**John 3: Nicodemus visits Jesus; Final Witness of**

 **John the Baptist**

**John 3:1-21; Nicodemus Visits Jesus**

* Nicodemus was a pharisee. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. Jesus refers to him as a “teacher of Israel”, indicating that he was also a scribe or teacher of the law.
* Because Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, he went to see Jesus at night for fear of the Jews.
* Nicodemus was very educated. To be well educated does not mean that a man will have an understanding of the things of God.
* Nicodemus is very respectful of Jesus, addressing him as “rabbi”. He acknowledges that Jesus is a teacher of God. Jesus is aware that Nicodemus places too much trust in learning.

***“Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”***

* Nicodemus responds, **“*How can a person once grown old be born again*?”**
* Nicodemus’ first question reveals that he still has doubts about Jesus. (*Is he a prophet?* *Is he the Messiah?*)
* Jesus responds ***“Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of the water and spirit.”***
* Jesus’ response is to emphasize that Nicodemus places to much trust in learning. A person’s emphasis on human knowledge will interfere in their understanding of God.
* With the words ***“being born of the water and spirit”*** Jesus is referring to the Christian Sacrament of Baptism.
* In Baptism one is born of water and the Holy Spirit. As Christians we have two births. The first birth is of earth and the second birth (Baptism) is of heaven. While the first birth is of mortality and second birth is of eternity.

***“The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound that it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit”***

* In this verse Jesus is speaking of the effects of the Holy Spirit produces in the soul of the baptized. Just as with the wind – when it blows, we realize its presence, we hear it whistling but we do not know where it comes from or where it will wind up.
* The Holy Spirit is the *“divine breath”* that we receive in Baptism. We do not know how He comes to penetrate our heart, but he makes his presence felt by the change in the conduct of whoever receives him.

***“And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”***

* The bronze serpent which Moses set up on a pole was established by God to cure those who had been bitten by the poisonous serpents in the desert.
* Jesus compares this with the crucifixion to show the value of being raised up on the cross; those who look on him with faith can obtain salvation.
* The good thief was the first to experience the saving power of Christ on the cross. He looked upon the crucified Jesus and acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus advised him that he would be in paradise with Him that very day.

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”***

* This scripture summarizes how Christ’s death is the supreme sign of God’s love for man. Salvation history is an expression of God’s mercy and love for us.
* God’s love is so great that he desires that everyone be saved to the point that he sends his only begotten son to be crucified for our sins.
* The redemption that took place through the crucifixion restored the dignity to man that was lost due to the Original Sin of Adam and Eve.
* The purpose of Jesus’ life, crucifixion and resurrection was salvation not condemnation. We have free will. God’s desire is for all people to be saved. He has given us *“free will”*. Those who choose to reject Jesus in turn choose their condemnation.

**John 3:22-36: Final Witness of the Baptist**

***“After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea, where he spent some time with them baptizing.”***

* In John 4:2 it becomes clear that it was not Jesus but his disciples who were baptizing people.
* The baptism of the disciples was not the Christian baptism of water and the Holy Spirit but was a baptism of repentance.
* In the disciples’ baptism they were exhorting people to conversion. The baptism of John the Baptist and the apostles’ baptism had the same purpose: To bring the baptized to Christ and to prepare the way for future faith.
* John the Baptist’s disciples were concerned that the man (Jesus) he bore witness to is now baptizing with his disciples and all the people are going to him.
* John responds ***“No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven.”***  John explains to his own disciples that he had testified that he was not the Christ but that he was the forerunner of the Christ.
* His mission was to announce the coming of the Messiah. To prepare the people to be able to recognize and receive the Messiah.

***“He must increase; I must decrease.”***

* John the Baptist rejoices to see the Messiah has already begun his public ministry. John recognized the difference between his position and that of Christ’s. He has joy in that he was effective in his mission to be the forerunner of Christ and that the people are flocking to Christ.
* John knew that once he completed his mission he was to fade to the background. John the Baptist is a model for all Christians. Especially those who perform ministry. The focus is never to be on us but on Christ. We are to be open instruments to be directed by the Holy Spirit.
* Self-emptying; Kenosis.

The Navarre Bible; The Gospel of St. John; Scepter Publishers; New York; 1986

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