

JESUS— THE WITNESS FROM HEAVEN

HEAVEN



WHO IS
YOUR WITNESS?

VERSUS



TO WHOM
ARE WE
LISTENING?

EARTH

FOR THIS PURPOSE I WAS BORN AND **FOR THIS PURPOSE** I HAVE COME INTO THE WORLD—**TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH.** EVERYONE WHO IS OF THE TRUTH LISTENS TO MY VOICE (JOHN 18:37A ESV).

REVIEW ... 3:1-8

We must be born again from above to have the new life that enables us to see the kingdom of God.

This new birth is the work of God alone without human effort.

This is a work of the Spirit which we can neither understand nor explain any more than we are able explain the movement of the wind.

SETTING OUR CONTEXT ...

I. What heaven knows **VERSUS** What earth knows!

A. Witness—to testify to or affirm what one has seen or heard or experienced.

B. Nicodemus—**witness representing earth.**

- (John 3:2a ESV) This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, **we know** that you are a teacher come from God.

C. Jesus—**witness representing heaven.**

JESUS IS LITERALLY **THE WITNESS** FROM HEAVEN.

- (John 3:11 ESV) Truly, truly, I say to you, **we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen.**
- (John 18:37a) For **this purpose** I was born and for **this purpose** I have come into the world—**to bear witness to the truth.** Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.
- (John 12:49–50 ESV) **For I have not spoken on my own authority,** but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—**what to say and what to speak.** 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. **What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.**
- (John 7:16–17 ESV) So Jesus answered them, “**My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.** 17 **If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know** whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.
- (John 8:26 ESV) **I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.**
- (John 8:42–43 ESV) Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, **for I came from God and I am here.** I came not of my own accord, but **he sent me.** 43 **Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.”**

II. **Basic Fact:** Everyone knows some things about God, but not everyone knows God.

- (Romans 1:18–19 NLT) **But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.** 19 **They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them.**

III. There are two general groups of people on earth.

A. **GROUP 1:** Those who know some things about God but do not know God.

B. **GROUP 2:** Those who know some things about God and know God.

IV. **GROUP ONE:** Those who know some things about God but do not know God may be divided into two subgroups.

A. Subgroup 1: Agnostics and atheists who have **no interest** in what God says in the Bible.

- i. **Agnostics**—people who believe that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God.
- ii. **Atheists**—people who disbelieve or lack belief in the existence of God or gods.

B. Subgroup 2: Religious (or spiritual) people who have **some interest** in what God says in the Bible.

- i. This group would include all religious people such as Nicodemus who seemed (as a Pharisee) to have great interest in what God says in the Bible.
- ii. However the people in this subgroup are no more capable of seeing the kingdom of God than are the agnostics and atheists.
- iii. The people in this group may even fiercely defend the Bible but they have added to or taken away from what God says by bringing the witness of Scripture under the authority of humans.
 - (Deuteronomy 4:2a ESV) **You shall not add to the word** that I command you, **nor take from it.**
 - See also Revelation 22:18–19.
- iv. They do not realize what they are doing.
- v. They do not know what has happened and do not know what will happen.
- vi. They will one day hear Jesus judge them as those who were a law unto themselves because they rejected the witness of heaven.
 - (Matthew 7:23 ESV) And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; **depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**”

C. Subgroup 2 also includes religious people who have great interest in the Bible and study it diligently.

- (John 5:36–41 ESV) But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For **the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me** that the Father has sent me. 37 And **the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, 38 and you do not have** his word abiding in you, **for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.** 39 **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,** 40 **yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.** 41 **I do not receive glory from people.**

- Christ's works, the Father himself and the Scriptures bear witness but they refuse to believe this three-fold witness from heaven and come to Christ to have eternal life.
- What Christ means when he says—"I do not receive glory from people"—is that he will not adapt his witness to please or satisfy people.
- Meeting the expectations of their peers is exactly what this group has done which has kept them from believing.

- (John 5:44 ESV) **How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek** the glory that comes from the only God?

- They remain blind to the kingdom of heaven because they submit the heavenly witness to the authority of humans and so the light that is in them becomes darkness.

- (Luke 11:34–35 ESV) **Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.** 35 **Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.**

- Submitting God's word to our humanity reveals a bad spiritual eye that transforms incoming light into darkness which then becomes our light which is great darkness indeed.

V. **GROUP TWO:** Those who know the things of God, know God and see the kingdom of God.

- They are born again and live a new life in view of the kingdom of God.
- Because they see the kingdom of God they do not modify the witness of Scripture to fit the human standards of life on earth.
- They hear the voice of God and know what has happened and will happen.

BACK TO JOHN ... 3:9-18

1. Nicodemus could not understand "these things" because he was still restrained by the earthly witness and not yet able to fully receive the truth from the witness from heaven, 3:9-11.

- (John 3:9–11 ESV) Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, **we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.**

A. Jesus is the powerful witness of heaven—he is the truth and he is full of grace and truth.

- (John 14:6 ESV) Jesus said to him, "**I am** the way, and **the truth**, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**
- (John 1:14 ESV) **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, **full of grace and truth.**

B. Jesus knows the things that are true and he is giving testimony to what he has seen above.

C. Nicodemus had not yet been born again so he could only receive the testimony of this world and not the testimony of the witness from heaven.

2. The witness from heaven—Jesus, the Son of Man—is the ultimate authority on eternal life as the one who has ascended into and descended from heaven, 3:12-15.

- (John 3:12–15 ESV) If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, **how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?** 13 **No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.** 14 And 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.

A. If Nicodemus cannot believe based on the simple example of being born again, then how can he believe Jesus' witness about eternal life.

B. Jesus has ultimate authority as the only witness who has come down from heaven and has been given dominion and glory and a kingdom.

- (Daniel 7:13–14 NIV) In my vision at night I looked, **and there before me was one like a son of man,** coming with the

clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 **He was given authority, glory and sovereign power**; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. **His dominion is an everlasting dominion** that will not pass away, and **his kingdom** is one that will never be destroyed.

3. The Jesus we preach must be the Jesus who has passed through and is exalted above the created heavens and who sits at the right hand of God.

A. He must be lifted high above human belief and opinion by the witness of Scripture.

B. We must present him as high and holy far above all other names and authorities so that people may see him for who he is and believe in him for eternal life.

C. We must preach the Jesus who has been presented to us by the heavenly witnesses so people may believe and have life in his name.

- (John 20:31 ESV) But these are written so that you may believe **that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
- (Ephesians 1:20b–21 ESV) ... Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.**
- (Ephesians 4:10 ESV) He who descended is **the one who also ascended far above all the heavens**, that he might fill all things.
- (Philippians 2:9–11 ESV) Therefore God has highly exalted him **and bestowed on him the name that is above every name**, 10 **so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and **every tongue confess** that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- (Hebrews 4:14 ESV) Since then we have a great high priest **who has passed through the heavens**, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

- (Hebrews 7:26 ESV) For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, **and exalted above the heavens.**
- (Hebrews 8:1–2 ESV) Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, **one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven**, 2 a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.
- (Hebrews 9:24 ESV) **For Christ has entered**, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but **into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

4. We dare not change the witness of heaven but stay true to the testimony and preach the true gospel of God which offers eternal life and warns of condemnation and judgment, 3:16-18.

- (John 3:16–18 ESV) For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only Son**, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send **his Son** into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever **believes in him** is not condemned, but whoever does **not believe** is condemned already, because he has **not believed in the name of the only Son of God.**

A. Believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and have eternal life.

B. Do not believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and remain under the condemnation of God.

CONCLUSION: Who is your witness? To whom are you listening?