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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

He who Descended From Heaven.

(John 3:12-15)

(2013).

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He who Descended from Heaven.

John 3:12-15 ----- ¹²Jesus said to Nicodemus: If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

It is most likely that the earthly things Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus about was the Old Covenant, Moses law, the miracles, the revival and testimonies that were taking place all around him, while the heavenly things would refer to the New Covenant of grace, Jesus being the Son of God, his death and resurrection and eternal life in everlasting glory.

These words: -

- No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Have been used to support the theory that Jesus pre-existed with God in heaven before the foundations of the world were created and time began, but that would mean that Jesus was in heaven as some kind of divine angelic spirit being and left heaven to become a foetus in the womb of Mary. So what do the words, "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man mean?" To find the answer let's begin by looking at the resurrection.

Prior to Jesus resurrection no-one ascended to heaven we know this because Paul told the believers in Rome: -

- That God's Son was the firstborn (resurrected) among many brothers (Rom. 8:29).

And in the book of Colossians he writes: -

- Jesus is the beginning, the firstborn (resurrected) from the dead (Col. 1:18).

Added to these are the following words of the book of Revelation: -

- Jesus Christ the faithful witness is the firstborn of the dead (Rev 1:5).

Jesus death and resurrection is spoken of a birth, because death for a Christian is not an end, but the beginning of a totally new and glorious eternal life. In this sense it is a birth from this mortal and violent world of pain and sorrow into an eternal world of joy and peace. Obviously if anyone had ascended to heaven prior to Christ then not one of these verses can be believed and Jesus certainly cannot be spoken of as being the firstborn or first resurrected from the dead to heaven.

He who descended from heaven carries the following six ideas: -

1. Jesus origin was heavenly in that he was born of God by the creative power of God and the Holy Spirit through the Virgin Birth.
2. Jesus was sent from above, meaning he was sent by God.
3. At Jesus water baptism and prior to his ministry God's voice spoke from above saying, "This is my beloved Son" approving him for his ministry (Matt 3:17).
4. Jesus is the only man God has given all His power and authority to preparing him for his ministry.
5. Jesus was approved of God and prepared by God for his ministry.
6. Jesus teaching was not his own, but his Fathers

It is in this sense that Jesus Christ descended from heaven (or came from above). It means he was born of God and sent by God. Came from above is the same as saying, "God sent his Son into the world."

Jesus conversation with Nicodemus.

Jesus begins telling Nicodemus that no- one has yet ascended into heaven, then the conversation changes with the word but, i.e., but the Son of Man who descended from heaven will be in heaven with God. Jesus is telling Nicodemus that the Son of Man will be the first man to ascend to heaven. Obviously Jesus is not yet in heaven since he is talking to Nicodemus on earth, Jesus had previously asked Nicodemus, if he can't understand earthly things how will he understand heavenly things? (v12).

Jesus is now speaking heavenly things to Nicodemus, things that not even the apostles understood until Jesus appeared to them after his death and resurrection. Jesus is explaining to Nicodemus that a major future event is about to take place which of course is his death and resurrection to heaven.

We know Jesus is talking about a future event because immediately after telling Nicodemus that no-one has ascended into heaven he tells him that in the same way that Moses was lifted up so will the Son of Man be taken up (v14). Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he will be the first man to ascend to heaven.

Jesus words, "He who descended from heaven even the Son of Man," does not mean that Jesus pre-existed as some type of conscious angelic spirit in heaven and then descended into the womb of Mary to become a foetus. The words, "He who descended from heaven," is a Jewish idiom which means, "He was sent by God," (i.e., he had God's favour and blessing upon him. Jesus was born of God and sent by God it is in this sense he descended from heaven.

Ponder for a Moment.

We understand that Jesus ascended to heaven because we look back in history, but this conversation Jesus is having with Nicodemus would be causing his mind to race in all directions. Imagine his confusion as he listens to the man standing in front of him telling him that he will be the first man to ascend from earth into heaven.

Even the apostles who lived with Jesus for three years did not understand what Jesus meant when he said, "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day" (Matt 17:22-23) until Jesus appeared to them after his death and resurrection.

Jesus words: -

- As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (v14).

Refer to the following words recorded in the book of Numbers: -

- 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 (Num. 21:9).

The story of the serpent on the bronze pole fabulously echoes Christ on the cross. A little after Israel's deliverance from Egypt (called the house of bondage) the people of Israel sinned by speaking against God and against Moses so the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people so that many people of Israel died. So Moses prayed for the people 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."

Moses erected a bronze serpent on the pole and if a serpent bit anyone, they would look at the bronze serpent and live (Num. 21:5-9). How majestic and beautiful is the word of God, especially when we think of the following words of Jesus: -

- When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he (John 8:28)
- Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out and when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself (John 12:31-32).

Bronze is a symbol of judgement and the serpent of course symbolises sin, thus the serpent on the bronze pole is also a wonderful picture of Christ dying for the sin of all mankind, (though he never sinned himself). Just as the people of the Old Testament looked at the serpent on the pole and lived, so it is now, whenever a sinner comes with repentance to the ONE who died for them on the cross their sins are forgiven and they are promised eternal life in everlasting glory.

For further information concerning the firstborn into heaven, see the title: -

- Heaven in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Later in this chapter John says: -

- He (Jesus) who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all (John 3:31).

John words, he who belongs (or comes) from the earth does not mean that he lived in the earth but was born of a human father who was a descendant of Adam. Adam was made of the earth so is referred to as earthy it is in this sense that John is from or belongs to the earth, because he descended from Adam.

In contrast to this Jesus was not born of a human father, but by the creative power of God and the Holy Spirit. It is in this sense Jesus is from above or from heaven and not from below or the earth. Jesus was not born of a human father and therefore is not a descendant of Adam. This is what the words, Jesus is from above mean.

Clearly the words: -

- He that comes from heaven.

Do not mean that Jesus lived with God in heaven as His Son and then descended into Mary's womb for nine months changing from the Son of the Almighty God to become a baby that fed on her breasts. It is in the sense that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God and was, born of God that the writers of the Bible say that he came from heaven and that he came from above. These expressions are Jewish idioms that simply mean Jesus was sent by God and favoured by God.

End.