

Life Group Notes 10/23/2022
Mark Warren John's Gospel Week 3

This week I introduce a new format designed to make the notes easier to follow. The footnotes remain at the end, and are referenced in the message with an asterisk (*). If you have observations or questions feel free send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net.—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.

(This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**)

Note: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. The purpose is to unite, not divide; to proclaim fearlessly the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories from Sunday that will serve for a long time. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. This study is also a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions Pastor Mark has raised this week, 10/23, John 3. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.**

At the end of the message notes, pages 8 and 9, I have made footnotes (*) to help dig deeper into some of the people and events in this passage.

This week I covered:

1. The pharisees. Who are they? Where did they come from?
 2. Nicodemus. Who was he? Do the Jews know him? Why is this encounter so important?
 3. "Born again" is a play on words. The note looks at it.
 4. The problems translators face when words fail or go missing, from language to language.
 5. The meaning of "one and only" Son.
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Pastor Mark begins with a question typical for evangelicals on outreach in the streets: "If you were to die tonight, where are you going? Are you sure?" **Answer him. Can you explain how you are sure? Is it a matter of following the commandments? How is a person saved?**

Look up Mark 10: 17 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?" 18 But Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not give false testimony, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" 20 And

he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth." 21 Looking at him, Jesus showed love to him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But he [a]was deeply dismayed by these words, and he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

23 And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"

1. Summarize the story.
2. What HAS the young man done?
3. What has the young man not done? What works are missing? What is missing?
4. If Jesus promises "treasure in heaven" where there is neither rust nor decay, is that a fair exchange? Today?
5. Was Jesus offering more in exchange or less...in this life?
6. Could you do it? Have you ever? Do you have a testimony?
7. Whom do you know in history that did this? What was the result?

Look up Matthew 7: 21 Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 **Many** will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness!'

1. What does Jesus mean by "many"?
2. Why is that sobering?
3. Did they do everything right? Were there legitimate prophecies and miracles?
4. Did their prophecies and miracles save them?
5. For whom were the prophecies and miracles intended?
6. If Jesus didn't know the prophets who prophesied, whom did He know?
7. What does a "worker of lawlessness" not do, despite working legitimate miracles and prophecies?

Jesus and *Nicodemus

1 Now there was a man of the *Pharisees named *Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs You are doing if God were not with him."

1. Who is Nicodemus?
2. Why does he come to Jesus at night?
3. Why is it significant that Nicodemus calls Jesus "Rabbi"? What is his surprising admission, and why is it so surprising?
4. Who is the "we" in his statement? Are there others in the council who do not know this? Many? If the others do not see, what are they? Whom did Jesus call "blind guides?"
5. Does Nicodemus ask Jesus anything?

3 Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is *born again."

1. Is Jesus exhorting Nicodemus or is He recognizing a gift?
2. What might Nicodemus have seen in Jesus that prompts Jesus to say these words?
3. What does this tell you about Nicodemus? Has he seen the kingdom of God? How do you know? Does he understand this?
4. Do you see what Nicodemus saw *before* you are born again, or after you are born again? Why does Nicodemus see what the others cannot see?
5. Why did Nicodemus come to Jesus?

4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time to be born?"

1. What do you think of Nicodemus' question?
2. How many times have you read this passage?
3. Do you understand perfectly what Jesus is saying? What questions do his statements raise in your mind?

5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh is born of flesh, but spirit is born of the Spirit. **7** Do not be amazed that I said, 'You must be born again.'

1. Can you summarize what Jesus just said? What happens at birth? What does a child know? What does a child not know?
2. What does "born of water/flesh" mean? What does "born of the Spirit" mean?
3. When were you born of the flesh? When were you born of the Spirit? Who is your father in the flesh? Who is your father in the Spirit? Explain.
4. Is there a distinction between "seeing the kingdom of God" and "entering the kingdom of God."
5. Who rules in the kingdom of God? What does that rule look like in practical terms? Who obeys whom? How often?

Pastor Mark says **look up the new covenant in Ezekiel 6: 24** *For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all the countries, and I will bring you back into your own land. 25 I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances.*

1. Do you see water baptism foreshadowed in this passage, v. 25?
2. Why is there more than just river water being used here?
3. How does this explain being "born again"?
4. When this promise is fulfilled who is ruling in our heart?
5. Where is the kingdom of God?
6. When Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is within you," does this explain what that means? How?

Look up Jeremiah 31: 31 *Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD,*

*when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.*

***32**It will not be like the covenant
I made with their fathers
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of the land of Egypt—
a covenant they broke,
though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.*

***33**“But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, declares the LORD.
I will put My law in their minds
and inscribe it on their hearts.
And I will be their God,
and they will be My people.*

***34**No longer will each man teach his neighbor or his brother,
saying, ‘Know the LORD,’
because they will all know Me,
from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.
For I will forgive their iniquities
and will remember their sins no more.”*

1. How does this explain being “born again”?
2. When this promise is fulfilled who is ruling in our heart?
3. Who becomes our teacher?
4. Who rules in righteousness and mercy?
5. Where is the kingdom of God?
6. Why did Nicodemus have such a hard time remembering this?

8The wind blows where it wishes. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

1. Can you explain?
2. Do you have a testimony? What evidence of the wind blowing have you seen?

9“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10“You (you singular/thou) are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and you (singular) do not understand these things? **11**Truly, truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, and yet you people (you plural) do not accept our testimony.

12If I have told you (plural) about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you (plural) believe if I tell you about heavenly things? **13**No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven—the Son of Man. **14**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15**that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.

1. Is Nicodemus becoming enlightened? Are you? Why is this so hard to understand if it's earthly?
2. Summarize what Jesus is saying about Himself?
3. Who is "we" that is speaking?
4. How is what Jesus is saying, "earthly"?
5. Why do you think *they* have a hard time with Jesus' testimony?
6. How are you doing?
7. What is the promise when you become born again?
8. How does God say your life will change? Summarize the new covenant.

Look up Numbers 21: ⁴Then they set out from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, in order to bypass the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient on the journey ⁵and spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you led us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread or water, and we detest this wretched food!"

⁶So the LORD sent venomous snakes among the people, and many of the Israelites were bitten and died.

⁷Then the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Intercede with the LORD so He will take the snakes away from us." So Moses interceded for the people.

⁸Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and mount it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will live." ⁹So Moses made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. If anyone who was bitten looked at the bronze snake, he would live.

1. Summarize what happened to the Israelites in the desert.
2. What brought the judgment and the plague of snakes? Have you ever grown impatient?
3. What happened when Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert?
4. When was Jesus "lifted up?" What happens when the "snake bit" look to Him?
5. Is He foreshadowing His death?
6. What happens when you look to Jesus?

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

1. **Look up John 15:** ¹²This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are My friends if you do what I command you. **How does the love Jesus demands that we have reflect God Himself?**
2. If God did not send His son to condemn, why do people feel condemned by Christianity today?

3. Did Nicodemus believe in Him?
4. If demons believe in him, why are they not saved? What is the difference between the demons believing, and Nicodemus'?
5. How do you know?

19And this is the verdict: The Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the Light because their deeds were evil. **20**Everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come into the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. **21**But whoever practices the truth comes into the Light, so that it may be seen clearly that what he has done has been accomplished in God.”

1. **Review John 1:** **5**The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. **9**The true Light who gives light to every man was coming into the world. **10**He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. **11**He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. **12**But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— **13**children born not of blood, nor of the desire or will of man, but born of God. How can you distinguish believers from unbelievers? Good pharisees from bad pharisees?
2. How does one “practice the truth?” What did Nicodemus do? How did he begin his conversation?
3. Do you understand why communication has become so difficult with unbelievers in these days?
4. How did John foreshadow this conversation with Nicodemus?

Mark says, “Jesus claimed to be Him, the only unique Son of God, and His resurrection proves that He was Who He said He was, and the people loved the darkness. God has given us freedom. He has given us the ability to choose Him or reject Him.” Then He asks, “Why would He do this? We wouldn’t have to worry about sin. We wouldn’t have to worry about choice. Why would He do this?” **Answer him? If you are free, what is the only gift you can bring to the party that is yours alone to give? Why is your faith, therefore, so important to God, that “without [your] faith, it is impossible to please Him”?** (Heb 11:6) Mark says, “The only thing you can do is invite Him in, decide to take Him at His Word, and God does the rest.” **Does this make sense? What changes when you are born again? Where do your directions come from?**

John’s Testimony about Jesus

22After this, Jesus and His disciples went into the Judean countryside, where He spent some time with them and baptized.

23Now John was also baptizing at Aenon [note: literally the Springs] near Salim, because the water was plentiful there, and people kept coming to be baptized. **24**(For John had not yet been thrown into prison.)

25Then a dispute arose between John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the issue of ceremonial washing. **26**So John’s disciples came to him and said, “Look, Rabbi,

the One who was with you beyond the Jordan, the One you testified about—He is baptizing, and everyone is going to Him.”

1. What is surprising about this passage? Have you ever thought of Jesus baptizing in water?
2. What was the John’s disciples’ reaction to Jesus baptizing?
3. What do you imagine the “dispute over ceremonial washing” was?
4. Looking at chapter 1, whose “fault” was it that “everyone was going to Jesus and leaving John?”
5. In modern “evangelicalism,” this might be called sheep stealing. How do you know it is not?

[27](#)John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. [28](#)You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but am sent ahead of Him.’ [29](#)The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom stands and listens for him, and is overjoyed to hear the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. [30](#)He must increase; I must decrease.

[31](#)The One who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth belongs to the earth and speaks as one from the earth. The One who comes from heaven is above all. [32](#)He testifies to what He has seen and heard, yet no one accepts His testimony. [33](#)Whoever accepts His testimony has certified that God is truthful. [34](#)For the One whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

[35](#)The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in His hands. [36](#)Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever rejects the Son will not see life. Instead, the wrath of God remains on him.”

Jesus describes John as the greatest prophet of all prophets before this time, yet he did no recorded miracles.

1. Summarize what you read. How does hearing John the Baptist speak enrich us?
2. When you “accept Jesus’ testimony” you certify that God is truthful. Have you accepted His testimony? In Romans 1, Paul writes, “Because they refused to acknowledge God as God, He gave their minds over to depravity.” What does accepting Jesus’ testimony bring? Review the new covenant above.
3. When God “gives the Spirit without limit,” what do you have to look forward to? Have you asked the Lord to fill you? Review the new covenant above!
4. What makes him the “greatest” when he “prophesied in his name” but did not mighty works in his name?
5. What do you have to do to become the “greatest in the Kingdom of God?” (“If you want to be great in the Kingdom of God you have to be the servant of all.” “The last shall be first, and the first last.” “The least shall be the greatest”)
6. How does what John the Baptist says here make him that kind of great?

7. How are you doing on a greatness scale? Have you said, "You must increase. I must decrease," yet?

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's notes:

On Pharisees: *Pharisaíos* – properly, "a separatist, a purist"; a Pharisee." If we were writing the history, it's likely we'd call them "Puritans." "Pharisee" is derived from the Aramaic term, *peras* ("to divide and separate"). This literally refers to a "separatist"; hence, a Pharisee told everyone he was "separated from sin...unlike that tax collector over there." That was part of the problem. The pharisees claim their origins from the Maccabee in the Hasmonean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes, around 165. Their determination to enforce repentance and put a barrier between Israel and sin also distinguishes their legalism as historic. The Pharisee decided what work was on a Sabbath day, to the extent that a Jew could walk one mile on a "Sabbath day's journey," but a foot more was sin. The fruit of such legalism was the legendary hypocrisy that accompanies every story of a Pharisee, and the license for Christian pastors through the centuries to accuse others in the body of like hypocrisy.

On Nicodemus: Outside the book of John, little is known of Nicodemus, the Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin. The most instructive lesson to observe is the interaction between an honest purist and the object of his desire: Purity and Holiness incarnate. He calls Jesus "Rabbi," which means "My Teacher." It is an honorific address. We see Nicodemus here in chapters 3, then again as a wise counselor in chapter 7, and finally as a partner with Joseph of Arimathea in the burial.

The Jews have no record of this Nicodemus unless he was a very young man, because they tell of a Nicodemus ben Gurion who was renowned for his miracles during the rebellion against Rome sixty years later. If Nicodemus was old, which, being a member of the council of elders or the Sanhedrin, is far more likely, then it's very possible that he first encountered a twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple twenty years earlier (End of Luke 2), and remembers well that encounter. If he is fifty in this account, he would have been thirty at that time, the same age as Jesus in this account at this time. Each would remember each other, and calling Jesus "Rabbi" has that much more significance. Also, since John the apostle was acquainted with

members of the Sanhedrin, and in particular the high priest (John 19:15), there is a possibility of prior acquaintance in this encounter.

On “born again”: The Greek for “born again” poses an interesting array of possibilities for the translator. There is a skillful play on words involved. The Greek is *gennethe anothēn*, which could mean “born again, from above, from heaven, (b) from the beginning, from their origin (source), from of old, (c) again, anew.” The veil of the temple was “torn from top (*anothen*) to bottom. Luke in chapter 1 of his gospel, tells the story from the very “top” to get the story straight. In Galatians, Paul asks why the Galatians want to be enslaved “all over again.” Nicodemus misunderstands and asks Jesus, “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time?” Nicodemus doesn’t consider the possibility of being “born from above.” This does not mean that the double meaning of this invitation was not Jesus’ intent. What is clear is the concept of a fresh start. A new beginning.

On languages, idioms and “you”: A translator’s challenge is sometimes daunting. I had a difficult time explaining to my French friend why you must chop a tree *DOWN* before you can chop it *UP*. It made no sense to him. Their language provides two distinct words. This is called an “idiom,” or an expression making sense in one language that, when translated directly, would make no sense in another. “Born again” provides just that challenge, but what’s most interesting here is that Jesus’ play on words is in a heavenly language that Nicodemus, and most probably we, might not grasp immediately.

In the same sense, languages differ in the tools they provide. The King James Bible uses the terms “thee” and “thou” for “you” when addressing a single person. Thee and thou are invariably translated “you” in the modern translations, and so, we risk losing a distinction that is vital to clear understanding. Those who have lived in the south know that the southern accent has restored a plural form of address with “y’all,” which is never used for a single person, but only for the group. “Do you have your book?” is a question for a single friend, but “Do y’all have y’all’s book?” addresses a crowd.

On “one and only son”: The Greek word, *monogeneis*, means “only issue,” “only begotten,” unique, singular and without precedent. Where we may be adopted into God’s family, Jesus is God’s issue, and the only One Who proceeded from the Father.