

Living in the Spiritual Dimension

‘A man dies and goes to heaven. Of course, St. Peter meets him at the pearly gates. St. Peter says, “Here’s how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you’ve done, and I give you a certain number of points for each item, depending on how good it was. When you reach 100 points, you get in”. “Okay”, the man says, “I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart”. “That’s wonderful”, says St. Peter, “that’s worth three points!” “Three points?” he says. “Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my tithe and service”. “Terrific!” says St. Peter, “that’s certainly worth a point”. “One point? Golly. How about this: I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless veterans”. “Fantastic, that’s good for two more points”, he says. “TWO POINTS!!” the man cries. “At this rate the only way I get into heaven is by the grace of God!” “Come on in!””

And that, folks, pretty much sums up the why of the Gospel! For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son to exchange His perfect, sinless life for our decrepit, sin-filled lives. He took our horrific lives into Himself, and, deservedly because of our sins upon Him, sacrificially died on the cross, paying

the penalty of death for sedition against God. In taking our lives from us, in return He gave us His perfect, sinless, supernatural, everlasting life. Such a simple, great exchange! On the other hand, this flat-out brilliant, perfect plan was truly a once-for-all-eternity act that had never and could never have been imagined by anyone except God Himself. This Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, this Tripartite Divinity, planned and purposed to separate one Person of Himself from the rest of Himself by putting all the sin of all who would ever repent and believe on Lord Jesus, and die in place of us, instead of us. Since He died, then God could then forgive us of, not some, not most, but absolutely all our sins; if we but give our lives to Lord Jesus. For when we give them, we receive His life imparted to us.

Only the Creator Himself could conceive of such a perfect, flawless remedy. And for each and every one of us believers, God can point to us and show the devil and all who rebel against God's righteousness, that here are humans who've willingly chosen to cling forever to their Father, forever obedient, loyal and steadfast. They achieve the perfection in their existence that the rebellious fallen angels could never achieve. Thus, we become qualified to judge the very angels themselves! Imagine the future consternation of those rebel angels when we, creatures created to live and administer this earth, so much inferior to them, are now placed above them in power and authority. Since the devil, genius that he is, is painfully cognizant of this future, his hatred of us

only grows hotter and hotter as his allowed time to wreak havoc on earth draws nearer and nearer to its close.

This is the reality of all life, of the entire physical universe of which the Earth is the center. Though not necessarily evident now, it will be unquestionably when Christ Jesus lowers the New Jerusalem down from Heaven to hover over this earth forever and ever, with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's presence eternally residing within it. All this our Lord Jesus was trying to get across to Nicodemus. Because this esteemed rabbi was addressed as "*the* respected teacher" by the Lord, using, purposely, the definite article "the", indicates that Nicodemus was the most supreme of all the rabbis of Israel in that day. He was the top teacher, the one that all others aspired to become. And he felt both a responsibility and an intellectual curiosity to learn more about this "upstart", unsanctioned, unauthorized rabbi Who was rapidly gathering worrisome, massive throngs of followers. Was this Man's teachings orthodox? Was He leading people astray? Was He compromising the sacred Jewish faith? Nicodemus, for the sake and spiritual well-being of all the Jews, had to find out. Well, find out he did!

In fact, Nicodemus got way more than he bargained for. He approached the Lord under the cover of darkness, for both privacy, discretion, and to allow for an extended discourse with no distractions or interruptions. He began by acknowledging that Lord Jesus is indeed specially touched and used of God, because no one could perform the miracles and signs that accompanied Lord

Jesus' ministry unless God was with Him. And that's as far as he got! No use wasting any time here. No use allowing more words to confuse and obfuscate the issues. Lord Jesus dives right to the salient point. The "eternal truth" is that anyone who seeks to gain admittance to Heaven, that is, to live eternally with God, must be "born from above". Nicodemus must have stuttered trying to respond to this startling, astonishing, opening statement from Jesus of Nazareth. This Man had just skipped over, side-stepped, all the "pertinent", "relevant" issues that concerned the scribes, the teachers, and the priests, not only in Jerusalem but throughout the Jewish world. The concerns about following the law of Moses, about properly observing the Sabbath, about offering the correct sacrifices in the correct ways, about the necessary pilgrimages and observances of the holy days, about the purification rituals and immersions, "baptisms", sacred washings to purify one's self before coming to God in worship and prayer. All these and more were bypassed by Lord Jesus' very first sentence! What was this Man talking about?

You see, in a very real way, it's much like today's joke at the beginning. The Judaism of the day, and even still today, is focussed on observing, correctly, all the various rules, regulations and religious observances required by whatever sect of Judaism people belong to. To varying extents, all of them are striving to gain favor with God by doing "good" works in the form of obeying the Law of God given them way, way back by Moses. The goal,

of course, is to obey every single command and injunction written in the Bible, as interpreted by whatever one's denomination of Judaism. But, of course, it's impossible! Everyone knows it, while pretending otherwise. And since there hasn't been a temple in which to offer the required animal sacrifices to "atone" for the people's sin for 1,954 years, many in Israel today are waiting with baited breath for the Third Temple to be built and completed, so that the animal sacrifices can resume allowing God to once again "forgive" the people's collective sin, so the Messiah can come, to set all right with God again. If only until next year's Yom Kippur.

Lord Jesus' opening words set all of that aside. What all the religious establishment saw as of first priority, this "strange" Man treated practically as an afterthought. What was He saying? Something about being "born from above"? What in the world? The Lord explains further and still Nicodemus doesn't understand. The most skilled, esteemed, educated, holder of the highest degrees, is struggling to comprehend the "simple" truth Lord Jesus has just expressed. The Lord gently chides him for not being able to grasp what has just been revealed. Of all people, Nicodemus should be the first to understand this "new" revelatory truth. Yet, probably because of his very vaunted education, he can't wrap his head around what Lord Jesus is saying. He later does come to understand. We know because he and Joseph of Arimathea went to Governor Pilate after Lord Jesus' death on the cross, and respectfully retrieved His body, prepared ample spices and burial

garments for Him, and together, laid His body in Joseph's own tomb because it was close by and it was the least they could do.

The long and short of what our Lord revealed to Nicodemus was the simple and foundational fact that we were never meant to live according to the rules of the current state of this world. In fact, we were never meant to be limited to just living on this earth. Lord Jesus was opening Nicodemus' eyes to the supremacy of the spiritual "dimension", as opposed to the physical. For it is from the spiritual realm that the physical realm exists at all! Because of the fall of Adam, and the simultaneous fall of creation, the realm of the Spirit is veiled and permanently closed off to all of humanity and creation who are not covered in the righteous, physical-spiritual blood of Christ Jesus the Second Person of the Trinity, the designated-from-all-time Savior of the world. For it is when we live in the Spirit, by Holy Spirit, the Spirit's realm, God's "native" "home" is opened to us simultaneously as we continue to live on this "solid", physical earth. As Adam and Eve had before they rebelled, we are to live with one foot on earth and the other in Heaven, in the heavenly, Spirit realms, at the same time. That is how we were designed to live. And that and more is what Lord Jesus came to restore. For, as the Prophet Isaiah experienced in chapter 6 of his book, we were always meant to live this way. And so we will again, and even now as we learn ever more to hear and sense Holy Spirit guiding us. For the closer we get to Him, the Lord, the closer we walk into God's very presence in Heaven!

