

The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John

Lesson #22

The Journey

Jim Hoffman

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The Gospel of John

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

John 3:11-13

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The Gospel of John

- The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus continues – He is a rich and religious lost soul who is spiritually dead but doesn't know it.
- Jesus knew Nicodemus was lost for 2 reasons, by the questions he was asking and because
- **John 2:24** But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people **25** and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

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The Gospel of John

- Nicodemus is probably worried about his own spiritual condition – he has seen the works of Jesus, is being drawn to him, and this would have to be very uncomfortable.
- He was used to telling others how to get “right” with God and all of sudden he is coming to terms with the reality that he was not “right” with God – he is far from him.
- How humiliating for “the teacher” of Israel to be exposed as a hypocrite who had no confidence in the condition of his own soul.

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The Gospel of John

- He wants to know how to be “right” with God – he was so used to telling others the things they needed to do and is probably wanting Jesus to give a “how to” book.
- But Jesus already hit him with the reality that with the exception of exercising the faith that God would give him, there are no steps to take to enter the kingdom of God.
- He is finding out just how out of touch Judaism had become the message of grace.

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- Nicodemus is coming face to face with we Ephesians 2:8 and 9, notwithstanding the fact that Paul’s letter would not be written for another 30 years or so.
- **Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**
- Nicodemus is accustomed to telling people **what to do** when all along he should have been telling them **what to believe**.

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“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
John 20:31

Whoever believes Jesus is the Christ is born of God.
1st John 5:1

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Acts 16:29 And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

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• **John 3:11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen** – Jesus is giving Nicodemus a first-hand, eyewitness account.

• Jesus had actually witnessed all of the O.T. saints enter Paradise as they exited this life – his witness is not hypothetical or theoretical, but actual.

• When he says, “truly, truly” he is literally saying “amen”, or “so be it” – in his case he could have said, “I authored all truth so pay extra attention”.

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- Another way to look at Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus is not to focus on his ignorance but instead to focus on Jesus’ evangelistic effort.
- We believe that Nicodemus later receives Christ because there are at least hints to that effect, but if you want or need encouragement to witness; make notes.
- Jesus gives him the unvarnished truth and was content to plant seeds – I would say, “just plant seeds” but that would run counter to how people often get saved.

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- If even the evangelistic efforts of Jesus are not met with an immediate conversion, then maybe we are not as unsuccessful in our evangelistic efforts as we sometimes think.
- Don’t look for instant results, just be faithful.
- **1st Corinthians 3:5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.**

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- How interesting it is that Jesus says, “we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen”.
- Three possibilities – 1) his disciples were right there with him when he met with Nicodemus 2) he was including them anyway, or 3) he was pointing to the Trinity.
- I like #3 (he was pointing to the Trinity) for 2 reasons, first it puts a new concept front and center and secondly it underscores there is no schism in God.

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- **12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**
- On one level what is going on this night is that Jesus was trying to stretch Nicodemus – he dropped one of the greatest mysteries of the bible on him, the new birth.
- On another level while Nicodemus is proving out what was manifestly true (He came unto his own and his own did not receive him) Jesus is also illustrating that the gospel is for all, even those “up and out”.

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- Nicodemus, educated as he was, articulate as he may have been, is showing that unbelief produces ignorance.
- Listen to unbelievers interpret the bible – they will often lift a phrase that they like out of context and perhaps conclude a loving God could not possibly send anyone to hell.
- **1st Cor 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.**

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- Nicodemus is all caught up in “how” the new birth happens and the steps to take to make it happen – he thinks it is something he can understand and then do.
- Jesus is sort of saying to him – do not focus on what you need to do to experience the new birth, but rather focus on what one must believe to be born again.
- Perhaps this is why the religious are so hard to reach – all their lives they’ve been doing things when they should have been believing things.

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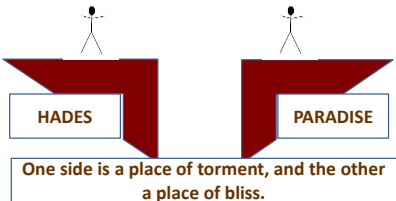
The Gospel of John

- **13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.**
- Okay, here is where the fun starts – what about Enoch and Elijah? Didn't they ascend into Heaven? And what about all the O.T. saints? Don't count Lazarus or Paul either because those events were yet future.
- None of them ever ascended into Heaven – they descended into Paradise – allow me to explain.

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The Rich Man and Lazarus

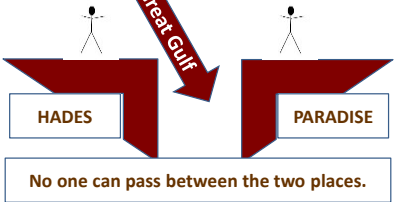


One side is a place of torment, and the other a place of bliss.

CHRISTIAN LIFE ASSEMBLY 17

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The Rich Man and Lazarus




No one can pass between the two places.

CHRISTIAN LIFE ASSEMBLY 18

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The Rich Man and Lazarus



The people in Hades (Hell) do not want their loved ones to join them.

CHRISTIAN LIFE ASSEMBLY 19

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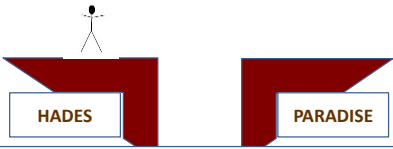
The Rich Man and Lazarus

Paradise is the place Jesus went to the day He died on the cross. To the repentant thief beside Him He said, "today, you will be with me in Paradise."

CHRISTIAN LIFE ASSEMBLY 20

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The Rich Man and Lazarus



Today, Paradise is empty – Eph 4:8-10 tells us that when Jesus ascended to Heaven, He took all of the O.T. Saints with Him.

CHRISTIAN LIFE ASSEMBLY 21

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Ephesians 4:8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive the captives, And He gave gifts to people." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

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- **13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.**
- So, what of all those testimonies you've heard and the books you've read about trips to Heaven and back? You will have to decide for yourselves which ones to believe, and which ones are fraudulent.
- Lazarus and Paul both died and came back, but neither one spoke about what they had seen.

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The truth of Christianity is not rooted in mystical experiences that only a few people have. It is rooted in God-given revelation through writings that are open for all to see and study and test. It is validated in real lives that others can see and examine. So, instead of directing people to his private experience, Paul says, "We behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you. For we are not writing to you anything other than what you read and understand and I hope you will fully understand." (2 Corinthians 1:12-13)

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