

Week 8

JESUS TELLS OF HEAVENLY THINGS

As He promised Nicodemus, Jesus began to “tell heavenly things”. As He said, He came down from heaven, no one else has done this, and so He is uniquely able to tell us heavenly truths, truths that we would never know if He hadn’t come to earth.

The “Heavenly Things” Jesus told Nicodemus began with the way to go to heaven, Jesus said; “You must be born again”. Nicodemus did not understand this statement-after all its heavenly truth. Nicodemus was like so many people, he thought if he did a lot of good works, followed certain traditions and rituals, then he would go to heaven, but he wasn’t sure how much he had to do or how good he had to be.

1. Jesus laid down the principle that “you must be born again. John 3:3
2. He repeated the same thing and brought in the idea of water to illustrate the work of the Holy Spirit John 3:5
3. He explained the necessity of new birth-a new creation from the natural corruption of mankind. John 3:7
3. Fourthly He illustrated the work of the Spirit a second time by the idea of the wind. John 3:8

V14-5

Jesus again predicts His death and the kind of death He would die, Numbers 21 is our reference.

This is just one of a number of times God taught the Jews about the significance of the death of their Messiah.

Numbers 21:4-9

Here we find the Israel in the wilderness at Mt.Hor. Aaron had just been “gathered to his people”, he had died on Mt.Hor and Moses had ordained Aaron’s son, Eleazar to the priesthood in place of his father Aaron. They had been in this place for at least a month.

After a period of time there, while God showed Himself their deliverer when they were attacked by the Canaanites, God provided manna (the food of angels), He provided cloud which a shield from the sun

during the day and brought light and warmth at night, the people complained. They were not grateful for all of God's generous provision.

Are you a complainer? Would those who know you best, describe you as a contented person or are you constantly complaining against God? This passage makes it clear, all complaining is against God, He does not like it one bit. How did God respond to these ungrateful people?

This is no small thing; there were millions of people complaining, people who were miraculously delivered by God over and over. They had been protected by His Presence, fed with the manna, drank miraculous water.

V6- what do we find happening to the complainers?

Serpents bit them and they died.

V7-10

What is this all about and why did Jesus refer to it? Jesus as a good illustration of His own crucifixion selects the lifting up of the serpent of brass for the relief of Israel when bitten by serpents.

I quote the ideas of JC Ryle to explain this:

1. Just as the Israelites were in distress and dying from the bites of poisonous snakes, we are in spiritual distress and dying from the poisonous effects of sin.
2. As the serpent of brass was lifted up on a pole in the sight of the camp of Israel, so Christ was to be lifted up on the cross publicly, in the sight of the whole nation.
3. As the serpent on the pole was an image of the very thing which had poisoned the Israelites, even so Jesus Had in Himself no sin and yet was made sin and crucified in the likeness of sinful flesh and counted as sin (Romans 8:3). As the brass serpent was a serpent without poison, Jesus was without sin. Please friend, understand, Jesus was crucified with our sin laid on Him and He was counted as a sinner and treated as a sinner and punished as a sinner for our redemption. We see on the cross of Christ our sins carried, punished, and crucified.
4. Finally, as the one and only way by which Israelites obtained relief from the brass serpent was by looking at it in faith; so the one way to get benefit from Christ is to look at Him by faith. Any feeble look

brought cure to Israelites, the weakest faith, if true brings salvation to sinners.

- a. Can you hear the response of some of the people? “I am not looking at that brass serpent, what can it do for me? Its just too simple, I have to do something myself to get relief. I have plenty of time, I will do it later. I have to follow certain rituals, wear certain clothing, go to religious services; just looking can't be all there is to it”.

Friends, the idea that Jesus death was just a great act of self-sacrifice on His part and denying that Jesus was our substitute for sin on the cross does not reconcile with this teaching by Jesus Himself.

Jesus died for our sin, as our sin bearer when He was lifted up. The fact that He died was buried and rose again; victorious over death is our everlasting hope. Salvation from eternal separation from God can happen only by looking to Jesus and believing He can and will save us.

When you believe in Him, and what He accomplished for you on the cross, at that point you give up any idea of working your way into heaven, you receive eternal life. Eternal life is received by being/believing not by doing.

V16 “ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will never perish but have everlasting life.”

Probably the most recognizable verse in the bible, beautiful beyond anything known to man. It puts to rest all ideas that only certain people can be saved-God so love the WORLD, another heavenly thing Jesus showed to Nicodemus. No doubt he thought that salvation was for the Jews only, but no, Jesus had a new truth for him, God loves all the world, without any exception; the Messiah, the only begotten Son of God is the Father's gift to the whole family of Adam; and every one who believes on Him for salvation may have eternal life.

What could be more amazing? God doesn't hate this wicked world, He loves it. God doesn't plan to annihilate all of us, even though we

deserve it, no He plans to save us. God didn't give an angel, no He gave His only Begotten Son. This wonderful gift of salvation cannot be bought, it is a free gift; freely offered to all, all who believe. Free to us, costly to God.

You see this is the message consistently through the bible, beginning to end. Salvation/eternal life is a free gift of God, for those who will accept it; it is yours for the taking.

Notice the comparison of the last two verses; V15 and v16

Whoever believes in Him may have eternal life

Whosoever believes in Him may have everlasting life. Repeated for emphasis the Greek word "*aonios*" is translated eternal life in one verse and everlasting life in another-eternal and everlasting life is possible for those who believe in Jesus.

V17

Here Jesus shows Nicodemus another heavenly thing; that is, the main reason Jesus came into the world was not to judge the world but to save it. Not to condemn but to die for man.

V18

Another heavenly thing for Nicodemus; the privilege of believing and the peril of not believing in the Son of God is explained. Jesus let Nicodemus know in no uncertain terms, He is not a good teacher. He is Messiah and those who believe Him will not perish.

The darkness men love is moral and mental darkness-sin, superstition false religion. Men and women have to give this up and they like it, they do not want to give it up.

Have you fallen for the current thinking that men are basically good and if they have enough of something; education, nice clothes, housing, more food, whatever they are trying to sell, and then they will be good? How does that thinking compare to what Jesus has plainly stated?

Some people obviously love sin, hate true belief and run from the gospel, the bible and religious people as much as they can.

Friends, God loves you and is willing to save you, come to Christ, believe on His finished work on the cross and you will have eternal life.

Life and Death are before you, choose this day whom you will serve.