

The Gospel of John – A New Birth

Today we're going to continue this series by looking at John 3:1-21. This scripture says:

- (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 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.

This is indeed a rather large Scripture to cover, but I think it's important that we look at it all together. First of all let's look at this man Nicodemus. Nicodemus was like a lot of people today. He was curious about what Jesus was teaching, and yet he was afraid because he knew the teachings of Jesus were contrary to his culture. He wanted salvation, but he wanted to obtain it secretly. How many people today want to worship Jesus in secret? It didn't work for Nicodemus – he had to openly confess Christ. In John 7:50-51 we find him openly defending Christ before the Sanhedrin, and then in John 19:39 we find that he brought myrrh and aloes to the burial of Jesus. In Matthew 10:32-33 we find that confession before men is essential to salvation. Our hearts cannot be right to receive Christ as Savior if we're not willing to openly profess Christianity.

Now this isn't saying that someone can't be saved and then not tell about it for a while. It is, after all, the condition of the heart at the time of salvation that matters. Sometimes what happens between the point of salvation and the time that opportunity arises to confess that salvation causes people to not tell others. It appears that Nicodemus wasn't open about his following of Christ until he defended Christ in the Sanhedrin. He likely missed out, though, and many of the benefits of following Christ. You see, I believe that most who have delayed confession of salvation will tell you that they didn't receive the full joy of salvation until confessing it. It is with the heart that man believes, but with the mouth that confession is made to salvation.

Jesus discussion with Nicodemus went right to the heart of the matter. You cannot enter into the kingdom of God as the creature that you are. You must be born again. This was a concept which was hard to grasp, and one that is often misunderstood today. Let's look at few things here. First of all in Matthew 25:31-46 we find Jesus representing judgment as a shepherd separating his sheep from his goats. The sheep enter into the kingdom and the goats are cast out.

There's a problem here, then. If you're a goat how do you enter into the kingdom of heaven? The answer is you can't unless you can become something that you're not. You see, we are all sinners by birthright. We are all heirs to the death of Adam. We are all goats by birth. In order to enter into the kingdom we must be born again – a new birth that makes us a sheep. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that when we're saved we're no longer the same creature. We're no longer the goat that we once were. We've now been made able to enter the kingdom through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Verse 5 is one that I find often misused in churches today. You see, verse 5 has to be taken together with verse 6 in order to understand what it's saying. If you just read verse 6 you might get the idea that the new birth is accomplished through water and Spirit. This would seem to be in disagreement with Ephesians 2:8-9 which tells us that salvation does not come of works (anything that man can do). Verse 6 brings it into complete agreement though, explaining that verse 5 is talking about 2 births. The first birth is the watery, natural birth. Every human being who has ever walked the face of the earth has that birth. It is the second birth, then, that sets Christians apart. It is the Spirit.

Just as Nicodemus did, though, many people ask today how these things can be. You see, we have a hard time understanding the Spiritual because we're looking from the natural. It's hard to understand an infinite God when we're living in a finite world. It's hard to understand a righteous God when we're living in a fallen world. It's hard not to ask questions. Jesus didn't seem to mind the questions, though, as long as they were leading toward salvation. He was patient, even while telling Nicodemus that he should have known these things already.

It is when we can get our mind off of the earthly things that we can begin to see things through God's eyes. It is then that the gospel becomes relevant to us. Before that point it's just a book with good stories, and perhaps good moral teaching.

The gospel in miniature really is that. Jesus plainly told Nicodemus that the way of salvation is through faith in him. You cannot get to heaven any way other than through Jesus Christ.

The gospel in miniature doesn't really end with John 3:16 though. Jesus continues his discussion by pointing out that there is hope for the condemned – faith in him removes condemnation. Faith in him brings you out of the darkness and into the light. We're living in a dark world today, but Jesus came to bring light. Jesus didn't come to condemn you – He wants to save you. If you've never received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior I encourage you to contact me at john@intotheword.org. I'll be glad to discuss the plan of salvation with you in detail.

Also, don't forget that you can follow us on Facebook at [Into the Word Ministries](#). I would love for you to become a Facebook Fan.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich