

John's record of Jesus' one-on-one encounter with Nicodemus is one of a number that the Holy Spirit moved him to remember in considerable detail over a half century after the fact. Not that this inspired scripture was a revelation out of the blue but, far more likely, the product of decades of fond recall. And don't we also, having the Gospels in hand, delight to recall and meditate upon various incidents in Jesus' life and work here on earth. Through the Gospels we walk with Him through those days as well.

Jesus referred to a familiar miraculous Old Testament incident to alert Nicodemus to God's healing, saving grace for any who would simply look. It is salvation by faith not of works. Note again the gift is now offered to the whole world and to everyone in it, Jew or Gentile. But the offer is not for immediate healing of some physical ailment or injury, but for eternal life. Life that transcends even physical death if that should intervene. Eternal life is not mere longevity. It is the quality of life imparted by the One who is Light. It promises grace and resurrection, not immunity from pain or death. It is life in fellowship with God Himself. Forever.

The Lord stated He was not sent to condemn the world. It was ripe for judgement and richly deserved it. But He came that it might be saved. Again, not just the nation of Israel, but the whole world. Those who choose to believe not are condemned already. Why? Simply because Light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than Light. Why? Because their deeds are evil. A bad conscience condemns but does not prevent lust from overwhelming a fear of certain punishment. Pride generates avoidance of reproof and prevents many from repentance. They perish. But by the mercy of God some repent and come to the Light. Only one who repents and realizes God's saving grace is humbly willing to come to the Light and have his works reviewed. The saved soul produces works for the Lord, under His direction, that He will review and reward in a coming day, 1Corinthians 3:11-15; 4:5.

In these concise statements recorded by John (vs 12 - 21) Jesus laid out the whole outline of New Testament truth for Christian life in this era. John and other Apostles and Prophets filled in details.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship,

created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

1Corinthians 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Next, John's narrative moves on to finish the account of the part John the Baptist had in the story of Jesus. Each of the four gospels presents John's essential role in the early days of Jesus' public ministry. He was really the last of the Old Testament prophets. The Lord called him the greatest of them, Matthew 11:11, Luke 7:28. His mission was to announce the Messiah. His story furnishes an orderly transition from Old Testament history and prophecies to the New Testament fulfillment.

Jesus had come into Judea and begun baptizing there while John was still actively baptizing in the Jordan. The Jews raised a serious concern among John's disciples about the purifying rites of the Jews. How did this baptizing fit in, or did it? They came to John about it. John set the record straight. His baptizing had little to do with ancient purifying practices of the Jews. His baptizing was about repentance, not ritual. He was the forerunner of the Christ, Jesus is the Christ. He prepared the way of the Lord. The Messiah must take prominence and leadership. John himself must fade out of the scene. John did not begrudge the prospect of being set aside. He rejoiced for his mission had been accomplished.

John the author next gives eight clear examples of the preeminence given the Lord Jesus by God through John the Baptist.*

27 A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

John was given his message from heaven. Jesus the dependant Man received His message from Heaven as well.

28 *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.*

John gave clear witness as to the nature of his mission, and the One He announced.

29 *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

There was no impulse toward rivalry in John's heart. Though his loyalty was tried it was found to be true.

Don't we see a hint of the anticipated Bride of Christ, the Church, in John's statement?

30 *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John's humility was genuine despite his greatness. His joyous anticipation of the revealed glory of the Lord is an example for all.

31 *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. 32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.*

John's testimony had to do with announcing the arrival of God's Anointed King here on earth. John predicted the Lord Himself was to testify regarding heavenly things as John the author duly recorded in his inspired writings in the New Testament.

33 *He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. 34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*

There was nothing in the Lord Jesus that could in any way hinder the complete uninhibited indwelling of His holy human body by the Holy Spirit, filling every niche and cranny. In contrast, the believers before Christ were hosts to the Holy Spirit who came upon them as

He willed but not as a permanent resident, Psalm 51:11. Now, every believer in this age has been baptized by the Spirit upon personally trusting Christ as Savior and confessing Him as Lord. Our bodies have become the temples of the Spirit; Romans 8:9; 1Corinthians 6:20; Ephesians 1:13,14. But we can personally grieve Him by our behavior and attitude, though He never will depart, Ephesians 4:30.

35 *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.*

A Basic Truth: The Godhead **is** Love, defined by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Being One. God has given the Son dominion and preeminence over all things, and Jesus the Son has accepted this as Man. He will deliver it all back to God when He has completed the mission He has undertaken for God, 1Corinthians 15:21-28.

36a. *He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life:* Salvation by faith and eternal life is basic to God's dealing with man in all ages of time.

36b. *and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath (active fury, not merely a silent pout, avoidance or withholding of blessing) of God abideth (rests permanently upon) on him.*

The fact of God's eternal wrath is basic to the gospel giving it meaning and urgency infinitely beyond the liability of punishment and suffering under human justice systems. Beware. Repent. Believe. Receive.

* Were all these truths uttered by John the Baptist or were they inserted in the account here by John the apostle? No matter, for truth of God is presented here. Take it and receive it. Soak it up, heed it, live it.

By Ronald Canner, May 4, 2011