

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to John 3

We are continuing our study through the gospel of John –

For the next couple of weeks, John is going to continue to remind us who Jesus Christ is – however, he is not going to do by telling us about different signs that Jesus Christ did.

He is actually going to do it through a one on one encounter that Jesus Christ had with these individuals.

Nicodemus

The Samaritan Woman at the well

The Man at the Pool of Bethesda.

These three individuals had nothing in common.

The only thing these individuals had in common was that they all have a need.

And we will see through our study how Jesus pointed out their true need – and how He was able to fill that need.

Let's pray...

[Jhn 3:1-21 NKJV] 1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

Our study begins with John introducing us to this individual, Nicodemus.

And John tells us that Nicodemus was a Pharisee –

Now, throughout the gospels, we find over and over again that there was one group Jesus seemed to be always in trouble with; it was this group, the Pharisees.

Whether Jesus was healing someone or in the midst of teaching a group, it seems that the Pharisees were always around the corner waiting to tear into Him.

The Pharisees were 6000 strong –

Many of the rabbis during this time, many of the wealthy and many of the rulers were Pharisees too.

So they had a huge influence on the people.

And they had one self-appointed task – and that was the enforcement of the man-made rules and traditions that were handed down by the rabbis as well as the interpretations of the laws by the scribes.

And they went to great lengths to give the impression that they followed the rules and traditions themselves.

If they inadvertently swallowed a bug – they would put on a show and make themselves gag –

Here is the thing church – regarding the Pharisees.

The majority of them, they didn't really care about the genuine righteousness that was the foundation for the Law of God.

That is not why they did it.

They just wanted to look righteous and gain a reputation among their peers and the people for being religious.

And here's where they ran into trouble with Jesus – His whole aim was to obey the heart & Spirit of the Law.

Jesus knew they were fakes.

He called out their false righteousness. He called out their hypocrisy.

That is why they opposed Him and were always looking for something with which to condemn Him

Now, not all the Pharisees opposed Jesus

Nicodemus, one of the leaders among the Pharisees – He was part of the Sanhedrin.

He had been careful to follow the rules and traditions – not because he wanted to give the impression that he was self-righteous or religious.

He desired a genuine relationship with God.

– but being a Pharisee (being religious) had left him empty and longing for more.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

I had you make a note that Nicodemus came to inquire of Jesus by night.

He comes with some questions for Jesus – there are things in his heart.

He heard what had happened at the wedding in Cana, he heard about what Jesus had done and what He had said as He cleansed the temple.

And he comes to the conclusion that this man has been sent from God.

Now, why did Nicodemus come to Jesus by night?

Some people think that he didn't want others to know what he was doing.

Maybe he was a little timid.

And they conclude that he did this in secrecy.

And it may or may not have been the reason for him doing so.

He could have also come by night because it was cooler at night or because he was busy doing his duties as a Pharisee – remember, this is happening during Passover.

I believe that the important thing here in verse two is that Nicodemus came to Jesus.

Because in Nicodemus coming to Jesus, we learn that we can bring any of our questions before God.

God is not going to be offended by our questions

He is not going to laugh at our question

He is not going to tell us to go away.

Mark this down – Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD,

God invites us to come to Him with our questions

Why wouldn't we?

He is the God of infinite wisdom; He is the God of infinite love, infinite grace and infinite power.

God has an answer for you and me

He has answer for any issue that is heavy in our hearts

He has an answer for that question or concern that is stirring around in our mind.

But first we have to come to Him.

Like Nicodemus.

I also had you make a note that Nicodemus addresses Jesus as a teacher.

And the reason is because one of the things that the Holy Spirit inspired John as he was writing his gospel was to point out Jesus as the Teacher.

Check this out,

Of the 90 times that Jesus was addressed directly in the gospels, 60 times or 2/3 of the time, He was addressed as Teacher or Rabbi – Rabbi means teacher.

The multitudes that followed Him addressed Him as teacher

His disciples addressed Him as Teacher

Jesus even referred to Himself as Teacher –

[Jhn 13:13 NKJV] 13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for [so] I am.

And the reason that this is important is because it is a reminder that it was by His teaching that He was making the Father known.

It wasn't by the signs He was doing – it was by His words, by His words, by the words that had been given Him to speak by the Father.

That is why after the Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount –

[Mat 7:28-29 NKJV] 28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

And even Jesus when He addresses His own ministry says -

[Jhn 5:24 NKJV] 24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

So, Nicodemus comes to inquire, he addresses Jesus as teacher and he knows Jesus was sent by God, he knows there is an intimate relationship between them and he wants the same.

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

In our study last week, at the end of our study, we saw that many believed in His name after seeing the signs which Jesus did.

But then we saw that Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men,

He knew what was in their heart.

He knew their true passion.

Jesus knew the heart of Nicodemus

This man wants to know God.

This man wants to be with God.

He's lived a life as a Pharisee, trying to be pleasing to God by keeping the Law.

So Jesus cuts to the chase –

Now, for the Jewish believer - The Kingdom of God was the rule of God over the Earth every good Jew was looking forward to.

It was the thought of the Messiah coming and setting up His kingdom where He would reign.

Jesus drops a bomb on Nicodemus and says – “Nick, the Kingdom of God doesn’t arrive with the Messiah coming to Earth in Heavenly glory as was the expectation of the day.

The Kingdom isn’t something that descends out of the skies onto Earth, it’s something we can enter into right now by being born again

The word for again is the Greek word for above.

In order to see the kingdom of God, one must be born from above – one must be born of God.

It speaks of regeneration / spiritual rebirth

[Tit 3:4-5 NKJV] 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the **washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,**

To experience this regeneration / spiritual rebirth, one must be completely renewed through God's power.

Think of what was going on through Nicodemus' mind as he heard these words –

Up to now, he thought that by adhering to all these do' and don'ts – he thought he was on his way.

So he is a little confused about what he just heard.

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

Nicodemus isn't being sarcastic here in verse 4 –

He is being sincere in his attempt to understand what Jesus has just told him.

He is a smart individual – he understands the concept of regeneration – he just doesn't grasp how it will be done – in fact, he sees it as impossible.

“There is no way we can start all over?”

Now, I find it interesting that Nicodemus asked how can a man be born again and not why should a man be born again –

And the reason is that even as he sincerely attempted to adhere to the law – I believe deep down inside, Nicodemus understood that he was still a sinner.

He knew there were things in his life that he would have done differently if he had a fresh start.

And Jesus attempts to explain it by expanding on what he said in verse 3.

unless one is born of water and the Spirit

Now, there are many interpretations to what “born of water” here means.

Now - there are obvious wrong ones

There are those who interpret the phrase “born of water” to refer to “water baptism” – they are the ones that will say that water baptism is a requirement for salvation.

The problem is that the verse is completely taken out of context.

Some people interpret this phrase to mean physical birth – so we have a physical birth (since we all come forth from a sack of water) and then we have a spiritual birth.

Other people interpret “born of water” to mean born again by the Word of God (Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:26, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,)

“born of water” to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 7 – describes the living water that flows from the heart of the believers)

6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Once again, Jesus attempts to explain the difference between the two births –

Turn with me to Romans 5

[Rom 8:5-8 NKJV] 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those [who live] according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded [is] death, but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The word that is used here for flesh and carnal – it is the same word.

And sometimes in our walk as believers, we can sometimes allow these fleshy things to come back in our life.

When a person has only been born of the flesh – when they have only gone through the first birth, they are not going to be able to do anything that is pleasing to God.

That is the reason for the regeneration – that is the reason for the second birth.

This is what Jesus is telling Nicodemus.

You want to draw closer to God, you want an intimate relationship with Him, you need to be born of the Spirit.

You need the second birth.

And the difference in the second birth is that it's not something that happens to the outside of you, it's something that happens to the inside of you.

It's not what you do to yourself; it's what the Holy Spirit does for you.

And here in verse 8, Jesus gives Nicodemus an illustration of the work of the Holy Spirit in making us new.

8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus, you can't see the wind, but you see its influence & effect on what it touches.

The leaves & branches of the trees move. You can hear it as it passes by

You can see it blowing your friend's hair, well, in most cases anyway

This new birth Jesus is speaking about is the same way; it's a work of the Spirit.

We can't see the Spirit Himself, but we can see & hear His influence in the lives of those He causes to be born again.

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you **the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? 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. 12 "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**

Nicodemus is having a hard time comprehending what Jesus has been telling.

And Jesus responds here with a well-deserved rebuke.

Nicodemus, you are **the teacher** of Israel

He was supposed to be one of the premier teachers of that time.

Jesus didn't say he was "a" teacher; he was "the" teacher of Israel.

And what Jesus tells him is that in his pursuit of religion – he lost sight of the spiritual realm altogether.

Religion had become so much a thing of rituals & regulation there was nothing of faith left.

His pursuit of a relationship with God had been hijacked by dead religion

That is why he was clueless when Jesus spoke to him about spiritual things.

As the teacher of Israel, as a Pharisee – an expert in the Law, he should have known that the Old Testament had plenty to say about sin and the need for rebirth.

Turn with me to Ezekiel 36 -

[Eze 36:24-28 NKJV] 24 "For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do [them]. 28 "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

In Deut (in the Torah) one of the books that every Jewish male was supposed to memorize by the age of 10, it clearly speaks of regeneration

(30:6)

“And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

What often happens to a person who is very "religious", is that they know lots of stuff, they know what's good for others, but they don't realize what they themselves need to know and do.

That is what is happening to Nicodemus.

You see, Jesus knew Nicodemus' real problem wasn't an inability to understand; it was an unwillingness to.

All his life Nicodemus had trusted in his own goodness, his own performance of the rules to earn Him a place with God.

Jesus turned that whole idea on its head & told him he needed to start over.

13 "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, [that is], the Son of Man who is in heaven. 14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Numbers 21, we have the account how the camp of Israel was invaded by poisonous snakes.

Whoever was bitten died, unless they looked up at the image of a bronze snake Moses erected in the center of the camp.

This foreshadowed Christ Who was made sin for us on the cross.

We've all been bitten by the Fall & are dying of the spiritually fatal poison of sin.

Salvation comes, not for any work we do but the Work Jesus has already done.

All we need to do is look to Him & we're saved!

So, once again Jesus provides Nicodemus with an illustration he should have been very familiar with –

And He says, "Nicodemus, look to Me and you will be born again, you will be saved"

I was reading an article on the life of George Whitefield

At 16 he became deeply convicted of his sin.

He tried everything to become acceptable to God. He wrote, "I fasted for 36 hours twice a week. I prayed formal prayers several time a day and almost starved myself to death during Lent, but only felt more miserable. Then by God's grace I met Charles Wesley, who put a book in my hand that showed me from the Scriptures that I must be 'born again' or be eternally lost."

Finally, Whitefield understood that he had to trust in Jesus Christ.

He believed and was both forgiven and changed. After he became a preacher, he spoke at least a thousand times on the subject, "You must be born again."

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because he was seeking information.

But after his encounter with Jesus, he realized that what he really needed was transformation.

A transformation that only Jesus can provide.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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