

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 26

August 28, 2019

In 2010 I began a study of the mind of Christ and I decided that every day I would spend at least an hour, maybe two, looking at everything Jesus did and said, and I produced out of that seven-year study 21 journals. Those journals are mainly preserved so I may pass them on to my kids. I have five kids. When we were looking at what to do, some suggested that I share some of this material on Wednesday nights, so that's what we're doing. It is being recorded and transcribed because no one could ever take my notes and read what I wrote.

I'll be reading a lot from my journal tonight, and I'll pause for any comments you want to make so you are welcome to jump right into it. I'm about half way through the first journal so we're just "flying" through the mind of Christ here at a rapid pace. I'll be 95 when we get through the end of journal 21, I think.

I've also made a decision this week, I've been praying about it and thinking about it for a while, that by the end of the year or the first of next year, I am going to start a new study on "The Mind of the Holy Spirit". I will journal on this one as well, so I'm looking at how to prepare. When I prepared "The Mind of Christ" I took a chronological approach to the life of Christ I just started from the very beginning and went to the end of the life of Christ. The Holy Spirit study is a little different from that because He wasn't incarnated and didn't live for 33 years on the earth. So I have to start at the very beginning in the Old Testament.

My plan right now is not to do a topical study, but to see the work of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning, all the way through the Bible. I'm looking at it in the context of asking the basic question, "How to get into the mind of the Holy Spirit; how does He think?" I am looking forward to beginning that study after I finish my writing on Isaiah every morning.

We began the section of "The Mind of Christ" last week in John 2:23-25 so I won't go back with many comments on this. It says, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man."

We talked a lot about that last week and about the idea of us entrusting ourselves to Christ, but Christ was not intrusting Himself to us. Honestly, we're not trustworthy enough for Him to trust Himself to us. He is fully trustworthy so we can entrust ourselves to Him. We talked about that and then I suggested that the story of Nicodemus that follows can very well illustrate that on this point of why Nicodemus needed to entrust himself to Jesus, but Jesus, knowing what was in Nicodemus, (and you will see very quickly in the story, that Nicodemus didn't "get it". He didn't understand a lot of what was going on and therefore, was not worthy of Jesus putting His trust in Nicodemus.

The story of Nicodemus is pretty well known but what generally happens is that sometimes we stop too soon in the story and don't go all the way to verse 21, so we will be doing that. I am just going to read a part of it because there is no way we're going to get through it all tonight.

John 3:1-3

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; ² this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” ³ Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Now, I'm going to stop right here and we'll pick up in a few minutes on that.

Ironically, the first confrontation with a Pharisee, and especially a member of the Sanhedrin, was mostly pretty positive compared to some of the confrontations He had with other Pharisees that turned into a debate. Nicodemus seemed to be a lot more open and willing to listen even though he didn't always understand what was being said.

The Pharisees believed in “oral law” and “the Torah”, the Torah being the written law; the first five books of the Old Testament. But the Oral Law of Moses was His Divine interpretation of law written down in what is called the Talmud. So, the Pharisees believed in both the written Law of God and the Oral Law of God, so they had peculiar interpretations. I say ‘peculiar’ in the sense that they were peculiar to the Jews themselves. They believed in afterlife, like the Sadducees, and that the Messiah would usher in world peace. They believed that the days of the Messiah would bring about world peace.

The Pharisees were more of the “blue collar” Jews . . . they were the common men, as opposed to the Sadducees who were the elite. The Sadducee has a lot more at stake when it came to his cooperating with the Romans because they were the entrepreneurs and their livelihood was tied up with the Romans. There was more contention between the Pharisees and the Romans.

This is our first introduction to Nicodemus. It's not known to me what, exactly, prompted his visit to Jesus. We are not told how Jesus got on his radar or when he noticed Him. There had been plenty of things that had happened up to this point, particularly the overturning of the tables in the Temple that may have been the first thing that got his attention ... why in the world would this man overturn these tables in the Temple? The Sanhedrin would have had a vested interest in that issue.

In John 19:38-41 we read, “After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.”

We see that Nicodemus was with Joseph of Arimathea who loaned Jesus a grave. I say “loaned” I guess because you could say that God rented it by the day. There was no lease on it; He wouldn't be staying long so he didn't need to ‘buy’ a grave site. I'm going to try that. I wonder if, when I die, somebody would loan me a grave, because I don't plan to stay forever in it.

Anyway, they took Jesus' body down from the cross and they helped prepare the body for burial. But think about what a witness it would have been to the world; particularly those who wondered whether or not Jesus was actually dead. I think Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus could have testified that He was dead. **They** would have known if **anyone** had known.

But Joseph was described as a secret disciple and it is mentioned that Nicodemus came by night probably indicating that he, too, was afraid of the Jews. So even though they had an attraction to Jesus, and obviously must have become followers of Jesus, they didn't start out as being very bold and they seemed to want to keep their interest in Jesus quiet.

Nicodemus acknowledges two things about Jesus. First, he acknowledges that He is a teacher or a Rabbi and that He is sent from God, and second, that he knows this because of the signs that He does could only be done by someone who has God with him. These are point-on, solid conclusions made by Nicodemus.

He also uses the plural, "**we** know". **We** do not know who else might have drawn that conclusion with him. I have a lot of speculations on that, but I do not preach my speculation as truth; they're just questions I have. Joseph of Arimathea may have been already been interested in Jesus as well. It could have been Nicodemus' family ... we don't know.

The key to faith is to believe that Jesus came from God. ★ That was given over and over again in the teachings of Jesus; that you have to believe that "I am the One who had been sent from God". So Jesus refers to Himself as the One sent from God throughout His ministry, especially in John. Compared to the conclusions we saw in John chapter 1 made by the early disciples, they had concluded, or at least it had been presented to them that Jesus was the Messiah, He was the Savior, He was the Lamb of God, He was the King of Israel, and He was the Son of God. All of these are identities of Jesus that had been presented thus far, in the Book of John, so Nicodemus' conclusion was weak compared to some of those other things. **He** said He was simply a teacher who has come from God, and He *is* a teacher, but Nicodemus is not sticking his neck out too far yet in saying He is the Son of God. He's not drawing *that* conclusion yet. In Matthew 23:8 Jesus told them that only One is your teacher and therefore they should not call men "Rabbi".

Jesus is going to challenge the people of His day that even when they use terms like "You are a teacher come from God." He has a way of taking that term and turning it back to an exclusive term. There is only One Teacher, and the rest of you are learners, as there is one "Father" in Matthew 23:9. "**Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.**" Jesus does that later on in His ministry.

Here are the signs again. It mentions the idea of signs, and as we talked about "signs" last week, we said that the word "sign" is semeion (σημειον), and they are usually indicators of something that has already happened. Usually we put signs and labels on things that already exist. A sign, normally, is an indicator of a past event. So, here is this word sign, used again. The question for me is, what signs did Nicodemus know that Jesus had done? It's unlikely, if he's a member of the Sanhedrin based in Jerusalem, that he would have been aware of the sign of the water into wine because that was done in Cana of Galilee.

There was something of a sign with Nathaniel when He was called to be a disciple, but it really wasn't a sign from the turning over the moneychanger's tables and driving out them out. That wasn't miraculous in any way. So I'm not sure what he is referring to when he says, "No one can do these signs unless he is from God."

Macy: I was just thinking of Chapter 2:23 "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing." We don't have all the details of "where He was and what did He do." There is so much more that they didn't write. There is so much more we don't know.

Rod: You're exactly right. That's where we have to, kind of, fill in the blanks. We don't know what he saw. And we know that there were other signs because of John 20:30-31, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." So, you are exactly right. We're not sure what he saw that would lead him to draw the conclusion that He was someone sent from God. I'm glad you pointed that out. I appreciate that.

But it **does**, kind of, set Him apart from a lot of the other Jews that Jesus encountered. They couldn't get *enough* signs to be convinced. They always wanted 'one more' sign. Nicodemus seemed to say, 'I've seen enough to be convinced that You are from God. You couldn't do these things unless you were from God.'

We observe some building blocks of faith this story. One of those things that Jesus typically did, and this is the second time He uses the phrase, "Truly, Truly I say unto you" or "Verily, Verily I say unto you". I think it's interesting that Jesus uses that terminology quite often. I don't know if it was unusual terminology for people of that day, or something unique to Jesus. But, certainly, to say "Truly, Truly I say unto you" highlights it, underscores it, pay attention, "I've got something really important to tell you".

This is the second "Truly, Truly" statement in John. In John 1:51 says, "And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" when Jesus was talking to Nathaniel.

In 3:3, this is the first one said to Nicodemus. Jesus does not respond to what Nicodemus said directly. When Nicodemus said, "You are a man sent from God", Jesus doesn't say, "Thank you very much for recognizing that. How's your family?" Jesus doesn't have any small talk but jumps directly into the teaching. Now again, we may not have all of the story, ... but this is how it's presented in the text.

In recognizing that, acknowledging Him as a Teacher sent from God, perhaps Jesus is thinking, "Well, if you really think I'm a Teacher, let's see how this is going to go. I'm going to jump right into some teaching and see if you're actually going to be a good student." So, He starts teaching him. Or, perhaps, Jesus may be responding to Nicodemus coming secretly at night. He's basically saying, "Nicodemus, you came here in secret. You came here under stealth. You know, let's just get right down to the point here." I don't know. Either way, there does not appear to be any small talk of Jesus' teaching recorded in the Book of John.

This is the first extensive teaching we hear from Jesus. I'm following this chronologically. There are some smaller teachings but this is the first, most extensive teaching we hear from the mouth of Jesus. He preached that “the Kingdom of God is at hand” and we have some snippets of things that He said, but this is the most complete one yet.

Jesus connects the new birth with seeing the Kingdom. He says, “Unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.” The idea of birth or being born means to regenerate, to bear, to beget, to be born, to bring forth, to conceive, to deliver, to make something, or to spring. The word is connected to generations (genos) and is the word “gennao” γεννω. It is spoken of the Work of God in regenerating, sanctifying, quickening anew and ennobling the powers of the natural man by imparting to him a new life and a new spirit in Christ (1 John 5:1). This idea of birth and regeneration is essentially what God does, and it is a process of not only bringing something to life, but is the process also of sanctification and of renewing of the Holy Spirit found in other places. This quickening is a really basic teaching in Christianity; that man does not have the ability to bring himself to life. In the physical sense he doesn't. I cannot create myself. I cannot conceive myself. We are all totally dependent on God and other processes for us to actually even exist. This is extremely important in understanding the very core issues of salvation. The issue of salvation is that I cannot save myself. I cannot give myself “new” life, and I can't give myself life, period.

We begin to see that Jesus is laying some building blocks of understanding of the Gospel; the idea of total dependence on God for even life ... for existence. I can say, editorially that man inherently has a problem even with that. He thinks that somehow that he is something more than he is; that he's more important than he is; that he's more powerful than he is when we cannot even control our own existence both on the front end of it and on the back end of it. But yet we think we're very powerful, yet we can't control any of that.

Jesus also adds the word “again” – born again. Again is from the word “ano” (ανω) and it literally means “from above.” It means to be born from above. It can mean “from the first”, it can mean “anew”, but the most natural interpretation of the word is “from above”. The origin and nature of this birth is **divine**. It is not natural; it requires divine process as Jesus will explain in different ways. But in choosing this word, He sums up for Nicodemus, a completely new kind of relationship. A whole new relationship is being introduced into the mind of Nicodemus.

One of the things that is lacking in the understanding of the Jewish people, particularly from the Old Testament of this time is, “God is Father”. Father is not a concept that is stressed in the Old Testament. It has some indicators there but it is not stressed as many other concepts are stressed.

Jesus talks about Father all the time. God is the Father. Nicodemus is hearing this, and he is having to get his head around this relationship thing that Jesus is introducing to him.

Ruth: The cross reference in my Bible, if we go back to John 1:11-13, it says that “[He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God](#)”. So He had already discussed this ‘new birth’ in John.

Rod: Yes. But this isn't Jesus discussing it. This is the writer, John, in his introduction giving that. This is not **Jesus teaching** that. Yes, the concept has already been introduced in the book.

Ruth: But probably Nicodemus hadn't heard it.

Rod: Right. He had not read the introduction to the book that he was going to appear in later on. My guess is that he probably *never* read the book. But he didn't have to. He had the Author to the book. But I am glad you brought that up because that is also in my notes but you spoke before I got there. See, you guys are every bit as smart as I am, probably more-so, and I don't know why I am up here teaching this because you are ahead of me.

But if you look at John 3:31, John says, "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all." This is jumping ahead, but back to John the Baptist's testimony. John the Baptist says that He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth; He who comes from heaven is above all. Again, even John is talking about this two-tiered system. There are things that come from above and the things of this earth. And you will see throughout the New Testament the dichotomy between earth and heaven; between the world and the Kingdom of God. So, we are born from above, we have a heavenly birth. There is something different about our being brought into the Kingdom of God that cannot be done in a natural way. Of course, we are going to see that Nicodemus isn't going to 'get that'. He's not going to pick up on that.

But later on Jesus also tells Pilate that **his** authority is from above, without which he would have **no** authority at all. John 19:10-11 says, "So Pilate said to Him, 'You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?' ¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Pilate was saying he had all this power, so Jesus was saying, 'well let's think about where this power actually came from. It wasn't inherent within you, but it came down from above.' And even if it came down in orders from Rome, where did Rome get its authority? Where did the governing authority of the Caesars come from?

Any authority that is on or in the earth came from God. It originates from God. And any authority that man takes is either in alignment with the authority of God or it is a rebellion *against* God. Man often usurps the authority of God and takes it for himself doing his own thing with it. And that is when we have clashes with God. God simply steps into the situation and says, "Let me remind you who's the boss. Let me remind you that you are not the authority here.

In John 1:13 Jesus first speaks of this new birth. I say Jesus does, and that's a misnomer. I need to correct my notes here, because He doesn't speak of it, actually John does. How does one become a child of God? By receiving Jesus we are given the **right** to become a child of God. We receive Him by believing in His name. God experiences His Divine will by giving us birth. To be born of God is to be born from above. Even when Mary conceived Jesus, it was 'from above'. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary.

So Nicodemus thinks he understands the word as ... and again ... he doesn't see it as from above; He takes it as born again or born a second time. Perhaps he was not paying attention, or he simply went for a meaning that made more sense to him. He jumped to a conclusion. This was not a concept or a truth that could be easily grasped, even by a man like Nicodemus. Jesus has more teaching to do on this.

So, what did Jesus mean about seeing the Kingdom of God because he said if you're born from above you will see it? He said, *unless* you are born from above you will *not* be able to see the Kingdom of God. So, what does he mean?

If we compare this with natural birth, we might say that if a baby is not born, (in other words, dies in the womb), that baby will not see the light of day, it won't see the world, it will not see anything when they are expelled from the womb because they'll be dead. So Jesus is saying that if you are going to see the Kingdom of God, you have to have this birth into it. To see something, one must first come into it or enter it (as Jesus later says). If I want to see the Grand Canyon, I have to enter the park.

The word 'see' here is "eido" (εἶδο). It means to know, to be aware of, to behold or to perceive something. Therefore, **seeing** leading to 'perception'. It is not just simply seeing it as you would when you enter a room and see a room. You can enter a place and not see what that place is. You have to have some perception of what it is. There have been places I've stepped into and I had to get some bearing on 'where am I? What is this place?' So, it's not simply being **in** a place but it's the perception of where you are in that place.

It's used in John 1:39, 46 the two disciples said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" ³⁹ He said to them, "Come, and you will see." Then in 46, "The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

People were told to "come and see" about Jesus. How badly did they want to see? How badly do **we** want to see? Do we really desire to perceive? We need to be longing for proper perspective – that which is essential in our coming to Christ. I've thought about this a lot. This is one of those things where, in our trying to lead people to Christ, we often have a short window sometimes ... a small window of opportunity to help people to come to Jesus. So, what do we want to inspire in them to see, to know, to experience, to perceive? There are any number of places that we can jump in and it may not be the "right" place to jump in. I think about the idea of when Jesus said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself". If we take our cues from the early stages from the book of John; John the Baptist, the early disciples like, Andrew who went and got Peter, Philip who went and got Nathaniel; *their* focus was 'come and see Jesus. Come and see this person'. Step into *His* circle and begin to perceive who He is. **If** you correctly perceive who He is, that one single perception will change the rest of your life. It will cause you to have to answer a lot of different questions. If Jesus **is** who He says He **is**, then **what** will **I** do with Him? How will I live now? What kind of difference is that going to make in my life?

Some may merely perceive that the bible is God's word, which **is** important obviously, it's the authority. But that's all. People get bogged down into interpretations ... are all the manuscripts actually reliable? We have so many questions. But perceiving **JESUS**, being drawn to **Him** – *that's* what caused Peter to be able to say in John 6:68, "To Whom shall we go? There's no one else to go to. You have the words of eternal life."

"As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life."

Macy: One of my favorite things I heard from a gentleman friend of mine is, "**An experience will trump an argument any time.**" And having that experience and that perception of who Jesus is and inviting others to experience Him **with** you rather than arguing ... *nobody* will win with arguing. If they will come and see who this Christ is requires, on *our part*, a perception and awareness of who He is.

Rod: Amen. Thinking about the perception of the Kingdom ... *that's* one of the things that the Jews struggled with. They had high anticipation of the kingdom that will come about as Daniel said would never be destroyed. They had a high perception of a king, of someone sitting on the throne of David, ruling over Israel and bringing in a time of peace and prosperity. They had this desire in their heart. So Jesus keys on that and says, "Unless you are born from above you can't even begin to *enter* and *perceive* this new Kingdom."

You will see throughout the book of John people struggling with that idea. Even Pilate being confused later on – if you truly are a king then where's your army to come and fight, and all of that. Because he didn't see any army or physical threat from Jesus, he said, "I don't find any fault in this man." John 19:4 says, "Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." He thought He might be crazy talking about Himself being a king, but Jesus seemed harmless. He didn't have an army; He isn't threatening anybody.

This is when Jesus says that Pilate didn't understand His Kingdom. He didn't understand that it was not a kingdom of this world. And little did Pilate know that he had more to fear from **that** Kingdom than he did from a kingdom with armies. But he didn't 'get it'.

Ironically, the metaphor for Nicodemus coming at night because of fear indicated that he was somewhat reluctant to **see** as he remained in the darkness. He wasn't boldly walking in the light. He was standing in the shadows, which often happens with people we're trying to lead. They stand off in the shadows because they don't want to fully engage and step fully into the room to be able to begin to perceive things. They're looking for a back door so they can get out.

Usually we use light to get a good look at something. From the Hebrew, with the idea of volition, to know, to approve, to love or take an interest in (and again, I'm talking about the word "see"). It is something that you take an interest in. It is something that you make a part of your will, (your commitment) for Him. So it's a very strong concept that Jesus is putting before Nicodemus.

So, the *object* of seeing is the **Kingdom** of God. This concept dominated Jesus' teaching. His intent was: making known God's absolute rule in our lives. This is what Jesus was all about. He was trying to get across this fundamental idea of man recognizing what is fundamentally true - it is that **God** is in control, but man simply just hasn't learned to submit to Him yet. He's in rebellion to Him.

“Basileia” (βασιλεια), is the word for kingdom, which also means to reign, or have dominion, to exercise a kingly power. Is there a parallel to this and what Jesus said about ‘My Father’s House’ ... ‘you have made my Father’s house a den of thieves’? It’s a domain or a dominion. It’s the sphere of God’s influence and authority over us rooted in His sovereignty. Sin has separated man from God’s authority; it has usurped the place of God in our lives and seeks to control us. Our desire **must** be to see and enter the control of God. This is what this new birth is about. It is the answer to this is. It’s about “how do we get into the center of the **control** of God, to the **kingdom** of God, or to the **will** of God?” He says, new birth is the only way to do it. He says that you have to have a total transformation in order to be able to get into that new relationship with God.

Nicodemus' *at night* visit did not indicate to Jesus that Nicodemus was interested in a complete surrender to God's rule. When God rules, the hold of the world is gone. We do not care who knows God reigns when we give ourselves completely to Him. When we give ourselves completely **to** His reign, we don't care who knows He's reigning in our lives. He's our King.

Nicodemus, up to this point, still cared. He didn't want to be seen. He didn't want it to be known yet. There was something else tugging at him, looming in the darkness, a fear he had which he was not ready to face. Other forces controlled him. He was not yielded, conquered, arrested, humbled enough to step into the light. And Jesus is really kind of getting all of this in one sentence, which is amazing to me. The mind of Christ, how He can take these complex concepts and boil them down into a few words, and it takes me pages to unravel the meaning of what He is saying.

Jesus response or His thinking about Nicodemus' reluctance to commit (and here is our key ★); what do we perceive **our own** reluctance to commit but also when we perceive other people's reluctance to commit?

Here's what Jesus did. He confronted it. He confronted it with spiritual truth. In this case, He holds out the goal of seeing or entering the Kingdom of God as something that can **only** be accomplished through the new birth ... a completely new relationship with God. This message is **non-negotiable**. Jesus states the spiritual reality of the nature and characteristic of a relationship with the Father.

This word has become one of those words that we don't like in our society. It's the word “dogmatic”. But if there ever was a dogmatic statement, this is dogmatic. John 14:6 is another one, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” That's a dogmatic statement. It doesn't leave any wiggle room. It's an exclusive statement.

So, for God to be our Father, we have to be born into God's family. For Jesus, it's that simple! Do you want to be in God's family ... well, how do you get into a family? Well, the most natural way to get into a family is to be born into it. Later on we learn that adoption is an option as well. Eph. 1:5-6 reads, "In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." But, how do we get into a family? We're born into it. So does a person want to be in the family of God? The most natural thing to tell them next is, if they seem reluctant, is to say, "Well, you have to be born into it. How would you like to be born into the family of God?" This shows to me that Jesus always thinks and speaks in Spiritual realities. That's the way it is. It's the way it is. It's marked by "truly, truly". That's the way He thinks.

So, in verse 3 and verse 5, Jesus also uses the term "*unless*" or "*except*". This means that there is only *one exception* to not seeing or not entering the Kingdom. And that's the new birth. In other words, for those who don't want to see the Kingdom, don't be born again. There is only one exception to this. Otherwise seeing and entering is impossible. Though different words are used, it's a similar approach regarding divorce in Matthew 5:19 where He uses the term, "except for fornication". Again, when Jesus uses the 'except' clause; He is making dogmatic statements about something.

Nicodemus' response shows that he did not understand what Jesus was saying. He interpreted the teaching literally when it was meant spiritually or figuratively. Each of us is subject to faulty interpretation. Do we take something literally or figuratively? We always have to make that judgment, particularly when we are studying passages that we're not as familiar with or we're studying a book like Revelation or something like that. What's literal and what's figurative? Is it a literal 1,000 years or a figurative 1,000 years – those are choices we have to make. But in John 10:6 John comments that when Jesus spoke, He spoke in 'figures of speech' and that they didn't understand when He spoke in those figures of speech.

In John 16:25, Jesus acknowledges that He has spoken in figurative language.

"This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them." NASB

"Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them." NIV

In verse 16:29, Jesus is speaking plainly of the Father.

"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father." NASB

"Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father." NIV

In John 16:29 the disciples say that 'He is **now** speaking plainly'. Because of this they say they believe but Jesus challenges this by predicting that they are going to leave Him alone when in a few hours He would be arrested.

In other words, they had this epiphany that He was now speaking plainly to them and they say, “Oh, **now** we believe” ... “**now** we’ve got it.” But he challenges them, have you **really** “got it? You may have perceived it differently at this point, but has it really **captured** you? Has this relationship **secured** you in this Kingdom, or are you going to be torn away from it easily in a few hours when I’m arrested and you come up against **another** kingdom ... other soldiers? What are you going to do then?” And He predicted that they weren’t as solidly in the Kingdom as they thought they were. They hadn’t learned to live in that Kingdom comfortably yet. Later on they’ll get there, but at this time they’re still struggling with that.

So, obviously there is a time and place for figurative speech and one for plain speech. In trying to make Spiritual realities understandable He had to package them in metaphors and figures which were subject to misunderstandings ... even non-understandings as with Nicodemas. Jesus’ thoughts were on how to explain profound Spiritual truths in simple terms without losing the profoundness of the truth because an illustration that waters down the seriousness of the teaching is not a good illustration. It **has** to be able to capture the essence of the truth.

In Jesus’ experience, just as in ours, people do not always get what we say. In this case, because of how Nicodemas **heard** what Jesus said, should Jesus have thought, “Well, I’m a terrible teacher just because Nicodemas didn’t understand me!”? Jesus **could** have said, “Now, what I’m about to say (in other words, we could add this to the text, “well, this is how you **should** have said this, Jesus.”) Now what I’m about to say to you has an element of metaphor in it. So when I say, “born”, I do not mean an earthly birth.” Well, He **could** have said that ... but He didn’t.

Nicodemas’ thought process was faulty. Perhaps Jesus said things as He did because we have to be led to make the transition from what we **know** to what we do **not** know. This is a basic method of learning.

1 Corinthians 2 is about the spiritual process of the Holy Spirit, and putting spiritual truths from the deep mind of God into spiritual words or vehicles of understanding is God’s way of communicating. Humans often think they need to help God communicate. We believe we can improve on His methods and words that He uses to try to get His points across. And I wonder how prideful we are. Part of faith is believing God knows exactly what He’s doing and **we** are the ones who can learn from **Him**. This story helps me to see this process at work. In other words, I think there are temptations along the way in things that Jesus did and said that sometimes leads man, and sometimes in very serious ways where they spend a lot of time trying to explain Jesus and trying to help Jesus out when, when really, Jesus doesn’t need our help. He knows what He’s doing.

Carole: We may be trying to influence them by our theology ... what He really means is... so that they’ll believe like **we** do.

Rod: That’s very true. Often we filter Jesus’ words through our theology and understanding things so that it does come out in a more processed way... the way we want to understand it. It fits into our neat little package, instead of letting Jesus, simply by His own words, speak for Himself and challenge the socks off of us without us feeling we have to interpret it or dumb it down. Well, we’re just about out of time so we’ll pick up next week.