

## Heart Transplant

*I have come that you might have life . . . abundantly.*

—Jesus (John 10:10)

Some may accept Jesus Christ for who the Bible says he is because he seems so obviously “other” – from another environment (if not world): being neither socialist or materialist, neither religionist and certainly not atheist(!). He must have often appeared as a Transplant from another world, better than our own—as was revealed by his most off-handed comments. Think of it, now: How would you have spoken about life in this world, or even of that Roman world, as a descendant of Abraham—if you had already lived in Heaven and knew what the future held for you and the people living around you?

Would you have been enamored with the trinkets and baubles of that age? Put another way, more simply: if you knew that in a given number of days you would be leaving here (no matter your age) as you met your “date with destiny” no matter how hard you tried: just how would *you* live?



Further, if you had *already been to Heaven* and knew the glories awaiting your faithful execution of your mission on earth, how would this have affected your interaction with those around you? What if you knew that your every action, today and at this very moment, would affect the destiny of your neighbor—and that possibly, your interaction with someone might affect *their* date of checkout . . . or the *way* they will check out: How would this affect your manner of living?

The Jews of Jesus day lived under the Roman system of government under the burden of an empire mentality. As hard and brutal as that was, however, and as hard as it may be to grasp within our post modern mentality, such was actually a highly evolved form of oppression compared to

many of the barbarities of that ancient world. Rome's concept of occupation far exceeded earlier ancient forms of social structure. In fact, even their concept of slavery (if you can conceive of this) was highly advanced. Conquered people were often enslaved, yes, but by the time the Roman system had been instituted there were various levels of slavery, such that each level had its particular perks, if you will. So that while slaves could not formally own property, those with particularly advanced training were granted exceptional honor and respect (as with physicians, and trusted stewards of the estate, for example)—so that said "slavery" was not without its compensations.

However the proud Jewish nation insisted on tracing its origins back to the glory days of King Solomon, while embracing concepts that we would identify as similar to freedom and liberty from Roman occupation, and yet Jesus never allowed such concerns to define him or those he had influence over. The atmosphere of Heaven is one of love, and Jesus' chief concern (beyond allowing escape from damnation) was that of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. We may begin better appreciate how "other" this perspective was, as we read one of Christ's comments regarding living this out within that culture:

<sup>32</sup> *Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

<sup>33</sup> *Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys.* <sup>34</sup> *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Luke 12:32-34 [emphasis added]

Why did Jesus say such things (see also Matt. 6:33)? How could He say such a thing? What was He thinking?—and His famous statement, about having your heart where your treasure is—was this really a commentary reflecting how he saw life from where he had come from: a reference to Heaven? In other words, was Jesus really saying, "Don't look at this world as your real Home; but live like a visitor 'on

leave' from where your real citizenship belongs . . ."??

I think we often miss this perspective. So let us consider another example of this mindset that is sometimes read over: as Jesus addresses a religious leader of that day; a man having what many would recognize as many "degrees" to his name. This fellow was educated to the hilt. More, he was highly trained within the very religion that God Himself had given to the Jews(!). So, Nicodemus (we'll call him "Nick" for short) visits this young rabbi by night, crosses his legs, and leans in to compliment Him.

*This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

John 3:2

Notice with me, that Nick says (almost whispers?) that "we know" that You are a teacher from God. What?! Is it possible that Nick was actually engaging in an exploratory mission with the hope of extending to this young Rabbi the privilege of joining their exclusive club? What an honor (or is it)!? If such was even knocking on the back door of Nick's mind, the Lord simply dismissed the offer by answering from His perspective.

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

John 3:3

No doubt readers are familiar with where we are going here (John 3:16). Yet for purposes of our discussion, let us simply focus on a phrase normally completely overlooked—after Jesus lets loose with some truly important information about life in the Spirit. For, as Jesus now informs Nick, this form of living is much like the wind that blows wherever it wishes, "*So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (vs. 8). It is not that that the wind is without purpose or reason (as with modern weather reporting)—just that the ways of God are quite beyond our complete understanding. In other words, whenever we wish to come to terms with God, it is best to first seek His terms, and not our own. He is the One who makes the rules, not we. (I know, how politically incorrect can you be???)

So now it is Christ's turn to "lean in" and make a counter offer to Nick, as He allows this ruler (and us)

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***[He] let loose with some truly important information about life in the Spirit . . . It is best to seek His terms . . .***

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to see some of the inner workings of a Heavenly mindset by first asking Nick how it is possible for a man who had studied so much of the Bible given by Moses and the prophets . . . to miss the heart of God.

<sup>10</sup> *Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" <sup>11</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*

John 3:10-12

The comment most often “run over” and entirely overlooked is found in the very next verse. Please note, however, the clear context (and back drop of the conversation) that Jesus has been engaging in. For He is clearly inviting Nick to enter a world that he had completely missed while reading the Scriptures! For myself, when reading the above verses I cannot help but wonder if Christ was not thinking of words the sons of Korah had written; now included within the psalms:

<sup>4</sup> *"I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: 'This one was born there.' "*

<sup>5</sup> *And of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her; And the Most High Himself shall establish her."*

<sup>6</sup> *The LORD will record, When He registers the peoples: "This one was born there."*

*Selah*

Psalm 87:4-6

That last word “Selah” is meant as a sort of musical pause (like a rest mark, within a musical score).

“Selah” invites the reader to stop and think about what they have just read. What on earth is all of this hubbub about? Why make mention of Rahab (a harlot) and Babylon (where the Jews had been captive) as well as Philistia (which we may loosely associate with modern day Palestinians) –not to mention Tyre (one of the richest nations of the ancient world) as well as Ethiopia (into which, Moses had married –Numbers 12:1)??

Then these sons of Korah seal their commentary with a mysterious meditation “*When He registers the peo-*

*ples*” (in Heaven, in other words) it will be said, “*This one was born there.*” Ah, but of course, such was an insight far too deep for Nick to now consider! For, even the disciples who were following Christ were not yet ready for an understanding of this Jewish Messiah who had actually come into the world to save *everyone* who would accept His invitation—even their enemies (if they repent)!!

With this, we are ready to roll over the very next verse as Nick’s head is still spinning from trying to wrap his mind around what Jesus is offering him. For his last question is still hanging pregnant in the air: “*How can these things be?*” (vs. 9). It is now that Jesus intimates (without elaborating):

<sup>13</sup> *No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:13-15 [emphasis added]

Did you catch that? Yes, yes, of course: He is referring to His being lifted up, itself confusing to many, for how can the Son of God be rightly associated with a serpent (the devil)? Of course, the apostle Paul now informs us: It is because the Son of God’s purpose was to busy Himself with the “rescue mission to earth” that would allow Him to be crucified . . . so that He could *take our place* upon that Cross (2 Cor. 5:17-21) so that we could engage in the great exchange: of His righteousness, for our sin and loss!

But did you see the point that most miss, when reading the above passage? It is a secret to Christ’s victory while living upon this earth, and later what He looked forward to, while upon the Cross (Heb. 12:2). Yes, **it was where His heart was: in Heaven.** In fact, as far as Jesus was concerned, in a very real sense He had never left Heaven. For He says plainly, “*No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven*” (vs. 13) –which is the very same mindset offered to believers, today (Ephesians 2:6).

Yes, for there are many who may today identify with Nick (Nicodemus) and would devote themselves to copious reading and book learning, while concerning

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themselves with merely the mindset and cultures of the day and of that ancient world: becoming, if you will, biblical anthropologists and apologists for the mindset of this world. And there is certainly nothing wrong with such endeavors.

However, Jesus breaks it down so simply that even a child may grasp it when ready to humble herself:

*For God so loved the world that  
He gave His only begotten Son,  
that whoever believes in Him  
should not perish but have ever-  
lasting life.*

John 3:16

So that one day, after Jesus had accomplished His mission, and had actually gone to the Cross to pay for our (and Nick's) sin, a very wealthy Jew along with Nick (from that exclusive club) would blow their cover in order to provide a proper burial for the Christ.

<sup>38</sup> *After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he*

*came and took the body of Jesus.* <sup>39</sup> *And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.* <sup>40</sup> *Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.*

John 19:38-40

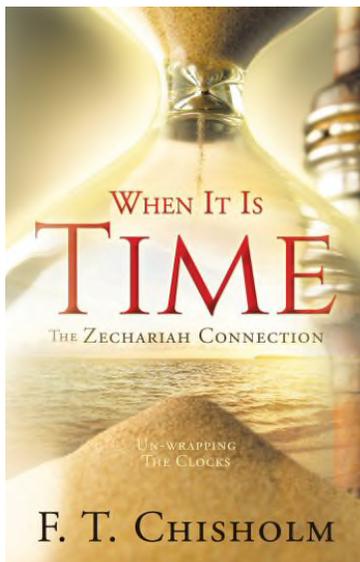
However, Jesus had a big surprise for these gentlemen, for three days later He arose from the dead! And thus, in a very real sense, Jesus' discussion had paved the way for Nicodemus to become St. Nick—and so may we all be, when we entrust our heart to Heaven, instead of to this earth.

*For our citizenship is in heaven,  
from which we also eagerly wait  
for the Savior, the Lord Jesus  
Christ,*

Philippians 3:20

For Jesus was much more than a mere "Transplant." He is the Lord of Glory.

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