

GOD'S INVITATION:

How to Become a Christian

“What it Takes to Get it Right”

The Fifth Movement – The Judgment of God – John 3:19-21

In this particular study we've seen a guy who is very religious, very successful, and very popular by the name of Nicodemus. He is the epitome of all of these things and he comes to Jesus and immediately in those first seven verses, three times he hears the same message: “You must be born again”—verse 3, verse 5 and verse 7.

In the second movement of the symphony we considered the life-giving agent in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. It is He who blows like a wind upon our lives, convicts us, shows us our need, and as a result is the giver of life in answer to our faith.

Now in the third movement of the symphony we looked at several verses and Nicodemus went through a period of doubt and unbelief, confusion and question. It started with verse 9 and he says, “How is a man able to be born?” Now Jesus realizes that there is a deeper question than this. However, because in verse 11 notice that He actually bears Nicodemus' heart.

He says:

John 3:11

“Most assuredly, I’m saying to you. That which we are knowing we are speaking, and that which we have seen, we are bearing witness: and our witness you are not receiving.”

In other words, He can understand the fact that Nicodemus is asking the question “How” is more or less a cover-up when really underneath he is not responding to the message that He’s given.

Now what do we do with a guy who’s facing the frustration of doubt, confusion, question—when a message like this comes which cuts across his religious life? Which cuts across all of the things which he, by nature, in his life to this point has experienced? Well it’s beautiful. In our last study we looked at those great verses beginning with verse 16.

God loves a person like that. “God so loved...that He gave... that whosoever would believe would not perish, but have everlasting life.”

We discovered in our last study that God’s love is not by degrees. God’s love is not something that we earn. God’s love is not something that we deserve. God loves each of us just the same because God is love.

And in that kind of love, there’s a great deal of freedom to

realize that He doesn't accept us because of what we are. He accepts us in the fact of what we are going to be as a result of our relationship with Him. He created us in the beginning because He was lonely and wanted fellowship—wanted a relationship. And once that relationship is established we discover miraculously as we come to the Cross of Calvary and see His love manifested in our behalf, but He still loves us just the same. That He still cares.

Now what happens when a person refuses to accept the love gift in verse 16—Jesus Christ, God's Son—as their Savior? Well God is still a holy and just God. There's a consequence to be born in view of the fact that they would reject this love gift. And so we come to this unpopular position today and that is the judgment of God in this fifth and final symphony.

It is more comfortable to talk about love than it is to talk about justice or to talk about judgment. But the Bible is filled with references to the fact that God has always judged sin.

In Genesis we read:

Genesis 6:5

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his hearts was only evil continually.

In that time God brought onto the world the flood. In Genesis 19 the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in wickedness

experienced God's judgment.

And when we come to the time of Jesus Christ and His life lived upon earth He goes to the Cross, not necessarily because He had to, but because He wanted to. He wanted to, in love, experience God's judgment.

Isaiah the prophet predicted it in Isaiah 53. He said: "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Surely He hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem Him, stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him."

The poet put it so well:

On him almighty vengeance fell,
that would have sunk a world to hell.
He bore it for a chosen race
and thus becomes my hiding place.
(source unknown)

God's judgment was poured out upon Jesus Christ upon the Cross. But now what does a just God do when we refuse to respond in love to the provision of His Son? He's still a God of judgment.

Second Thessalonians 1:8 says that as concisely and as plainly as we can make it:

2 Thessalonians 1:8

Bringing judgment on those who do not wish to know God and who refuse to submit to His plan, to save them through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It can't be any clearer. God has no alternative but to judge.

Now at the time of our New Birth, when we come to know Jesus Christ as Savior, our name is inscribed in the Lamb's book of life. And the absence of our name in the Lamb's book of life, of course, will result in an experience of judgment saying only that we have refused to receive Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:31 says: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God."

We should be careful in our concept of God. Realize He's just and holy—for we have no absolutes. And secondly, remember that He's a God of love. Put these two things together. Don't be so captivated by His great love that we forget that He means what He says. And that as a result of rejecting, as a result of refusing His plan for salvation, it leaves Him with no alternative but to judge.

Second Peter 3:9 says: "The Lord is not willing that any should perish"—that is in judgment—"but that all should come to repentance."

His desire is a heart filled with love because He created us, He wanted a relationship. But when we chose to go our own way, we leave nothing open for God but the alternative of judgment.

We can read the book of Revelation from chapter 6 through chapter 19 and we can see the future manifestation of judgment that is going to come because of a refusal to receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

Notice these last three verses within the context of what we've seen to this point.

v. 19 “Now this is the judgment, that light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil.

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In this verse right away we get the picture of things. It's also described for us in John 1:11: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

Jesus Christ is likened to the Light of the world and He is the light that has come into the world. And then we read that “men loved the darkness rather than the light.” And the reason that is given is because “their works were evil.”

Since Jesus Christ is the light of the world, then to be without

Him is to walk in darkness.

First John 1:5-6 would also bear this message:

1 John 1:5, 6

And this is the message which we've heard from him and announcing to you. That God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not know the truth.

Ever noticed that when light comes on the scene, that which is comfortable in the darkness scatters toward the dens and the holes? Ever flipped a rock and watched the little animals that have lived in the security of the darkness under the rock head in all directions, uncomfortable in the light? Ever noticed that invariably the things which men do wrong are the things which they do in the dark?

Job describes it in Job 24:13-17 when he says:

Job 24:13-17

These are them that rebel against the light. They know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. The murder rises with the night, he killeth the poor and needy and in the night he is as a thief. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight saying, "No eye shall see me." And he disguiseth his face in the dark. They dig through houses, they shut themselves up in the daytime. They know not the light, for the

morning is to all of them as thick darkness for they know the terrors of thick darkness.

Second Corinthians 4:4 says: “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Why is it that we get so terribly emotional when we hear a message of our responsibility to God?

Well it could be for one of two reasons. One, it’s verifying with our own heart that we’ve made the right decision and that this is for real and the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirit. Or secondly, it could also bear witness to the fact that we’re manifesting emotion because of guilt. We realize that we have denied the existence of all of these things for years and when we hear the reality of the message, and that it coincided with the lives of people that we have seen whose lives have been changed, we become immediately very emotional when we hear the reality of the spiritual truth.

The darkness makes a person comfortable. The darkness makes a person not see things as they really are. The darkness gives a sense of security and yet it shouldn’t. Because Hebrews 4:13 says that “all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

In the darkness we can’t see what’s just ahead so we can be comfortable right now.

v. 20 For everyone who is practicing evil is hating the light, and is not coming to the light in order that his work should not be exposed.

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We don't really want to see ourselves as we really are. We would rather project an image. We would rather build a little castle behind which we could hide. We would rather give the world the feeling that we're secure and content when inside we're crumbling and falling apart.

One of the greatest things we can do is come to the place where we see ourselves as God sees us. The closer the image of what God sees and what we know to be, the closer these two come together the more productive, prosperous and fruitful individual we're going to become. And the more of life we're going to experience in fulfillment.

Gerhard Dirks, the father of the original IBM computer and holds a lot of the patents on the computer—fabulous IQ—explains the computer as just like the human mind. “Garbage in and garbage out” is the way he expresses it. But one day he was talking to a group of Christians. He said, “As you know as a Christian it is possible to already be living in the light of Jesus Christ but still to have a lot of darkness in my life. It's still possible to want to project the phony image. To be an

unreal person rather than to be transparent like described in these verses.”

He said, “There are four questions that I would suggest that you ask yourself so you can determine whether or not you are walking in the light. Question #1—when was my yes not a yes and my no not a no?” And he said, “Make a list of your first outright lie, your first shaded answer, your first broken promise. So when you can go back to that point you can begin to see where you started to walk in darkness as a Christian.” Then secondly he said, “What do I try to hide?” And then this question he amplifies it further by saying, “Bitterness? Selfishness? Resentment? Jealousy? Malice? Anger? Criticism? Failure in your home? Hatred? Your own sin? Your shortcomings?” And then he said, “What do I actually say to people I’m personally interested in? Go back over the last conversation you’ve had with somebody that you’re deeply interested in, see how much of that conversation revolved around you and how much of it revolved around the person that you were interested in.”

“See a person walking in darkness cannot ever get very close to someone they love because they feel threatened, they feel fearful, lest that person that they’re interested in would see them as they really are. So they’re always projecting an image. And then fourth, what non-relatives have I ever really helped without getting anything for it? A person who is walking in the light can afford to spend himself in the lives of others because he doesn’t have anything to hide.”

It's possible to come to God in a selfish manner, receive the gift of His Son and keep on walking in darkness. This is the reason it's so threatening today and the fantastic movement that's taking place in the church of Jesus Christ of people who begin to get honest, to come and own up.

No wonder they're feeling fabulous new love for each other. No wonder they're feeling fabulous new relationships because they're opening up. They're becoming honest people. They're willing to talk about a common bond and relationship to Jesus Christ because we're all going to spend eternity together anyway. That's beautiful when that happens. If we're threatened by it today, if we're still walking in the cloak of darkness even as a Christian, may God speak to us about that matter.

Pray the prayer of the psalmist David in Psalm 139:

Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me, O God, and know and my heart;
try me, and know my thoughts;
and see if there be any wicked way in me,
and then lead me in the way everlasting.

In the process of coming to the light, it becomes terribly painful because there are a lot of things that have to be dealt with. There are a lot of inadequacies in our lives that begin to show up and we have to be willing to be big enough to own up to it and mature enough to change and move in the direction

of the light.

Many Christians would rather hide and be comfortable rather than deal with the impotent, fruitless lives which are in drastic need of divine surgery to become the kind of people they ought to become.

v. 21 But he that is doing the truth is coming to the light in order that his works might be manifested to have been accomplished by God.”

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The one who's walking truthfully, the one who's walking honestly, the one who's walking openly, experiences the fact of joy because he has nothing to hide. He's an open, transparent individual. He's not afraid of coming to the light in order that his works might be manifested, to have been accomplished by God.

What a thrill just to be honest with everybody! What a joy to realize that we don't have anything to hide! We don't have to build a shell around ourselves, making it difficult for people to get to know us because we're threatened when they get too close.

Where is the power in a person today in our land, who has no spiritual Watergates in their life? So as a result they cannot

speaking with power and authority because they're threatened when people get too close. We're living in a time with a double standard, when it's unethical to do things which are forthright and honest almost. We're at the point where it is ethical to live in a way of fooling people and having a double standard by which we live.

Now there is a day coming which is a day of judgment. And the judgment is going to come because men love the darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. There's a day coming when men who were born and who refuse to be born again are going to wish that they were never born at all. God is very patient. He's loving. He wants to get glory from our lives and He wants to provide a relationship—and He has—through the gift of His Son. But when we refuse, we throw ourselves open to His judgment.

Don't ever get the feeling that God doesn't know what we're doing. Don't ever get the feeling that we're doing something behind His back. God's keeping the books and He knows the whole deal.

Now the neat thing about this passage that gets us so excited is that Nicodemus responded. The reason we see that is in two other verses in the gospel of John.

In John 7:50, when the case about Jesus Christ comes before the Sanhedrin, who's the guy that stands up and speaks? Here's old Nicodemus standing up before these other 69 guys in the Supreme Court and he says, "Does our Law judge any

man before it hears him and knows what he does?”
Representing Jesus Christ at this point—putting a delay in the machinery.

Even better than that is John 19:39. All the disciples left, everybody had checked out, the Cross had happened and everybody was frightened and running for their lives. If Nicodemus was a chicken when he came to Jesus by night in the first experience, man the New Birth did something for him because here he is in broad daylight. He comes and begs for the body of Jesus Christ and prepares it for burial.

In John 19:39 we read:

John 19:39

There came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. Then they took the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, after the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Nicodemus' life had been changed through this encounter that we've read about in this particular passage.

Now the symphony is an unfinished symphony. The reason it is, is because the finale is to be written by us. We're the one who has the responsibility at this particular point to respond. And we're praying that we'll each respond in favorable fashion if we've never entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ,

God's Son.

Here's a neat story from Don Anderson's ministry:

One experience that was the most memorable in all of my ministry came in my first charge as a youth minister. A lady called me late one Sunday night and she said, "My brother John is here. Would you come?" When I went over to the house I had the privilege of dialoguing with John for some time. And John that night received Christ as Savior. And I got this letter just a couple of years ago that really touched my heart. John was a crippled man who lived by braces, while he lived. And the letter came:

Dear Don,

John went to be with the Lord on December 22nd, as you will see from the folder that is enclosed. He was struck by a car while he was walking across the street. John had no insurance, but we thank and praise God that he had assurance of being born again. His billfold was found with a \$5.00 bill and a check which my sister had mailed to him for Christ, but had not endorsed. Also, a card indicating his decision for Jesus Christ and your signature. I had the opportunity to tell my two sisters about the evening you were in our home and John received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Again I thank and praise God that you were available and you came that Sunday evening when I phoned that John was here.

(source unknown)

How long do we have to live? How long do we have to make this important decision? How many days are going to continue to slip by that we're losing, in the sense that we're spending them on ourselves when God expects for us to come and make the decision that needs to be made?

Hebrews 2:3 says: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation."

Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, chose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

Revelation 22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Let's pray.

Our heavenly Father, as we've looked at this passage of scripture with Nicodemus in John 3:1-21, we pray that we might realize the fact that You are a God of love and that You long for a relationship with us. You want to give us complete fulfillment because You are a God of love. But Father we realize too that You are just and that there are consequences for failing to appropriate, failing to respond in a favorable

manner to the message of the Cross of Jesus Christ. And Father we pray that You might speak to our lives about the responsibility and that they'll be those who'll make the decisions which are necessary to be made in our lives to line up in conformity with Your will. We're going to praise You for what You're going to do in each of our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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