

### Jn.3 Jesus & Nic, dispute w/ J the B disc. 11-14-99

first big face to face confrontation with a real big time mucky muck.

Last week we saw Jesus walk in to the Temple like He owned the place, and drive everyone out.

They do not try to seize him (later they would try and fail)

They do not try to stone him ( “ ” )

Here they are so intimidated they don't even try. Jesus had such an air of authority. That impressed people as much as his miracles.

1:20

**Jn.2:18 Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"**

He did, however, perform signs to show his authority to do it. He granted their request.

**2:23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.**

What did he do? I don't know. That must have been some Passover week that year! This man who drove everyone out of the Temple is doing miracle after miracle. No one had to rely on rumors. If you heard about the miracles, you could just go see him perform some more. A whole week of God displaying his power.

When Jesus did this, He really stirred thing up in Jerusalem.

3:00

Many people “believed” on his name. What kind of belief was this? If they believed, why did Jesus not commit himself to them? What was it that was in them that was a problem?

**24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.**

???

Paul uses that term to refer to the full-blown commitment to Christ.

John uses it to refer to a general favorable attitude toward Jesus. “Accepting” Him.

So they are favorable, but Jesus rejects that supposed “faith.” Why?

**25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.**

**1 Now there was a man...**

5:45

Ch.3 is an example of the people in v.23.

We are not left hanging at the end of ch.2

**of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.**

Here we have the highest example of human religion. The Phar. had religious devotion unmatched. Nobody followed more religious rules.

Perhaps Jesus is on his way back to where he was staying (maybe Bethany like the other time). You are walking along, talking about clearing the T, and suddenly you notice a shadow, and as you turn - a chill runs down your spine. It's Nic! A Pharisee - a member of the Supreme Court! You step back. The other disciples step back. Jesus steps forward.

7:30

He begins the conversation in an amazingly civil way. He says *we* (Israel) believe...believe what? 2 ***That you are from God.***

**2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."**

That's not enough. Just believe that God is with him is not sufficient.

- flowery talk about Jesus while rejecting Him.

"Jesus was a great teacher"

"He claimed to be Almighty, Creator God. Do you believe that?"

"No."

What if I claimed that? You wouldn't say, "What a wonderful teacher! He's a little off on that thing about being God, but other than that..."

9:55

Now watch how Jesus handles this man. Jesus knew what was in this man, and so he does us the favor of not responding to what he said, but answering the Q on his heart (just like Mary).

He was a very prestigious person. Most Rabbis would say, "I'm so honored that you would speak with me, Oh great teacher of Israel. Thank you so much for the complement." But he didn't get that from Jesus.

Again, in every conversation Jesus ever had he is always the authority. He

is never cowed or intimidated by anyone. You always get the feel that it is a superior talking to an inferior. Wise talking to a fool. The master talking to a student. He is not condescending or arrogant, but he controlled every conversation. The Master of the moment.

11:00

Nicodemus was at the top of Jewish religion. His question was apparently something about what his position in the kingdom would be. He had been so faithful with the rituals, so religious, he had worked so hard, read and memorized the Bible so much, prayed and fasted so often and so long.

Yet still wonders (always the case with works religion, because you never know if you have worked hard enough).

13:15

Jesus answer was an absolute SHOCK.

**3:3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, (that's what a master said to a student when he really wanted him to pay attention) no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."**

How far have you progressed in the kingdom? You haven't even entered it yet. All your religious work hasn't even gotten you to the first step. You have to start from absolute scratch. You must be born all over again. You aren't even the right kind of creature. You have to be re-created just to qualify to enter.

Nic probably expected that he would be in an elevated position in heaven. Jesus says he's not even in it.

14:30

Like Mt.5:20 and 18:1-3

15:15

Last week we asked why, if Jesus was such a likable guy, did His life end around my age with the masses clamoring for His blood. Maybe it's because He went around telling people they were not in the kingdom.

**...9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. (Didn't believe) A favorable attitude toward Jesus is not real faith.**

**10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?... I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? "**

16:00

What a slam! Nic had spent his life *teaching* heavenly things. The great leader of Israel's religion - the authority in Is on heavenly things - was not even capable of understanding *earthly* things.

Some teacher!

The kind of faith that says, “I believe Jesus is from God” but stops short of conversion is not real faith.

Unbelief doesn't understand spiritual truth, because it refuses to, because of the darkness in the heart.

16:30

Jesus goes on to tell Nic. that he is going to die on a cross. This had an effect on this timid man. He was there at the burial when the disciples had fled.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to you that there are true believers and phony believers. What is a phony Christian? Is it someone who claims to be saved, but does some really bad thing? No. Lot's of true Christians do terrible things.

So what is a phony Christian? What makes someone a true Christian? It's crucial we answer that, because your eternal destiny hinges on it.

If you read John, you will find that it is very simple. A Christian is someone who knows the true God and loves Him.

**Jn 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.**

**Jn 16:27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.**

**1Co 8:3 the man who loves God is known by God.**

So a true Christian – a person who is going to heaven – is someone who knows the true God and loves Him. Some people have love for the god they worship, but it's not the true god. It doesn't do any good to love a false god (if you pick up a banana, call it Jesus, and love it, you are not saved – you're just loony).

19:00

And if you do know the truth about God, but you don't love Him, you are not saved.

Paul put it in a little different terms. He said salvation is by faith alone. What is faith? 2 things: believing the truth about God and salvation, and entrusting your life to Him.

- knowing God and loving Him
- Believing the truth about God, and entrusting your life to Him

Jesus put it another way: "Follow Me."

20:15

There are a lot of ways it can be put, but they all focus on the same reality: salvation involves a commitment from the heart. Becoming a Christian is like getting married – it happens when you come to a moment in your life where you realize your heart is hopelessly corrupted morally, that you are guilty before God and in desperate need of forgiveness, and you entrust your life to Him.

Those are the terms.

Absolutely anyone can know God on those terms.

Absolutely no one can know God on any other terms.

21:00

## JESUS SETS UP A CONFLICT OVER CERIMONY

**JN 3:22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized.**

**23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, (MAP) because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. 24 (This was before John was put in prison.)**

Evidence for immersion

**25 An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew**

What kind of argument? I think the reason Jesus went there is just so this would happen. John baptizing over here - Jesus there. Which is better? Why 2? Who is #1? EVERYONE knows J the B is prophet, but Jesus, he is kind of unorthodox. Rivalry. "We've got water, yes we do. We've got water, how about you?"

**over the matter of ceremonial washing.**

24:30

Most take this to be baptism.

Where have we seen that phrase before? It is the exact word used in 2:6. Those are the only 2 time John uses the word. One ch. later - I think it must refer to the same thing (not baptism)

One who had apparently been associated with Jesus. John's disciples, seemed to be still stuck in a lot of ceremonialism (Mt.9:14). A big argument breaks out

about Jesus' ideas.

"Why do you still follow J the B?"

"Everyone knows he is a prophet - established. Jesus is kind of unorthodox"

"But what about the miracles? God's voice from heaven. Your guy is washed up"

"He's the greatest prophet that ever lived"

"Oh yeah? You wouldn't know a prophet if he bit you on the face"

"OUR guy baptized your guy – your guy couldn't baptize a glass of water"

"Your guy isn't worthy to tie our guy's sandals"

"Yeah? Well we've got water, yes we do..."

I don't know if it went that far - but we know that there was some kind of argument over this issue of ceremonialism.

"Look at all the people John sent over - they are all coming over to Jesus - why don't you guys come too?"

"He doesn't respect the ceremonies (wash hands, fast, wine in sacred jars, got people drinking out of them!... He's kind of weird"

"Your guy eats grasshoppers"

30:00

Apparently John's disciples lose, because in the next verse they go running to John.

Are you starting to see a theme develop with Jesus deeds?

- Ceremonial water to wine
- Goes to the center of their whole religion and drives them out
- - Telling the #1 religious leader and law-keeper that he hasn't even taken the first step toward God yet.
- now his follower arguing with John's about ceremonialism

Jesus was attacking their religion. What was wrong with their religion? Didn't God institute ceremonies?

31:30

It's not that actions aren't important. Someday you will be judged according to your deeds. It's vitally important that we obey God. But the action only has significance if it is a true expression of the heart.

Good deeds are a tool we have to express our love and devotion to God. If there is no love and devotion, the deed is absolutely meaningless. What does God

think when you put money in the offering, but you do it with another motive? That's worse than worthless. It's offensive to God. It's like giving an engagement ring to your girlfriend and saying, "I have absolutely no intention to marry you, but I should get some credit for giving you the ring."

The only significance of an engagement ring is if it is an expression of your love. If there is no love in your heart, and no commitment, the gesture is meaningless.

God detests even His own ceremonies He instituted, if they are empty.

**fasting** – Isa.58:3 **'Why have we fasted,' they say, and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?'**

**"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. \_\_\_\_\_"**

**circumcision** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dt.10:16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer., \_\_\_\_\_**

**Jer.9:26 \_\_\_\_\_ the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart." (\_\_\_\_\_**

**sacrifice** - Isa.1:10-15

An empty ceremony is offensive to God.

38:30

Are you ever guilty of this? Bowing your head during prayer and reading the bulletin? Doing religious activities for show. Remember. God always looks on the heart.

Some of the most religious people around are not even in the kingdom. They have devotions every day, come to church every time the door is open, etc., but it's all external. Be careful about being consumed with externals (Standing/sitting, clothes, Bible, singing, prayer, giving, etc.)

Keep in mind, this is what God hates more than anything.

In the OT we have prescribed external methods of worship given as pictures of spiritual realities. But now that those spiritual realities have been clearly revealed we don't need the pictures any more.

NT goes out of its way not to have any prescribed external ceremonies. Interesting - religions always dominated by hundreds of ceremonies & rules & protocol, not us.

no instruction on church building set up - or if we even need to have one. No instruction on order of worship. No guidelines on when sit or stand. No rules about the length of the service. No information about dress. Nothing on how to do communion.

And as for ceremonies - only 2! And neither one gives grace - just pictures. Also- very de-emphasized. Did you know no direct command that we be baptized or take communion? (we know we are to do them - cuz we are to baptize and it is assumed we will take communion)

Why? They *have* to have those ceremonies, because that's all there is to their religion. Get rid of the ceremonies and there is nothing left. They are careful to crowd their worship with a lot of rules and protocol and rituals, so that no one notices that the religion is really empty.

40:40

This was always the theme of Jesus' teaching (SOM, Mt.23)

41:45

Some people think a sacrament will give grace.  
But there is no such thing as a sacrament.

Now it's easy for us to point fingers at other traditions and accuse. But we are subject to the same danger. Want to know the #1 non-biblical ritual we have developed? The sinner's prayer. Is there anything wrong with praying at the moment of conversion? No. It's the most appropriate thing in the world. But many people have mistaken the prayer for the conversion.

"How can I gain eternal life?" The Bible's answer is believe, or follow Jesus. Our answer – pray to "receive" or "accept" Christ. "Invite Jesus into your heart." The result is people are confused about what salvation is. Most kids think the key to salvation is really "meaning" it when you pray the prayer.

Some of you are probably like me and did it a million times just to cover your bases. That's the problem with that. When you make salvation come from some action, there is no security, because you have the constant nagging of the question of whether or not you did it well enough.



Have you noticed that when the Bible talks about how you can know for sure that you are forgiven, it never points backward? The issue is not, “Was my conversion genuine?” It’s, “Do I believe?”

When I lead someone to the Lord, I don’t have them pray to “receive” Christ. I tell them what it means to be a Christian, and then ask them if that describes them. If it does, the person is saved, and there is no action connected with it. That way, in the future when they doubt, instead of looking back at some action, they will say, “A Christian is someone who believes. Do I believe? Do I love God?”

**BENEDICTION:** Eph 1:17-19

**I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.**

**Jesus Clears the Temple 11-7-99**

Questions about this week or last week

**Jesus was angry because people were taking God lightly.**

**Can you think of an example of what might make Him that angry today?**

**Anger at evil is a virtue. Tolerance of evil is sin.**

**In practical terms, how do you “hate the sin and love the sinner?”**

**Anger always rises out of love. When the object of love is offended, anger is the response.**

**With that in mind, what is the value of anger in your life?**

**What do we learn about God from the severity of hell?**

**If you find you love yourself too much, or God not enough, how do you change that?**

**What about when it is both?**

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**2:23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.**

Jesus has always been popular. People who reject everything He taught and who oppose Christianity are often very favorable toward Jesus.

**Why do you suppose that is?**

**A true Christian is one who knows the true God and loves Him. The greatest command is to love God with all your being.**

What do you tell a person who wants to love God, and feels nothing toward Him?

**Some say that requiring a commitment or repentance is a false addition to faith. We are saved by faith alone, and requiring repentance or commitment is adding “works.” How would you respond to that?**

Jesus told Nicodemus that no one can see the Kingdom unless he is born again.

How would you respond to someone who says that is fine for you, but don't criticize other ways – just respect other people's beliefs?

Jesus is obviously going way out of His way to destroy people's confidence in rituals. Actions that do not express something that is in your heart are worthless.

What do you do if you want to do something for God, but don't feel anything inside you? For example, suppose you decide to read your Bible or give offering even though you don't feel like it. Does that mean you shouldn't do it?