

JDB

Religion or Christ?

Radio Sermons



by

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Introduction

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:22, 23).

Peter's first epistle, addressed "to the strangers (aliens) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," was written late in his life. The apostle's main theme is suffering, particularly the suffering of the true child of God. Because of the Christian's association with "the Suffering Saviour," he can expect to suffer in this world as he goes about the Master's business.

In Verse 23 of the first chapter of this epistle, Peter speaks of a unique experience possessed by all who truly know Christ as Saviour. The apostle speaks of all true children of God as "being *born again* (having undergone new birth) not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

All Christians have been "born again," or "begotten again." This experience refers to an act of the Holy Spirit in which the believer is regenerated unto eternal life and, as a part of this process, a new spiritual nature is "begotten," or "created." There is no true child of God who has not undergone this experience. All who truly know the Lord can claim Peter's words for themselves, "being born again."

The expression, "born again," is a very good biblical term that applies uniquely to all who are saved. However, in our day, this expression has fallen into ill repute. In order to ridicule and destroy the scriptural meaning of "born again," Satan has given

the term to the world where it is used to describe a great number of bizarre occurrences. In the drug world, it is used to describe one's first experience (or "trip") with hallucinating chemical compounds. In Satanic cults, one has been "born again" after his first occult experience. In a popular men's lodge (a lodge that has many overtones of the Babylonian mystery religion), one is said to have been "born again" when he achieves a certain high level degree. In the secular world, many say that they have been "born again" when they are given a renewal of life through psychotherapy, or through medical therapy that brings a cure to a devastating illness.

Because there are so many non-biblical definitions of the term, "born again," it no longer conveys a clear impression when used in its biblical sense. At one time the question, "Are you born again?" was considered equivalent to the question, "Are you saved?" or "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour?" But now many non-Christians — drug addicts, high-degree lodge members, Satan-worshippers and medically-restored non-regenerated persons — will give an affirmative answer to this question. Soulwinners for the Lord are required to use other expressions as they contact the lost and dying of this world.

In spite of Satan's destruction of the effectiveness of this term in evangelistic work, it is still a perfectly good biblical term. The expression was first used by our Lord in His interview with Nicodemus as recorded in the third chapter of the Gospel of John. Not only did the Lord use the term, but He both defined and illustrated it. If one seeks the true meaning and implications of the expression "born again," he should study John 3. There, he will find the Lord's own explanation of the process of spiritual rebirth.

That is the purpose of this study. We will go to the most important interview in all history, and consider the choice that was made so clear to Nicodemus. This "ruler of the Jews," just as every other human being in the world, was faced with a clear choice — "Religion, or Christ?"

1.

The Failure of Miracles

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25).

This study centers around the most important interview recorded in all Scripture. The account of the conversation between Nicodemus and Christ begins with the first verse of John 3. However, one glance at the Greek text tells us that John began this section of Scripture in what we know as John 2:23. This is where the inspired author actually introduced the conversation. Therefore, our study must begin with the closing verses of Chapter 2.

These last three verses of Chapter 2 form an introduction to the great teachings which now follow, and which are so characteristic of the Gospel of John. These are (1) the unfolding of the truth concerning eternal life, (2) how it is imparted to man, and (3) what goes with it. We have first of all a picture of the condition of man and how he needs a new nature and must be born again.

An expanded translation of John 2:23-25 would read as follows:

"Now, when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, at the feast, many believed on His name, viewing with a critical and discerning eye the miracles which He was constantly doing. But Jesus himself was not entrusting Himself to them because He was constantly knowing by experience all things, and because He was not having need that anyone should bear testimony concerning the individual man, for He himself was constantly knowing by experience what was in the individual man."

The connection is as follows: Jesus knew what was in the heart of the individual. John's purpose now is to show what Jesus found in the heart of man, not by telling us in so many words, but by bringing to the reader's attention various individuals who would be exhibits. John records what these people say. Because man speaks out of the abundance of his heart, the reader also can see what is in the heart of man.

We have an insight into the plan of John's Gospel. John is primarily a theologian in his Gospel, whose main purpose is to demonstrate the Lord's deity. But in connection with his theology, John has an evangelistic out-reach for lost souls. He tells the reader what is in man, and thus shows him what is wrong with man. Then he presents the divine cure for sin; namely, the blood of the Lord Jesus.

We read, "Now when he (Jesus) was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover, and at that time He performed miracles by which He manifested His power and glory. These miracles were the credentials of King Messiah. They were the signs of the kingdom. As a result of these signs He wrought, many believed on His name; that is, they conceded Him to be the Messiah, the Son of David, the Promised King. The miracles were evidences to them of the true Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, a faith that rests on the observance of miracles is *not* a saving faith and *does not* bring salvation to anyone! That is precisely why it is not worthwhile for us to debate with unbelievers about their objections to the inspiration of the Bible.

Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Elsewhere, we are told, "The preaching of the Cross is unto them that perish, foolishness." Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." God gives miracles to authenticate the Word, but faith must rest on something far better than miracles!

Here were Jewish people waiting for Messiah to come. They saw the miracles that Jesus did, and they said, "Well, now, if Messiah came, could He do any more miracles than this Man has done? Jesus of Nazareth *must* be the One of whom the prophets have spoken."

In that sense they believed that He *was* Messiah. But they did not confess that they were guilty souls needing salvation, and they did not see in Jesus the Saviour they needed. That is the condition of a majority of the "professing Christians" of today. These people believed in His name when they saw the miracles.

But while they believed in His name, not as the Son of God, but as Messiah, He did not commit (or trust) Himself to them. Their faith was not such as affected their moral nature, nor a faith which is expressed in complete submission to Him, or which opens the heart to receive Him.

The first part of Verse 24 says that Jesus did not *commit* Himself to them. The words "commit" and "believe" are really just different forms of the very same word in the original language. We might read this statement, "Many *believed* in His name, but Jesus did not *believe* in them." The Lord Jesus Christ did not trust His interests to these people, because He knew they were not genuine. He was fully aware of the wickedness and unreliability of each individual human heart!

You and I like to make a good case for ourselves. But Scripture shows how little we have to boast of if we would really be honest with God. Because Jesus was God manifest in the flesh, He *knew* what was in man!

He is as truly God, and as truly omniscient, as is the Father. He knows exactly what is in you and me. Yet, knowing all this, He loved us and gave Himself for us. But He does not trust us, or rely upon these sin-poisoned souls that are ours by the natural birth. He knows that we (the natural beings) *cannot* be depended upon. We are lost and ruined and undone. What we

need, therefore, is a new life. We need to be reborn of the Spirit. That is the new life He gives to us.

While these Jewish people were fully convinced that He who did these miracles was the Messiah, their hearts were untouched. It was intellectual belief which assents to outward evidence, but which felt no need of a Saviour and would not own the real condition of the heart before God. This is an illustration of what the natural man is — how spiritually dead he is!

The Lord Jesus looked through these men. Because He is God, He knows the hearts of all the children of men. In I Kings 8:39, we read of Him, "Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)." He is the Searcher of hearts, who alone can sound the desperately wicked depths of the human soul!

In contrast to these "believers in miracles," we find this man, Nicodemus. He is John's "exhibit number one." He is brought forward to testify of man's need, and of God's grace.

2.

Nicodemus

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:1-3).

At the beginning of John 3:1, there is a little Greek word that has not been translated in our Authorized English Version.

This word is sometimes translated "now," though more generally "but." It is the same word used in the beginning of John 2:23, "*But* when he was in Jerusalem at the passover . . ." So, if we translate this word and put it in its right place at the beginning of John 3:1, we read, "*But* there was a man of the Pharisees."

The Spirit of God thus puts this man in contrast with the Jewish people of Verses 23 through 25. We are now introduced to a Jewish man of the sect of the Pharisees who believed because he had seen the miracles of the Lord, who yet seemed to have a deeper desire than the others. This desire led Nicodemus to interview the Lord personally. Since he was a Pharisee, we can know that he was a member of an honored sect among the Jews, known for their extreme religiousness in keeping the law as well as the traditions of the elders (which supposedly was the interpretation of the law).

The Pharisees were the religious ritualists of that day. The Judaism of the first century was no longer that supernaturally-revealed system in which the Israelite was taught to look ahead in faith to a coming Sacrifice which God would offer for his sins, typified by the tabernacle offerings and the priesthood. It was merely an ethical cult, preaching a salvation-by-works message.

Nicodemus (the Apostle John's "exhibit number one") subscribed to this system of teaching. His name is a Greek name. It was a custom at that time among the Jews for the parents to give their boys two names, a Jewish and a Gentile name. The name "Nicodemus" is made up of two words, a word which means "to conquer," and one which means "the common people." The total word means, "One who conquers the people." Evidently, this name was given the boy at his birth. The Pharisaic tradition at that time included this idea; namely, that of subjugation of the common people. The Lord Jesus spoke of the burdens which the Pharisees were wont to put upon the backs of the people in the form of religious practices which were extra-biblical.

But here is a Pharisee whose heart is touched. We are told he was a ruler among the Jews; that is, he held a high ecclesiasti-

cal position in his nation, a position which demanded a clean, moral character. We find another description of this man in Verse 10. The Lord addressed him as "*the teacher in Israel.*" He had the reputation in his generation of being a leading, deeply educated teacher to whom the people looked for instruction and guidance.

Nicodemus has the distinction of being mentioned, not only in Scripture, but also in surviving Jewish literature. In talmudical literature, he is mentioned as Nicodemus Ben Gurion (see Jewish Encyclopedia Vol. IX, Page 300), an outstanding figure in the Jewish economy of the first century. Nicodemus was a leading member of the Sanhedrin and a man of much wealth.

Nicodemus stands in contrast to those who "believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." Here is a man who was totally honest in his seeking after the truth. Our Lord recognized him as such. Whenever our Lord finds a really earnest man, He will see that the truth is given to that one. Of that, we can be assured.

Perhaps someone asks, "Well, what about the heathen who have never heard of Him or His Gospel? Will God condemn them to everlasting judgment for not believing in a Saviour of whom they have never heard?"

No, of course, He will not! But what He will do is this: He *will* condemn the heathen for all the sins of which they have not repented! But He will see that every repentant soul gets enough light to be saved! He will not let a man be lost, *if* that man is honestly seeking for the truth!

So here is Nicodemus, an honest seeker. The Lord Jesus Christ treats him as such.

"But there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus his name, a ruler of the Jews." This is the last man on earth that *natural man* would think needed anything! Nicodemus was deeply religious. According to his own interpretation, he had

kept God's law all of his life. He had fulfilled all of the religious obligations that he recognized. But this "religious" man when he was face to face with the Christ of God, found that he lacked much. He had "religion," but he did not have Christ!

A great many people in the world today are just like Nicodemus. They are (by man's standards) good people. They reverence spiritual things but yet have not confessed their sins before God and have never known the second birth. These ones should follow carefully our Lord Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Let's all listen as though we had never heard it before.

Nicodemus sought the Lord Jesus by night. Twice more this fact is emphasized by John in this Gospel (see John 7:50 and 19:39). We are not given the reason that this man came to Jesus by night. Some take this as evidence of cowardice and feel that he was a man who truly believed in Jesus, yet not willing to risk loosing his position by open acknowledgement of his faith. While he had an earnest longing for the truth, which made him take a great risk, they feel that he was at the same time timid, fearing the scorn and condemnation of his co-religionists.

But we cannot be sure that he was a coward. The emphasis that John gives to his nighttime visit seems to refute cowardice. More likely, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because he wanted privacy as he poured out his heart to this Man. The Lord Jesus was totally surrounded by crowds all day long. Nicodemus wanted His undivided attention, so he sought "this teacher come from God" during the evening hours when there was no competition from the multitude.

Nicodemus addressed the Lord as "Rabbi" which means "Master," or "Teacher." This Hebrew name is one used by the Jews as a term of respect to those they recognize as teachers. It is accepted as meaning, "My great one, my honorable sir." The Lord Jesus was not an official rabbi among the Jews, but His prominence as a religious teacher had already gained Him this degree of respect even among His enemies. It was, in effect, His "honorary doctorate."

Nicodemus began by saying, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God (literally rendered, 'From God thou hast come a teacher') for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him" This was *not* the end of the sentence! Nicodemus was still speaking. But he had revealed his lack in his opening sentence. Therefore, the Lord Jesus interrupted him, and declared: "Verily, verily (Truly, truly; Amen, amen), I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus had not fully recognized the Lord's identity when he addressed Him as "a Teacher come from God." He did not recognize the Lord's deity!

Most likely Nicodemus had a strong impression that Jesus must be the Messiah, yet he was cautious and therefore made an attempt to know more about Him by the opening words of this private conversation. The Lord "knew what was in man." After those initial words, the Lord answered him at once without permitting this "ruler of the Jews" to continue his address.

What was in Nicodemus' heart? About what did he intend to speak to the Lord? When we read how the Lord answered him, we have a hint of what was in his heart. The Lord anticipated his question, and at once touched upon the whole matter which had exercised the mind of this Pharisee: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the *kingdom of God*."

Nicodemus came to inquire concerning the kingdom! The Messiah and the kingdom were inseparably associated in the Jewish mind. "If this Man does miracles, as He did, is He the Messiah; and, if He is, what about His kingdom?" This must have been the supreme thought with Nicodemus. The words the Lord spoke to him indicate such.

This brings up the question, "What kingdom did our Lord mean when He addressed Nicodemus in this abrupt way? This we must consider first. Then we can ascertain the meaning of being "born again," as well as the mode of this new birth.

The Gospel is often preached, and rightly so, from the story of Nicodemus. Those who use this text place emphasis upon the great truth that there is only one way into the kingdom, and that is the new birth. But the Gospel preacher generally identifies the kingdom of God with salvation, and speaks of it in the sense of being right with God, getting saved and receiving eternal life; which is all very true.

However, the original meaning in connection with Nicodemus is quite overlooked. Nicodemus certainly did not understand by the kingdom anything different from that kingdom which the prophets of his people had predicted. It is the kingdom promised to Israel, the kingdom which is not now, which will come someday and into which Israel will enter. Nicodemus had no understanding of God's purpose for this interadvent age, and its invisible kingdom of believers. In this age, the King is away, and the administration of His kingdom is in the hands of men. The King is the Head of Heaven, but He is not visibly present in the earth.

Nicodemus was on an earthly plane as his heart considered those questions concerning the earthly kingdom. He knew that he lacked much and he knew that the man before whom he stood had the only worthwhile answers. His mind was not on "salvation" (as we define the term), but it was on his part in the coming earthly kingdom. The Lord answered his question, but He also pointed the way to salvation during this present age of God's grace.

The term, "Kingdom of God," is the all-inclusive term that speaks of all moral intelligences willingly subject to God in any age or dispensation. Nicodemus was looking for the millennial reign of Messiah on the earth. But Jesus, in His use of the term "Kingdom of God," was teaching him that the only one who can rightly look for the coming earthly kingdom is a saved Jew. That person must enter the Kingdom of God first; that is, he must be saved, since the promises of God to Israel were made to a *spiritual* Israel, not an apostate nation. The Lord's answer, therefore, in effect is as follows: "Nicodemus, you are looking

for Messiah and the earthly kingdom of Israel. But you are unsaved, and need to be born again. Only to a saved Jew is the Kingdom of God promised.”

Since Nicodemus was a representative man of the human race, having in his heart what is found in every other person, since he needed to be born again, and since John was writing for the Gentiles, it follows that every human being needs to be born again.

Our question now is, “What does Jesus mean when He speaks of the necessity of a man being born again?” The answer lies in the meaning of the Greek word here translated “again.” The Greek word is *anōthen*. It has two meanings, “again” and “from above.” When a Greek word has more than one meaning, the context decides what meaning is to be used in any particular instance. For example, this word is found in John 3:31: “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.” The context here speaks of the earth as contrasted to Heaven. Therefore, the word *anōthen*, means “from above” here. But in the verse we are now considering, it means “again” and for the reason that Nicodemus in his answer to Jesus, so understands it. He speaks of a *second* birth.

But now we come to even a finer distinction. There are two words in the Greek New Testament which mean “again”: *paline* which refers to the repetition of an act, and *anōthen*, which speaks of the repetition of an act, but adds additional detail. It speaks of the repetition of an act, that repetition having the same source as the first act. It goes back to the outset of the matter, to the original state.

Therefore, this being born a second time, has *no reference* to one's physical birth (as the first time one is born, and for the reason that the source of physical birth is natural generation). Whereas, the source of the new birth is *supernatural generation*, when Jesus speaks of being born again in Verse 5, He speaks of being born of the Holy Spirit.

This consideration takes us back to the original impartation of spiritual life to the first Adam. Genesis 2:7 states, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The Hebrew word for "life" in the original is plural. It therefore speaks of the impartation of physical life and of spiritual life.

The first Adam was the federal head of the human race and when in his unfallen state the human race stood in him, it partook of the spiritual life which had been imparted to him. But Adam, in his fall into sin, lost this spiritual life for the whole human race, and plunged its members into total depravity and a lost condition.

Jesus, therefore, speaking to this theologian of the Old Testament Scriptures, reminds him of all this, and tells him that since he lost this spiritual life as he stood in the first Adam, he needs a fresh impartation of spiritual life. This life is given him through his being placed in the Last Adam, the One who "bought back" that lost spiritual life. This happens in answer to his faith in a coming Sacrifice for sin, the Last Adam being that Sacrifice.

All this is implicit in the words of Jesus, and to a theologian such as Nicodemus learned in the Old Testament Scriptures, should have been, at least intellectually, clear. In His reply, the Lord Jesus was, in effect, saying, "It does not help to say nice things, Nicodemus. You need more than a teacher, you need a Saviour — One who can give you a new life! You need a second birth!"

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

There is a widespread notion today that men may be educated into Christianity. However, a certain form of "religious education" is one of the greatest abominations of the present day! The idea behind this is that you can take a child and

instruct him along the lines of the "Christian philosophy" and thus educate him into salvation! Now, do not get the idea that we object to the term "Christian education." That is an altogether right and proper thing. A church cannot survive without it. It is right and proper to instruct the *Christian* along Christian lines. But "religious education" which simply tries to make people Christian by "educating" them into it, is the means of making many thousands of hypocrites instead of making Christians! "Ye must be born again." There must be the installation of a new spiritual life!

Note, in Verse 7 the Lord uses the *plural* personal pronoun, "Ye." If He had been speaking only of Nicodemus, He would have used the singular "Thou." Recall that when Nicodemus opened this conversation he said, "Rabbi, *we* know that thou art a teacher come from God." This plural "we" referred to Nicodemus and to all the members of the Sanhedrin. It is clear from I Peter 2:7 that the official leaders of Israel investigated the claims of Jesus regarding His Messiahship. Peter refers to "the stone which the builders disallowed." The "stone" refers to our Lord, and the "builders," to the religious leaders of Israel. The word "disallowed" is the translation of a Greek word which means "to put a person to the test for the purpose of approving him should he be found to meet the requirements laid down, and having found that he does not satisfy the prescribed requirements, to reject him."

Israel was looking for its Messiah, the Sanhedrin had investigated the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Nicodemus, speaking for all that august body, said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God."

The Lord includes Nicodemus, all the other members of the Sanhedrin, and all mankind when He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

So, it is true of Nicodemus and all of those of Israel whom he represented (both then and in the future) that they can never

enter in and possess the promised kingdom unless *born again*. It is equally true of the entrance into the kingdom of God's Son, which is now (see Colossians 1:13). There is no other way, but the way of being born again. What man is in himself, what he makes of himself, as a religious, a moral, an educated man (such as was Nicodemus) can never bring his soul into the presence and fellowship of a Holy God. This is the one unalterable condition for both Jew and Gentile: "*Ye must be born again.*"

3.

The New Birth

"Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:4-8).

The Lord had just told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

In reply, Nicodemus said, "But I don't understand it. How can a man be born when he is old? Can he go through the whole process of nature again? Why, that seems absurd! Just imagine! Can I go back and be born of my mother again?"

This question reveals the ignorance of the natural man even though in the eyes of man he may be a great teacher and religious leader like Nicodemus. Insofar as spiritual matters are concerned, Nicodemus was just as ignorant as the Samaritan woman who did not know what the Lord meant by "living water."

Nicodemus was "*the* teacher in Israel," but he was ignorant of even the most simple point concerning entrance into the kingdom of God.

In answer to Nicodemus, our Lord enlightens him that the new birth is a birth of the water and the Spirit, and repeats once more the absolute necessity of such a birth for entrance into the kingdom of God: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus' question showed that he was thinking only of the physical birth process. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" He was asking the Lord how one might go about obtaining a second *physical* birth!

In reply to his question the Lord Jesus said, "Nicodemus, listen to me; it would not make one iota of difference if you could. You would be no better off the next time than you were before. The natural birth does not count! It must be a *spiritual* birth! Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

What tremendously weighty words these are! First, the Saviour said, "Except a man be born of *water* and of the *Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What did He mean?

There are various interpretations of this statement. Some interpret the word "water" here as referring to human birth as coming in a sac of water, and this in contrast to the birth by the Spirit. But the question arises at once as to whether the Lord Jesus would waste words on such a self-evident truth, that in order for a person to be born into the kingdom of God, he must first be born physically. Furthermore, we learned that the particular Greek word used here by John, meaning "again," has no

reference to the physical birth *as being a predecessor* of the spiritual birth.

Others interpret the words "water" as referring to the rite of water baptism, but this is simply reading into the text something that is not there. The word "water" in itself, does *not* include the idea of baptism. Furthermore, the only proper recipient of water baptism is one who has *already* been born again; the *new birth* preceding water baptism, not the *rite* preceding the new birth. How could such a supernatural change as regeneration produces be the result of mere ceremony?

The Lord's words could not be a reference to the water baptism which John the Baptist preached. John refused his baptism to the Pharisees and Sadducees because they were *unsaved*. He said, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." (See Matthew 3:8,9.) He demanded of these individuals evidences of their salvation before he would baptize them.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, states that John the Baptist would not baptize any except those who manifested a true faith in God. It is clear then, that our Lord was *not* speaking of the water baptism administered by John the Baptist as a prerequisite (together with the new birth) as enabling one to enter the kingdom of God.

No one in all history *ever* received the new birth by water baptism! You can search your Bible in vain for anything like that! It is just not there! It is *not* in the Word of God!

Nowhere in Scripture is baptism likened to birth. It rather speaks of death. We are buried with Him by baptism into death. Water Baptism is the symbol of the burial of our old man, not a picture of the second birth.

Then, what is the "water" by which we are born again? Go through the entire Word of God. Nowhere do we find people

being born of literal water. Now, trace "water" through the writings of the Apostle John. You will find that "water" is the recognized symbol for the *Word of God*. This is true throughout all Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments.

In Psalm 119:9, King David asks this question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse (wash) his way?" Then David answers his own question, "By taking heed thereto according to thy *word*."

In John 4, the Lord Jesus, speaking to the woman of Samaria, said, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Now, what is the water that Jesus gives? It is the "water" of the Word. It is the testimony of the Gospel. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is *good news* from a far country" (see Proverbs 25:25). "Whosoever will, let him take of the *water of life* freely" (see Revelation 22:17). We ask, what is the "water of life"? It is the Gospel message defined by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:3, 4: "*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*"

We read in Ephesians 5:25,26: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; *that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

The "water of the Word" is the cleansing agent. Jesus once said to His disciples, "Now are ye clean through the word." (See John 15:3.) We are to be born again by the Word (the "water") of God, brought home to our hearts and consciences by the Holy Spirit (the "Spirit").

There are two "parents" to the spiritual birth, just as there are two parents to the physical birth. The Lord calls our spirit-

ual "parents" the "Water" and the "Spirit." The spoken Word of God brought together with the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit results in spiritual conception and birth. The Word must be preached in power, and the "call" of the Holy Spirit must be present. Under these two influences, the new birth can take place. Thus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Actually, the Lord used symbols for *both* the power of the Word, and the power of the Spirit. We have seen that "water" is symbolic of the Word of God. The "wind" is also symbolic of God's Holy Spirit. The Greek word for "wind" and "Spirit" is exactly the same. Although this word can be translated "Spirit" (as it is in our English version), it can also be translated, "wind." The Lord's words could read, "Except a man be born of water and of the *wind*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

In Verse 8, the Lord used the same word in a symbolic way, and there it is translated "wind." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Here the Lord is defining His symbol of Verse 5. The "wind" represents the Holy Spirit. The "water" represents the spoken word of God.

In Verse 6, the Lord makes it very clear that there is a great distinction between the *flesh* and the *spirit*. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." You can do anything you like with the flesh, but it does not turn it into spirit. If you baptize it, it is baptized flesh. If you make it religious, it is religious flesh. Flesh remains flesh until the very end. Flesh is born of the natural birth. "Spirit" (the spiritual nature) is born of the spiritual rebirth. The two things are entirely different.

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring about the new birth. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing cometh by the Word of God. The Word having been believed and accepted, the Holy Spirit accomplishes by His power the new birth. The new

nature, the eternal life, is received. We may well call the Word of God the "Mother" of all those who are begotten again, while the Holy Spirit is the "Father." For this reason Peter exhorts newborn babies, those just born again, to desire the sincere milk of the Word to grow thereby (see I Peter 2:2).

This new birth by believing the Word of God (and through the Holy Spirit as the agent of life and power) is absolutely necessary for entrance into the kingdom of God (all aspects of that kingdom). It is this which delivers from the power of darkness and translates us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Except by the new birth, Israel cannot enter that coming kingdom, the kingdom which will come with the return of the King. The remnant of Israel will be born again in that coming day, and a great national regeneration is in store for that nation (see Ezekiel 36).

After speaking of the necessity of the new birth, the Lord Jesus still saw a blank look on the face of Nicodemus. But He also saw something else, as we are told in the words, "Do not begin to marvel that I said to you, It is necessary in the nature of the case for you all to be born again."

There are several things contained within this statement. The first is found in the words, "Do not begin to marvel." The Lord Jesus knew what was in the heart of man, but He also noticed an "empty" look on Nicodemus' face. This demonstrated that not only was Nicodemus *not* understanding His teaching, but there were signs of his beginning to marvel at the teaching. Nicodemus thought he was hearing something entirely *new*.

The second thing we want to notice is the word "ye" in the King James Version. Probably the average reader would not notice that this is a plural pronoun, and therefore does not refer to Nicodemus alone. (This cannot be known from reading modern English versions of the New Testament. These "modern language" versions are forced to use the English "you" for both singular and plural second-person pronouns. Therefore, a part of

the meaning of the original text is lost. The King James Version uses the Old English "thou" for singular pronouns, and the plural "ye" for plural pronouns. The older language retains meaning lost in modern translation.)

In using the pronoun of the plural number, the Lord Jesus evidently had several things in mind. First, He recognized that Nicodemus belonged to the Sanhedrin and represented the position of that body with reference to himself. Second, He was making it plain to Nicodemus that not only was it necessary for him to be born again, all of his associates in that venerable body of men also needed to be regenerated. Third, there may be an implication that Jesus was suggesting to Nicodemus that he take this teaching back to the Sanhedrin. And, of course, the plural "ye" designates the necessity of the new birth for all who are ever to enter into God's presence.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." The Lord bids Nicodemus to stop wondering, and the repeated emphasis confirms the great importance of the new birth. No matter how this age may progress in educational and scientific matters, the demand of the Son of God can never be changed: "Ye *must* be born again." (In actuality, this age cannot progress in righteousness, for it is an evil age.)

Because of Nicodemus' "marveling," the Lord explains to him that there are mysteries in nature that we cannot understand. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The point is, you cannot see the wind, but you do recognize its power. Likewise, you cannot see the Holy Spirit, but you do recognize His power. He is invisible, but He makes His presence felt in a mighty way as He convicts and regenerates sinful men. He changes men completely!

First we see a wicked, worldly woman, who suddenly becomes a quiet woman of prayer. And we often see a wicked,

godless man changed into a preacher of the Gospel. *This is the work of the Holy Spirit! You do not see the Spirit, but you do see His power in those lives.*

Therefore, in this teaching of our Lord, there is a comparison between the invisible but mighty power of the wind and the unseen but powerful operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Like the wind which, though it cannot be seen, produces results that are visible, so the Holy Spirit in regeneration imparts the divine nature, which produces obvious results in the life of the individual.

Nicodemus, "the teacher in Israel," should have recognized this great truth! But he was still perplexed, as we see from his next question.

4.

The Deity of Jesus Christ

"Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:9-13).

Once again, for the third and last time, Nicodemus speaks to the Lord. He had first addressed Him expressing faith in Him as a teacher come from God. When our Lord had told him of the new birth as the only way into the kingdom, Nicodemus responded foolishly. And now, even after he had heard all the great truths concerning man's corrupt nature, the necessity of the new birth by water and the Spirit, and about the Holy Spirit as

the Agent in the new birth, Nicodemus is still perplexed. He asks, "How can these things be?"

What evidence of blindness to spiritual things is revealed in this great teacher of Israel! It is the blindness of the natural man, which is the condition of all of us. After our eyes are opened, we realize as the blind man did whom the Lord healed: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (see John 9:25).

Nicodemus revealed ignorance, even in the elementary things that he should have known as "*the* teacher of Israel." Therefore, Jesus answers, "Art thou *the* master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Nicodemus, you should have known about the new birth! As "*the* master (teacher) of Israel," Nicodemus should have known through the study of the Scriptures (at least in a general way). He should have known that Israel must be an Israel not only circumcised in the flesh, but in the heart as well, before she could enter and possess the promised kingdom. Nicodemus had the Old Testament canon, and he professed to be a master teacher from that canon. (The Jewish Scriptures are filled with teachings relating to the necessity of the new birth.) The Old Testament prophets make it very plain that only the born-again remnant of Israel will enter the land and enjoy the millennial glories.

In Isaiah 44:3 we read, "For I will pour *water* on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." What do we have in this passage? God is saying, "By the *water* of my Word, and by the power of my Spirit, I am going to work the miracle of the new birth."

One of the clearest teachings of the new birth as necessary for a remnant of Israel to enter the millennial kingdom is found in Ezekiel 36:23-28.

"And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of

them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the LORD God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:23-28).

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean . . . A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” There we have it again: “Born of water and of the Spirit”! Nicodemus, as “*the teacher of Israel*” you should have known this!

In Verse 11, the Lord Jesus continues to speak, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.” The Lord answers the “we know” of Nicodemus (see Verse 2) by His “we know” of Verse 11. When Nicodemus used that expression, he was speaking for a certain class of individuals; namely, the Sanhedrin. When Jesus used the expression, He also was speaking for a certain class of people; namely, those who had experienced the new birth (the apostles and disciples with Him). He thus identified Himself with the recipients of His grace. Nicodemus said, “We (the Sanhedrin and myself), know that thou art a teacher come from God.” The Lord said, “We (the apostles and myself), speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye (yourself and the Sanhedrin), receive not our witness.”

The Lord Jesus Christ was saying, “It is my mission in the earth, and also the mission of those who follow me, to testify of the things which we have experiential knowledge through hav-

ing seen them through our eyes. The problem is that you who are the religious leaders in Israel are not receiving our witness. I have told you of the necessity of the new birth, which you should have already known, and yet you remain confused."

Then Jesus follows with the statement of Verse 12, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" Of these earthly things, the earthly kingdom and the conditions to enter therein, the Lord had spoken, and Nicodemus did not know those simple things revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. Of "the heavenly things" the Lord did not speak to Nicodemus, and these heavenly things concern the fullness of redemption, the believer's identification with Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Church as the Body and fullness of Christ.

From the Lord's words we learn conclusively two important facts. First, the kingdom of God has both an earthly and a heavenly side. The earthly side is the kingdom promised to Israel; the heavenly side is the Church with her heavenly calling and destiny. The second fact is that the Lord here speaks only of the earthly things of the kingdom; the heavenly things were made known after the Holy Spirit came to earth.

The earthly kingdom was spoken of many times in the Old Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures plainly reveal the fact that it was always necessary to be born again in order to come into God's kingdom. This earthly "kingdom" was Heaven's rule on earth; it was the righteous kingdom of the Old Testament. But the Lord Jesus knew that the earthly kingdom was to be postponed for the time being. In effect, His words to Nicodemus were, "I have other secrets, but you will not understand them. You do not even understand earthly things taught in the Scriptures that you profess to know."

Nicodemus was not ready for the heavenly aspect of the kingdom that we enjoy in this Age of Grace. He had not yet apprehended the truths of the earthly kingdom as clearly taught in the Law and the Prophets.

In the next verse, the One who spoke thus to Nicodemus reveals Himself in His full deity. He is not "a teacher come from God," but rather One who came down from Heaven, and though in the form of a Man on earth, in His divine omnipresence is still in Heaven. The words He spoke to Nicodemus demand our careful attention.

"No man hath ascended up to heaven." Some have looked upon this statement as a contradiction and point to Enoch and Elijah, who were caught up out of the earth without dying. However, Scripture never says that these two went into the third Heaven, the place of the immediate presence of God. They could not have gone there, because they were still in mortal flesh as they were caught up. The first resurrection (immortal) body was possessed by Jesus Christ many centuries later. Had Enoch and Elijah received immortal bodies prior to the Lord Jesus Christ, then He would not have been "the firstfruits of them that slept" (see I Corinthians 15:20).

The Heaven of which our Lord speaks is the third Heaven, where God dwells. Into this Heaven no man has ever ascended (see Acts 2:34). Prior to the Cross, no man (body, soul, or spirit) ever ascended to that Heaven. The Lord speaks of Himself: "He that descended is the same also who ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things" (see Ephesians 4:10). We can associate this statement of our Lord with Proverbs 30:4: "*Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?*"

But why does our Lord speak here first of ascending into Heaven, and afterwards mention His descent? As He speaks to Nicodemus, He is speaking prophetically; that is, in anticipation of that which is to happen. He did this several times in John's Gospel. In His great high priestly prayer of John 17, He said, "I am no longer in the world," yet He was still in the world. So here He anticipates His ascension. He descended, He came down, from Heaven first. This is irrefutable evidence of His pre-

existence and deity. Equally so are the words, "The Son of man who is in Heaven."

"The Son of man who is in Heaven" reveals the omnipresence of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was still the omnipresent God even when He took on the flesh of man. While living on earth as Man, He had local presence here. However, He was at the same time in Heaven. As God, He dwelt in Heaven; as Man, He dwelt on earth. Every moment between His coming down from Heaven, and His going back, this statement was true of Himself. It proves to us that He did not relinquish His deity when He appeared in the form of a servant. This Gospel shows us His three great attributes of deity: *omnipotence*, *omniscience*, and here, *omnipresence*.

The expression "who is in Heaven" is one of those many expressions in the New Testament which can be explained in no other way than by Christ's deity. It would be utterly absurd and untrue to say of any mere man, that at the very time he was speaking on earth he was in Heaven. But it can be said of Christ with perfect truth and propriety. He never ceased to be very God when He became incarnate. He was "with God, and was God."

As God He was in Heaven while He spoke with Nicodemus. If Christ were only "a *teacher* come from God" and nothing more, He could not have used these words. His full deity is declared as it is written that Christ not only "came down *from* Heaven," but that "He is *in* Heaven."

The great marvel of this verse is this. He who came down from Heaven and had the power to ascend into Heaven was at all times the Son of God in Heaven! For He was, and is, *omnipresent!*

5.

The Gospel in Miniature

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:14-17).

It is in Verses 14 and 15 that the Lord gave final answers to Nicodemus' questions. He refers him to an incident that occurred years before when the Children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness. He says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up."

In the previous verse, the Lord had spoken of Himself as the Son of Man who is in Heaven, and now He speaks of Himself as the Son of Man to be lifted up. Nicodemus must have remembered, as "*the teacher in Israel,*" that the Prophet Daniel spoke of the Messiah as the "Son of Man." He saw Him in the night vision coming in the clouds of Heaven to receive the kingdom (see Daniel 7:14). Nicodemus, sharing the opinion of others of the nation, expected the Messiah to come and set up His kingdom, and overlooked the fact that the Prophet Daniel who foretold His coming to *receive the kingdom*, also records the *rejection of the Messiah*. "Messiah shall be cut off and have nothing" (see Daniel 9:26). Our Lord therefore points out to Nicodemus that before the glory can come there must first be suffering. The Son of Man, who will receive the throne of His father David and the promised kingdom, *must* first be lifted up.

This is the second "must" in the third chapter of this Gospel. If man *must* be born again in order to see and enter the kingdom of God, the Son of Man *must* be lifted up so that man, dead in trespasses and sin, destitute of eternal life, may receive

such life (and not perish). The words of our Lord give the answer to the question Nicodemus had asked, "How can these things be?" The Son of Man *must* be lifted up!

What our Lord actually speaks of here is His death by crucifixion. John 12:32, 33 makes this plain. "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*"

The Lord Jesus reminds Nicodemus of the wilderness experience of the Jews who were on their way to the Promised Land. They had murmured against God, being dissatisfied with the manna which came from Heaven. The incident is recorded in Numbers 21:4-9. God had sent fiery serpents among them as a judgment. They bit the people, and as a result, many died. The people acknowledged their sin, and asked the Lord to take away the serpents. Instead of doing that, God had Moses place a serpent of brass on a pole, and when bitten by a snake, all a person had to do to be cured was to look at the serpent of brass.

Our Lord uses that illustration to give the Gospel to Nicodemus. He said in effect, "Nicodemus, you have been bitten by the snake bite of sin. Just as that brass serpent was elevated upon a pole, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever puts his trust in Him, might be having life eternal."

The use of this incident to illustrate the wonderful truth of redemption manifests the heavenly wisdom of our Lord. It also confirms the typical teaching of Old Testament events, that "all these things happened unto them for *types*, and they are written for our admonition" (see I Corinthians 10:11).

The Lord's words to Nicodemus were just as though He had said, "I am going to the Cross, and there I will become the *antitype* of that brass serpent. There I will be made sin in order that sinners may become the righteousness of God through faith in me." In the wilderness, it was the *serpents* that afflicted the people. The poison of those frightful creatures was in the blood of the dying Israelites. The remedy was a serpent of brass

(brass is a symbol of judgment) uplifted. And *all* who looked to it were healed!

The condition in the camp of Israel is a picture of the ravages of sin, and the *wages* of sin, which is *death*. The fatal poison of sin is working in the race, and man is spiritually dead. The brazen serpent lifted up on a pole is the type of Christ in His sacrificial work on the Cross. Although the brazen serpent was the very image of what was destroying the Israelites, it had no poisonous fangs; there was no poison in it. And though it bore the likeness of the serpent, the emblem of sin, it was harmless. Thus, the Son of God appeared in the form of man, in the likeness of sinful flesh (see Romans 8:3), but He was *without sin*; He knew no sin.

When He was lifted up on the Cross, on that Cross the sinless Son of God was made sin for us, and by the offering of Himself for sin, He put away sin. Hanging on the Cross, He bore the curse and redeemed those who believe on Him from the curse, being made a curse for us. "For it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (see Galatians 3:13).

Looking up the brazen serpent, the Israelites saw the very thing which had put death and ruin upon them; and they saw it triumphed over; completely conquered. And as we look to Christ crucified, made a curse, bearing sin, we see sin judged, condemned, triumphed over, robbed of its power, and stripped of its strength. The old man has been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be annulled, that henceforth we may not serve sin. We see ourselves redeemed from the guilt and power of sin; death is ended and life is given, even eternal life.

We should note that the death-stricken Israelites were not saved by a natural process of improvement, by a gradual restoration; they were saved, rather, by a sudden supernatural manifestation of divine power. That life by which they lived was miraculous in its character.

How blessedly and fully all this foreshadows and illustrates the Gospel of our salvation! The question Nicodemus asked as

to the "how" of the new birth is wonderfully answered. Christ died for the ungodly, and believing on Him means salvation from eternal perdition and the gift of eternal life!

What is it to believe? It is the same that the Israelites did when in simple faith they accepted God's Word, believed its truth and then looked to the brazen serpent on the pole. This is the way to salvation as announced long before our Lord spoke these words of life to "the teacher in Israel" — "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (see Isaiah 45:22).

Again, what are the symbols that we have in the incident of the brass serpent? It was *sin* that caused the trouble for humanity. The serpent was a type of Satan, and that type dates back to the Garden of Eden. The poison in that serpent was sin. But what took place on the Cross? The Sinless One was made sin for us! *He* is the *antitype* of that brazen serpent!

The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, so far as the record of John is concerned, closes with Verse 15. Verses 16 through 21 constitute John's elaboration upon, and explanation of, the conversation. This appears clear from the following considerations. First, the words of the Lord Jesus, "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," speak of His looking into the future to a sacrifice which was not consummated at the time of the conversation. However, the words "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," look back to a past act in which God gave His Son. Our Lord would not have changed verb tenses in the midst of a conversation. It is the Lord Jesus looking *forward* to the Cross, and then John looking *back* to it.

It appears that after John recorded this conversation, remembering that the Gospel was given in Jewish terminology and that he was writing for the Gentile world, he saw the need of some explanatory material that would give the Gospel to the Gentiles in terms which they could more easily understand. The divine source and inspiration of these words is the Holy Spirit of God. It makes no difference whether the Lord Jesus spoke on earth, or whether through the Holy Spirit, He spoke these words from Heaven through John.

John 3:16 is often called "the Gospel in miniature." There is a sense in which the entire story of the Bible is told in it: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

This verse opens with the little word, "for." This word connects a statement of Jesus in Verse 14 with a statement of John in Verse 16. The Lord said, "Even so, it is necessary in the nature of the case for the Son of Man to be lifted up." Here we have, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." The connection is as follows. The question might come, "What made the crucifixion necessary?" It was *not* the justice of God which required the Son to pay the penalty of sin. God, in perfect righteousness, could have required sinful man to pay his own penalty for his wrongdoing. The broken law would have been satisfied, for the wages of sin is death. *The love of God* for a race of lost sinners was required. It was the love of God that mandated a Substitute to pay for man's sin. That Substitute is the Lord Jesus!

John 3:16 completely contradicts the idea that many persons seem to have about God. Many believe that God is represented in Scripture as a stern, angry Judge who is waiting to destroy men because of their sins. These same people believe that Jesus Christ (in some way or other) has made it possible for God to come out in love toward sinners. In other words, they believe that Christ loved us enough to die for us and, having washed away our sins, God can now love us, and be merciful to us!

This is a total perversion of the Gospel! Jesus Christ did *not* die to enable God to love sinners. Rather, we are told, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." It was *because* of God's love that Jesus Christ came into the world to die! We must remember that God loved us all along and sacrificed His Son for sin.

This same precious truth is set forth in similar words in I John 4:9,10: "In this was manifested the love of God toward

us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, *not* that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation (doing away) for our sins."

Christ's coming to the world and His going to the Cross (there to settle the sin question, and thus meet every claim of divine righteousness against the sinner) are the proof of the infinite love of God toward a world of guilty men!

Thankful we should be for this limitless love extended to us, a world of guilty sinners. We worship the One who demonstrated His infinite love by giving His Son for our redemption. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (see Romans 5:8).

When you really stop to think about it, it could not be otherwise, because He *is* love! We are taught (in both I John 4:8 and I John 4:16) that "God *is* love!" That is His very nature! We can say that God is *gracious*, but we cannot say that God is *grace*. We can say that God is *compassionate*, but we cannot say that God is *compassion*. God is *kind*, but God is not *kindness*. But we can say, "God *is* love!" That is His nature, and love had to manifest itself. Although men had forfeited every claim that they might have upon Him, God still loved us and sent His only Son to become the propitiation for our sins. Mark it well: "God *so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

"Whosoever believeth." What is it to believe? It is to trust in Him, to confide in Him, to commit yourself and your affairs to Him. This verse says to all those who will listen, "You cannot save yourself. All your efforts to redeem yourself can only end in failure. But I have given my Son to die for you. Trust in Him! Confide in Him! Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Have" — that suggests the present possessive. He does not say, "*hope to have* everlasting life." We "are having" ever-

lasting life right here and now when we believe in the Lord Jesus, and when we put our entire trust in Him.

“Everlasting life,” remember, is far more than life throughout eternity. It is far more than endless existence. It is the very life of God communicated to the soul in order that we may enjoy fellowship with Him. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (see John 17:3).

In the words, “should not perish, but have everlasting life,” there is a radical change in tenses, from the *aorist* (which speaks of a once-for-all act) to the *present subjunctive* (which speaks of a continuous state). The contrast is one between the final utter ruin and lost estate of the unbeliever and the possession of eternal life as an enduring experience on the part of the believer. The entire verse, taken straight from the Greek text, is as follows: “For in this manner God loved the world, so that His Son, the only begotten One, He gave, in order that everyone who places his trust in Him might not perish, but might be constantly having life eternal.”

Furthermore, we are told in Verse 18, that God did not send Jesus Christ into the world that the world should be judged (the meaning of the word “condemned”) by Him, “but that the world through Him might be saved.” Later, our Lord spoke words to the same effect. “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (see John 12:47).

The Old Testament prophetic Word shows Messiah as the Judge of the nations and of the ungodly, both among Israel and the Gentiles. His coming means judgment and for the earth the rule of righteousness, when righteousness will reign through Him as King of kings. Nicodemus and the Jews who awaited the promised Messiah and His kingdom therefore expected Him to come as Judge. They overlooked the fact that His second coming will bring both the judgments announced by the prophets, and the establishment of the throne of righteousness.

His first coming was not for the establishment of His kingdom. While the Jews were blind to the purpose of His first coming, the professing church of today is even more blind concerning His second coming. The purpose of His first coming was to provide a door of salvation for all the world, to make salvation available through Himself, that those who believe on Him might be saved. But it *does not* mean that all the world will be saved in this age. When those who believe are gathered out, when the Church, the Body of Christ is complete, His second coming will take place, and *then*, He *will* judge the world in righteousness!

As though to encourage the guiltiest sinner to come to Him, in Verse 17 the Spirit says, "*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*" It is hard to believe, in the light of the clear teaching of this Scripture, but there are those within the sphere of professing Christendom who teach that the Lord is so great, mighty, and holy that it is not befitting that a poor sinner go directly to Him! Rather, such persons erroneously teach that He should be approached through His mother, because there is none other that has such great influence on Him!

How could anyone believe that Jesus is unapproachable? How could anyone believe that Jesus is hard to contact? Even when He walked the earth, it was said of Him, "This man receiveth sinners." And now, though high in heavenly glory, He still says to sinners, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavily laden."

We can all go directly to Him, and when we trust Him, He gives us eternal life. He did not come to *condemn* (judge) the world. He came with a heart of love to *win* poor sinners to Himself!

6.

Only Two Divisions of Humanity

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:18-21).

In Verse 18, John elaborates upon his previous words. He stresses that God did not send His Son to judge but to save, and that whoever accepts His Son as Saviour, is not judged. Then he takes up the case of the unbeliever, and says that such a person stands judged already. He uses the perfect tense, which speaks of a *past* complete action having *present* results. The unbeliever does not wait until a future trial to see whether he is to be judged guilty or not guilty, for John declares that he had been already judged. The present result that he (the unbeliever) is looked upon by God as being under His judgment. That is, he stands convicted of his sin of unbelief.

The sin, John says, is that the person has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God; he is presently in a permanent attitude of unbelief. John again uses the perfect tense here. This is no snap judgment on the part of the unbeliever, John says, but a deliberate and confirmed attitude toward God's Son. This, John says, does not merely disclose human infirmity and passion, but shows a wickedness of man which he chooses and prefers in the presence of the goodness of God which has been revealed in the Cross.

Notice just how plain and simple Verse 18 is. Anyone dissatisfied with his natural state and who is seeking light should

remember that these are the very words of the living God: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned (judged); but he that believeth not is condemned (judged) already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Do you see what we are told here? *There are just two classes of people in that verse!* All men in the world who have heard the message are divided into these two classes. What are the two classes? First, "He that believeth." They are those who believe in Jesus. They stand by themselves. Now the second class, "He that believeth not."

Every person who has ever heard of Jesus Christ is in one of those two classes! Everyone who has heard of the Lord Jesus is either among those who *believe in Jesus*, or among those who *do not believe!* It is not a question of believing *about Him*; it is a question of believing *in Him!* It is not holding mental conceptions about Him — mere facts of history. But it is trusting Him, committing oneself to Him!

Those who trust Him — and those who do not trust Him — we have to ask ourselves to which of those two groups we belong. "He that believeth in him" — am I there? "He that believeth not" — am I there? If anyone finds himself in the latter group, he should make haste to move out of there into the first group. A person passes out of the one and into the other by trusting in Jesus. Simply pray the sinner's prayer — in sincerity!

Does someone sincerely not know whether he is in the first group — the saved group or not? The verse says, "He that believeth in him is not condemned." The question is, "Does one believe in Him?" If so, the promise is there: "He that believeth in him is not condemned." There is no further room for doubt!

But suppose one finds himself in the latter group. Listen to what it says: "He that believeth not is *condemned already.*" One does not need to wait until the Day of Judgment to discover that! *Condemned!* Why? Because such a person has been dishonest? No! Because such a one has lied? No! Because such a one has been unclean and unholy? No! Is it any of those things? No!

What does the verse say? "He that *believeth not* is condemned already, because he *hath not believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God." *That* is the condemnation!

All those sins one has been guilty of, Christ took into account when He died. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (see Isaiah 53:5). So if one *is* condemned, it is *not* simply because of the many sins that one has committed throughout his lifetime. It is because of spurning the revelation of the Saviour that God has provided.

If that one turns away from God and continues rejecting the Lord Jesus, he is committing the worst sin there is! He came, a light into the world to lighten the darkness. If one turns away from Him, he himself is responsible for the darkness in which he will live — and die!

The sinner who believes on the Son of God is no longer under that condemnation. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (see John 5:24).

But what a solemn truth it is that "he that believeth not is condemned already." He remains in his guilty condition before God with wrath abiding upon him (see Verse 36); he is judged because he does not believe in the Son of God.

Unbelief, then, is the sin which damns. Well has it been said, "Nothing is so provoking and offensive to God as to refuse the glorious salvation He has provided at so mighty a cost by the death of His only begotten Son! Nothing is so suicidal on the part of man as to turn away from the only remedy which can heal his soul. Other sins may be scarlet, filthy, and abominable. But not to believe on Christ is to bar the door in our own way, and to cut off ourselves from heaven." John 3:18 may well be the most powerful verse in the Bible! It is deadly to avoid the plain truth of which it speaks!

The truth of Verse 18 is further explained by John in the words, "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, with the present results that it is here, and men love rather the darkness than the light." The "Light" here is the Lord Jesus Christ. Its "coming into the world" refers to the incarnation. The words, "is come," are a good translation of the Greek perfect tense, which speaks of a past complete act having present results. It is not as if the Lord Jesus had flashed across the vision of sinful humanity like a meteor through the sky, and then was gone. Rather, He came and lived here for thirty-three years in full view of mankind. *And since His ascension, He lives in the hearts and lives of believers.*

The human race therefore cannot plead an unfair opportunity to see the light. It stands judged because it rejects the light which it has before itself constantly. The rejection of God's Son, therefore, is not the result of ignorance, but of deliberate choice and preference.

But John hastens to inform his reader that this rejection of the Saviour is not fundamentally an intellectual thing, but has its roots in a totally depraved nature. He says that this preference of darkness to light is found in the fact that men's works were constantly evil. The word "evil" is the Greek "*poneros*" which means "evil in active opposition to the good."

To paraphrase John's words, we can say, "And this the condemnation: That He, the Light (Christ), came into the world, and through His coming it has been manifested what the heart of man is. Because man has an evil heart and does evil deeds, he loves darkness rather than light." It was so with the Jews; it is so still. The light of the Gospel is here; it has been shining for more than nineteen hundred years, yet man continues to love darkness and refuses the light. The rejection of the Gospel-light has never been greater than it is at present! Rejecting the light, the Gospel of the Cross, is the greatest tragedy of human existence, for it seals an eternal doom.

Note again: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light

because their deeds were evil." Isn't it strange that men would rather continue in darkness than to turn to Him — who is the "Light" of life — and find deliverance?

John continues this thought in the words, "For everyone who habitually practices evil, is hating the Light and does not come to the Light, in order that his works might not be convicted." The distinctive word for "evil" here is "*phaulos*" which means "that which is paltry, ugly, poor." It refers to a dull, senseless viciousness. Thus, John states that at the basis of all rejection of Christ, is a totally depraved nature, a love of sin, and hatred of the good.

Again, to paraphrase, "But he that doeth truth, who in sincerity believes, cometh to the Light, and walks in that Light, and thus it will be manifested that his deeds are wrought in God, the fruits of that new nature he received in believing on the Son of God."

On the other hand, John says, the person who practices the truth comes to the Light in order that the character of his works might be openly shown. This he does because he realizes that his deeds have been wrought in God in the sense that God the Holy Spirit, dwelling in him, produces the works.

Let us repeat John's words: "*For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*"

These words may come before someone who has never made the decision to trust Christ and receive Him into his heart. Let this question be addressed to that one: "Are you going to turn away from the Light today, or are you coming into the Light? Will you trust the blessed One who is the Light of the world, and thus receive the salvation that He so freely offers you?"

7.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

"After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 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. He must increase, but I must decrease. 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. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:22-36).

The interview with Nicodemus ended with Verse 21. The recorded incident concerning John the Baptist which follows may seem unrelated to the Nicodemus interview, and some might wonder why John recorded the sequence as he did. There is divine purpose, however, in the choice of this sequence. The Holy Spirit of God is presenting witnesses who testify of the Person and work of the Son of God. The record given provides

opportunity for John the Baptist to present his testimony in the form of an elaboration of the Lord's words to Nicodemus.

After the nighttime interview (perhaps the next morning), our Lord left Jerusalem and went into Judaea; that is, the surrounding country. There He tarried for some time with His disciples. There, also, the disciples baptized. Although the Scripture says, "And there *He* tarried with them, and baptized," the next chapter makes it clear that our Lord did not personally baptize anyone. John 4:2 says, "(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)." His disciples baptized those who responded to the Lord's preaching.

We know nothing about this baptism other than what is mentioned here. But it must have been of the same character as John's baptism unto repentance. Those who followed the Lord's ministry at that time could not have received what we now call "Christian baptism," because this occasion was prior to the Cross. Therefore, they could not have been baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John, the forerunner and herald of Messiah, also continued in his ministry, baptizing in Aenon near Salim. We are told that he chose this area, "Because there were *many* (not 'much') waters there." There were many accumulations of water that were available to serve as "baptistries" in that region. (John had not yet been cast into prison by King Herod.)

"Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all come to him" (see Verses 25 and 26).

What the question was between the disciples and the Jews is not fully stated, but probably concerned the question of baptisms. "Which of the baptisms, that by John, or the disciples' baptism, was the most valuable and purifying?" It is evident that this unrecorded dispute brought the disciples of John to

their leader in a spirit of jealousy. They were of a sectarian spirit, and were disturbed by the action of the disciples of the Lord in baptizing the people. God used this jealousy to bring out, from the camp of John the Baptist, a most wonderful testimony to Christ's deity and Messiahship.

John showed his own spirit of meekness, and his understanding of his own ministry for God, as he went straight to the point. "John answered and said, a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ (Messiah), but that I am sent before him. 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. He must increase, but I must decrease" (see Verses 27-30).

What a blessed statement this is! It bears witness to the tremendous spirituality and humility of John the Baptist. But what else could we expect from this great man of God? It is written of him: "He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (see Luke 1:15). Whenever the Spirit fills, He produces humility, lowliness of mind and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John rested in the will of God, perfectly content and assured that all was well. What did it matter if more men came to the One of whom he had borne witness than came to himself? John was fulfilling his mission as the herald of the King. He fully understood that he was the one of whom Isaiah had prophesied in Isaiah 40:3-5: "*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*"

John assured his questioners that no one could have a successful ministry except God be behind it. "A man can receive

nothing, except it be given him from Heaven." He reminds these jealous men that he had told them from the beginning that he was not Messiah. He was only His forerunner — His herald. "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the *Messiah*, but that I am sent before him."

John then speaks of Christ as the Bridegroom. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." But who is the Bride? Not Israel, who nationally held the position of the married wife (symbolically). Being unfaithful, she was divorced — which is her present condition. A day is coming when Israel will be reinstated and become once more married unto the LORD in earthly glory. Speaking to Israel as the cast-off wife, Jehovah said, "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married" (see Isaiah 62:4). Also, "And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi (husband); and shalt call me no more Baali (my lord)" (see Hosea 2:16).

A divorced wife taken back into favor can hardly be called a bride. The Bride of which John the Baptist speaks is the Church, gathering now to the heavenly Bridegroom, destined to be the Lamb's wife and to share with Him all His heavenly glory.

John calls himself only the Bridegroom's friend. Notice, he does not claim to be the Bride himself. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets; he was never a part of the Church, and he founded no church denomination. He is only a "friend of the Bridegroom," and as such he greatly rejoiced to hear the Bridegroom's voice.

Therefore, Christ was all his joy. To exalt Him was the total business of his ministry. He was content to decrease and see Christ increase. "He *must* increase, I must decrease." This is the third "must" in this chapter. As John stated it, even so it should be in the individual experience of every believer. Christ must ever increase, and we decrease!

"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." The Spirit-filled John exalts the Lord Jesus and bears witness to His deity. He is from above. Unlike all other men who have come into existence only at the time of their conception, He was preexistent even before the world was. When His flesh was conceived within the body of the Virgin Mary, His Spirit came down from Heaven from whence "his goings-forth (ministries) had been from of old, from everlasting" (see Micah 5:2).

Since He is from above, therefore He is above all. Having come from above, He speaks of the heavenly things He has seen and of which He knows. The words of Christ therefore are the unchangeable, the unchanging, the ever-abiding words of heavenly truth. He is the Truth, and His Word is Truth. "And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is truth."

With Him whom he thus exalts, John compares his own inferior ministry. He is of the earth, and his conception is earthly. It is weak and imperfect, as are all earthly things.

The statement, "no man receiveth his testimony," anticipates the Lord's rejection. However, if anyone believes the testimony of Him who is from above and who has made known heavenly things, he has set to it his seal that God is true. The seal was attached to a document to confirm and to attest to it. In like manner, he who receives the testimony of Christ, believes on Him, trusts in Him, declares thus his belief that God is true to His Word and has kept His promises as to Christ and salvation. On the other hand, "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (see I John 5:10).

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." The Son of God, sent by God, one with God, speaks the words of God. How could it be otherwise? This is followed by another

great statement: "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." In Him the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell. Prophets in the Old Testament received the Holy Spirit by measure (that is, in limited measure). This was not so concerning the One who is very God. He in whom the Father dwell was also the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

In our age, those who are in Christ receive the Holy Spirit, not by measure, but rather He *himself* comes as the abiding Guest. Believers are then the "temples" of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 35 says, "*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands.*" This means that the Father, in anticipation of the redemptive work of His Son has given Him the preeminence in all things. As He has said in the second psalm, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (see Psalm 2:7-9). All things belong to the Son in His essential deity; but as the incarnate Son of God, He finished the work that He alone could finish — the work of the Cross. Therefore, He has been *made* the heir of all things.

The final testimony of John is a very solemn utterance. It is the reason that the Holy Spirit followed the Lord's interview with Nicodemus with this incident in the ministry of John the Baptist. This great truth is a fit termination of this most significant chapter. Note: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Here John the Baptist states the way to life. To receive eternal life as a present possession ("hath" means "is having"), one must exercise faith in the Son of God. That is the only requirement. It is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (see Ephesians 2:9). Salvation is a gift of God, given to those who believe on the Son.

"And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." What an important statement this is! This is a reaffirmation of the fact that there are only two classes of people in the world, just as was presented in John 3:18. John the Baptist adds his testimony to that of the Lord, and to that of John the Apostle, the inspired author of this Gospel.

Many are today disbelieving the revelation of God's Word concerning the wrath of God and the eternal punishment of all those who do not accept the Lord Jesus Christ and who do not believe on Him. Some deny altogether that the sinner is by nature a child of wrath. Others say that the wicked man dies like the beast. They persuade themselves that somehow, in some way, the wicked are annihilated and have no immortality. They say only those who believe on Christ possess immortality.

Others have invented a "second chance" theory; others believe, or say they believe, in universal salvation, while others call it "restitution" or "restoration." All these theorists deny that there is such a thing as the eternal, never-ending, wrath of God. All of them juggle with the Hebrew and Greek words translated "forever" and "everlasting" as if these are terms of limitation. However, this one sentence, the final testimony of this Spirit-filled man of God, answers all their delusions and hallucinations. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

"Life" is not defined as "eternal existence," but rather as "eternal existence in the presence of God." To "not see life" does not mean that one will cease to exist. It means that he will never exist in the presence of the Holy God. However, the wrath of God "abideth" (resides forever) on him. Such wrath could not forever abide on one who is annihilated at physical death. That one who "believeth not" on the Son of God will exist forever, and that "forever" will be filled with God's abiding punishment.

From John's words, we learn that man is by nature a child of wrath. Note the words, "... and were by nature the children

of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3). The wrath of God, in order to abide upon the natural man, (the unbeliever) must be upon him (the unbeliever) already. "Annihilationists" are proven to be liars, for if sinners are annihilated, the wrath of God cannot abide upon them. The errors of all "false theorists" are completely answered by this solemn declaration, "The wrath of God abideth on him."

It is impossible to say that this statement means anything less than timelessness and endlessness. It is clear-cut and permits no deceitful handling. May we all realize as never before what an awful thing it is to reject the Son of God and to neglect so great salvation! Knowing this great truth, may we go forth and give a dying world the Gospel of His grace as it was presented to Nicodemus during that historic "interview by night."

The End