



# Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



## Episode 138 - Look at Me (John 3-5)

### Jesus Meets Nicodemus

Nicodemus was one of the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem. Being a Pharisee, he followed the traditions of the rabbis and scribes. He comes to Jesus at night to learn for himself if Jesus is the Messiah or not. Jesus tells him he must be born again with water and the Spirit if he wants to see the kingdom of heaven.

- From this passage do you think Nicodemus had submitted to John's baptism or not?
- Why did Jesus consider it important to discredit the Jewish notion that being a physical descendant of Abraham was all it took to be a child of God?

When Jesus compares Himself to the serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness, He is speaking of an event we covered back in episode 40. Instead of removing the poisonous serpents as the people requested through Moses, God gave them a way of salvation through a serpent on a pole.

- Why would putting a bronze serpent on a pole require faith on the part of a bitten Israelite?
- How did the serpent on the pole exclude any idea of salvation by works or heritage?
- How does salvation through the serpent on the pole point ahead to salvation through Jesus on the cross?

### The Samaritan Woman at the Well

After Jesus asked about her husband and exposed her sinful life, she tried to change the subject. But the direction she turned their conversation gave Jesus the opportunity to correct her mistaken notion of worship. It also helps us focus our eyes on true worship. The woman spoke as if God was only accessible in certain places; for her it was Mount Gerizim in Samaria; for the Jews it was the temple in Jerusalem.

- What distorted view of God's presence can we get from gathering to worship Him in a church building at a set time each week?
- How does remembering that God is spirit and fills all creation help us think of worship differently?
- What tremendous value can we find in gathering to worship God regularly in a particular place?
- How do you remind yourself that God is present at all times and all places in your day-to-day life, and not only in worship at church?

### Healing on the Sabbath

God established the Sabbath as a day for His people to rest from their labors. The scribes and Pharisees had come to focus all their attention on that rest—i.e. what they could and could not do on the Sabbath. But the Sabbath isn't really about our resting; it's about our coming together to watch God continue to work in our lives. So on the Sabbath Jesus went to work, teaching and healing many people. He turned the spotlight off our rest and back on God's work.

- How does it transform our worship to think of it as a "Divine Service"—that is, God working for us while we rest?
- What is the best way for us to keep the Sabbath day holy?

### Jesus' Witnesses

God had set a standard for Israel which required two witnesses to establish the truth of any matter (see Deuteronomy 17:6). So Jesus said, "If I alone bear witness about Myself, My testimony is not deemed true" (John 5:31). In order to establish the truth that He was God's chosen Messiah, Jesus went on to say, "There is another who bears witness about Me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true" (John 5:32). In fact, Jesus spoke about four witnesses: (see John 5:30-47).

## John the Baptist

In John 1:32b-36, John the Baptist gave his testimony, "... 'I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Him. I myself did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.'" Months later after Jesus went to Galilee, John was still witnessing to the crowds about Him. At that time the Baptist told his disciples "He must increase, but I must decrease" (see John 3:22-30).

- John the Baptist was an impressive figure. Which people would have been most impressed by his testimony?
- What did Jesus think about John the Baptist? (See Matthew 11:2, 7-15.)

## Jesus' Miraculous Works

At the end of his Gospel, John would write of Jesus' miracles, "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). All of these stood as powerful witnesses to His divinity and His Messiahship.

- What confidence do you gain in Jesus when you read accounts of His power to heal the sick, drive out demons, still storms, multiply food and raise the dead?
- What miracles or other evidences of God's power have you seen in your own life or heard from others?

## The Father's Voice

The Gospels record at least three times when the Father testified that Jesus of Nazareth was His Son:

- When Jesus was baptized the Father testified, "... 'This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17b).
- When Jesus was transfigured the Father said, "... 'This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him'" (Matthew 17:5b).
- When the time drew near for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross He told His disciples and the crowds around Him, "Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your Name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not Mine" (John 12:27-30).
- When Jesus said, "This voice has come for your sake, not Mine," how was He pointing to His Father as one of His witnesses?
- Why did the Father want His words to be heard by a number of people and not just the 12 disciples?

## The Old Testament

In John 5:39 Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me."

- What Old Testament passages can you think of that speak of Jesus?
- Why is it important for us to keep studying the Old Testament?