

John 3: 1-15 The Encounter with Nicodemus

Review

- Begin at the end: “I go to prepare a place for you...”
- John’s purpose in writing: “That you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
- John’s overarching message: Jesus is the very source of life. He brings life us to now; and he gives us eternal life.
- Consider this in the larger Biblical context. God delights to give life to his people. God comes to us in human form to ensure the restoration on the life we lost in the Garden.
- The thoroughly Jewish context of John’s Gospel
 - In the beginning...
 - The Word was with God and word was God
 - All things made through him
 - The Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us
 - We beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only Son
 - Replacement themes: Jacob’s Ladder, The Temple
 - The miracles are given as Messianic signs, with discourses before and after each one explaining the meaning of each sign.
 - The seven “I am” sayings asserting his divinity are spread out among the explanation of the signs.
- So John has presented Jesus clearly and emphatically as the eternal Word, the only one on earth who can reveal and explain the Father to us.
- Now John shifts his focus and beings to tell us about the Holy Spirit. Directly in the conversation with Nicodemus, but also in Ch 4 with the woman at the well, and throughout the Gospel, particularly in his farewell discourse.

John 3: 1-21 The Encounter with Nicodemus

- Who is Nicodemus? A Pharisee and a leader of the Jewish people
- He comes at night. Maybe afraid, maybe proud, maybe both.
- Jesus's attitude toward him. He rebukes him sharply, but not with condemning language as he does with the Jewish leaders in subsequent passages. And we see in Ch 19 that Nicodemus helps take Jesus's body and prepare it for burial.
- Nicodemus has a seed of piety, honoring Jesus as a teacher, and recognizing he must come God.
- Jesus's gives an unexpected response
 - Truly, Truly... Pay attention!
 - To see the KOG, you must be born again. Jesus is saying that even those pious declarations count for nothing, unless he is born again.
- It is not just some part of him that must be restored or repaired. The whole man must be replaced. He must be born again
- Nicodemus does not make the connection, and takes Jesus's words literally, only in relation to his physical existence.
- Jesus repeats the assertion, now expanding "water and spirit"
 - Water not a reference to natural birth or baptism, but a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
 - "That which is born of flesh...of Spirit.." Natural birth and natural existence is not enough to enter the Kingdom. You must be born again. From above. A work of God, not something man can do.
 - "Do not marvel". He gives an analogy with the wind. If you can accept the wind having its effect without you knowing how it works, why can you not accept God's invisible work within you?
- Nicodemus still refuses to accept the spiritual reality (How can these things be?) and draws a sharper rebuke from Jesus.
 - You are Israel's teacher, and you don't know these things? They should have known from the OT that the Spirit brings renewal.
 - We speak of what we know...
 - Here John is returning to his earlier themes:
 - Jesus is from above, and he reveals the Father
 - We have life by believing in his name
 - God renews us by his Spirit. This is his work to do, ours to receive.

The takeaway:

Chrysostom: "A river in which babies wade and elephants swim".

- "You must be born again.": Simple and yet profound. A truth that seeps deeper and deeper into our soul as we contemplate it.