

Turning On the Lights

‘A churchgoing family took a girl who was visiting them to church one Sunday. This girl had never gone to church in her life but seemed to enjoy the experience. When they returned home, they asked the girl what she thought about the experience. She said she liked it, but was confused about one thing. She asked why the whole West Coast was not included. The family [wondered] what she was talking about. She explained, “The man in front kept talking about the Father, Son, and whole East Coast”.’

Well, that girl was not the only one confused about God’s true nature. Perhaps the most misunderstood Person of the Holy Triune God is Mr. Holy Spirit. This Gentleman, in many ways, really should be the most well-understood Person of the Godhead since He is the One Who indwells, lives inside of each and every one of us, once we have been baptized and invited Him in, by giving our lives, the control of our lives, to Christ Jesus our Savior. Because Lord Jesus Himself promised, and then breathed Holy Spirit on the apostles just before His ascension into Heaven. Once in Heaven, dear Holy Spirit manifested Himself, and His power, by coming on all the believers on the Day of Pentecost. Recall that just after the glorious, jaw-dropping spectacle of the living, noisy, windy, thundering supernatural flame lights moving

through the air with each a mind of its own, seeking out the exact believer each was assigned to go to, moving swiftly through the ceiling and descending on each designated believer, unlocking that person's mouth and lips and tongue and vocal cords, and brain(!), so they each one began speaking in other languages of the glorious majesty and saving love of God that were understood by different people in the crowds surrounding them!

Though this was the most eye-catching, ear-catching, breathtaking, astonishing event occurring in front of this crowd of bystanders, this was hardly the most important thing transpiring. For within each and every one of the believers, a tremendous work of blessed Holy Spirit was transforming them into not just true, devout and loyal followers of Christ Jesus, but into children of God Himself, that is, brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus the Son of God, Son of Man. They were being born again in mere seconds. In public. Right before the crowd's eyes. If the highly respected, elite Pharisee leader of the Jews, leading member of the Sanhedrin, who clandestinely met with Lord Jesus, Nicodemus, had been there, and maybe he was, only God knows, his questions about how we can be born again would have been answered right before his eyes. Even then, he still wouldn't be able to explain it. For it is just as Lord Jesus taught him, as we read in John 3:8: "The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit".

Just as we can each feel the wind blowing, we simply can not tell where the next breeze will come from or how long or how strong it will be. Yesterday, we broke in a new fire pit. We got the charcoal lighted, and at first it was very smoky. While the smoke smelled good, if it blew over you, it stung the eyes. The thing was, it was next to impossible to be anywhere near it and still be out of its way. Because the wind kept blowing it, first this way, and then that way, and then around, almost in circles. It was simply impossible to predict where the smoke would blow next. We just had to keep a safe-enough distance to allow us time to move out of its way when the wind changed, by the second.

Now while we probably want to avoid being suffocated by smoke, no matter how good it smells, and prevent our eyes from burning by the particulates in the smoke, not so with Holy Spirit. For dear Holy Spirit is the very presence of God Himself, Father *and* Son, right *inside* us. Right *beside* us. St. Patrick's famous Breastplate Prayer states exactly this. Obviously he had the first-hand experience of knowing just how this reality of life actually exists. Hear the final two paragraphs of that famous prayer, which, by the way, would be a good prayer for every believer to pray daily or from time to time: "Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me. Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger. I bind

unto myself the Name, The strong Name of the Trinity; By invocation of the same. The Three in One, and One in Three, Of Whom all nature hath creation, Eternal Father, Spirit, Word: Praise to the Lord of my salvation, Salvation is of Christ the Lord”.

Well, that about says it all. I could end this with just those words. But don't get your hopes up. This is still too short! For Christ Jesus didn't end with that. In His tender, patient teaching of Nicodemus, He went on to prophesy in verses 13-15: “But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life”. Now, what does Moses and the bronze snake have to do with anything? Well, as a leading scholar, professor, judge and ruler of the Jews, from the rigorous sect known as the Pharisees, Nicodemus would have had at least the entire first five books of the Bible, the Torah, if not the entire Old Testament, memorized. So when Lord Jesus mentioned the bronze snake, Nicodemus would have known exactly the passage in Numbers 21 being referenced. This happened in the last year of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt.

The last year! Probably during their last summer before entering the Promised Land, the people, and note it was mostly the young ones, for the older faithless generation that had balked at entering the Promised Land forty years before had almost entirely died out by now, this younger generation who had all been born

during the wilderness wanderings, eating the miraculous manna, never experiencing their shoes or clothes wearing out, not even knowing that things get old and finally fall apart and have to be replaced, for God had miraculously provided for their every need, for forty years, now they're complaining. Again! These people, who had never known the anguish, torment and deprivation their parents and grandparents had endured in Egyptian slavery, now, tragically like so many of our younger generation today, cried out, protesting to Moses, as recorded in Numbers 21:4-5: 'But the people grew impatient with the long journey, and they began to speak against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!' Can you imagine? They hadn't the faintest idea of just how good they had it! Their life was an absolute breeze. Well, reality would strike then soon enough.

Now imagine how Father God felt. They deserved far worse for such mocking and blaspheming of God's tender, loving care for them, but God only sent some poisonous snakes among them to bite the worst of them who fittingly died. But even here, God was merciful. For the people came to their senses, and cried out, in verse 7: "'We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take away the snakes.'" So Moses prayed for the people.' And the Lord God patiently answered, as verses 8-9 record: 'Then the Lord told him, "Make a

replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!” So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed! And now Lord Jesus prophesied to Nicodemus that He Himself will be similarly lifted up on a tree, and all who look upon Him in faith will have *eternal* life. Not just lengthened earthly life.

Consider again what happened on Pentecost. The believers were born again, filled with Holy Spirit, and Peter preached. A *long* time, Luke says. And about 3,000 were saved, baptized, and born again that very day. But remember, the Day of Pentecost also commemorated the day when the Israelites received the Ten Commandments and the Law on Mt. Sinai from Moses. What happened while he and Joshua were up on the mountaintop with God? The people down below grew impatient, convinced Aaron to make them a visible idol, a golden calf, which they worshiped in a debauched orgy of sexual sin. Moses saw them sin and threw the tablets of the Law at them which shattered on the ground. And God through Moses told the Levites, who’d kept themselves from the sinning, to go through and kill the ringleaders who had brought such sin on the people. About 3,000 were killed that day. But, nearly 1,500 years later, on the Day of Pentecost, about 3,000 were brought into the Kingdom receiving eternal life, never to die again! God turned on their lights! Folks, that is how the One and Only Living Triune God does things. Perfectly!

