus & his teaching.

**"set his seal" (v. 33)**—i.e. signing off

**"has eternal life" (v. 35)**—this is a present possession (not just a future hope).

**"Wrath of God remains" (v. 36)**—being condemned or under God's settled, holy displeasure against sin is the present condition of those who reject Jesus.

**Related Passages:**

Ephesians 2:1-2

1 Corinthians 2:14

Colossians 2:9

John 10:10b

2 Peter 2:9

**Study Questions:**

1. What issue did John the Baptist's disciples come to him with? (v. 26) (O) Can you identify a time in your life when you were resentful of someone because you were jealous of his/her success? (A)

2. In what way was John's role as the forerunner of Jesus like that of the "friend of a bridegroom"? (I)

3. Read vs. 31-36. Who is the focus? (O) How do these words explain John's announcement in v. 30: "He must increase, but I must decrease"? (I)

\*Key word explanations are from MacArthur or Phillip's commentaries