

John 08 - The People's Champion

Dr. Leon L. Sanders
John 3:1-15

Oral Tradition Rules Jewish Life

- Began during the Babylonia Diaspora
 - When Temple destroyed priests lost their importance
 - Synagogues began among Jews to keep culture alive
 - Leaders (Rabbis) rose up to study and explain the Old Testament based on oral traditions
 - Oral traditions became more important than Bible
 - When Temple destroyed 70 A.D. Pharisees only Jewish sect surviving; Sadducees (Priests) faded away

What Was the Sanhedrin?

- Sanhedrin was ruling body of elders over the Jews after the Diaspora composed of Sadducees and Pharisees
 - Sadducees represented priesthood
 - Pharisees represented the people
 - Scribes began with Ezra assisted in interpreting the Law
(Nu 8:1-12)
 - Held at local and national level Sanhedrin decided all religious-political matters

Differences Among the Sects

- Chart discusses various differences between sects
- Essenes isolated, ignored in Gospels
- None of these groups understood the Bible

Map: Differences Among the Three Parties

	Essenes	Pharisees	Khassim
Place of Birth	Galilee, Palestine	Galilee, Palestine	Galilee
Authority	Moses	"Tradition of the Elders"	"Tradition of the Elders"
Practices	Isolation in desert, celibacy	Observance of Jewish Law, Oral Tradition	"Lapsed Essenes?"
Temple	Opposed	Observance	Worship
Oral Tradition			
Believed in	Yes	Believed	Accepted
Observance	Observance, separation of individuals with Essenes	Observance, separation of individuals	Essentially observant, separated
Jesus said	No	Yes	No
Accepted	Yes	Essentially	Accepted, Essential
Wife	Accepted	Essentially, separated, celibacy	"Lapsed Essenes?"
Oral Tradition	Essential, Oral	Essentially, Oral, Tradition	"Lapsed Essenes?"

Source: (Adapted from) Mark, The Gospel of John, pp. 100-101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000

Oral Traditions Over Bible

- Pharisees [Set apart] developed a set oral interpretive traditions assisting people to understand the Scriptures
 - Oral traditions considered greater than written law
 - Believed given to elders while Moses talking with God
 - Composed of beliefs, opinions and contradictory musings of many men over the centuries
 - Written down & known as Talmud, Midrash, Mishnah

Written and Oral Jewish Laws

- Torah- general term for all of Jewish Law and Ethics. Includes the written Torah (5 books of Moses, term can sometimes include also rest of Tanakh) and Oral Torah (Talmud, Midrash, Mishna etc.)
- Tanakh- acronym for Torah (5 books of Moses), Nevi'im (8 books of the Prophets) and Ketuvim (11 books- Psalms, Proverbs etc.)
- Mishna- Codification of Oral Torah.
- Talmud- explanations of Mishnah and other sources within the Written and Oral Torah.
- Midrash- Explanations of Written Torah. Often allegoric.

Examples of Oral Traditions

- Here are several examples of Pharisaical oral traditions
 - Frequent ceremonial washings before meals, prayers, etc.
 - Corban - Gift to God used as excuse to ignore parents
(Mt 7:10-13)
 - God acted at Babel as people valued bricks over people
 - Non-Jews are animals: No conviction for murder or rape
 - Excuses/justifies pedophilia

Jesus Challenged All Groups

- Common people hardened by sects' hypocrisy
 - Sadducees - Controlled Temple despising the sacrifices
 - Pharisees - Made Law burdensome with many rules
 - Scribes/Lawyers - Bible interpretation/legal judgments
 - Little unanimity in teaching people of God's salvation
- God & Christ blasted these groups for rejecting Bible
(Mt 1:6-9; Mk 23; Lk 11:37-40)

Dialogue Placement in Time

- Not possible to place this dialogue precisely in Christ's ministry as few clues are presented
 - Probably later in His ministry as Jesus well known to national Sanhedrin: Authenticating signs and teachings
 - Nicodemus acknowledges this from his greeting
 - Nicodemus' motives are clearly suspect based on his greeting to Christ: *smooth as silk*, full of flattery

Why Did Nicodemus Come?

- John never explains why Nicodemus came to Christ, only that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night
 - Did Nicodemus come to learn more from Christ?
 - Is Nicodemus point man for others who acknowledge Jesus' authenticity?
 - Or, did Nicodemus come to have Christ join him thereby giving Christ an out from the stauros while empowering the right people - Kingdom now (Flesh)?

What's in a Name?

- Nicodemus - Champion of the People
 - Nico - Victor or champion
 - Demas - People
- John presents him as a ruler (Sanhedrin) and teacher of Judaism who champions the people for God (Sincere)
- Christ shows him that he knows nothing about God making Christ the true protector of God's people

Nicodemus Opens the Dialogue

- Comes by night - Wants his visit to remain a secret
 - Later in Christ's ministry Sanhedrin threatened to oust anyone who proclaimed Jesus as Christ (9:16,29)
 - Ousted from the synagogue meant banishment from Jewish society - Worse than a Gentile
 - Or, did he not want others to know of his political maneuverings guiding this powerful teacher to the proper goals - Pragmatism (Secular humanism)

Worldview Context for Facts

- Nicodemus' Judaizing worldview was the matrix by which he thought he *understood* Jesus' teachings
 - He filtered all he heard through his Judaizing worldview
 - This translated Jesus' teachings into a system of works
 - He probably saw Jesus as a great Rabbi, even surpassing Gamaliel who was alive at this time (Ac 5:33-40)
 - His greeting did not acknowledge Jesus as Son of God

Christ's Response to Greeting

- Unless one is *born from above* one cannot discern the Kingdom of God - Essence of the New Covenant (JCo 5:17)
 - Nicodemus came believing himself to be a believer
 - Christ tells him he is separated from God - Lost
 - Without being *born from above* (not again), he cannot discern or understand anything about God (JCo 2:11-14)
 - Nicodemus balks at being *born from above*; he conceives only of being born again (Spiritually dead, no rebirth) (Ep 2:1-10)

Christ Tells Him About New Birth

- Christ answers Nicodemus' question; being *born from above* requires:
 - Water - Repentance which John spoke of earlier (Jb 1:4)
 - Spirit - Indwelt by Holy Spirit based on Christ's death (Ro 1:23-26, 8:5-11)
- Without these one cannot enter God's Kingdom
 - Eliminates works meaning Nicodemus is not saved

Christ Makes Important Distinction

- All who are not *born from above* are of the flesh
 - They can only act consistent with their fleshly nature
 - They cannot will themselves into a spiritual birth
 - Christ uses the wind as an example of His truth
 - Invisible but known force whose effects are observable
 - God's Spirit determines who is *born from above* and the changed nature is self-evident to believer and others

Nicodemus' Wrong Assumptions

- Christ told Nicodemus not to be confused but think based on the Scriptures - Exegesis versus Eisegesis
 - Essence of the New Covenant - God's Image w/o Sin (Jc 31; 33-34; 2Co 5:17)
 - Bible clearly discussed importance of God's Spirit (Isa 2:28-29)
- ∴, one's nature is either fleshly {Lost} or Spiritual {Saved}; but not both {Law of Excluded Middle} (Ro 8:5-8)

Metaphor of Birth/Rebirth

- Physical birth a metaphor for the spiritual birth
 - Conception & birth occurs without the person's consent
 - Growth requires by both the person's and body's input
- Spiritual Birth follows this same pattern
 - God determines who will be spiritually born (Jo 6:44-65; Ro 9:16)
 - Spiritual growth a work of God & person (Ro 5:25; 6:10-11; 2P 1:5-7)

Nicodemus Astounded

- Nicodemus, nor hardly anyone else, had conceived of anything other than a continued physical existence
 - Believed spiritual would simply be an epiphany
 - Christ's teaching defied this; there must be a new essence: *born from above* (Jc. 15:45-49)
- The saved spiritual nature in fleshly body can dimly discern God's truth; fleshly nature cannot. (Jc. 2:6-8, 13:12)

Nicodemus Ignorant Teacher

- Christ chides Nicodemus for being teacher of the Law in Israel and ignorant of this foundational concept
 - Christ says He sees and knows what He witnesses
 - Nicodemus, and others, reject His witness, corroborated by His signs, which they acknowledged are from God
 - Confused by Christ speaking of earthly spiritual issues
 - Without spiritual maturity heavenly spiritual matters would be incomprehensible (R. 4:2)

Reference to Israel's Dream (Jc. 18:33-19)

- Christ's heavenly claims allude to Israel's (Jacob's) dream at Bethel - God's words are His source
 - Angels ascending & descending: instructions from God
 - Christ has descended (physical) and will ascend (Ac. 1:6-11)
- Christ references His coming death for sin symbolized by Moses lifting up Serpent in Wilderness (Nu. 21:8-9)
 - Christ bases His claims on Bible Nicodemus teaches!