

JESUS' CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS

BIBLE TEXT: John 3:1-21; 7:45-53: 19:39, 40.

LESSON 29 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

John 3:1-21;

- ¹ There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:
- ² The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
- ³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- ⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?
- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- ⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.
- ⁸ 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.
- ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?
- ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?
- ¹¹ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and

NOTES:

Nicodemus' Question

The first thing Nicodemus said to Jesus was, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." That was an unusual statement to come from a Pharisee. The Pharisees were the religious people of Christ's day, but they had long before lost the Spirit of God, and were worshiping God only in forms and ceremonies. When Jesus came they refused to accept Him as the divine Son of God, and always tried to find fault with Him, especially in matters pertaining to the Law.

We can see that Nicodemus, who was one of the Pharisees, was very different from the rest of them. He admitted that God had sent Jesus, and he believed in His miracles -- which is more than many church-people do today.

Nicodemus was a leader in the Jewish religion, and Jesus seemed surprised when he did not know what it meant to be born again. Their church had drifted so far from God that they did not even know what it meant to have a change of heart.

The New Birth

Many people today are in the same condition that Nicodemus was in. People do not seem to know what you mean when you talk about getting saved. They think that when they join a church and say they believe in Jesus, that is all, they need to do. Many ministers do not preach that men must be sorry for their sins and forsake them, and must pray until Jesus forgives them. Many a person has been disappointed when he joined a church, expecting his life to be different, and then finding he had to keep on struggling against the same sins he had before. There had been no change.

Perhaps Nicodemus had also been disappointed, for he was seeking the truth. But the things Jesus told him about being born again were strange to him. The new birth is a great miracle, and Jesus explained it to him very carefully. He told him that it was not in the natural -- an old man could not be born again as a baby -- but it was in the spiritual; the change came in the heart of a man. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Effects of the Spirit

Jesus told Nicodemus that though he could not see the transformation take place, the results would be just as plain as the effects of the wind blowing on a tree. We can see the leaves clattering; and if there is a storm we may even see the tree uprooted or torn to pieces, but we never see the wind. We can feel the gentle breeze blow on our faces; we can see the clouds scuttle across the sky, driven by the wind; we can see huge waves roll high in the sea; but we never see the wind that causes them to move. We do not expect to -- yet no one doubts that there is a wind just because he does not see it.

The effects of salvation are just as real. When we see a helpless drunkard, who has lost everything because of his life of sin, come to God in repentance, and from that time on never get drunk again but become a good citizen who earns an honest living, we know he has been born again. We did not see the Spirit of God come in, or the devil go out, but we can certainly see the change.

testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

¹² If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

¹³ And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which 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 whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁶ ¶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

¹⁸ ¶ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

²⁰ For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

²¹ But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

John 7:45-53:

⁴⁵ ¶ Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

It may be that someone has a bad temper. He gets angry when he cannot have his way. After he is saved his friends notice that he does not get angry any more, and he is not quarrelsome. That is one of the results of the new birth, just as real as the tree being uprooted by the wind.

When a sinner comes to Jesus with godly sorrow for his sins, and asks forgiveness and Jesus forgives him, he is born again. The sinful desires are gone, and God gives him power to go and sin no more. Whenever Jesus gives us a command, He gives us power to do it. When He healed the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda, He told him to take up his bed and walk. In the Scriptures we read that the man did take up his bed and walk; so Christ had supplied the needed power. Later Jesus met him in the Temple, and told him to sin no more lest a worse thing come upon him. We see that Jesus expected him to obey that command, also.

The things the Lord told Nicodemus must have made a great impression on him; because, later, when the chief priests and Pharisees were trying to capture Jesus to kill Him, Nicodemus came to His defence by saying, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" The priests ridiculed him; but he did not care, because he knew Jesus was right, and he wanted to see justice done. After the crucifixion it was this same Nicodemus who brought myrrh and aloes, and helped to tenderly wrap the body of Jesus in linen clothes with the spices (John 19: 39, 40).

Refused Light

The Jews were always making a controversy about little things, and did not seem to realise they were committing great sins themselves. Jesus included them when He said that light had come into the world, but because their deeds were evil they preferred the darkness. There are none so blind as those who do not want to see. Jesus was the Light of the world, glowing in all His spiritual beauty before them; but because their deeds were evil they hated Him.

In Jeremiah's day God spoke of the terrible sins that were being committed in the land, and said, "And my people love to have it so." What a terrible thought it is that people profess to be followers of Jesus and yet love their sins! Think of the terrible judgments that will come upon the people for whom God has done so much, and who still continue in their sins and "love to have it so"!

"So Loved the World"

Everyone who knows anything about the Bible at all can quote John 3:16. There is enough of God's Word in that verse to save the whole world if men would act upon it.

"For God so loved the world. . . ." Do you ever stop to think how much God loved us? We love people who love us, but could we love our enemies as God did? When the Children of Israel, God's chosen people, turned their backs on Him and committed great transgressions, He said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3).

God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us who were evil; and Jesus loved us enough to leave His beautiful Home in Heaven where all the angels praised Him, to come to earth and live among wicked men who hated Him. He knew, too, that He would have to die a cruel death on the Cross to atone for the sins of mankind. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Jesus told His disciples at one time, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But we were the enemies of God, sinners who did not obey His commandments, when Christ came to die for us. Oh, such wonderful love!

In John's first Epistle he tells us more of the love of God: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that

⁴⁶ The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

⁴⁷ Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

⁴⁹ But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

⁵⁰ Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

⁵¹ Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

⁵² They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

⁵³ And every man went unto his own house.

John 19:39, 40.

³⁹ And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

⁴⁰ Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

we should be called the sons of God" (I John 3:1). When we become the sons of God, we are joint-heirs with Christ to eternal glory (**Romans 8:17**; ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together).

When we are saved God puts His love in us. In Galatians 5:22, 23, we read of the fruits of the Spirit, and love is the first one mentioned. Because that love is in us we can be lights in the world, showing forth that love of God. All the fruits of the Spirit are important if we want to shine for Jesus: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The man, woman, or child who is bearing all these fruits is living a beautiful Christian life, and Jesus is "not ashamed to call them brethren."

QUESTIONS

1. Did Jesus thoroughly explain to Nicodemus the meaning of the new birth?
2. What part did Nicodemus have in the burial of Christ?
3. What must we do in order to be eligible for Heaven?
4. Name some of the "fruits" of the life of one who is born again.
5. Look up the account of the serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness.