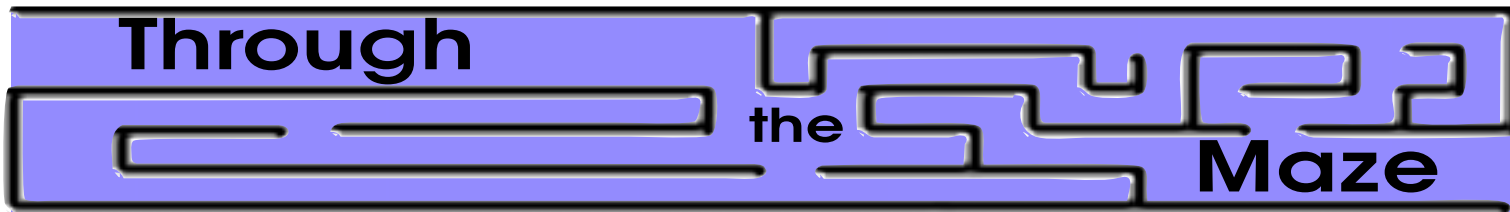


"Truth without Love is too hard; Love without Truth is too soft"

Living Faith Church



Copyright 2003, James R. Spencer Box 8656, Boise, ID 83707 www.mazeministry.com 09/03
order line (answering machine) 1-800-871-7120

The Eye of the Tiger The Cream of the Fight

John Chapter Three: The Heart of the Matter

A shopkeeper challenged a man to read the third chapter of the Gospel of John seven times. It was a chance encounter that turned briefly to spiritual matters. The man left the shop, went home, and fulfilled the reading challenge. When he did, the Holy Spirit transformed him and saved him.

Seldom do I challenge anyone with that specific reading assignment, but sometimes I do. It sounds kind of "spooky" and quasi-spiritual. But, when a person seems to be seeking, I believe John chapter three reveals God in a most powerful way.

Surely this chapter is one of the most read passages in the entire Bible. Certainly John 3:16 is the most quoted of all Bible verses. John the Apostle, himself, says that the things he writes in this gospel are written "so that men may believe that Jesus is the Son of God and in believing have eternal life." (John 20:30)

Nicodemus comes by night

Here is a powerful man, a member of the highest Jewish ruling body. He came to Jesus deferentially, seeking an audience by night to size up the new prophet.



Nicodemus seems to be a man of good intention. We know he later challenged the other rulers when they plotted to take Jesus' life. Nicodemus said, "Do we now judge a man without hearing him and without knowing what he does?" (John 7:51) Nicodemus also helped Joseph of Arimathaea embalm Jesus' body after his crucifixion. Joseph provided Christ's tomb, but it was Nicodemus who brought the 100 pounds of spices to wrap amid the linen shroud.

The challenge

But when Nicodemus came to Jesus and
Continued on page 2

When is it OK to judge?

One of my old Navy buddies recently renewed his walk with Christ. He is in a great, growing church in Las Vegas. He knows I'm sincerely interest in the well-being of the Mormon people. Still, like so many Christians he does not regularly encounter the seamier side of Mormonism, so it isn't so easy for him to describe the Mormon religion in the stark terms I do.

The outward trappings of the Mormon religion and the heavy-hitting Mormon PR campaign often obscures what is really going on in Mormondom. Unless the flap is lifted, people cannot see the wild events going on inside the Mormon tent. Because my friend knows and trusts me, he is

Continued on page 3

The Trinity

This is a letter I recently addressed to a young Mormon missionary I have been emailing.

Aaron,

It is true that the doctrine of the Trinity is not easy to get our minds around. But because it is complex, does not mean it is wrong. God makes Himself known to us plainly and simply, but He is not plain and simple. You can describe the systems of a Boeing 747 in simple terms, but it would still take many volumes and years of study to know it fully. So it is with God.

I wish you were in a place I where could send you my two tape series on the

Continued on page 4

...The Eye of the Tiger

inquired into his prophetic nature, Jesus immediately challenged him. “You must be born again!” he said. Jesus is almost rude in his abrupt confrontation. He speaks forcefully, almost with the same intensity and zeal that he expressed when he turned over the moneychangers’ tables in the temple. There is no wiggle room here for Nicodemus.

When Nicodemus expresses confusion—“Must I reenter my mother’s womb?”—Jesus tells him about a spiritual birth that is so powerful and so encompassing that it can only be compared to being buffeted in a windstorm. The wind of the Spirit comes *from* wherever and goes *to* wherever, but the newly born believer is unable to discern its purpose. He is simply carried along by the spiritual breath of God. He has entered, as the Prophet Ezekiel said, water so deep he could no longer swim in it. (Ezk 47:5)

The heart of the gospel

The new birth is an experience, not a theology. The theology comes along afterward in an attempt to describe the experience.

The Apostle Paul described his experience on the road to Damascus as an apocalypse! (Gal. 1:16) “God revealed (unveiled, manifested) his Son in me!” The Apostle John used the same word to describe *his* experience on the Isle of Patmos when Jesus appeared to him in glorious vision and commanded him to pen the Book of Revelation (also known as the Apocalypse of John).

Someone has called the New Birth “The Christ Experience.” It is a radical unveiling of Jesus to the believer. As radical as the unveiling of Jesus to the Woman at the Well of John, chapter four. “Sir! I perceive you are a prophet!”

Or as radical as the unveiling to Nathanael—“Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!” Or Thomas—“My Lord and my God!”

The spirit vs. the flesh

The born again experience is, as the Gospel of John succinctly records, the birthing of a new nature inside the human being. Now he has two natures—a fleshly nature, born of the water and a spiritual nature born from above: “Flesh gives birth

to flesh, but spirit gives birth to spirit.” (John 3:6)

Nicodemus remained unspiritual

“How can these things be?” Nicodemus asked. Not, “Give me this water so that I shall thirst no more,” as the Samaritan woman asked. Not, “Even dogs get crumbs that fall from the master’s table,” as the Syrophenician woman said. But, “How can all this be true?”

The Christ experience always elicits a response of some kind. Those who are confronted with the message of Christ cannot help but be affected by it. How they respond to it is another matter.

Nevertheless, in our war against the power of darkness, a close encounter of the best kind is in the challenge, “Marvel not, you must be born again!” One of my friends, the late Bob Klein, was very bold in this regard. He was forever saying to people, “You must be born again.” This question goes to the heart of the battle.

As an amateur theologian, I love to discuss the great doctrines of the Church. Such discussions are an important part of evangelism. Comparing truth with error is a fundamental role for ministers of the gospel. Nevertheless, the question “Are you born again?” cuts to the bone. Anyone who is born again knows it. Anyone who is not will stammer at the question. It is much like the great Kennedy Evangelism question “What would you say to St. Peter to get you through the gates of heaven?” People who are not born again cannot answer that question. Every one who is born again can answer it and will answer it the same way every time.

The grape juice dream

Years ago a young man who had converted to Christ from Mormonism told my church congregation about a recurring dream he had while on his Mormon mission. He said that every night he went to bed feeling a burden of sin. “I knew I was in my sins,” he said. And every night he had the same dream in which he stood looking at a can of grape juice inside a soda pop machine. He knew he was in his sins and he knew he wanted the grape juice. The problem was he had no money to buy it. At that time, he said, he saw Jesus coming down an escalator wearing

a three piece suit. Jesus walked over to the machine and dropped in two quarters, the juice came out, and Jesus went back up the escalator.

The young man said he had that dream over and over but he could never figure out what it meant. Then, after he was born again, he knew exactly what it meant. I have told his story all over the country. Those who are born again get it, those who are not born again do not get it. And I say to the audience, “If you don’t understand the dream, I’m not going to tell you what it means.” I don’t tell them because you can’t really get the significance of it until you are born again.

As we encounter the lost, I think it is a good idea to remember the encounter Jesus had with Nicodemus. The old Jew wanted to have a religious discussion; Jesus wanted him to be born again.

A Letter from my web site

Hello:

I accidently discovered this site when I was looking for some information on getting sealed in the temple. I am not a memeber in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. But just looking for some information. I read Beyond Mormonism online here...It just about made me cry... [After dating a Mormon girl...] she asked me to take the Mormon missionary disscussions. I have finished them all, have been to church a few times, and gotten to learn a lot. It is up to me if I want to be baptized. I already knew that there were some things wrong with this church. But being there and seeing everyone just made me blind I guess. I just wanted to believe so much that it was true so I could be with her.

But after finding this site and reading that book, it underscored in my mind the things that are wrong. I'm just stuck right now...I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't know if I can find the right way to say it without crying. I know that we have come really close to eachother now. It's going to be really hard to tell her that I won't be able to join! ...I had a question to ask, I don't know if people reply to these e-mails, but I was wondering what church is

...When is it OK to Judge

willing to take a peek.

Christians are basically possessed of good will and tolerance; they are certainly not looking for a fight. I have discovered they will only invest energy into a battle with Mormonism if they understand—as I do—that it is an evil alternative to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a system that binds its people with heavy burdens.

To the uninitiated, Mormonism appears harmless, if not downright *good!* The outward trappings of the great American religion headquartered in Salt Lake City impresses the casual investigator. Mormon families, neatly dressed, radiate order and peace. They inhabit homes lining broad, tree-line boulevards in sleepy Mormon towns, situated in lush Utah. Happy Valley USA!

Tolerance

Tolerance is an overworked word today. We—rightly—abhor intolerance, both racial and religious. We understand that people are free to believe whatever they want to as long as it doesn't threaten their neighbors. That is the American way and a tenant of the American dream.

But religious freedom does not mean that the ideas we hold dear cannot be challenged from the outside. We cannot use the concept of tolerance to stop us from speaking out on religious beliefs or practices that are harmful to people. For example, we cannot allow the bigoted ideas of the Ku Klux Klan or neoNazism to go unchallenged.

Likewise, Bible-believing Christians have a right to speak out against religious ideas which challenge the revelation of God in the Bible. We challenge abortion, gay sex, and adultery, for example, even

though the American justice system protects these activities. We challenge these practices and ideas, not as unlawful in the eyes of the state, but as unlawful in the eyes of God. We tolerate the practice of the ideas in the sense that we do not take up arms to stop them, but we do not allow them to go unchallenged intellectually. We speak out against them. We try to influence people to give up these ideas. We picket abortion clinics, write letters to the editor against the idea of gay and lesbian marriage, and we counsel people to be sexually pure.

I do not judge gays and lesbians in the sense of pronouncing them evil. As President Bush recently said (and was criticized for saying it) “We are all sinners.” I am not less of a sinner because I do not engage in homosexual activities. I am a sinner. Paul said he was the chief of sinners. And yet Paul preached against sin.

So, we do not judge sinners. But we *do* attempt to show them where they are wrong so that they can change. Jesus said: *... God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already...* (John 3:17-18)

When we judge people, in the sense of telling them where they are wrong in their conduct or beliefs, we are not condemning them—they are already condemned. We are simply pointing out how they need to adjust their conduct or beliefs to please God.

Relativism

Moreover, America is in the grip of the Relativism and Postmodernism. These

forces threaten to extinguish evangelism in America. Relativism is a philosophical viewpoint that says truth is impossible to describe. Truth is dependent upon circumstances. Murder is not murder if the human being killed is a fetus and the one killing it (or authorizing its murder) is the mother of the fetus. But, as 21-year-old Robert Anthony Davis discovered, if you are not the mother, you can be convicted of first-degree murder for killing a fetus. He shot a pregnant woman in a convenience store holdup. The woman lived, but the fetus died.

Postmodernism says that we can no longer describe the world in logical terms. There is no way to unscramble the myriad events occurring in the world to find order or reason. Things just *are!* Don't try to make sense out of them. So, for heaven's sake, don't think that you can tell anyone else they are wrong about anything!

It is true that the Bible says “Judge not lest you be judged.” (Matt. 7:1) We should never judge others as less than ourselves. We should never look down on anyone. We should never be haughty. In fact, the Bible says, “... in lowliness of mind let each [person] esteem others better than themselves (Php. 2:3)

But the Bible also says the saints shall “judge the world.” (I Cor 6:2) And we are told that our judgement should be righteous judgement:

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. (John 7:24)

So We had better learn to judge

A lot of damage has been done to evangelism by the misunderstanding about our role in judging the beliefs of others. My friend, the late Dr. Walter Martin, was fond of saying “The cults are the unpaid bills of the Church.” He meant that cults exist because the Body of Christ is reluctant to expose them.

I receive letter after letter from weeping parents who have lost their children to the cults because they *and the pastor and leaders of their church* failed to warn their children about the errors of Mormonism and other false religious systems.

When will we learn that righteous judgement is not the same as being “judgemental?” ■ — Page 3 —

...Letter from a Missionary

James Spencer with. I was hoping to find some comfort with Christ...

Thanks for your time...

Eric

Eric,

I hear stories like yours a lot. Thank God you were able to see through the Maze of Mormonism. Although, you may not be out of the woods yet.

I do hope you can get plugged in to a good, Bible-believing church and get

some good teaching. What churches have you attended in the past? Do you know any Christian pastors or Christians from school that you can talk to.

What you need to do is to develop your faith. That will take time. But, believe me, it is well worth the effort.

If you send me your postal mailing address, I will send you an information pack, a couple of tracts, and a couple of pamphlets. Keep me posted,

Jim Spencer ■

...The Trinity

Trinity. I will try, as I have time, to load it onto the Internet.

Having said that, let me introduce you to the Trinity. To understand this doctrine you must be willing to believe what the Bible itself says, not what someone *says* it says.

We need to read the Bible from front to back. We must understand that God has a purpose in giving us the Bible. Although it came through many people over more than a thousand years, there is a unity to it because it actually comes from God Himself.

The doctrine of the Trinity is based on two revelations. The revelation of His Unity in the Old Testament and His Trinity in the New.

The main purpose of the Old Testament is to call people away from the belief in—and worship of—many gods. “You go whoring on every high hill and under every green tree after false gods,” He says. He gives us the First Commandment (Deut. 6:4) “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD:” And He gives us all the Isaiah verses:

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior” (Isaiah 43:10-11).

This is what the Lord says – Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it (Isaiah 44:6-7).

“You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one” (Isaiah 44:8).

“I am the Lord, and there is no other, apart from me there is no God... so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am

the Lord, and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45:5-6).

To understand the nature of God, we *first* must understand that in all the universe there is but one, self-existent God, and that everything else is a creation of this One God. That is the bottom line of the Old Testament and the beginning of understanding the New Testament. Only after we understand that there is but one God can we begin to approach the revelation of the New Testament.

In the New Testament we indeed find that God appears in three Persons: Father

Who is both One and Three, we often redo his infinity to fit with in our finite minds. We do this either by rejecting the Old Testament Revelation of His Oneness, or by rejecting the New Testament revelation of His Threeness. Cults take one of those two options.

But to those who declare what the Bible declares even though they do not fully understand it, there is but one acceptable statement of faith: “There is One God Who eternally exists in Three Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

Mormons scoff at this great revelation of God’s grandness. They mock it (or did when I was a Mormon) in the temple ceremony, as they mock Christianity during the Manti pageant singing “At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light and the burden of my sin rolled away...” as though that hymn depicted the silliness of trusting Christ alone for forgiveness.

When I was in the Navy, I was a radar technician. I fixed radars. But I never knew how electricity worked. I thought “the electrons move down the wire from positive to negative.” But a nuclear scientist told me, “Actually, the holes *between* the electrons move.” So, you see, I never understood it. But that never prevented me from turning on the lights.

The Trinity is simply stating everything God revealed about Himself in the Bible. But the cults can’t submit to that kind of simple obedience. So they make up something. For me, I would rather say what the Bible says even if I don’t understand it, rather than make up something the Bible does not say, just so I *can* understand it.

Again Aaron, I advise you to listen, not only to what Mormons tell you, but to think outside the box and ask yourself if all of the great minds of Christianity have come to love and believe in the Trinitarian God of the Bible just because some priest told them to believe it. That is not the case.

Even if you can’t get a hold on the Trinity, at least, do not fall for the lie that there are many Gods in the Universe.

Jim’s Speaking Schedule

see <http://www.mazeministry.com>

• **(Most) Every Wednesday Night—Meridian Assembly of God, Meridian, Idaho**
7:00 PM 1830 N. Linder Rd., Meridian Idaho, 208-888-0063

• **Friday—Saturday, Sep 26-27, Idaho Falls, ID, First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 455 W. Sunnyside Rd., Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m., 208-529-4082**

• **Sunday AM/PM, Sep 28, Meridian, ID**
Treasure Valley Worship Center, 50 W. Spicewood, 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. 208-887-0801 (1/4 mile north of Cherry Lane on Meridian Rd.)

• **Sunday-Tuesday, Nov 16-18, Richland, WA, Richland Assembly of God, 1110 Stevens Drive, 509-943-2636**

• **Sunday—Wednesday, January 11-14, Port Angeles, WA, Lighthouse Christian Center, 304 Viewcrest Ave., 360-452-8909**

Son; and Holy Spirit. All three of these Persons possess all the attributes of God.

So what do we do with the information? We can either jettison the revelation of the Old Testament (as Mormons do) and say there are three Gods (and if three why not four, and if four why not me?). But we can’t do that.

Or, we can take the route of the Unitarians and say there is only one God, but sometimes He appears as the Father, sometimes as the Son, or sometimes as the Holy Spirit. But that won’t work either because the New Testament declares that Jesus, being fully God, is Eternal. So what do we do with the New Testament revelation of the full Godhood of Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit? Since we can’t easily wrap our minds around a God