

Bible Study – March 31, 2015 (John 2: 23 – 3: 21)

1. What are the qualifications to enter or to see the kingdom of God? (3: 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16; Matt. 3: 2)
 - a. Cannot see or enter the kingdom of God with knowledge but with an experience (3: 2, 3). As an outside matter cannot understand neither the origin nor the destination of the Wind, a person who is not born again cannot understand the born again experience.
 - b. Readiness or submissiveness to have a new beginning (3: 5). Nicodemus might be righteous according to Jewish society. He might had a lot of knowledge. But no one can enter the kingdom of God with his own strength or righteousness. Everyone need a new beginning.
 - c. Readiness to be filled by the Spirit and accepts its authority (3: 6, 8)
 - d. Great-heartedness to accept and believe the preliminary and heavenly things (3: 12). {Earthly things: - Jesus Christ came down from heaven. People need to believe in him and accept him for a new beginning. These things takes place on earth. Jesus was talking about this until now and Nicodemus couldn't understand it. Then, there is a heavenly part to it, more advanced truths. Nicodemus won't be able to get it unless he will be able to understand the earthly things}
 - e. Believe in Jesus Christ (3: 15)

2. Nicodemus came to Jesus with intellectual questions (3: 2, 4, 9)? Jesus began answering to his question in a preliminary intellectual level and he couldn't grasp it (3: 12). Therefore, in verse 16 – 18 author summarises the conversation by bringing it to the level of faith and love. How do you understand the transition from intellect [knowledge] to faith and love [heart] in the process of born again? Does the first sign in chapter 2 has any relevance in this discussion?

A person comes to the **born again** experience as the result of faith in Jesus Christ and God's love and not because of his intellectual capacity. The experience of **born again** is more than intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It means putting our trust and confidence in him that he alone can save us.

Jesus not only brought heavenly knowledge from heaven to earth but he brought heavenly experiences too (3: 11, 12, 13). As experience is more connected to heart, the author takes the conversation to the level of heart/experience. Heavenly realities do not contradict with knowledge rather it is the true knowledge. But it cannot be grasped with human knowledge. Human knowledge will grasp it when it is followed by an experience.

3. How do you understand God's Love? (3: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; 14: 21; Eph. 3: 17 – 19; 1 John 3: 16, 17, 18, 19; 4: 8, 16). In these verses Jesus Christ is described as the only begotten Son (3: 16) and as the Light (3: 19, 20, 21). These title of Jesus has connected to the theme of God's Love.
- a. God's love is not static or self centered. It reaches out and draws others in.
 - b. God's love is wide enough (God loved the World [contrary to Jewish idea]). It has lot of room to accommodate all people.
 - c. God's love is not vague, sentimental feeling, but love that costs (God not only gave the Son by sending him into the world, but God also gave the Son on the cross.)
 - d. His Love is complete and perfect. God has shown his love by giving his one and only Son he loved the most. Therefore, his love leaves no room to be questioned.
 - e. God's love is revelatory. It manifest what is already existed between the Father and the Son (1: 14; 3: 16) {the already existed love and the relationship.} It doesn't come out of emptiness. It has an act of love to support it and not only the words of love.
 - f. God's love proceeds out of a relationship and it is only works best in a relationship.
 - g. Out of the revelatory aspect its purpose is brought out, both negatively and positively. As it doesn't proceed from emptiness but from a perfect relationship and what is already existed, the way people respond to it can lead them into eternal life or judgment¹.
 - h. No one can escape from the result of God's love (3: 17; 9: 39)
 - i. God's love demands the response of Faith (3:18). Questioning it or doubting it will lead to judgment.
 - j. God's love works in light and it has light² (3: 19, 20). God's love never goes in line with darkness People loved darkness because light brings everything into light. Nothing can be hided or kept in secret. A person who accept God's love or Jesus Christ is least bothered about his past failures and sins have been revealed (brought into light). He rather enjoys the love of God or having Jesus in him.
 - k. God's love is always followed by action (3: 21). God's love will lead a person to do the truth (cf. 1 John 1: 6). The practice of truth is what is required. The Love of God proceeded out of an action therefore it requires action from the recipients.
 - l. God's love will increase our confidence level (3: 21).

Wind's Origin: - Eccl. 8: 8; 11: 5. Though the wind's origin is invisible. Its effect can be observed.

Moses' lifting up of serpent: - Num 21: 8 - 9

¹ John goes on to speak Christ as Judging (5: 30; 8: 16, 26) and of his word as judging people (12: 48). He also present the Jewish idea of God the Father as the Judge (8: 50). But he also speaks the Father has committed all judgment to Christ (5: 22, 27)

² In the Gospel of John Christ is Light (1: 9; 8: 12; 9: 5)