

2008#5 THE GOSPEL IN A NUTSHELL

JOHN 3:1-21

Today we continue to look at the Gospel of John
And one of the most quoted verses in the whole Bible.

John 3:16

Jesus gave us this verse as specific answer to the unspoken question
How can I have eternal life?

That's one of the most universally asked questions of mankind.

We all have a lot of different question about life.

That is why the California mobile service called AskMeNow is so popular.

You can subscribe too, they will text message you an answer to

Any question you may ask on any subject.

Do you want to know the weather in Singapore?

The direction to a restaurant in Chicago?

Who was the 12 president?

The square root of 700 Billion? AskMeNow

Maybe that is why teachers won't let you text in class.

I would sure like to text them some questions children ask:

1. Like Casey, a nine years old, who asks: "I have a cat that eats regularly and needs to go on a diet. He also eats mice when he is out. How many calories in a mouse?"

2. Or this question for you senior citizens:

Whatever happened to Preparations A through G?

3. If 4 out of 5 people suffer from diarrhea does that mean the fifth one enjoys it?

4. For you bankers: How did a fool and his money get together?

5. For you educators: If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?

Now answering questions can be a delicate business.

Mr. Smith was out walking when a lady walked along with him and asked:

"Mr Smith, what do you think about cremation?"

Mr. Smith replied without hesitation "You know the principle don't you?"

"No" the lady replied

"You bury treasure but you burn rubbish"

then Mr. Smith said: "But why do you ask?"

The lady said: "Well, we cremated my mother last year!"

It always pays to find out why the question is being asked.

Before we so carelessly answer.

I. EVERY PERSON HAS A QUESTION

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." John 3:1-2

Here we meet Nicodemus the son of Gorion,

A teacher of the Law.

A member of the Jewish ruling council.

who lived in the time of Vespasian,

and was reputed to be so rich that he could support
all the inhabitants of Jerusalem for *ten* years.
Nicodemus was the kind of person that people go to for answers,
But he himself was so busy that he came to Jesus at night
To ask his question.

However, coming at night Nicodemus showed Jesus that he was not
Inquiring how to become a disciple.
Because no Jew was ever baptized or circumcised at night.
They were always initiated during the daytime.
So perhaps Nicodemus came at night because he wanted it
Clear that he was only interested in conversation and not conversion.

It doesn't matter how intelligent you may be,
How old or young,
How prosperous or poor,
Spiritual or worldly,
We all have questions.
These are the lumps of life.
Is Nicodemus different than any of us?

**Richard Selzer in his book *Down from Troy*,
Writes about his great admiration and respect for his mother.**

But he had to admit she was unable to cook anything without
lumps. Mashed potatoes, applesauce, oatmeal, all had lumps. "To this day,"
he said, "I have some problems facing those foods."
I laugh about that because when my brother and I cooked on the farm,
we just assumed that lumps were a part of the adventure of eating.

Contrast that with our world today that wants everything homogenized,
Without lumps including our thinking and believing, our finances and our politicians.
We want things to go down smoothly, and not everything does.
Because at the heart of the faith, even for believers, are some lumps.
Nicodemus wanted to know how we can be certain
that we are members of the kingdom of God?
That was the lump for Nicodemus.
a teacher, respected ruler of the Jews
So, he came to Jesus.
Every man has a question.

II. EVERY QUESTION HAS AN ANSWER

**³In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God
unless he is born again. " John3:3**

Jesus answered the question Nicodemus wanted to ask,
The comparable question today would be:
"How can I know for sure that I am a Christian?
And if I died would I go to heaven?"

**Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he
is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth**

to spirit. ²You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'
John 3:6-7

Now just because Nicodemus heard the answer doesn't mean he wanted to buy it.
 Every one of you here knows when you are driving, what a red light means,
 That is why running red lights is the No.1 cause of car accidents in America today,
 \$7 billion in damages, medical bills and lost work time.

Do you know how much time you save running a red light? 50 seconds.

Now will people stop running red lights because they know that?

Probably Not....

²"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" John 3:9,4

We don't know if Nicodemus was making a joke or playing the fool.

Because Jesus came back with--Come on Nicodemus,

¹⁰"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"

That reminds me of a man who went on a ski trip, and was knocked unconscious by the chair lift. He called his insurance company from the hospital,
 but it refused to cover his injury.

He asked: "Why is the injury not covered?"

The insurance rep said: "You got hit on the head by a chair lift, that makes you an idiot,
 and we consider that a pre- existing condition."

Nicodemus stepped back into the old mode of Pharisaical argument
 That answered a question with a question.

How can a man be born when he is old? John 3:4

But I think Jesus went right past this ruse or avoidance technique

And exposed Nicodemus's heart,

He said: Your old way isn't going to work any longer.

The ceremonial lamb no longer covers your sin,

The goat no longer carries your guilt.

The dove no longer carries your shame away.

Jesus said I am making a new covenant.

This is a spiritual covenant.

Flesh give birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to the spirit. John 3:6

You must be born again. John 3:7

Just because you are born a Jew won't save you anymore.

Now is Nicodemus on the same air waves as Jesus,

Was he in the same blog? Same MySpace?

Speaking the same language?

Jesus said:

I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? John 3:12

Let us get on board here Nicodemus,

I am the Son of God.

I am the Messiah

¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. John 3:14-15

Jesus was saying:

Every MAN HAS A QUESTION
EVERY QUESTION HAS AN ANSWER
AND I AM THAT ANSWER

III. EVERY QUESTIONER HAS A SAVIOR

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16-17

What do we learn from this verse:

First, The world was in a condemned state, about to perish; and was utterly without power to rescue itself from destruction.

In the syndicated comic strip, FRANK AND ERNEST, two bums are sitting along a wall talking with each other. One says to the other, "Do you believe in fate?" The other replies, "Sure. I'd hate to think I turned out like this because of something I had control over."

Friends you didn't have control over the fact that you were born into a sinful world, into a sinful body, into a sinful life.

That is why God had to act in our behalf

¹⁶"For God so loved the world John 3:16

Secondly, That God, through His eternal love, provided for our rescue and salvation, by giving his Son to die for us.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son,

Third, Jesus blood covered our sins. That the sacrifice of Jesus was the only means by which sinful man will not perish **that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

Jesus wrote in blood over the doorpost of every person's heart: Forgiven.

The only condition being our free will to accept or reject the sacrifice.

And to know it happened.

When the books of a certain Scottish doctor were examined after his death,

it was found that a number of accounts were crossed through with a note:

"Forgiven--too poor to pay." But the physician's wife later decided that she wanted the money and sued those accounts to pay up.

When the case came to court the judge asked but one question. Is this your husband's handwriting? When she replied that it was he, responded:

"There is no court in the land that can obtain a debt once the word forgiven has been written."

God has written forgiven over your debt, your sin,
There is no hell in this world that can keep that from us,
Except our own will.

¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3:16-18

One of the wise folk sayings of the Russian people is this: Make peace with men, and make war with your sins." Unfortunately, we usually do the opposite!" James W. Cox, The Minister's Manual for 1993, Harper Collins, 1992, p. 326

Fourth, when we accept and believe we are brought to eternal glory.

-that they may have everlasting life.

If Jesus gave it. And we received it?

Can we know it's true for us?

This passage concludes with Jesus answering the last question we have:

Why is it with that with this kind of love and grace shown to us at the cross.

That people do not accept Jesus as their Savior

To escape eternal damnation and separation from God?

Jesus said:

¹⁹This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. John 3:19-20

Its up to us.

Whether you are Nicodemus, a teacher of the church,

A janitor, or a visitor.

Its up to us.

The verdict of your eternal destiny lies in our belief

we can stay in the darkness of disbelief and damnation

Or we can come to the light

Accept the Good news of Jesus for ourselves,

And find out what living is all about.

²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." John 3:21

We don't have to live all of our life with the question,

I wonder if I am saved? How do I get to heaven?

We can live confidently with the answer:

I accept and believe that Jesus is my Savior

And He lives in my heart.

Will you repeat this great promise with me.

John3:16