

Series: John
Title: No Man But Christ
Text: John 3: 9-21
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Every word our Lord Jesus spoke was vitally important. The Bible is the word of the Lord. Those with a red-letter Bible may think only those words are the words Christ spoke. But this whole book is the word of the Lord.

Still, when the Lord Jesus said, “*Verily, verily*”, he draws our attention to what he says. He is speaking something absolutely true and necessary. Now, notice, after each “*verily*” Christ said, “I say.” Speaking to Nicodemus,

John 3: 3: 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: 5: 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. 6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7: Marvel not that I SAID unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8: 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: 9: Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10: Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Our Lord asked a convicting question, “Art thou a teacher of Israel and knowest not these things?” These things are plainly declared in the old testament scripture which Nicodemus should have known. The LORD said, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, I will put my Spirit within you” (Eze 36: 25-27). Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel. He was a very moral man. He was a Pharisee of Pharisees. But he did not know these things. But listen to the Lord’s next “*verily*”.

John 3: 11: Verily, verily, I SAY unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

Christ speaks as the Head of all his people in whose heart he abides—“*we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.*” When Christ was baptized of John he spoke for all who he represented when he said, “Thus it becometh US to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt 3: 15). As with all things Christ is the perfection of our witnessing. With Christ abiding in those he has given the new birth, though we see through a glass darkly, all in whom Christ abides, he makes to know him and testify of him. James said of believers,

1 John 2:20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

The unction of the Holy Spirit has made us know Christ and believe on him. It is through faith in Christ that he makes us know and understand the gospel. Notice, the order. It is through faith in Christ that we understand the doctrine.

Hebrews 11: 1: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, [faith is] the evidence of things not seen...3: Through faith we understand...

The Spirit of our Lord makes us speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.

2 Samuel 23: 2: [David said] The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue.

The Holy Spirit is not making us infallibly write and speak as the holy men of old that God used to pen the scriptures. But by the Spirit of our Lord, we believe on Christ. And through faith in Christ, the Spirit makes us know and understand the things that are freely given to us of God. By the same Spirit, “*we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.*”

What was Nicodemus' problem? The issue is not *the things*, not the doctrine, which Christ taught. The problem was Nicodemus did not believe Christ himself. Repeatedly Christ said, "I say unto thee, I say unto thee." He said, "*But ye receive not our witness.*"

John 3: 12: If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Christ is saying that if he told him earthly things, and Nicodemus believed not Christ then how should he believe Christ if Christ told him heavenly things. It matters not what the doctrine is. Until we believe Christ himself—until we believe and receive Christ as the Faithful and True Witness—we will not believe any doctrine—"if I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, [me] how shall ye believe [me], if I tell you heavenly things." Brethren, when sinners question and question and question our doctrine, the issue is not the doctrine we preach. The issue is that sinners do not believe Christ himself.

The Lord Jesus is THE Truth, THE Faithful and True Witness, THE Revelation of God and there is no other. That is what Christ declares next and why Nicodemus unbelief was such an offense. This is why every unbeliever's unbelief is such an offense. It is because Christ is the Faithful Witness sent from God.

John 3: 13: And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Proposition: We must first believe Christ himself; then through faith in Christ, he will give us more light to understand and believe more of him.

Remember Nathanael?

John 1: 47: Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48: Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49: Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

Nathanael believed Christ himself; that he is THE MASTER, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

John 1: 50: Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

Believing on Christ, Christ promises to give greater revelation of himself. He makes us behold him more as the one Mediator, between God and men.

John 1: 51: And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Proposition: We must first believe Christ himself; then through faith in Christ, he will give us more light to understand and believe more of him.

THE TRUE AND FAITHFUL WITNESS

John 3: 13: And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

The Man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Son of God sent by God to be his true and faithful witness. The Lord Jesus is declaring that he is the only GodMan, Mediator, THE Faithful Witness, THE Truth, THE Word, THE Revelation of God.

John 1: 18: No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Revelation 3:14: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

John 7: 16: Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 17: If any man will do his will,...

The Lord said, "This is the will of him that sent me, that everyone that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." If any believe on Christ,

John 7: 16...he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. 18: He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Let's take the first part of our Lord's statement: "*No man hath ascended up to heaven.*" No sinner, no mere man, not even those he saved, has ever *ascended* up to heaven. The saints of old *entered* into heaven and so shall we who believe. But the Lord raises his saints. In Hebrews 11: 5 we see that Enoch "*was translated that he should not see death.*" But Christ translated him. In 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." But Christ took him up in the whirlwind. In 1 Thessalonians 4: 16 we see "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." But his saints only arise by the power of the Lord himself. Yet, Christ ascended of himself. No man, but the Lord Jesus Christ, the GodMan, ascended up to heaven.

Now, take the rest of our Lord's statement—"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." No man has *ascended* to heaven but he who *descended* from heaven. He who is the Son of man is the Son of God come down to be Jehovah's Faithful Witness! He has seen God because he is God. Christ is the revelation of the triune God. The Son of man is the Wisdom of God in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2: 3).

Notice that last phrase, "*even the Son of man which IS in heaven.*" When he abode on this earth, even while he stood there speaking with Nicodemus, the Son of man was in heaven with the Father. The Lord Jesus declares that he is the True and Faithful Witness who *speaks that which he does know and testifies that which he has seen.*

John 1: 18: No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Everything God reveals to his people about himself he reveals by his Son, Christ Jesus.

John 8: 26...he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

John 12:44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. 45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

John 5:24 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.

Matthew 11: 27: All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

God the Father said through Isaiah,

Isaiah 55:4: Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

So the Father says to his people

Matthew 17: 5: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased: hear ye him.

HOW ARE SINNERS MADE TO HEAR AND BELIEVE ON CHRIST?

Christ told the woman at the well, *“the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (Jn 6: 63). Christ speaks to us in the heart in Spirit as he was doing Nicodemus that day. Let’s see what Christ declared in this message he taught Nicodemus.

First, Christ reveals to us that he knows us. He teaches us we are lost. The Lord first teaches us that our problem is that we believe not him, even as he did Nicodemus. He makes us know that we are spiritually dead and must be born again. The Amen makes his child know that we are ignorant and lost because we *receive not his testimony*, as he did Nicodemus.

The Lord was preaching his gospel to Nicodemus and revealing himself to Nicodemus. Later, Nicodemus manifest he believed on Christ. This may be when the Lord first began to give Nicodemus life and faith to believe Christ.

Also, Christ makes us know he is the revelation of God by making us behold him crucified in the room and stead of his people, the elect. But he especially makes his child know he did it for him personally. Notice how Christ connects himself being the revelation of God with the cross.

John 3: 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. 14: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have [freely have] eternal life. 16: For God so [after this manner] loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Nicodemus heard the Lord Jesus declare that he is the GodMan Mediator, the True Witness, sent of God. And, the Lord said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” That may have been the first time that Nicodemus was given discernment to know that the brazen serpent typified Christ. He heard Christ declare that the Lord Jesus was made sin in place of his people on the cross. He was made the curse and redeemed his people from the curse of the law. Nicodemus heard Christ declare that believing on Christ is the only way God freely gives eternal life, so that we do not perish in our sins.

Nicodemus heard the Lord Jesus declare that those who believe on Christ shall not be condemned but those who believe not are condemned already.

John 3: 17: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 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.

It gets serious—it gets really serious—when the Lord reveals to you that you have not received his testimony. Then makes he makes us hear that *“he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* Can you imagine how Nicodemus heard that? We know, that is, those of us who have heard Christ speak into our hearts! Nicodemus knew he had not believed on Christ. If this is when the Faithful Witness bore witness in his heart then the Lord Jesus made Nicodemus know it in spirit.

Then Christ declares what the condemnation is.

John 3: 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

He is revealing to Nicodemus (and to you and me) that all Nicodemus’ religious education and works was only darkness rather than light, all best deeds were evil. Nicodemus had come to Christ but not in faith. He came by night. That may be why Christ said

John 3: 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

He is telling Nicodemus this is the reason you believe not on me, you love your evil self-righteousness. If a sinner comes to Christ the Light then his very best religious deeds will be reprov'd for what they are, evil. The Lord Jesus was tearing down Nicodemus' false refuge. He must destroy ours as well.

But then Christ declares what it is to *do truth—to do righteousness*.

John 3: 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Remember, 1 John? John spoke of doing truth, doing righteousness. It is coming to Christ believing on Christ. The believer comes to Christ the Light that our deeds may be made manifest, that they are *wrought in God*—they are worked in Christ and by Christ. Those who receive Christ's testimony and come to Christ believing on him manifest that we believe our only righteousness is the righteousness of Christ, wrought in Christ and freely imputed to us through faith in him. The believer manifests that even our spiritual life and faith and coming to Christ was wrought in and by Christ. Maybe it was then that God did for Nicodemus what he declared he would do:

Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Zechariah 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

I know this much, when Christ makes us believe on him,

John 3: 33: He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

When Christ gives us the words of eternal life then we know that his testimony is true. And *the Spirit comes into our hearts, crying Abba, Father*. That is when we become an eye witness. Then, by God-given faith, we behold Christ "evidently set forth, crucified among us!" (Gal 3:31). When the Spirit of Christ bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God, Christ bears witness in our spirit. Then "*Verily, verily we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen?*" We speak because the Spirit of Christ speaks within us. We know because the Spirit of Christ makes us know him. Those born of the Word of our Lord testify of what we have seen because the Spirit of Christ makes us behold Christ evidently set forth, crucified among us. The apostle Paul declared in Romans what our Prophet, Priest and King told Nicodemus:

Romans 10: 6: But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) 7: Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8: But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The Lord declared the same to Nicodemus. The Lord uses the word "whosoever" because Christ redeemed an elect people from among Jew and Gentile. Paul tells us what "whosoever" means and why he used that word.

Romans 10: 12: For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13: For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Whether a sinner is a natural born Jew or natural born Gentile, God saves his elect the same way—through faith in Christ alone, apart from our works. We see the Faithful Prophet preaching to Nicodemus. He was sent of God to be God's faithful Witness. Those Christ sends speak that we do know and testify that we have seen by the Spirit of Christ. The reason Christ saves through a preacher that Christ sends is to glorify Christ the Faithful Witness.

Romans 10: 14: How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Oh, may Christ speak to someone this hour and make you receive his testimony and believe on him! Never expect to understand doctrine spiritually until you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Christ's witness—"*By faith we understand.*" It is only by the Spirit of God making us a new creation and by Christ washing us with the water by the word, that believing Christ we then know. He bears witness in our hearts that we are righteous in him! Then we are no longer ashamed to speak that we do know and testify that we have seen of Christ Jesus our All and in all!

Amen!