

John 3:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Analysis

Jesus escalates the challenge: 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?' 'Earthly things' include new birth—spiritual realities illustrated through earthly analogies (wind, birth). If Nicodemus stumbles over illustrations, how will he comprehend direct heavenly revelation? Jesus' teaching progresses from accessible to profound; inability to grasp basics precludes understanding deeper truths.

Historical Context

This principle applies to all spiritual learning—foundational truths must be grasped before advancing to deeper mysteries. Hebrews 5:12-14 addresses similar progression. Nicodemus needed to accept Jesus' basic teaching about spiritual rebirth before grasping deeper Christological truths about incarnation and atonement.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does rejection of basic spiritual truth prevent understanding of deeper mysteries?
2. What 'earthly things' in Jesus' teaching do people struggle to accept today?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	τὰ	ἐπίγεια	εἴπω	ὑμῖν	καὶ	οὐ	πιστεύσετε	πῶς
If	G3588	earthly things	I have told	you	and	not	shall ye believe	how
G1487		G1919	G2036	G5213	G2532	G3756	G4100	G4459
ἐὰν	εἴπω	ὑμῖν	τὰ	ἐπουράνια	πιστεύσετε			
if	I have told	you	G3588	of heavenly things	shall ye believe			
G1437	G2036	G5213		G2032				

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 5:11 (Parallel theme): Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

John 3:8 (Parallel theme): The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

John 3:5 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.