

Order of events:

1. Opening prayer.
2. Praise God with song.
3. Praise God with corporate prayer.
4. Praise God with study of His Word.
5. Close (blessing, reminder of the Gospel, prayer)

Discuss the power of John 3:16. [Read John 2:23-3:16 and summarize the scene.] Nicodemus himself comes to Jesus to find out the point of all that is happening. Keep in mind that this scene comes on the heels of the last 3 verses of chapter 2. Many “believed” because of the signs and miracles Jesus performed. This and the temple cleansing left a deep impression on the people. But as John pointed out, they believed in Jesus, but he didn’t “trust” them: their faith was not real; Jesus knew their hearts. Their faith fell short of genuine faith. This is what is going on when Nicodemus comes to Jesus and the chapter 2 lead-in helps us interpret what follows.

Ever heard, “It was the best of times. It was the worst of times?” That’s the way I feel about this text we are about to study in the Gospel of John. This simple text is so amazing that only God the Holy Spirit could only have penned it. These verses, in one sense, very simply and elegantly spell out the gospel of Christ. On another level, they reach deep into God’s powerful reservoir of knowledge and contain many truths seen throughout Scripture. I think that’s why we see so many messages from and uses of this story. It is a harsh story of stark, unbending reality and yet, it’s a tender story of God drawing one of his children. It prompts many questions.

As stated, this is a fantastic story on so many levels. We see the human story of Nicodemus. We see the evangelism technique of Jesus himself. We learn how to become part of the kingdom of God – how to be saved. We see Christ’s deity in his omniscience of knowing men’s hearts and in the fact that *he* is the way of salvation. This section is classic John: simple words, simple situation, big points, profound concepts. It contains John’s fondness of having Jesus be misunderstood by his hearer(s) so as to provide an opportunity for the true meaning or the bigger picture of the message to be explained. It’s a difficult piece to understand I believe, because there are so many truths compressed into the text. As always, John’s economy of words cuts quickly, sometimes too quickly, to the point.

But I think the message is crystal clear: you must be born again. John Wesley was asked one time why he preached so often on ‘you must be born again.’ Wesley’s answer was, “Because... you must be born again.” The story of Nicodemus invites us to grapple with the issue of genuine faith that goes beyond mere belief on the basis of miraculous signs. [1] It helps us to begin to understand verses like Matt 7:21-23 (Lord, Lord... “I never knew you; depart from me...”), or “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 5:20) This is the message of grace. I hope we can do it justice in our study.

What do we know about Nicodemus?

Let’s take a brief side trip and examine Nicodemus and the Pharisees for a moment: one, to understand where Nicodemus is coming from and two, it seems that Nicodemus eventually became a follower of Christ and his experience may help us in our own walk.

John 3 {1} Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

John tells us that Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. Later Jesus calls Nicodemus *the* teacher of Israel, as some translate the Greek. As a “ruler of the Jews,” that probably meant that Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the council of seventy men who ran the religious affairs of the nation and who had authority over any Jew anywhere. Suffice it to say he was an important person.

If any group of people could be called religious fanatics, it was the Pharisees. This group of men (never more than 6,000) took a solemn vow before witnesses to devote their lives to obeying the Ten Commandments – in general terms and in very specific daily applications. To help them in this goal, there had grown up out of the Pharisees a group of men called Scribes (Lawyers) who spent their time studying the Ten Commandments and applying them to everyday life situations. The Talmud and the Mishnah (written commentary on the Talmud) were created by the Scribes detailing these applications. Take a quick look at a Table of Contents from the Talmud (link below) just on the chapter concerning the Sabbath. Then read over the section concerning knot tying on the Sabbath (link below). These meticulous, narrow, rigid, interpretations constituted the whole life of the Pharisees. (Other examples include mortar and spitting; 1,000-yard journey from home on the Sabbath and various loopholes therein.) [2,8]

That was the kind of man Nicodemus was. The Pharisees regarded themselves as spiritually superior to other men because of their dedication to obeying the law of God. It’s amazing that he would come to Jesus at all, but he did; and he seemed to come honestly with genuine motives. While only mentioned in John’s gospel, Nicodemus and his story give us something significant to ponder. Here in John 3, Nicodemus comes to Jesus sincerely. In John 7:45-52, he is mentioned again when he urges his colleagues to hear Jesus first before passing judgment. (Gamaliel responds similarly to the apostles in Acts.) Then in John 19:38-42, we see Nicodemus working with Joseph of Arimathea giving the body of Jesus a proper burial. I believe what we get to witness with Nicodemus is God’s irresistible grace drawing a man over a period of time. His salvation is a process not an event. We often look for the dramatic conversion(s) from our efforts in God like those of Acts 2; but God doesn’t always work that way. Remember, “Raise up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Life and our experiences mold and make us, and that can take time – “Slow work takes time.” Nicodemus’ example can offer us great comfort in the case of loved ones and friends for whom we have been praying.

Nicodemus represented the best mankind or the world had to offer – from a human perspective. He was dutiful to God and believed the signs of Jesus. He believed in angels, the resurrection, the Law and the Prophets, the Scriptures – all the things of the Pharisees. He expected Messiah, both a judging and saving Messiah. He seemed sincere, polite, genuine, affirming, enthusiastic. So, here was the best of mankind, let’s see what happens when he meets the *real* best?

John 3 {2} 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.” {3} Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

We are told here that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. Now some have made this out to be that Nicodemus was ashamed or afraid to come to Jesus during the daylight hours: afraid of what others would think. Based on what is stated, it doesn’t appear that this assumption is evident. It simply may have been the best time for these two popular, busy figures to meet one-on-one. His introductory words seems to indicate that others agree with him and possibly know he is has come to Jesus. Let’s look at the scene described to us.

Does Nicodemus' opening statement in verse 2 seem rude or sincere to you?

It's interesting to examine carefully the things Nicodemus says to Jesus in his opening statement: "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." "Rabbi" or teacher or professor: a courteous introduction from one who is considered a, or even *the*, teacher of Israel. I don't think it was mockery or sarcastic flattery. His focus is on teaching. And to the Pharisee mind, good teaching was all that humanity needed to please God – an instructed mind and a committed will. Many of us fall into that trap even today: we need to follow correct teaching, obey the Ten Commandments, do the best we can in life, obey the Law and the law, and God will be pleased with us and accept us; this, as Jesus points out, is the wrong end of the stick.

"...we know..." is a bad start. When addressing a great teacher, stating that you know something that you don't know for sure is not wise or even humbly deferring. How about, "it appears," or "we want to believe." By the "we," it seems that Nicodemus is representing a group, possibly even the majority of the Sanhedrin. "... that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs ... unless God is with him." God has and will validate the message of his messengers with miraculous signs; Nicodemus and the others recognize this. But after reading and studying John's first two chapters, we should recognize right away that although what Nicodemus says is true on one level, he obviously does not fully grasp the situation. Nicodemus gives it his three best swings, but completely strikes out. First, Jesus is much more than a teacher. He is *the* Light, *the* source of all truth and knowledge. Second, Nicodemus' and his group's faith rests on the validation of Jesus' teaching by miraculous signs. Faith in a true message is not the same as true faith in God. On the surface it may sound authentic, but as John told us at the end of chapter 2, God looks on the heart not the intellect. Also, we must take care to not accept miraculous signs as sole proof of a message. Remember the evil one can manifest himself as an angel of light and perform all kinds of convincing but false "signs and wonders." (2 Cor 11:14; 2 Thes 2:9) Nicodemus should have been like the Bereans and faithfully searched his Scriptures. Third, the statement that Jesus can perform signs because "God is with him" is quite a bit less than John understands Jesus to be. God is certainly with Jesus, but much more. After all, Moses, Jeremiah, and other prophets were also told that God would be with them. God is not only with Jesus but is revealed in Jesus. "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature..." (Heb 1:3) "We have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son." (John 1:14) "The Father and I are one." (John 10:30) "The Father is in me and I am in the Father." (John 10:38; cf. John 14:10). [1] And he starts all these inaccurate statements with, "we know." And that's exactly where Jesus zeroes in, "How can you possibly know?"

What connection does Jesus' answer in verse 3 have with Nicodemus' statement in verse 2?

As Jesus does in several other interactions with Pharisees and Lawyers, he very efficiently, not rudely, cuts to the heart of the matter and tells Nicodemus that "unless one is born again [from above] he cannot [*even*] see the kingdom of God" (v.3 with added). Only here and in verse 5 is the kingdom of God mentioned in John. The fact that the statement of Jesus begins with the solemn words, "Truly, Truly, I say to you..." indicates the seriousness of the statement (and we have three of them in these verses!). The faith that Nicodemus and his group affirmed is not adequate for seeing the kingdom of God. One cannot experience the kingdom of God simply by virtue of the miracles of Jesus and belief in them. Nicodemus and his group are looking at things only from a human perspective. What is needed is new life, new sight, new light from above. The kingdom of God cannot be seen, observed, or experienced simply as a human phenomenon, legitimated by miraculous signs. It is a gift to be received. John 1 states, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (v.12,13) These words of our

Lord must have been a hammer blow to Nicodemus. Although fanatically religious, the Pharisees were no closer to the kingdom than a prostitute or tax collector. All of his efforts and human wisdom fell short.

[Mention Warren – Harris Debate, *Newsweek* 4/9/2007 – How frustrating to talk to someone who cannot know the things of God and yet purports that God is not!]

What does it mean to be *born again*? What is the *kingdom of God*?

To be born simply means to receive life and to exist as a separate, unique entity. To understand “again,” we must look at the word translated. The Greek word *anōthen* (an’-o-then, ἀνωθεν) is used for the word “again” in the phrase “born again.” This word has three distinct meanings: 1) from above, from a higher place, a) of things which come from heaven or God; 2) from the first, from the beginning, from the very first; 3) anew, over again. So it can mean “from above,” to begin completely and radically anew, or to do a second time. It is quite impressive that Christ indeed meant all three meanings simultaneously! We must be born, receive life, a second time – spiritually. We are completely and radically changed into a new creation. And it comes from above; it is something that God does, not man. How powerful is that! As usual, Jesus uses something physical as a symbol or metaphor to make a point, like the “temple” in John 2, and he is misunderstood, which of course gives him the opportunity to explain more clearly.

The kingdom of God is a topic which encompasses a great deal of discussion. In Scripture it is called the “kingdom of God,” “kingdom of light,” kingdom of heaven,” and “kingdom of our Lord.” They are all the same. Let’s simply state that the kingdom of God represents three things: 1) the realm over which God reigns supreme as the king; 2) the people over whom the king, God, reigns; and most completely 3) the actual rule or reign of Jesus Christ. Our big struggle with understanding the “kingdom of God” is that we recognize God as sovereign over all and he reigns supreme; therefore, how can his kingdom have boundaries? But, according to his own counsel, God allows a kingdom of darkness to exist. (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13) And those that reject the rule of God belong to that kingdom. “Samuel... they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.” (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19) To be part of the kingdom of God, we must surrender completely to God’s reign in our lives – be born again. “Seek first the kingdom of heaven...” (Matt 6:33) Nicodemus seems to have understood this part of Christ’s discussion; he may have understood it better than we do today, in a land without “kingdoms.”

John 3 {4} Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Based on Nicodemus’ follow up question in verse 4, is he dumb, confused, or just fleshing out the metaphor?

Notice that this is a frequent reaction of many in the gospel of John. Jesus speaks using symbols and is often taken literally. For example when he states in chapter 2 that if they destroy “this” temple, then he will raise it up in three days. The Jews thought he was talking about the building, but John tells us that Jesus meant his body, of which the building was just a picture. Nicodemus realizes that it is impossible, even unthinkable, for a man to re-enter his mother’s womb and be born a second time. He is puzzled by Jesus’ response. Being a thoroughly learned and intelligent man, Nicodemus’ approach may be one of “process of elimination” on this phrase. Instead of saying, “Huh?” or “Could you explain that?” Nicodemus engages with Jesus in conversation – an art that is disappearing – and tries to flesh out the metaphor. But before he can get too far down this track, Jesus reiterates his point with more information, keying off the word “enter.”

John 3 {5} Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. {6} That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. {7} Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ {8} The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Well, here’s where the proverbial lid comes off the can of worms. What does Jesus mean? That’s certainly what Nicodemus wanted to know. Tremendous scholarly energy and debate has been poured over these verses. I believe that’s what happens when we try to limit God, paint him in a corner, if you will. Mixing the alloy of human wisdom with the genius of God is a foolish thing. As I have often stated, when I ask God about “hard” things, “Lord is it this way or that?” “Lord, did you mean such and such or so and so?” he usually responds, “Yes, all of the above.” “Lord, did you choose us, or are we responsible for choosing?” “Yes.” “Do you save people, or are they won through our efforts?” “Yes.” I think that’s why there is so much debate on the meaning of these verses, and others.

What do you mean we must be *born of water* and the *Spirit*?

Is the water human birth, or is it repentance symbolized in water baptism, or is it the washing of regeneration, or is it the washing with the Word?

Yes! Why do we have to limit the meaning? Let’s look at a few verses.

Ezekiel 36 {25} I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. {26} And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. {27} And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

John 1 {33} 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.’

Ephesians 5 {25} Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, {26} that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, {27} so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

John 15 {3} Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Titus 3 {4} But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, {5} he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, {6} whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

It seems that God has all his bases covered. Let the tension exist! Allow me to state emphatically that these verses do not, nor do any other verses, say that baptism is a requirement for salvation! Notice that none of the ideas mentioned are anything that we *do*. Repentance is as close as it gets, and we know that repentance too is granted to us by God. (Acts 11:18; Rom 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; et al) Furthermore, Jesus clearly explains how to enter the kingdom of God later, and baptism is not mentioned as part of the equation.

There is a lot of room for interpretation here. As usual, I try to take the simplest and most obvious meaning. A man must be born twice: a physical birth and a spiritual birth. Flesh gives physical life and the Spirit gives spiritual life;

and they are totally and radically different. Then basically, Jesus tells Nicodemus not to marvel (what a great word!) at these things. As we know from 1 Cor 2:14, natural man cannot discern the things of God; they are spiritually appraised. Jesus tells Nicodemus that this knowledge is beyond him. And that's exactly the way Nicodemus responds. "How can these things be?" In other words, "I don't understand." You could even say, "I don't believe." He may have even said it under his breath. What a great play on words here. The Greek word used for wind is *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) which, in this context, can mean the third Person of the trinity, or simply air movements. The Greek readers could enjoy the double entendre. Here is Jesus again using a physical entity to symbolize or represent a spiritual reality: God the Holy Spirit enlightens who he will enlighten.

John 3 {9} 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. {12} 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.

Here, for the third time, Jesus begins his statements with "Truly, truly..." This is the turning point in the conversation. Nicodemus doesn't say anything more after this, and Jesus turns the corner with him, guiding him to the ultimate truth. It almost seems that Jesus is a bit astonished at Nicodemus' lack of knowledge. Instead of, "How can the things be," he should have been saying, "That's what the Scriptures are saying." "He has spoken to a man who is the teacher of Israel, a man who has given his life to studying the Old Testament. Jesus also knew that book. He knew that Isaiah had spoken about a new life from God; that Jeremiah had predicted a new creation that would be given; that Ezekiel had said that God would take out the old heart of stone and give a new heart of flesh. All through the Old Testament there are statements about a new birth, a new beginning, a new creation, a new life that would come as a gift of God to those who would humbly, without pride, receive it as something they desperately needed. So Jesus says to Nicodemus, "How can this be? How can you, a teacher of Israel, not know about these things?"[2]

There seems to be a noticeable shift from a one-on-one conversation to a group-to-group discussion. Jesus (through John) expands the conversation to begin his introduction of the main point.

Who is the "we" referred to by our Lord in verse 11?

I believe it to be Jesus and the Holy Scriptures and possibly John the Baptist. God follows his own instructions about accepting the testimony of a single witness: two or more are required; remember why we have four gospels!

So, the Scriptures speak and Jesus speaks (and possibly the Baptist) of what they have seen and what they know – emphasized with "Truly, truly." The witnesses have spoken in agreement and you [plural now] did not receive or believe their testimony. Jesus seems to chide Nicodemus a bit: "If I told you of earthly things (I have talked about wind, and birth, and water) and you do not understand what I mean, how can I reveal to you deep and marvelous truths, the heavenly things (the things which are under the invisible control of God)? How can I do that?" [2] "I know the things of heaven because I alone have come from there." Jesus states that he and the Scriptures are the only ones qualified to speak of heavenly things. "Nicodemus, I am from heaven and I am revealing these things to you. No one can work or earn his way to heaven. Let me explain what being born again allows you to do."

As with the Pharisees and John the Baptist, do you notice that the Nicodemus here is saying less and less?

When Nicodemus offered no further response, Jesus lovingly and graciously explained to him the new birth [and belief] in all its simplicity [7] using an OT story which foreshadowed Messiah: the story of the caduceus. (We get that from the Bible too! – before Roman or Greek mythology – maybe that explains the number of Jewish doctors!) And Nicodemus knew the story. Beginning in verse 14, Jesus introduced the details of the way of salvation.

John 3 {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. {16} For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Numbers 21:5-9 tells this simple but powerful story of the serpent plague in the wilderness. The Israelites were wandering around, having left Egypt but having not yet entered the Promised Land. They had been complaining incessantly – grumbling about the food, muttering about Moses, and whining about how bad their condition was. Finally, when God had had enough, he sent a plague, in the form of hundreds of poisonous snakes. The snakes overran the camp, and the rebellious people were bitten. When they realized they [sinned and] were dying, they repented. They came to Moses, asking him to intercede on their behalf. God in his mercy forgave them and told Moses to construct a pole with a bronze serpent at the top. He was to erect it in the center of the camp. The Lord gave this promise: “Everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live” (Num. 21:8). That was true when the Israelites were in the wilderness; it was true for Nicodemus; it is true today. [7]

The issue was sin. Jesus was challenging this great teacher of the law to acknowledge that he had been bitten by the great serpent, Satan, and to come to the Lord for salvation. The very concept would have been repugnant to a Pharisee. It cut at the core of his self-righteousness. Far from giving Nicodemus an illustration of the ease of belief, our Lord established a painful condition for Nicodemus’s salvation: he must acknowledge his sinfulness and repent. He must be willing to include himself among the sinful, snake-bitten, repentant Israelites. [7]

How does this story of the serpents illustrate the love of God for the world?

God loved them so much that he sent serpents to kill them! Do you know God is not concerned about your death? He is concerned about your heart. Look at Heb 12:5-8.

Heb 12 {5} And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. {6} For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” {7} It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? {8} If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

God loves us so much that he takes the time to correct, rebuke, and direct us. If God did not love us, he would destroy us. How unloving is a mother or father who will not use discipline to help their children. Proverbs 13:24 teaches us that, “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.” That God takes the time to instruct and correct such vile rebellious creatures surely is the mystery of the “manifold wisdom of God” spoken of in Eph 3:10 on display for the universe to witness that God indeed is love.

Often there is some discussion of just exactly who is the “world” here. Again, I think this is an area of limiting God or mining too deep; but, if we link the story of the bronze serpent and the passage of Hebrews, verse 6 tells us that God disciplines his children. Therefore, the poisonous serpents and the bronze serpent were to correct his children, the true Israelites in the nation of Israel (Romans 9), which leads us to those for whom God gave his Son: the world

– meaning believers only. I don't think this is any more exclusive than saying you cannot understand the things of God unless you are born again – unless God lets you!

What does it mean to *believe* in Christ?

If it hasn't already, let the wrestling match begin! Each of us who claims the name Christian, should have struggled like Jacob did with God with this concept "believe." Believing simply means to accept and respond; there are two parts. Not postulating "works" in any regard, but a key part of believing is action. Real faith has at its heart a willingness to obey. You simply cannot help it! It's not your action. It's not you, but God in you! James 2:19 tells us that even the demons believe that God is one and shudder at that knowledge. Neither part of your belief is from you: understanding the things of God – not you; actions of faith in gratitude and good works – not you. God the Holy Spirit will not be contained; he will not sit idly within you! If you believe, you have received a new life wrought of God. John emphasizes this point a little later on through John the Baptist, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36) Believe and obey seem to be two sides of the same coin both received from God.

So, Nicodemus comes to Jesus and says, "...we know..." Jesus replies, "No you don't. You can't know. Let me set you on the right road if you will listen." Then Jesus explains the futility of "religion," the unity of revelation between the OT and his message, the necessity of regeneration (new birth), and the reality of redemption in himself (how to be born again), in only 16 short verses! Sometimes I enjoy the way the Catholic Catechism puts things:

In the historical conditions in which he finds himself, however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of reason alone:

Though human reason is, strictly speaking, truly capable by its own natural power and light of attaining to a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, who watches over and controls the world by his providence, and of the natural law written in our hearts by the Creator; yet there are many obstacles which prevent reason from the effective and fruitful use of this inborn faculty. For the truths that concern the relations between God and man wholly transcend the visible order of things, and, if they are translated into human action and influence it, they call for self-surrender and abnegation. The human mind, in its turn, is hampered in the attaining of such truths, not only by the impact of the senses and the imagination, but also by disordered appetites which are the consequences of original sin. So it happens that men in such matters easily persuade themselves that what they would not like to be true is false or at least doubtful.

This is why man stands in need of being enlightened by God's revelation, not only about those things that exceed his understanding, but also "about those religious and moral truths which of themselves are not beyond the grasp of human reason, so that even in the present condition of the human race, they can be known by all men with ease, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error".
[CCC 37, 38]

Mankind is deprived because of the consequence of original sin; our rudder is bent and we cannot go aright. That is why we stand in need of being enlightened by revelation from God.

If you have not met the Savior and surrendered to him, I caution you, be careful with what you think you know; you cannot know the things of God unless he lets you. When God opens your mind (divinely wrought regeneration) so that you understand that things are not right between you and him, do not debate or rationalize or reason; put up the white flag of surrender! Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 5:3) Become poor in spirit (broken, yielded), and... he will save you to be his beloved child.

Additional Comments or Questions:

1. A Table of Contents from the Talmud: <http://www.azwalker.com/john/images/talmud-sabbath-index.pdf>
2. Regulations Concerning Knot Tying on the Sabbath: <http://www.azwalker.com/john/images/talmud-knots.pdf>

References:

1. <http://www.cresourcei.org/lectionary/YearA/Alent2nt.html>
2. Stedman, Ray C., *Born of the Spirit*, 1983
3. Guideposts, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1986
4. Zondervan, *The NIV Study Bible*, 1985
5. Halley, Henry H., *Pocket Bible Handbook*, 1951
6. <http://godsvie.com/study.html>
7. MacArthur, John, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 1994
8. BABYLONIAN TALMUD, translated by MICHAEL L. RODKINSON, Book 1 (Vols. I and II), [1903]

Other Scripture References:

Ecclesiastes 11 {5} Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.

Jeremiah 31 {31} "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, {32} not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. {33} "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. {34} They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Ezekiel 11 {19} "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,