

Food for thought from the Gospel of John

3 – 8 The World’s Reaction to God’s Love

John 3:16-21

We are considering the last part of Nicodemus’ interview with Jesus. Nicodemus, a master teacher of Israel, has been bewildered by the idea of a new and spiritual birth that he is lacking (**John 3:1-9**). He has been confronted about his lack of heavenly knowledge (**John 3:10-13**). Nicodemus probably has also not figured out the significance of Moses erecting a brass snake before Israel and how Jesus has compared that to himself (**John 3:14-16 cp Numbers 21:4-9**). Now (**John 3:16-21**), Nicodemus is not just getting a nice discussion about God’s love. He is being shown a life and death decision that people must make. God’s love has been the motive for Him to send His Son. But people will perish if they reject His Son. There is a non-negotiable truth which will cause people to be condemned if they do not submit to it.

So, let’s back up and try to see how this develops.

- Mankind, in their spiritual deadness, need to be given spiritual life as a gift.
- Mankind, in their sinful state, need to have a sacrifice made for them. The act of faith, looking to Christ, will secure forgiveness and salvation.
- To refuse to respond by faith will bring condemnation. Actually, it will leave us in the state of condemnation that we are already in.
- This life that is offered, this love that is demonstrated, this sacrifice that has been made constitutes the truth of Christ that shines as a light in this dark and sinful world.

Behold and receive the truth / Behold and receive the light!

When Scripture says, “God so loved the **world**...” and “God sent not His Son into the **world** to condemn the **world**, but that the **world** through Him might be saved” we are talking about undeserving, unbelieving people. These are the people of the world. They naturally refuse to know Christ and refuse to identify with Him (John 1:4-5,9-10).

Let’s particularly notice John 1:4-5. Christ is a light that shines on everyone. Yet the world (“*the darkness*”) “*comprehends it not.*” Some translations say, in John 1:5, that the darkness “*has not overcome it.*” The NLT says that the darkness “*can never extinguish it.*” The Greek word means “*To understand, comprehend, grasp.*” It also means “*to apprehend, control, overcome.*” Though

the word seems complex, one thing is very clear: we are not talking about simple intellectual comprehension. We are talking about an ignorance that fosters rebellion.

Do the Truth

Mere ignorance could be replaced with information. But the rebellion that we are seeing here is that mankind is possessed of a love for sin that makes them hate the light, hate the truth. The truth requires that we be separated from sin. If God would just pay for our sins and then let us continue to wallow around in them, people might love the Gospel. But the message of God's love is that God sent His Son into the world to save His people **from** their sins – not save them so that they can continue **in** their sins (Matthew 1:21). To behold and receive this truth will result in forsaking sin and **doing the truth** (John 3:21; I John 1:6). On our part, we are required to have faith and repent (i.e. change our mind about sin – Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 21:32; Acts 3:18-19; 16:27-32). On God's part, God gives grace that produces a new spiritual life and perspective. Salvation provides the very presence and power of Christ, working within us (John 1:17; Romans 8:1-4; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13).

Love the light / Walk in the light

That people hate this light and will not come to it is like waking up a child, early on a winter morning, while it is still dark. As soon as you turn on the lights, they feel pain and they complain. So it is when we preach the Gospel to people who are comfortable in their sin. It is painful to be told of our sins and of God's displeasure with them. To some, it is unthinkable that God would take our sinful pleasures from us. So, this Gospel of love is hated by many because it shows us the true intentions of God's love – to make us holy people. There have been false gospels created to try and take away the issue of repentance and holiness.

Please understand, if sin was not such a terrible thing God would not try to take it from us. But, in order to give us eternal bliss, we need to agree with God that sin is bad, and that God has much better pleasure intended for us (I John 1:5 – 2:6; Romans 6:17-23; Psalm 16:11).