

## Jesus and Nicodemus.

### Part 2: The Paradox of Love and Judgement John 3:9 - 21

<sup>10</sup> "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"

<sup>13</sup> No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

<sup>19</sup> This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

#### "Are you the teacher of Israel?" (v10)

The language suggests that Nicodemus was a very important person. Jesus implies that as the outstanding teacher of the nation, Nicodemus should have been familiar with the teaching of the new birth. Evidently Jesus felt that since the OT contained this teaching in principle, those who read the Scriptures were responsible for knowing and believing the truth.

#### "We speak of what we know." (v11)

Jesus spoke with an air of authority.

#### "No-one has ever gone into heaven" (v13)

No one had ever entered into heaven to experience its realities directly except Jesus himself, the Son of Man, who had come from heaven. Revelation, not discovery, is the basis for faith.

#### "Just as Moses..." (v14-15)

The reference is to Num 21:4-9. Jesus uses this analogy to predict his death on the cross as the means of our salvation. He also would be "lifted up".

#### "For God so loved..." (v16)

The most important message of the Gospel - salvation is a gift received only by believing God for it. The nature of belief is implied in the illustration of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness (v. 14). Belief consists of accepting something, not doing something.

The presentation of the good news of God's love offers only two options: to believe or to perish.

#### God did not send his Son into the world to condemn... (v 17-18)

Notwithstanding this gloomy picture of "lost" or "perish," God's purpose toward man is positive. God's attitude is not that of suspicion or hatred but of love. He is not seeking an excuse to condemn men but is rather endeavoring to save them. His purpose in sending Jesus into the world was to show his love and to draw men to himself.

**"Men loved darkness instead of light" (v19-21)** The difference between the believer and the unbeliever does not lie in the guilt or innocence of either, it lies in the different attitudes they take toward the "light." The unbeliever shrinks from the light because it exposes his sin; the believer willingly comes to the light so that his real motives may be revealed.

## The Paradox of Love and Judgement

Here we are faced with one other apparent paradox of the Fourth Gospel - the paradox of love and judgment. (just as in Chapter 2).

We have just been thinking of the love of God, and now suddenly we are confronted with judgment and condemnation and conviction. John has just said that it was because God so loved the world that he sent his Son into the world. Later he will go on to show us Jesus saying: "For judgment I came into this world" (*John 9:39*). How can both things be true?

It is quite possible to offer someone an experience in nothing but love and for that experience to turn out a judgment. It is quite possible to offer someone an experience which is meant to do nothing but bring joy and bliss and yet for that experience to turn out a judgment.

For example --

(i) We do a good turn for someone - take them out for the day or whatever - they do nothing but grumble or find fault.

(ii) Suppose we love great music.. Suppose we have a friend who does not know anything about such music and we wish to introduce them to this great experience, to share it with them, and give them this contact with the invisible beauty which we ourselves enjoy. We have no aim other than to give our friend the happiness of a great new experience. We take him to a symphony concert; and in a very short time they are fidgeting and gazing around the hall, extremely bored. That friend has passed judgment on themselves that they have no music in their soul. The experience designed to bring them new happiness has become only a judgment.

(iii) A visitor was being shown round an art gallery by one of the attendants. In that gallery there were certain masterpieces beyond all price, possessions of eternal beauty and unquestioned genius. At the end of the tour the visitor said: "Well, I don't think much of your old pictures." The attendant answered quietly: "Sir, I would remind you that these pictures are no longer on trial, but those who look at them are." All that the man's reaction had done was to show his own blindness.

This is so with regard to Jesus. If, when someone is confronted with Jesus, their soul responds to that wonder and beauty, they are on the way to salvation. But if, when they are confronted with Jesus, they see nothing lovely, they stand condemned. Their reaction has condemned them. God sent Jesus in love. He sent him for that person's salvation; but that which was sent in love has become a condemnation. It is not God who has condemned the person; God only loved them; the person has condemned themselves.

By their reaction to Jesus Christ, someone stands revealed and their soul laid bare. If they regard Christ with love, even with wistful yearning, for them there is hope; but if in Christ they see nothing attractive they have condemned themselves. He who was sent in love has become to them judgment.