

What Must I Do to be Saved?

Before getting into the answer to the question posed in the title to this lesson I would like to apologize once again for there being so much time between lessons. It seems that Satan has been hindering on every hand, but he will not prevail. We had some server problems with the website that we finally got worked out. Then I was sick and unable to do the lesson.

Now with that said let's get on to the lesson. This is a topic that I'm sure is discussed often, and I know that there are many different answers out there. I would like for us to look and see what the Scriptures have to say about this. Let's first look at John 3:1-21, which 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.

Now it appears that Nicodemus was afraid to be blunt in asking Jesus what he must do to be saved, but Jesus knew the intent of his heart. In order to understand this we need to understand what it means to be saved. To be saved implies that there's something to be saved from. In Romans 6:23 we're told that the wages of sin is death, and in 1 Corinthians 15:22 we're told that all die in Adam. You see, when God made man in the beginning he made us to live forever. God wanted us to love him and worship him of our own accord so he laid down one rule. Man chose to disobey God, so death came upon man. God, though, had set aside Jesus Christ to die on the cross so that we might be saved from this fate. You see, death in this sense is not the passing of the body from this life to the next. Death is entry into eternal damnation in a place called Hell. We studied about this when we were studying Revelation 20. This, then, is what we're saved from.

So from Jesus' response to Nicodemus we see that the thought on his heart was "What must I do to be saved?" It might also be phrased as, "What must I do to go to Heaven?" Jesus answer was simple. You must be born again.

Sometimes people throw around this answer as if everyone ought to understand it. This is not the case. Even Nicodemus needed for this to be explained, and I think that the Church would do well to follow Jesus example. We need to explain to people what it means to be born again instead of just relying on a catchy phrase.

In verse 5 Jesus tells us about two different births. The first birth is a birth of water. Now there are many who say that this represents water baptism, and thus water baptism is required for salvation. I think, though, that we cannot read this verse out of context with the next. You see, Jesus explains this verse in verse 6 when he talks once again about two births, a fleshly birth and a Spiritual birth. You see, the natural, fleshly birth is the first birth, the birth of water. Everyone who has ever entered into this world has undergone this birth. The second birth is then what is required for salvation. This is the one we're talking about when we say, "Ye must be born again."

But how do we obtain this second birth? Jesus went on to give an answer to this question in the often quoted John 3:16. Salvation is obtained by believing on Jesus Christ. This is reaffirmed many times over through the Scriptures. In Acts 16:31 Paul told the jailor at Philippi that if he would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ he would be saved. Now I don't think that Paul would have lied to the jailor, so I think that this is all that is required for salvation. In Ephesians 2:8-10 Paul tells us that we are saved by grace through faith, and that it's not of ourselves. He tells us that it is not of works so that we would not boast, but that we are created to do good works in Christ Jesus.

But can it really be that simple? Yes, it can. The problem is that we must be ready to believe, and there's a process that gets us there. First of all a person must be convinced that they are a sinner. Without this understanding it is impossible to be saved. After all, how can a person believe if he doesn't understand that there is a reason to believe?

In coming to this understanding a call is sent out from God. This call is often referred to as conviction and is brought about by the Holy Ghost (John 16:8-12). Often the instrument of the Holy Ghost in bringing about conviction is the preached Word (Romans 10:14).

Following this understanding that we are a sinner comes repentance. To repent simply means that our desire is to turn from our wicked ways, not to do those things again. We want to change but recognize that we can't do it on our own. It requires humility. Jesus told a parable of two men who went to the temple to pray. The one who went away justified was the one who went with the humble, repentant heart. You can find this parable in Luke 18:9-14.

Next there comes the simple task of asking. In Romans 10:9-10 we're told that confession with the mouth goes hand in hand with believing for salvation. You can't truly believe without confessing it with your mouth.

Finally, I want to talk for just a moment about this belief. It is not enough to just intellectually say, "Lord Jesus come into my heart, I believe in you" or some such prayer. True saving faith comes from the heart. The exact words don't really matter.

Today it is my hope that you have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. If not I pray that you will come to that point that you put your faith completely in the finished work on the cross at Calvary. If you have any questions about salvation please feel free to contact me. If you've been saved after reading this lesson please let me know. I would love to share in your rejoicing and answer any questions you might have.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich