

## The Mind of Christ - Lesson 28

September 11, 2019

I hope you're feeling well tonight because this study goes deep. This study tonight which is two or three verses goes really, really deep. So, I'm going to pick up with the third "Verily, Verily" or "Truly, Truly" statements in John 3:11. He is still talking to Nicodemus and will be through this chapter. "Truly, truly, I say to you, **we speak of what we know and testify (bear witness) of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony (witness).**"

The curious thing about John 3:11 is the word "we" that I mentioned last week. It is "we speak and bear witness". So we have to ask the question, "Who does the 'we' refer to? In verse 12 He uses the word "I" - <sup>12</sup> **If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** So He goes back to "I" in verse 12 ... the first person. Is this a phrase like in Genesis 1:26 where it is said, "Then God said, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him..."

This is the third "Truly, Truly" statement made to Nicodemus. The only **recent** reference to another person is statements concerning the Spirit. So, He refers to the Spirit as the most direct in terms of a pronoun if you try to look for a preceding pronoun. Surely, at this point, He cannot be referring to His disciples. Perhaps He means John the Baptist because John the Baptist bore witness to Him. And, of course, the Spirit that came down, they heard the voice from Heaven, so there are lots of witnesses here. Exactly who He is referring to is a little bit difficult here. Perhaps He lumped His disciples in with Him by association.

How many times does Jesus use the phrase, "**That which we, or I, know**"? So, if we can look at similar phrases, maybe we can figure out who He is talking about here. In John 1:18 He said, "**No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [exegetes] Him [the Father] to us.**" So, in terms of 'what does Jesus know'; He is in a position to know and then bear witness what He knows. Jesus says that He has been in the presence of the Father, He has seen the Father, and that He is, in a sense explaining the Father **to** us.

To **Nathaniel**, Jesus promises that he is going to see greater things one day. He will show, and I hope you don't think that these are too esoteric to the point of the verse, but it demonstrates that when He spoke to Nathaniel saying, "**I'm going to show you greater things one day**" (John 1:50-51), He indicates that **He knows more** than He's saying at that point. Later, in **John 8:18**, Jesus that the Father **also** bears witness of Me. (**I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.**) So again, that would include the Father in the statement of one who bears witness.

In **John 8:38**, Jesus says that He speaks what He has **seen with** my Father. What He knows is what He has learned in the presence of His Father. "**I speak the things which I have seen with My Father...**"

In **John 8:55** Jesus says He knows God, so what does He know? "...and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you."

All of these are pointing back to His experience, **personally**, with God the Father, and what He knows **because** of that relationship and that experience. For Jesus, the credibility of his ministry rests on what He knows to be the truth. EVERYTHING hangs on this idea that does Jesus actually **know** what He's talking about; and that rests on His identity ... **who is He?** It is all connected together. Jesus can only give testimony to what He **knows**; that which He has **seen** or that which He has **experienced**. That is the nature of testimony. When you go before a judge and you swear to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" you are testifying to what you have seen and heard.

I testified once in a trial for a lady that died, eventually after one year, of injuries from an automobile accident on U. S. 41 near the hospital. She was hit **head on** by a car and I witnessed the accident and had to go in and testify. Well, it was very **specific** what I could testify to. I had to be very narrow in what I saw because it all happened so quickly...in a split second. But it was in my memory and I was being deposed almost a year after the accident happened. At the scene, they told me that they might have to call me, but when it turned into a vehicular homicide, that's when I was called. Fortunately for me, I had a **really** precise memory of what I saw and they were trying to determine **who** was at fault in the accident. I say that because when you are giving your witness or testimony, it can only be from what you have **personally experienced**.

So Jesus is testifying. He is giving witness to things He has **personally** seen and known, from the **Source** of everything, and that is from His **Father**. So **my** relationship with the Father, (and **your** relationship) with the Father, rests on knowledge, and experiences of Jesus that He reveals to **me**. So the testimony I have is a kind of second-hand testimony because **I** testify to what Jesus reveals to **me**. There is an experiential part to that, and we'll get to that.

**My** faith is what He says is true and is based on **His** perfect reality, not on **my** reality. So, when I think about what my faith rests on, it doesn't rest on just "my" truth or reality, it rests on **Jesus'** reality... what **He** knows to be true. And there is a big difference in that. **My** faith is what he **says** to be true based on His perfect reality and not mine. He not only experiences more, much more than I, but He knows how to **interpret** His experiences, and **teach** these experiences and bear **witnesses** to these experiences to me.

So, if I am going to have faith at all, I am going to have to rely on the fact that Jesus Christ has had personal experience with God. He, then, can perfectly interpret those experiences, and of course, if we include the Holy Spirit who puts them down into words so they can be indicated to me, and explained to me, then **that's** the basis of my faith.

**Ruth:** In John 8:54, Jesus says, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. <sup>55</sup> Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I **do** know him and obey his word. If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

So when Jesus says He **knows** God says and that God is glorifying Him, and Abraham knew him, it's almost like that eye-witness you get in Hebrews. So the people who can testify about God **know** him. So Jesus, who knows God, also knows Abraham.

**Rod:** Yes. But even Abraham is seeing God through Jesus. It says, "Abraham saw **my** day and he testified..." It's because of the promise that was made to Abraham that through his seed, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. So Abraham was able, even through Jesus, to know the Father in the idea of the '*seed* to bless the world'. You will see that Jesus is **truly** the intermediary between us and God. **He** is the One who *knows* Him, He's had that *personal experience* with Him, and He brings that experience to us. Then, through **His** experience, *we* experience God. **And that's a major, major theme of Scripture.** That's why Jesus is critical—'**no** man comes to the Father *but by me*'. Certainly, we can know things **about** God through the things He has made (Romans 1), but to have that *intimate personal relationship* with God can be had only through what **Jesus'** reveals to us. That is the *special knowledge which is eternal life*.

I don't have eternal life just because I know that God made the heavens and the earth. I have eternal life because Jesus has revealed the Father to me and I have entered into a *personal, knowledgeable relationship* with Him. That's the intimacy.

My experiences are limited and **my exegesis** is **flawed**. So, my experiences with God are limited and my exegesis of God is flawed, although I must, in a sense, exegete His exegesis, if you will! Because Jesus is explaining God, and I have to read that, and I have to interpret it so that I understand it.

I take great comfort in 1 Cor. 2:10-16. It says that *the Holy Spirit is involved in that process of helping to interpret these things to me*. And I think you will see this, if we get to it here in a minute, where I have a struggle. You are going to see my struggle in my life, and then, the next day—a breakthrough. It's like, "**Wow**. I just saw it. I think I just saw it. I think it was the Holy Spirit involved there." (I'm not that smart). But it is only helpful if it is received. Notice what he said in John 3:11. "**Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak (bear witness) of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept (receive) our witness.**" He's still talking there in the plural.

**Here's the next part of this.** The knowledge of God is only helpful if it is received. This verse holds some *major keys* to understanding the divine process of revelation. The response Jesus was getting was described as "not receiving" our witness. The witness was being given but it wasn't being received. It would be like if you were testifying in the court and the jury is not receiving it; they were not buying it; it's not connecting with them. The word is lambano (λαμβάνω). In John 1:11-12 it uses a similar word, "paralambano" (παραλαμβάνω) meaning to take to one's side, or to take or receive to oneself, to admit or acknowledge. Man has a choice to position himself with Jesus or not, as opposed to Calvin's teaching that man has **no** choice. But if that's true, why did Jesus rebuke those who did not receive Him as if it was *their* fault? I mean, if man doesn't have any choice in the matter of receiving Christ, then why would Jesus rebuke them for not receiving Him? It certainly wouldn't be their fault if Calvin was correct. I digress—a little Calvinistic diversion there.

Reception is ★ key to relationship. It is the opposite of rejection. So when we talk about receiving something or accepting something, it is the opposite of rejecting something. Here are some references that have some relationship to the idea of receiving. These are really important so I will go through each of them. I really think that many times, while God didn't have to say anything more than once, but if He said it a bunch of times, He's emphasizing it. I'd better pay attention to that.

### **John 1:11-12**

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not **receive** him. <sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name— NIV

He came to His [h]own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God— NASB

### **John 1:16**

Out of his fullness we have all **received** grace in place of grace already given. This was about receiving grace upon grace or one blessing after another. Think about what is being received here: receiving Him; receiving grace.

**John 3:32** (Here I think He's talking about the witness of John the Baptist)  
What He has seen and heard, of **that** He bears witness and no one **receives** His witness.

### **John 4:45**

So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans **received** Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast So a group of Galileans received Him.

### **John 5:43**

I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. You don't receive Me even though I come in my Father's name

### **John 7:29**

This is about receiving the Spirit

### **John 10:18**

"This commandment I **received** from My Father." He talks about receiving the commands from the Father. (When God commands, it has to be received, or it can be rejected.)

### **John 12:48**

He who rejects Me and does not **receive** My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. (Those who do not **receive** Jesus' sayings will be **judged** by those same sayings)

### **John 13:20**

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **receives** whomever I send **receives** Me; and he who receives Me **receives** Him who sent Me." To reject Jesus is not to just reject Him but also to reject the One who sent Him.

### **John 14:17**

...that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot **receive**, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

Until the world is convicted of their sin, they cannot receive the spirit of Truth. That's one of the reasons why the work of the Holy Spirit is to first convict the world of sin and judgment and then the world is able, **if** they stand convicted, they **can** receive the Spirit at that point. We'll see more of that later in John 3.

**John 17:8** (Speaking to the Father)

“...for the words which **You** gave Me **I** have given to them; and they **received** them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. Jesus is saying that the disciples “received” the words He gave them.”

**John 20:22**

And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “**Receive** the Holy Spirit.

Basically, if we take all of these Scriptures together, then here are the conclusions we draw about the doctrine of receiving. There are **three** basic things you have to receive in order to have this power and ability to be children of God:

1. You have to receive **Jesus**
2. You have to receive the **Spirit**
3. You have to receive the **Words** of God

If you do not receive those three things, you cannot have this relationship with God, this knowledge of God, this experience with God which is the essence of Eternal life. So there has to be the reception of Jesus, the Spirit and the Word, that **causes** us then, to enter into a relationship with Him. *So, if we reject any one of them, Jesus, His Spirit or the Word, any one of them, we cannot be a Christian, we cannot be saved, because those are essential to the relationship.*

When you see the word up here in John 3:11, **Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony (witness)**, this is the background of what is in the Mind of Christ when he uses the term to “**receive**” our witness.

The testimony or witness “*martereo*” (μαρτερεω) from which we get the word “martyr”, is explained by Jesus in John 5:33-45. There are four witnesses that He mentions. He mentions the witness of John the Baptist, the witness of the very works that Jesus does, the witness of the Father and the witness of Scripture.

{<sup>33</sup> You have sent to **John**, and he has testified to the truth. <sup>34</sup> But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup> He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

<sup>36</sup> But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the **works** which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

<sup>37</sup> And **the Father** who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. <sup>38</sup> You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.

<sup>39</sup> You {diligently} search the **Scriptures** because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that **testify** about Me; <sup>40</sup> and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. <sup>41</sup> I do not receive glory from men; <sup>42</sup> but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. <sup>43</sup> I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. <sup>44</sup> How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? <sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup> For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. <sup>47</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"}

Those are the four witnesses (testimonies) that Jesus mentions there. Specifically in John 3 Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, this leader – this teacher – this ruler of Israel, who is obviously curious and has not yet made the decision to **receive** Him or to accept Jesus as the Son of God. Nicodemus is in this state where he is trying to decide whether or not he is going to actually **receive** Jesus and be given the power to become a child of God. So, he's still in the search mode – he's indecisive – he's outside of saving grace. As we will see, reception equates with believing. The first step of our relationship with Jesus is trusting. Reception is a trusting reception to take Him to our side. He has to come to our side "lambano" (λαμβάνω). It means to come along side. Until we take Him by our side, we cannot enter into that relationship with Him.

It's very similar to Matthew 11:28-29 where Jesus says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take **my yoke upon you** and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." When you are yoked with Jesus, you are coming to His side. You are now walking with Him in the **same direction**. A very good picture of this is the walk of the disciples on the road to Emmaus beside Jesus. They didn't realize it at the time, but when they spent time with Him and walked in the same direction with Him, they began to understand some things they never understood before and the excitement was contagious.

**Macy:** I find it interesting and I highlighted this. I noticed that Jesus said **you people** do not accept me. I know he's talking to Nicodemus but is He grouping them with the heathens or the other Pharisees? Do we know who he's referring to?

**Rod:** Yes, Nicodemus kind of represented the mindset of the Pharisees at that point so He does group that in. And I note here, "Do **we** not need Him on **our** side or do **we** need to be on **His** side?" I guess it's a little of both.

Verse 12, is curious. "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" It is a contrast between earthly things and heavenly things. Now this is a curious verse to me in this context. Remember that Jesus has been talking to Nicodemus about this whole idea of being born again, or born from above, by water and the Spirit. Nicodemus is thinking in earthly terms about going back into his mother's womb a second time and being born. He's thinking in very earthly terms and Jesus is thinking in very Spiritual terms. But Jesus said, 'If I **told** you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I told you heavenly things?'

Now, the word “if” is what causes you to probably turn, because Jesus **has** been telling him Spiritual things. Let’s explore that a little bit. So Jesus contrasts **earthly** things with **Heavenly** things.

The verse indicates that Jesus has been speaking of earthly things to Nicodemus, but they seem to be heavenly to me. The Greek word for earthly means ‘upon the earth’. It is “epigeios” (ἐπιγῆιος). It means things belonging to the earth. It is used in 1 Cor. 15:40, “There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another” contrasting **earthly** and **heavenly** bodies – each having its glory.

In 1 Cor. 15:45 Paul uses the word again when he says, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” He uses “earthly” meaning dusty or dirty; soil-like. It is like the earthen vessels of 2 Cor. 4:8 – Jars of clay. In 1 Cor. 15:46 he says, “However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.” The word “natural” is the same word.

By contrast, ‘our citizenship is in heaven’ – **Phil. 3:20**. **James 3:15** speaks of the two kinds of wisdom, “Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.” It is **earthly** or **natural** wisdom as opposed to the wisdom that comes down **from above**. It’s the same idea as being ‘born from above’. In James 3, the earthly wisdom is of the devil, while spiritual wisdom is from above. You get this picture, not just in the teachings of Jesus but also in the teachings of Paul and the Apostles. It’s the idea of a contrast between the things of the earth – that rise up from the earth, thinking that comes from the earth versus the things that come down from heaven. *It is the “coming down” things that change us. It’s the things that we gain from heaven that change us and not the things that are generated from earth. And I believe that that’s a good commentary on the world.* That’s why we have so many problems—too much of our thinking is being generated down here instead of positioning ourselves for the wisdom that comes down.

Somehow, all these verses fit together to give us a picture of how Jesus thinks of the two planes. Nicodemus seems to be caught up in the earthly plane. He is being held down by earthly thinking that prevents him from living in the heavenly thinking. It may be similar to the idea of **2 Cor. 3:3** where Paul talks about the veil that is over the minds of those who still tied to the concrete Law of God written on stone. (You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.) So that veil covers their face so that it prevents them from understanding spiritual things. They know **rules**; don’t do this-do that and so forth, but they are not getting a spiritual perspective of God. And it’s only when they **turn to the Lord**; they must turn and see Jesus – and they **receive** Him, in a sense. **Then** the veil is lifted; and **then** the glory of the Spirit comes in so that there is change that occurs.

When we’re talking to people and it seems like there is a veil over their face and they’re not getting it...

(This week while we’ve been doing the phone calls and the meeting, we’re getting a lot of that. People are reaching out but they’re hitting brick walls. They’re in situations with people where people are not listening to them and they wonder, “What else can I do?”)

They're wondering what more can I say, how can I say it differently, can I do one more thing that will make a difference in this person's life? And really, it isn't that we shouldn't try to figure those things out, but the issues are really deeply spiritual when it comes to the blindness – the spiritual blindness within the person's heart. I think that Jesus is getting at that in this whole idea of the earthly and the heavenly perspectives that we have, so all of these verses fit together to give us a picture. The idea of heavenly thinking is used several times in Ephesians.

### **Eph. 1:20**

That power is the same as the mighty strength <sup>20</sup> he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms. It is where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God **in the heavenly realms**.

**Eph. 1:3** it is where all spiritual blessings are located (in the heavenly realms in Christ).

**Eph. 2:6** “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...”) It's where we are seated **with Him** in the heavenly places or realms.

**Eph. 3:10** It is where the rulers and authorities to whom **the church** must reveal the manifold wisdom of God. It is where they are **also** seated.

### **Eph. 6:12**

Our struggle is with the powers in the heavenly realms. {For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.} There is a sense or a perspective that what we see and hear is not the ultimate reality, but there is a whole world in the air... in the heavenly realms; and **that** there is where the really dynamic work is happening. We have to help people get their head out of the earth – to stop looking down. Remember in **Ecclesiastes 1:9** Solomon talked about, “there's nothing new **under** the sun”? He has this contrast between things that happen ‘under the sun’. He uses that phrase over and over again, against the things where we have to look **up** to find meaning and purpose somewhere else, and we're not going to that under the sun.

Somehow, we have to help people get a heavenly vision. They have to get a vision. It wasn't until Paul got the vision from Heaven that there was some change that happened in his life. We have to catch that perspective.

**Macy:** It's hard to help **other** people catch that perspective if we haven't caught that perspective ourselves.

**Rod:** Absolutely. We have to live in the heavenly realms. We have to know where our citizenship is and that's where our thinking has to be. You are exactly right. And there's a dynamic to that that I don't fully understand, but God uses that somehow. He uses our living in the heavenly realms, and being comfortable in those heavenly realms, and using the language of Heaven to draw other people into that. Yes, it is true that Jesus came to earth. He became a man like us, but He never lost His heavenliness. He never lost His heavenly perspective. Even though He came down and lived in the flesh with us, He never lost His heavenly thinking. Sometimes I think what **we** think we have to do is to get down to the level of the earthly in order to influence the people of the earth. That is never the perspective that I see.

The heavenly kingdom that Jesus is talking about to Nicodemus is in 2 Timothy 4:18 [The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.](#) This is the kingdom he is talking of.

Let's go on –

It seems strange that Jesus said that He had ascended into Heaven. We have to get through this because this is where I had my epiphany! It seems strange that Jesus said He had ascended into Heaven (**John 3:13**). [“No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: even the Son of Man.”](#) To me, this teaching is a lot more difficult and He's *still* talking to Nicodemus! This is a lot *more difficult to understand* than ‘you must be born of water and the Spirit’. This gets into some deep water for me.

It seems strange that Jesus would say He had ascended into Heaven since that comes three years later, doesn't it? And He says He's the **only** one who has ascended into Heaven. Well, I'm just going to share with you a lot of questions that I have about this.

1. What about Elijah? What about Enoch? (Heb. 11:5) Didn't they ascend into Heaven? Neither of them died and specifically, Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. 2 Kings 2
2. Isaiah went there in a vision. (Isaiah 6:1)
3. Jacob observed Angels ascending and descending from Heaven on a ladder (Genesis 28:12)

So what does Jesus *factually* mean when He says that [“No one has ascended into heaven”](#)? Could this be the same type of statement made in John 1:18 - NIV [“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.”](#)?

Or

NASB [“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”](#)

4. Well, do the Angels see God? Doesn't it say in Matthew 18:10 that the Angels of the little ones behold the face of the Father? [“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”](#) Doesn't it say there are 24 elders (Rev. 4:4), all these creatures in Heaven (Rev. 4:6-8), the Seraphs (Isa. 6:1-3), Cherubim (Gen. 3:24, Ezek 10); but Jesus said that **no one** has seen the Father but **Me**. Is that literally true? I mean, even Moses got to see the back side of God.

How do we take these statements factually when there seems to be so much other evidence in Scripture that says there are *others* who have seen Him; or *others* who have ascended into Heaven?

So, did Jesus make trips back to Heaven during His 33 years sojourn that are not recorded? Many think that Jesus visited the earth as “the Angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament, or the Son of Man in the Old Testament period. Some believe that He was the fourth man in the fire with the three Hebrew children Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. (Daniel 3) Well, if He (Jesus) was, did He ascend back to heaven when He got out of the fire?

Take a look at **Proverbs 30:4** These are the words of Agur

Who has ascended into heaven and descended?

Who has gathered the wind in His fists?

Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

**What is His name or His son's name?**

Surely you know!

**Acts 2:34** speaks about the coronation of Jesus to sit at the right hand of God

“For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:

‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, <sup>35</sup> Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”’

<sup>36</sup> Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

**John 7:34** says,

“You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

We have similar statements about this in Acts 2:34 and John 7:34 we have similar statements about it but the ascension in Acts 2:34 it indicates by **context** the coronation of Jesus at the right hand of God. So after He was resurrected He ascended back into Heaven, sat down upon the Heavenly throne, and was proclaimed King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He was made both LORD and Christ as Peter said in Acts 2:37.

The word “ascension”

**John 3:13**

“No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

**John 6:62**

“Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!”

In this chapter, (32-40), Jesus mentions that bread that came out of Heaven which we must eat to live. The disciples were having trouble with this difficult statement. And to this, Jesus challenges them with His *ascension* to where He was before. He **has** to go back to where He was before. It's almost like, “If you have trouble understanding that I came **out** of Heaven, you'll have a whole lot of trouble with Me going **back** to Heaven.”

Jesus made a similar statement to Nathaniel in John 1:51 about “**the Heavens being opened and the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**” So if Jesus was the only one who ascended into heaven, who are all these angels he talked about in His warning to Nathaniel above (1:51) about ascending and descending?

*So the way Jesus uses this, it seems to be a definite proof of His identity as the Son of Man; and it is tied to His descent.* In other words, there is something tied to the descent of Jesus and His ascension back to Heaven that proves He *is actually* the **Son of God**. But it's confusing to me until I get to the next day when I had my “epiphany”. How does He **mean** this when there is all this other evidence of angels (and others) ascending and descending?

## Ephesians 4:8

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." Paul uses it about the gifts that are given to us in Christ, and he mentions they are given by Jesus to man "from on high in" (See verses 9 and 10). (Now this expression, "He ascended," what [b]does it mean except that He also [c]had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) *Ascension implies descension. Descension implies ascension.*

In other words, each of them imply the other. This ascension includes Jesus going higher than the Heavens and filling the whole universe; i.e. **the omnipresence of Jesus**. This is hard to understand. It's hard to understand because He speaks about it in so many different ways of this ascension 'deal'.

So, when we talk about the death, burial and resurrection; when we get to "ascension", how do we understand that? We've talked a whole lot about death, burial and resurrection, but we haven't talked quite as much about ascension. But if you go to 1 Corinthians 15 and you talk about the core of the Gospel, ascension is included in the core of the Gospel. That's hard to understand. September 27, 2010 – I'm not ready for the "epiphany" yet. So I have to hurry.

The *two witnesses* in Rev. 11:11-12, after they were resurrected, the breath of God entered them and a loud voice from heaven told them, "come up **here**". *They* ascended into Heaven in a cloud. So even the two witnesses, whoever they are in Revelation, ascended into heaven in a cloud.

So identify with Agur in Proverbs 30 that I just read: "nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One." In other words, that is what he concludes. Who has ascended ... who has descended? And then he says in 30:2-4, {I do not have human understanding. <sup>3</sup> I have not learned wisdom,} nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.

And Agur asks, <sup>4</sup>Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Ascension and descension implies power, wisdom and access not held by mere mortals.

When coupled with John 3:12 about earthly and Heavenly things, Jesus certainly knows both ascension and descension because both earth and Heaven have been His throne. "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Perhaps Jesus was not concerned with chronology, and simply meant that no one had experienced Heaven and earth as **He** had. That's a possibility. And then I put, "That's the best I can do" . . . until the next day.

Now, **John 3:14** may have something to do with the ascension as well. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; <sup>15</sup> so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life." *Lifted up kind of sounds like ascension* so I'm thinking, "maybe **that's** what He's talking about." Maybe the "ascension" is "lifted up".

Jesus mentions the lifting up of the serpent like the Son of Man and I had thought “lifted up” simply meant *Jesus on a cross*; but **perhaps** it means more... *including the resurrection and the ascension, or the coronation of Jesus! Is that it?* If, when Jesus says *ascension*, is He thinking *coronation*? Does He mean “Being made *Lord and Christ*?” It fits the context of **Acts 2:34-36** which reads

<sup>34</sup> For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:

‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand,

<sup>35</sup> Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”’

<sup>36</sup> Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

In **Acts 2:34-36** does ‘No one is ascended mean “ascended to the throne” of heaven’? Maybe **that’s** the ascension He’s talking about. Maybe He’s not talking about just simply being transported from earth to Heaven but about being ascended in a very specific way!

When we talk about the resurrection; Jesus wasn’t the only one resurrected. Lazarus was resurrected! Jesus raised people from the dead while He was on the earth. But **their** resurrection doesn’t *save* us. Their resurrection doesn’t have the same meaning to us. So when He uses this idea of **ascension**, in **His** mind, He’s not simply talking about being transported from earth to Heaven, (like beam me up Scotty kind of thing), but He’s talking specifically about a *special ascension* – a unique ascension – an ascension to the right hand of God where He is crowned **King of Kings and Lord of Lords!** No one ascended means “no one ascended to the throne of Heaven”. And Jesus was crowned King of Kings because of the way He was ascended. That’s got to be **it! There’s my epiphany.**

### **If you compare Philippians 2:5-11**

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but *emptied* Himself, *taking the form of a bond-servant*, and *being made in the likeness of men.* <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He *humbled Himself* by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> **For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow (receiving worship), of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess (receiving confession) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** The descent includes emptying Himself, becoming a bondservant, being made man, humbling Himself, being obedient to death on a cross, and then lifted up highly exalted, and receiving the name above all names, receiving worship and confession.

In God’s sphere of time and space, the coronation was as if it were *already done!* And I say, “thank You for this insight!” If this conclusion is right, it helps me to see why, to Jesus, ascension does not merely mean “return to Heaven”, but a glorious event where He sits at God’s right hand. This *is* the story of Revelation 12. And I say thank you. I think that’s it. I think, when He says “and no one has ascended into heaven” what He is saying is that no one has ascended into Heaven like Me” or “no one is experiencing the ascension that I am experiencing which I am experiencing, which is the coronation where I am made King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

**Macy:** I follow you but I just ... Do I understand this? You're talking about no one has ever gone into heaven except ... You're taking the perspective that even though that's in the future, by His being God, He is speaking of it as if it's in the past, as being done.

**Rod:** Yes.

**Macy:** As opposed from "he did come from Heaven, and that maybe was already ascended previously." Maybe it's possibly both. Since 'no one has ever gone into Heaven except the One...' could it something to do with His previous existence tied in here as well.

**Rod:** Well, I see what you're saying. In Greek it **is** in the past tense, but the past tense is a minor thing for me in regard to the conclusion because "past tense" for God is irrelevant.

**Macy:** Before Abraham was, I am.

**Rod:** Right. And often, God speaks of 'things that are **not** as though they **are**' according to Romans 4 which is a statement of faith. So this whole idea, for me, answers the questions, about not just **this** particular passage, but **all** the passages that have to do with the ascension of Jesus. It answers what ascension has to do with it in terms of being redemptive ... not just simply a factual statement that He went back to Heaven, but ***it is included in the core of the Gospel itself just like the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.*** Just like the death, burial and resurrection, it (the ascension) has a profound effect on our salvation. And if you tie in the fact that 'it wasn't until He sat at the right hand of the Father, that He was able, at **that** point, to send the **Holy Spirit**. He poured out His Spirit, which **then** ushered in, in Acts chapter 2, the preaching of the Gospel and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world.'

So I really believe that the ascension of Jesus is more theologically relevant than we have made it. It is really tied to the core of the Gospel. That's my conclusion. I got really excited on September 28, 2010 and it was probably about 6:00 in the morning when I had that.

Next week we'll pick up on Moses and the snake.