

Understand Who God Is

Nigeria 2019

You are confronted with the holiness of God and you're confronted with your own sinfulness. It's true when you handle the word of God, that it affects the preacher as much as it affects those that are preached to. God gives us His word so we can see His glory and when we can see His glory we are changed. We become more like His precious Son. When we see the light of Jesus Christ it causes us to turn from our own darkness, the sin that is within us. As I come to you tonight, I pray that God causes you to see a greater vision of who He is because that's what each of us needs. The better we see God, the better we serve Him. The better we serve Him, the better we love our neighbor and the better we fulfill the two great commandments, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. The more distorted vision of God you have, the less you love Him, the less you glorify Him, the less you fulfill the purpose for which you were created. The purpose of all creation was to glorify God. Last night I said I was going to work over these three nights through John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Because this verse has a real significant context around it and I talked about how before Jesus said John 3:16, he started by confronting Nicodemus and saying, "Don't you know you must be a new creature before entering the kingdom of God? That you must be washed by the Spirit and in the water of God? Unless He is born of water and Spirit, he cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Because it is a spiritual work, it is a work that is impossible for us to do because before we are saved we are not spiritual, we're of the flesh and flesh can only produce more flesh. It requires the Spirit to create a spiritual being. Jesus is confronting Nicodemus, the ruler that was a Pharisee, this man who is known as a great scholar and rabbi, and Jesus says these are things you must know. One of the hardest things for people to accept is what Jesus Christ said in verse 8, the Spirit blows where it wills, not where you will. That's why we are commanded to pray for people's salvation because God decides who will be saved and who will be damned. That's the context in which Nicodemus says in verse 9, "Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" How can this be? I have declared the truth of who God is before many people in my life and I have heard many times, but how can these things be? What does that make us? If God saves who He chooses to save, what do we do with our salvation? The answer is nothing. The answer is that God is almighty, you have no strength except the strength given by God. The Spirit blows where it will and no one can control it. In my experience, people don't have a problem with this when it comes to other people, they are happy to pray for other people's salvation, they're happy to believe whether God controls whether that person is saved, but when they look at themselves in the mirror, they say God can't force them to be saved, God can't reject me, it has to be me that decides. People pray believing in the sovereignty of God, people pray saying that God will set His love on who He sets His love on, except when it comes to themselves. If you don't believe God saves who He will save, stop praying for the lost. Don't be a hypocrite. If you don't believe God solely did the work of saving you, then don't pray for God to do the work of saving others. You know God commanded you to pray for the salvation of others. Accept the God of Scripture,

believe that is the God that created heaven and earth, the God that can make Romans 8:28 be true, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." If God doesn't control all things, then He cannot declare all things good, He cannot say all things are for the good of His people, He must control all things in order to say the Fulani attacks are good for His people. But many people say, like Nicodemus, 'How can these things be true?' The reason Nicodemus could not see it isn't because God didn't say it to him because God said it to him over and over again. The Pharisees were known to memorize Scripture, they were known to have the first five books of the Bible memorized, and this isn't a new idea by Jesus Christ, this is how God described Himself from the beginning. Deuteronomy 32, God is telling Israel what is going to happen to them, He is telling them that they are going to be rejected by Him, He's telling them that He is giving them lands and vineyards, but instead of saying God did all that, they will say they did it themselves. How many people that are saved say the same thing? Let me change that, how many people that say they are saved say the same thing? God reached down and He rescued them and they said they did it themselves. God reached down and rescued them from Egypt and delivered them to the Promised Land, that's a picture of being saved from our sin and being part of the kingdom of God. How many people are like Israel? Instead of saying God did this, they say we did this ourselves? That's the context when we get to verse 34, "Is this not laid up in store with Me, Sealed up among My treasures?" He's saying He has laid up in store vengeance against Israel. He said He delivered them and set them in a good place and they rejected Him and said they did it themselves. It was because God did it and not them. So then He says in verse 35, "Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them." He's promising that the day is going to come that He has set in place about 1,500 years before it happened, that He is going to send a sword and destroy His people. There's nothing any of them could do about it, not because God wouldn't forgive them if they repented. God promises forgiveness if we repent, but they couldn't repent because repentance is a gift from God, repentance is because God opens our eyes to sin and then we seek Him and then we find Him. That's how salvation works and he, just like Esau sought repentance with tears but could not find it. He had set the day in place where He was going to destroy Israel to show it is not their work, but His work. Make sure you believe in God as it says in verse 39, "Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand." He kills and He makes alive. In a physical sense, He is the one who kills and makes alive, and in a spiritual sense, He is the One who kills and He alone is the One who makes alive. The reason Nicodemus came to Christ by night is because he thought men could kill and make alive, but man cannot kill or make alive. There is no other God as He says in Deuteronomy and the sign that He points to is that He is the One who kills and makes alive. Make sure you believe in this God, don't be like Nicodemus who said how can these things be? He told us in His Scriptures who He is. He's very clear in Exodus 33. This is when Moses is on the mountain and receiving the Ten Commandments and while he is up there he hears Aaron leading the people in sin and he goes down to the people and he breaks the Ten Commandments. He goes up again to God and God says He is going to destroy every one of those people, none of them will survive for I took them out of Egypt and they sought idolatry. They made a golden calf and Moses falls down before the Creator of the universe and he begs

Him not to kill Israel. God says, don't worry, I will raise up a great people for you and Moses says, but all the nations will say You are a God that cannot deliver Your people, and God decides not to kill all of them. Then Moses says to God, 'Show me Your glory', then God responds to Moses in verses 17-19, listen very closely, "So the Lord said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name." And he said, "Please, show me Your glory." Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." I want to make sure you understand when he says the name of the Lord, he is saying this is His reputation. When Proverbs says a good name is better than riches, it's not talking about what people call you, it's talking about your reputation, what you are known as. Do you have a name as a thief or a name as a gentle and kind man? Do you have the name of an angry man or the name of a generous man? That's what it means when we say and proclaim, 'In the name of Jesus Christ'. It's what He is and who He is. God says He is going to tell us His name, tell us His reputation. He will declare the name of the Lord before you. Moses asked to see God's glory and God says He will show you His glory, He will show you who I am and He says I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. The glory of God as He declares it, is based on the idea that He gets to decide who is saved. He is the One who decides who is saved. Do you bless the name of the Lord? For He said this is who He is and what His name is, He will show mercy to whom He will show mercy. If you go to Romans, Paul quotes it in Romans 9:13, "As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." Let's be clear, in verse 11 it says, "For the children not yet being born..." God hated Esau before he had even done anything. God chose to love Jacob before he did anything. Paul understands what the immediate response to the message I am saying to you. Verse 14, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!" If it is impossible to deliver us from our sin, does that mean God is unrighteous? The answer is, certainly not, it is not unrighteous for God not to show mercy to somebody. It is His glory that He doesn't have to show mercy to anybody, it is His glory alone that He saves. Praise be the name of God, this is the God of Scripture and this is where he quotes Exodus 33. Paul's argument about why He hates Esau and loves Jacob is because it is the glory of God to do so. You have no claim on God, it is solely by His grace that any are saved, it is solely by His work that any are saved. Verse 15, "For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." This is what God said was His name, what God said was His glory. Have you called on the name of God? There is no other name under heaven by which one can be saved. Have you called on the name of the Lord? Have you called on the One that will have compassion on whoever He will show compassion? Verse 16, "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." You cannot will your way into heaven, it is not by Him who runs. You cannot work your way into heaven. It is God who shows mercy. There have been billions of people that have read this book that are in the same place as unsaved Nicodemus. They say, 'How can this be? How can God be like this?' instead of falling down before God and saying, 'Save me Lord, I cannot do this myself.' Call on the name of the Lord, for that is His glory. Nicodemus doesn't understand that, do you understand that? Romans 2:4, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" It is not your wisdom, it is not your work. It is

the wisdom of God, it is His glory. Don't be like Nicodemus saying, 'How can these things be?' Instead, humble yourself before the one true God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the God who gives you every breath You breath, the God who makes you alive and the God who will kill you. Believe in this God, believe in His name, for the sake of His glory. John 3:10, "Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" Jesus Christ is saying these are the most basic things that you must know. Nicodemus was reading the Scriptures as a dead man who is not being informed by the Spirit of God. A guy who can read Scripture over and over again, he could memorize books of the Bible, he spent hours preaching to others as a member of the tribe of the intellectual Hebrews and Jesus said to him, 'Do you not know the most basic things?' You must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven and the Holy Spirit blows where it will and there is no man that can stop it and no man that can force it. Are you reading the Scriptures as a living, spiritual being or are you dead in your sins and trespasses and it's just words on a page instead of life? God says this is your life, read the Scriptures as they are written. These aren't secrets, they're explained throughout His Scriptures. Open your eyes and read the Scriptures, put aside your ideas of what is righteous and what is good and seek to understand what God says is righteous and good. Nicodemus kept his own view of God even though God had said over and over again who He was. Make sure you want to know the God of the Scriptures, He was speaking to Moses on that mountain. No one had seen the Father, He is a Spirit. Jesus Christ is speaking to Moses and saying He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. Make sure you believe in this Jesus Christ. Verse 11, "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness." Jesus Christ came from heaven, being from the presence of the Father, and Nicodemus has the boldness to say, 'How can these things be?' And Jesus Christ says, 'I know, I came from heaven.' Understand the temptation, the sin to say when you read the Scripture that God can't be like that, God can't kill billions of people, God can't kill people who have never heard the name of Christ and send them to hell, God can't say many are on the way to destruction and few are on the path to eternal life. Yes He can, for this is His glory. It's very sinful for us to read the Scripture and skip over it because the God that's described is not the one we want to believe in. What God does does not change based on what you believe. Believe in the God of Scriptures, read the Scriptures of God and say this is the God revealed to us. Don't be like Nicodemus, who at the end of verse 11 says, 'You don't receive our witness.' God witnessed to this through Moses, through Joshua, through David, through Samuel, through Elijah, through Elisha, through all the prophets. They all say the same thing, they all say there is only one God and He is the almighty God. I think when we hear the term 'Almighty God', we twist it so say, 'the mightiest God'. That's not who He is, He is the Almighty God which means there is no might outside of God. We cannot take a breath unless God lets us, we cannot get out of bed in the morning unless God gives us strength. There is no might outside of God, He is not the mightiest, He is the only One that has might. Yet, we don't want to receive His witness. Humble yourself, open the Scriptures to see what they say. This is the God they described, this is the God who is declared in the Scriptures, this is what's required for salvation. Not to believe in a God named Jesus Christ, but to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for there is no other name by which you can be saved. Genesis 17 is where He promises to raise up a people to Abraham. This is the first time the term 'Almighty God' is used. Genesis 17:1, "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am

Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.” It is by God that He chose Abraham, it is God that made Abraham blameless and walk before Him. Abraham walked in the presence of God by God’s strength, not by Abraham’s strength. Verse 2, “And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” Just like His glory is related to the idea that He will save whom He will save, His declaration of His almightiness, the declaration of His omnipotence is that He chooses who He saves. Do you receive His witness? He came from heaven and this is Christ saying it, this is who Christ is. Do you receive His witness or are you like unsaved Nicodemus who says, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus Christ goes on in 3:12, “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” He’s telling him things that he should be able to understand. Like I was saying last night, God ordered the world so we can understand who He is so Jesus Christ is telling Nicodemus about earthly things, He’s telling him about being born, He’s telling him about wind, and He’s telling him that these things declare who God is. Nicodemus thought he was wise and Jesus Christ says you can’t understand simple things, things that have been right in front of you your whole life, you can’t understand why there is a breeze blowing right now, you can’t understand why birth looks the way birth looks. Don’t expect God to reveal more significant things if you can’t understand the earthly pictures He put before you. If you can’t understand how a father and son are a picture of God the Father and God the Son, if you can’t understand a husband and wife are a picture of Christ and the church, if you can’t understand planting a seed in the field that comes up and produces many more grains, then that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you can’t understand the basic pictures that God has put in the world don’t expect to have a deeper understanding about other things. If you can’t understand how the world is ordered by God, then don’t expect to have a deeper understanding. Verse 13, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” Why would Jesus Christ all of a sudden change the subject and say there is only One who has come down from heaven? He is the only One who has come down from heaven because there were many false prophets in Israel who said they were sent by God, who said they had the words of God, who said they had spiritual understanding. There are still many, many men today who say I am a man of God, I am a prophet of God, but instead of saying what God said they said what they wanted to hear and what they wanted to believe. They said ‘peace, peace’ when there was no peace, they say you are fine with God when your hearts are far from Him, they are saying you are saved if you believe in the God they are preaching. If they are not preaching the word of God, their witness is worthless. The things I say here that do not align with the word of God are worthless. The purpose of every single prophet, whether Isaiah or Joshua or Malachi or Peter or Paul, their job is to declare that Jesus Christ who ascended from heaven, the One who declared Himself to us. There are always others that will declare another God, but what we need to do is not know what men are declaring to other men, but what God declared about Himself. That is the message the world needs, it doesn’t need your wisdom, it doesn’t need your cleverness, it doesn’t need your fancy words, it just needs you to say who Christ is because His reputation, what He did by descending from heaven, taking on flesh, being mocked and hated, going to His own and being rejected, and being willing to lay down His life because He is the almighty God, no one could take it from Him, He had to lay it down and He took it up again so that we could know He is the One who kills and makes alive, He died and He rose again so you could have life, so you could have everlasting life.

Whosoever believes in Him, only those who He has shown mercy will believe in Him. I want to make that argument from verse 14, it says "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." To understand what He is talking about you have to go to Numbers 21 because it explains what he is talking about. He's saying this has always been declared to the people of God, this is how you are saved. Numbers 21:4-5, "Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." Notice what they are doing, they've been freed from slavery. God has been providing every meal every day, but instead of saying it's the mercy of God that He provided manna from heaven, they say that their souls loathe this worthless bread. Now, the New Testament is clear, that manna from heaven is Christ. When they say they loathe the bread, they are saying they loathe Christ. Verse 6, "So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died." God punishes them, God punishes them for their sin. They become miserable people, if God wouldn't have moved they would have stayed exactly where they were, satisfied in their sin, proud in their claims of God. But God doesn't leave them there proud in their sin. Verse 7, "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people." God had given them eyes to see through the various things He had done to the children of Israel. The plagues that He sent on Egypt, the way He divided the Red Sea and they walked through it, the way He demonstrated His power and might with the thunder and lightning around the mount, because God kept revealing Himself to them they knew to look. They didn't say this just happened to be what was going on, they said these fiery serpents were sent because of the hand of God. They didn't just say this happened to be where they were in the desert, God had given them an understanding of the world because of His goodness. He sent the serpents because of His goodness. They didn't seek God because they wanted to find God, they sought God because God started killing them. Understand how serious truth faith is, God kills people to make sure we have a picture. The people said they had sinned against God, and pray to the Lord that He would take away the serpents from among us. So Moses prayed for the people, verse 8, "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." They knew they were dying by the fiery serpent, there are many many people that do not know they are dying because of sin, for the wages of sin is death, but most people don't believe that. Seeing that your sin leads to death is the mercy of God, it's part of that birth process of being born again. You have to understand you have rebelled against the Living God, that He is going to kill you. You must fear that God to be saved, you must seek God and fear Him to be saved. They had to recognize they were dying, they had to recognize they were being killed by God before they would look at the serpent on the pole, before they would live. This is still the way it works, we sin, God judges us for that sin, God reveals to us in His mercy that we are dying because of our sin, and everyone He reveals that to, everyone who understands that looks to the cross of Christ because that's where salvation is. As it says in John 3, "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Just like that serpent had to be lifted up so those who were dying to look to him to be saved, it's still the same now. Do you know you are dying without Christ?

When you preach the gospel to your neighbors, when you preach the gospel to people who do not know Christ, do you start with how they have offended a holy God? Because that's the core problem, God is huge, He is infinite in His power, infinite in His knowledge, infinite in His presence, because God is a God who cannot look upon evil and we are evil. That's what your neighbor needs to know, that's what you need to make sure that you know, that any rebellion against a holy God is worthy of eternal damnation and you need to come to Christ with humility because it's He who will show mercy to whom He shows mercy. Anyone God is kind and merciful so that they understand the judgement that is upon them, there's only one thing that they will ever do, they will always seek Christ. If God gives us eyes to see, if He gives us ears to hear, if He gives us a heart to understand and we understand who God is and we understand who we are, we will always look to Christ because there is no other name under heaven by which one can be saved. Verse 15, "That whoever believes in Him should [c]not perish but have eternal life." Right before John 3:16, the example that Christ used is not an example about the might of man, it is about the mercy of God, it is about the revelation of God and who He is. Have you looked to Christ? Do you know who God is? Do you know who you are? Have you fled to Christ? Do you really think your sin is not that bad? That means that you don't think God is holy, you think He is just like you are and if you think whether you can control if you are saved, you have made yourself a god over God. You don't want a God who you can control because if you can control God, He is not powerful enough to save, God is not powerful enough to make sure you have eternal life. Don't believe in a weak God, believe in the almighty God because there's no other name by which one can be saved. Verse 16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Do you believe in the name of Jesus Christ? Not the world's Jesus Christ, but who He says that He is. It is not about your glory, it is about your glory, that's what our lives are supposed to be about because God created us for His glory. He will be glorified by you, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess, everyone will confess the true name of Christ. The Christ that's described in the Bible, some will declare it on this earth and some will confess it before they are cast into hell. God will glorify some as He says in Romans 9, He will receive glory by making some vessels of honor. He uses the picture of a king's house where some are the golden vessel that the king drinks from and some are the chamber pot that's under the bed so they don't have to go out in the dark. That's the picture, God has chosen some to be vessels of honor and He has chosen some to relive Himself in. This is who God is, fear that God, see the evil of your sin, humble yourself before Him, cry out to Him for salvation. I don't believe that it's a good practice to call people to come forward because then you are seen by men and that's not your problem, your problem is with God. Deal with God, see Him for who He is and deal with God. For those who know God, we are going to take a period of silence here for you to reflect on His glory and on His majesty and to reflect on how you can do nothing to become one with Him. Those of you who do not know God, today deal with Him for you don't know what tomorrow holds. Today is the day to deal with the true and living God.

Oh Lord I pray that anyone that's here that does not know You and unquestionably there are, that Your Spirit moves, Your Spirit takes them from being carnal and makes them spiritual. Lord, even if You don't save them tonight, I cry out to You that You begin the process, give them a

vision of Your holiness Lord, let them see You for who You are for You are the glory to all creation, You are the beauty of all creation, You are the strength of all things, You are all-knowing and all-wise. Lord, I pray that You move among us, reveal Yourself to us. Even those who know You, give them a greater vision of who You are. Let Your fear fall upon us in a greater measure, let us have more hatred for our sin, let us have more praise for Your mercy for we have no claim to it because when we were dead in our sins and trespasses, when we were in absolute rebellion to You, You chose to love us, You chose to love us in our filth, You chose to love us in our hatred for You, You chose to love us in our pride, You chose to love us even though we rejected You as God. Because You loved us we loved You. We thank You that it is Your work that saves us because without Your mercy of revealing Yourself to us, no one would seek You, but everyone here that knows You has sought You. We thank You that You let us find You. We thank You that it is Your gift so we don't steal Your glory for this is Your glory to show mercy to whom You will show mercy. Praise be the name of the Lord, amen.