

" Well, How Do You Know You Are Going to Heaven?"

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Sermon Text

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus* by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' 3 Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.'* 4 Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' 5 Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.* 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You* must be born from above."* 8 The wind* blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' 9 Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' 10 Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 11 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you* do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.* 14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* 16 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Sermon:

I had to get a hair cut this past week. I was beginning to look like a crazy-haired TV evangelist. This conversation Nicodemus has with Jesus about salvation, eternal life and heaven was on my mind in preparation for this day. So, I asked my barber if she would mind if I asked her a question? She said " no " I asked: "Do you believe you are going to heaven?" She said to me: "What kind of question is that to ask your barber!" Then she responded: "Yes" Then I asked her: "How do you know you are going to heaven?"

“Do you believe you are going to heaven?” (raise your hand) How do you know you are going to heaven? How do you know -- you are saved?

In his conversation with Nicodemus -- Jesus uses a word that grabs our attention: The word: “MUST” Very seldom does Jesus ever say “you must” “Must” we hear as a strong word. We interpret it as a requirement, as a necessary condition... so our ears perk up. What is it one must do to be saved? -- to go to heaven?

Chapter 3 verse 7 JESUS say:

Do not be astonished that I said to you,
“You must be born from above.”

These words it appears are etched above the gates of heaven upon which one's entrance into eternal life is granted or denied.

“You must be born from above.” What does this mean? The Greek word used here is “another.” ‘Another’ can be translated as: born from above; born again; born anew. Which one is the correct way to translate it in this text.? Can all three be right.? Evidently not. In the text, Nicodemus translates “another” to literally mean “born again. According to Jesus reaction, he sure didn't get it right.

There are a lot of people who believe you and me are going to hell... because we don't have it right

There are those Christians who believe you and me are not saved because: we haven't been truly baptized. They say “ to truly be baptized: (1.) You must have first declare your faith in Christ and then (2.) you must be dunked (baptism by submersion). None of this dribbling or dowsing stuff when you were an infant. It is not valid.” How many here were brought to the font as an infant? (hands raised) So, guess where they think you are going?

There are those Christians who believe you and I are not saved because you and I-- well-- are not Christians. They say: “For anyone to be a true Christian --you must be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” In this text, they have come separated “born of water and spirit” as meaning two different events. The conjunction ‘and “ is not seen as a connector of word but as a separator of words They interpret this verse as to read, “born of water, then the spirit” They go beyond this text to define “baptized with the Holy Spirit’ as meaning “ to speak in tongues.” How many of you have spoken in tongues? (raise hands) Guess where they think you are going?

There was a billboard with the question: WERE YOU BAPTIZED RIGHT? And underneath is a phone number where both an answer and a remedy presumably may be found. The inference is the same as the billboard? According to these two groups you and I aren't baptized right?

There is another group of Christians that don't care if you are baptized right. Their focus is not on the "water" or "spirit" They believe you are not saved because you haven't had a cathartic experience accepting Jesus into your heart following a four step procedure. Though you may be a believer, if you are not a "Born Again Christian"... you are going down.

Now, after all that: How many of you still believe that you are going to heaven? (raise hands) HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? What do you ground your believe on? What scripture validates your position?

I have a very wise barber. To the question: "How do you know you are going to heaven?" She said: "I trust in the promises of God."

She has grounded her salvation—

- Not in some regulations she kept
- Not in some rituals she participated in
- Not in some rites she been through
- Not in some requirements she has met

She has grounded her salvation—

- in Christ's saving relationship with her!

She is trusting God that he will be faithful to the promise of John 3:16 "that whoever believes in him shall not parish but have eternal life."

(turning a round, showing side and back of head to congregation)

By the way , how do you like my haircut? Didn't Christy, my wife, do a really nice job?