

Quality of Life is a term used frequently by both sociologists and (more recently) even physicians. They have created all sorts of “happiness” indexes which measure life **satisfaction** based on physical health, life expectancy, living conditions, relational dynamics and community life.

Interestingly, using these standards of measurement..... the 2011 **Better Life** Index ranks the United States **31st** among all nations of the world....

Canada placed 10th on the scale..... and remarkably **Iceland** is ranked number one..... in that same index...

Something’s wrong with that! Think about it.... Just having to pronounce **ice** every time I told someone where I lived would make **me** depressed....

Physicians are now throwing around the term... “Quality of Life” in deciding whether to recommend to a mother that she should abort the baby in her womb..... or to adult children whether he thinks they should **ethanize** their parents.....

As Christians..... how are **we** supposed to measure the Quality of Life? What are our standards for being able to say whether or not “Life is Good?”

Is it our blood pressure reading? By how well our appetites are being satisfied?
By our net worth?

The Bible makes it clear that all of these indicators are far **too narrow** in their understanding of life.....

That in reality..... (on the **grand scale**) there are really only **two** categories of life:..... **earthly life**.....(very short and plagued by a curse called sin) and a life Jesus is going to teach us about today.... called:

The Heavenly Life

I hope you will see.....life here on earth...is not WORTHY to be compared to the Heavenly life which is to come for all those who are **IN** ...Christ Jesus.

Whenever a prominent leader from another nation visits the White house it is big news. But if we discovered that OUR president had traveled under the cover of **darkness** to interview some emerging economic guru (like someone from China or Singapore) to discover secrets to their success.... it would be even **bigger** news....

In the **religious** realm of 1st century Israel that is something of what was happening here in John 3.. Nichodemus was not only a Pharisee among the Jews... but he was a leading teacher of Judiasm in the temple....

He has come under the cover of darkness to interview Jesus.... a man who has all the markings of some new religious movement.....and Nichodemus wants to find out what it is all about....

Last week... we heard the first part of their **conversation**... as Jesus taught him about being born from **on high** ...and Nichodemus was scratching his head with questions.....Let's pick up as Jesus tries to explain more in detail....

John 3:5-15

"Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 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."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 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. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

That **ETERNAL** life...is life in the age to come..... it is a HEAVENLY life....

It is heavenly not only because it is **devoid** of all the bad things we struggle with here on earth....

It is heavenly not only because it will go on forever.....

But it is **heavenly**.... because it is a life lived in Spiritual UNION with **God Himself**....

It is a COMPLETE life..... a WHOLE life.... full of infinite LOVE..... and soul satisfying JOY.....

because it is lived in face to face communion with Jesus Christ.... the Heavenly Son of God.....who became **MAN**.....

so that **IN** Himwe could KNOW God..... and HAVE a soul sharing fellowship with HIM and the rest of His children.....

In a PLACE that is newly created.....exclusively for that purpose....

And....our text says.....It is available to whoever **BELIEVES**..... whoever TRUSTS in the reality of who Jesus is now..... by faith in His Word...

Let's dissect how Jesus explains this HEAVENLY life is **IMPARTED** to us:

The Heavenly Life

1. Requires New Birth

Born again Christians are not just one demographic grouping..... among others who also call themselves Christians... they are the **ONLY** ones who are genuinely members of Christ's Body...

Until now.... Jesus had been speaking of people in general.....but now He addresses both Nichodemus and those he represents with " **YOU** must be born **ANEW**..."

You must be born of WATER and the Spirit...(v. 5)

One particular event in Israel's history was an object lesson of what Jesus was trying to bring Nichodemus to take hold of.....

It was a story Nichodemus undoubtedly taught to others many times:

Naaman... was a mighty man of valor.... the King of Syria.... but who was also a **leper**... He had a servant girl from Israel who told him of the Prophet Elisha in Samaria that could heal him....

So Namaan contacted Elisha and came to Israel (as a Gentile) to be healed...here is what Elisha did when Naaman showed up at his gate:

2 Kings 5:10

"And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.""

After some initial pride and resistance....his servants talked him into obeying.....

2 Kings 5:14

"So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

This event became the foundation in Judiasm for Gentiles to come into the Commonwealth of Israel through baptism.....

Just as Namaan's flesh was restored like that of **a little child** through the cleansing of the water of the Jordan.... Jews understood that these Gentile proselytes were being cleansed of the "sin" of their ethnicity.... and becoming Jewish...

But for JTB....to come to the **same river** and call upon JEWS to be baptized.... was a whole 'nother story....

And for Jesus to ask a Leader of the Jews (in the same fashion) to become like a little child... was a borderline **insult**.

But Jesus persists.... YOU are grossly underestimating the severity of your sin problem... until you recognize that ENTRANCE into **MY** heavenly life **requires** new birth...

- The spiritual womb of **regeneration** is the ONLY gateway to **life** in the age to come....for both natural born Jew and far off Gentile alike.

John 3:6

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

The **natural** man (those born of Adam) are from the earth... we are (by nature) men of **dust**. But those who are born of the Spirit of God... are united with the man of Heaven...

This flesh is destined to perish....corrupted by sin... it can **not** inherit the KOG...

Those born of the Spirit... inherit eternal.... **heavenly LIFE**.

Jesus tells this leading teacher of Israel:

You should not be **struggling** to grasp this! this is NOT really a mystery..... it is an **observable** event..... that takes place here on **earth**....

Here is what it is like....

John 3:8

"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."

In both the Hebrew and the Greek languages... that the word which we translate here as wind / spirit is the same word. It can be translated either way according to context. In fact, when it is in relation to persons... it is usually translated **breath**....

Just like God (in a manner above our comprehension) DECIDES which direction (and how hard the wind should blow) ...and your senses can perceive His action by the **RESULTS**.....

Trees swaying.... the **sound** of it blowing through any cracks in your window....

So it is with the way the Spirit comes to birth the Heavenly LIFE in a human being.....

You might not know **HOW** it happens... but anyone can see the **RESULTS**.....

The RESULTS of a new birth.... are CHANGED people..... whereas before they followed the spirit of THIS age..... the spirit of the sons of DISOBEDIENCE..... they followed the lusts of their own flesh....

but after the Breath / Spirit of God blows into their souls.... they are raised to New Life!

.... just like the prophet **Ezekiel** foretold in Ch. **37**.....(a prophesy Nichodemus would have been very familiar with....)

Ezekiel 37:1-5

" The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live."

God **breathed** upon them..... they became a MIGHTY army! They **were** DEAD... and God SPOKE His Command through His prophet..... and He caused breath to enter them... and they LIVED!

They became an ARMY under the Command of God! Doing His will....

There are VISIBLE.... noticeable changes when God breathes **Heavenly LIFE** into a soul that was dead.....

Family members notice..... co-workers notice..... you are not the same!

"That's right! God has breathed LIFE into my dead soul through His Word....."

God is breathing out.... through His Word even **now**... in this room..... who knows but that He is not raising someone from spiritual death right now.... bone is joining to bone...

People that are **born of the Spirit**..... become part of the **ARMY** of the Lord.... marching to the orders of HIS Word..... seeking to bring honor and glory to JESUS instead of themselves.... by the way they live.

- Nichodemus was still questioning...

In fact, his questioning and **doubting** has persisted beyond reason.....so that you have to wonder if it is not more **Proud Resistance**..... than a lack of understanding.....

John 3:9

"Nicodemus said to him, "**How** can these things be?""

This doesn't fit in my box Jesus..... Jesus says.... right..... I'm out to **reconfigure** your whole life....around **MYSELF**.

The Heavenly Life

2. Involves a Paradigm Shift

Remember that the heavenly life.... involves you becoming a bond –servant of the King of Heaven.....

it involves you **impeaching** yourself.....as the President and CEO of your own life... and handing the keys of that office to HIM.

That is a radically different orientation than Nichodemus was accustomed to.....so he **stubbornly resisted**....

John 3:10-11

"Jesus answered him, "Are you **the** teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand **these** things? 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.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all OT prophecies.... but He is **more** than that..... He is actually THE **true** Israel.... THE man.... that all who came before Him could not be.... it is through HIM... that all who believe are grafted into **the Israel of God**.

Here lies the RUB with Nichodemus....

The Pharisees believed THEMSELVES to be the True Israel of God.... after all they were the ones who knew the Law.....and KEPT it better than anyone else....

-Jesus says to him (literally).....So....You are **THE** teacher of **THE** Israel... (Grk. has definite articles) and **YOU** don't get this?

I am giving you MILK.... not MEAT..... Nichodemus....so we can not go any further..

John 3:12

"If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

We are talking here....about **observable** events that take place on earth.....

What Jesus wanted him to dowas to match up the **OBSERVATIONS** of Spiritual things he was observing that were taking place.....with the vast knowledge base of Scripture he had stored up.....

- Isn't that what Scientific experiments are all about?

Set up a situation to observe a phenomenon.... and interpret that data... in conjunction with what you already know....

Nichodemus.... did not want to have to re-interpret his data.... He preferred his **OLD Paradigm**.... where he felt in control...

Jesus – I came to **reveal** to you the goodness of My Heavenly LIFE... which **I ALONE** am capable of doing....and you refuse to receive it...

Earlier this year you may have seen....a little yellow book called "**Heaven is For Real**" In March it sat atop the NY Times best seller charts....

It is supposedly the testimony of a 4 yr. old boy who died on the operating table (or something close to it) and was then revived...

During that period, Colton (his name) testifies in little blurbs of what he saw as he WENT to HEAVEN....

... pearly gates... himself fluttering around with wings..... conversations with Jesus.... a little sister he never knew....etc.

In Jesus' day (like our own) many such stories were circulating of people who had died and gone to heaven and saw Moses and came back to reveal heaven to those still on earth.....

But Jesus says...

John 3:13

"**No one** has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man."

You remember that the Apostle Paul would later be given a **glimpse** of the 3rd heaven.... but he was forbidden to speak of it..... He was only to speak the goodness of the gospel.... and urge people to trust in **Christ**....

The **SOLE** messenger SENT from heaven to teach us about EVERLASTING life.

John himself will later testify:

1 John 1:2-4

"**the life** was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the **eternal life**, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our **joy** may be complete."

even though the Heavenly Messenger Himself had given him 3 illustrations with personal application.....Nichodemus did not yet GET this life.... which Jesus was MANIFESTING before His eyes.....

Now, Jesus is about to give him a 4th...with a foreshadowing of the MEANS by which all men can come to know the Heavenly Life.

John 3:14

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,"

Jesus (once again) **taps** a story Nichodemus was familiar with and shows him how the Son of Man is the fulfillment of it....

Israel was on their way through the wilderness (after their deliverance from Egypt)... and they decided that **Life was NOT good**....

In fact their situation would not even register on the Quality of Life Index....

Not that we would ever do this..... they began to feel that God was shortchanging them..... He was not delivering the blessings they had been promised on their time table.....so...

They began to **GRUMBLE** and **COMPLAIN**..... they even went so far as to **BLAME God** for their hardships.....

They said that God's appointed servant had led them astray....and they were **fed up**...

Numbers 21:4-5

" From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became **impatient** 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 we loathe this worthless food.""

The "worthless food" was the Heavenly Manna God has personally appointed for them to gather and eat by daily trusting in Him.....

There was never too much or too little. Even on the evening before the Sabbath... there was enough to carry them through....

It was God's supernatural provision for their **NEEDS**..... problem with this God was He was failing to meet their **WANTS**.....

They spoke against His goodness..... so God sent them a little taste of what they **deserved**..... what we ALL deserve....

Numbers 21:6

"Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that

many people of Israel died."

Watching a reality TV show called **Florida Wildlife** a while back.... and they told the story of a man who was bitten by a python on September 11, 2001. As the smoke was rising from the twin towers in NYC emergency personnel were bringing this man out of the **everglades** and to a local hospital...

Problem was the non-native pythons were fairly new to South Florida back then and they did not have any python anti-venom ...in fact the closest lab that had any was in San Francisco, CA

Already the man was developing the symptoms of **fever**, swelling and internal hemorrhaging...

Like **Israel**.... he had been bitten by a FIERY serpent.....if they did not him some anti-venom within 24 hrs. he was going to die.

Problem was, in the wake of the terrorist attacks... the FAA had grounded **ALL** flights....

He was 3000 miles from the REMEDY and no way to reach it....

As officials frantically tried to get through the red tape on the phone to get special approval for a flight.... the man's condition **worsened**.....

Finally, they reached a high ranking official who ordered a commercial jet carrying the REMEDY to fly from SF to Miami.... escorted by military jet fighters.... No one else on board....just the necessary crew and the anti-venom....

They touched down in Miami in time to save the man's life.....

I am not sure how many tens of thousands of dollars that one escorted flight cost to make....

But they did it all to save the physical life of one man..... dying of a snakebite.

Israel did not have a telephone.... or an airlines to call..... But they did recognize the ONE who had the REMEDY....

And they realized (by the grace of God) that this fiery venom in their veins was because they were under the **judgment** of God.....

Numbers 21:7

"And 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."

They did not repent in **general** ways..... they repented in **SPECIFIC** ways... naming their sin....asking for forgiveness....

We have all been bitten by a fiery serpent called **SIN**. Some of you have been bitten because you enjoy the DANGER of handling a something that you know can kill you....

You have **LOVED the darkness**.....You have coddled it....held it close to your heart..... and it has sunk its fangs into your soul...

You need to **REPENT**..... specifically **naming** your sin.....perhaps (as they did with Moses) going to the person you have spoken or sinned against... asking them to forgive you...

God answered Moses' prayer as he interceded for them.....

Numbers 21:8-9

"And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and **live**."

Can you imagine.... if you are Moses..... as your people are DIEING from snake venom all around you.... having to fashion a bronze or copper statue of a the very thing that is KILLING them! Wouldn't you hate having to shape its eyes... and that scaly body?

God wanted the people to realize that there had to be a **CURSE bearer**.....

That (by faith in God's command) as much as it doesn't make SENSE

If they LOOKED to the object that He had appointed.... that He would DIVERT the curse that was upon them to the CURSE bearer....

Jesus was telling Nichodemus.... I am going to be lifted up..... in obedience to God.... as the **CURSE** bearer.....for the Israel of God....

Whoever LOOKS to me will **LIVE!**

The Heavenly Life

3. Becomes Yours By Looking to the Cross

Just like God instructed Moses to lift up the Curse Bearer... in the midst of the CAMP...

Jesus came... and DIED on the CROSS.... right outside Jerusalem....

Where God Poured the FIERY poison of your sin ...into the bosom of His own Son.

For OUR sake.... Jesus **BECAME** sin....so that by LOOKING to Him... and believing on Him... we might be SAVED from the death we deserve...

- Do you FEEL the deadly venom of sin in your soul?..... do you know it will KILL not only your body.... but you will die the second death in hell unless you repent?

The Son of Man was obedient to His mission.... He was lifted up....on that CURSE bearing CROSS.....and He tells us WHY...

John 3:15

"that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Charles Spurgeon... (in a sermon he preached on this text)... pointed out that no matter how **far gone** the snake bite victims were.... they could be taking their last breath.... but if they LOOKED to the bronze serpent they would LIVE.... **without exception**.

Likewise... whoever will LOOK to Jesus.....no matter how **FAR gone** you are....

You could be wrestling with some decade old addiction.... you might be totally confused about your sexual identity.....

Doesn't matter.... LOOK to Jesus... on that CROSS....taking that curse...

You WILL LIVE!

Not justfor a few more years... or decades...in this miserable existence on a planet still under the curse

But **forevermore** in **Heavenly LIFE**.... in purity.... at PEACE with God... and in direct fellowship with the ONE who personally EXTRACTED the poison of sin from your soul.....

By taking it **into** Himself.