

## Look Up

Most scholars (unlike ESV translators) believe this text concludes the words of Jesus to Nicodemus. John's words then begin at 3:16 and end at 3:21. Last week JESUS taught Nicodemus about the new birth: absolutely essential, completely transforming, a powerful and sovereign act of God alone. In this text, JESUS teaches Nicodemus to look up. Unless we look up to God for the provision of our salvation, we shall never be saved.

### John 3:9-15

9 Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

#### I. We must look up to the Miraculous (vv. 9-10)

Notice how Nicodemus uses the word "can" in vv. 2,4, and 9. He believes Jesus is from God (v.2), but can't believe in the new birth. He is, at this point, a partial believer. Nicodemus' failure to understand flowed from his failure to believe. We cannot possibly grasp the Christian Faith without understanding its miraculous nature. We long for some of our friends to come and love Jesus Christ. Why shall we never give up on them? Because we have seen over and over again the grace of God toward hardened sinners like ourselves—and like Nicodemus.

#### II. We must look up to Revelation (vv.11-13)

Our faith is not the result of scientific discovery nor of philosophical contemplation. It is a faith revealed to us by God. Look at what Paul says in Galatians 1:11,12 and what Peter says in II Peter 1:20, 21.

No one has ever entered the heavenly realms and returned to report to us, other than Jesus Christ. In his commentary on John, Gary Burge says this:

Jesus is not simply another human teacher who outdoes one of Jerusalem's leading rabbis. Jesus is not simply a superior human expositor of Scripture who in debate can outrun any rival. Jesus is a *divine* teacher and revealer of God. We saw this already in 1:18. “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.” The importance of Jesus is not found simply in what he says but in where he comes from. Therefore there is an *ontological* dimension to Christology in John that is essential. Jesus has descended from heaven (3:13). This notion offers a remarkable appeal to my century: Christology makes an absolute claim, an outrageous claim, to religious truth. No other source can rival what is being claimed here for Jesus. He provides access to God that is unlike any other religious founder.

#### III. We must look up to the Cross (v.14)

Jesus here refers to an event in Israel's history when God provided healing from poisonous serpents. (Cf. Num.21:9). He says that in the same way He must be lifted up for our salvation. Of course, He will soon be lifted up on the Cross to pay for all our sins and to deliver us from the divine condemnation we deserve.

Notice that whereas for the Synoptics, the cross was the culmination of Jesus' humiliation, for John, it is the beginning of His exaltation. Cf. John 8:28; 12:32.

#### IV. **We must look up by Faith (v.15)**

Notice that Jesus calls for no performance, no heroic deed, no great accomplishments—simply trusting Him. The verb "to believe" is the most frequently used term (8x) in the discourse with Nicodemus. Out of 241 uses in the NT, 98 are in John, 9 in his first epistle. This is the first of 17 usages of "everlasting life" in John. In John, everlasting life is primarily the present state of life to be enjoyed now, rather than a future immortal bliss.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Why is it impossible for a true believer to deny the miraculous?
2. How has God made Himself known to us?
3. What did Jesus do for us on the cross?
4. Why must one believe in the work of Christ on the cross in order to receive eternal life?
5. What does it mean to "believe in him?"

#### Going Deeper

1. How have you minimized the miraculous in your walk with God and your witness to others?
2. How have you failed to appropriate the work of Christ on the cross for you?

