

"Jesus and Nicodemus"

John 3:1-21

Part 2

Introduction: Last week in our study of John we started into John 3, and we were listening to a conversation between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. He was a very religious man, but he was not saved. He was focused upon the external and by that, I mean he was consumed with keeping the hundreds of commandments of the scribes. To be more detailed, they had 613 commandments which they professed to follow. The Pharisees were very legalistic. They followed the Law as well as their own formulated commandments thinking that it was the way of salvation, but the Law was never given to save anyone.

Romans 3:19-22

¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets:

²² Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

The Law was given to reveal to man his true sinful condition, to show him that he was far short of God's requirement for righteousness.

The commandments that were developed by the scribes started out as a way to prevent another Babylonian Captivity. The Jews went into captivity because of sin and so the religious leaders developed all of these rules and regulations to prevent sin. It was like building a fence to keep people away from that which would bring another captivity. Nicodemus was deep into following that which the scribes had developed. When he came to Jesus he came seeking. The "religion" had left him empty and longing for something to bring lasting satisfaction. He came by night and he acknowledged the miracles that Jesus had done at Jerusalem.

Notice John 3:1-3

Nicodemus was consumed with the external and Jesus went straight to the point and told him he needed to be born again. Last week I had explained that the need to be born again is because when we were born physically, we were born into sin. We are born spiritually dead which means we are born separated from God.

Ephesians 2:1,5

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

⁵ *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

From John 3:3 we learn that people were saved in the Old Testament by being born again just as we are today. The difference is that we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, but they were not. The Holy Spirit was still at work to bring them to salvation, but He did not indwell them as He does us today. Before we move on, I wanted to back this up with Scripture.

Notice John 14:16-17

Here in the Old Testament the Spirit dwelled WITH them but there was a time coming when He would dwell IN them. This indwelling came on the Day of Pentecost when the church began.

Acts 2:1-4

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

² *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*

³ *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*

⁴ *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

➤ **The New Birth**

➤ **Part 1**

Notice John 3:4

Nicodemus does not comprehend what Jesus is saying, and this should not be a surprise.

1 Corinthians 2:13-14

¹³ Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Getting back to the verse we need to see that Jesus is saying that the way to the Kingdom is not obtained through human effort.

Notice John 3:5

Here in this verse the question comes up, "What does Jesus mean when He says that a person must be born of water? We understand the Spirit, but what is the water referring to? Let us first of all understand that we cannot know for sure. Whatever it refers to it seems it was something that Nicodemus understood. Some say it is a reference to the Holy Spirit, and the verse could be translated, "**Except a man be born of water *EVEN* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**" Those who teach this point back to Isaiah.

Isaiah 44:3

³ For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Isaiah 55:1

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Then there are others who teach that the water here is symbolic of the Word of God.

Ephesians 5:25-26

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Then they connect this with Romans 10.

Romans 10:17

¹⁷ *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

There are others who teach that the water refers to baptism, and they believe that a person MUST be baptized to be saved. We know this is not correct because this teaching would contradict many other Scriptures.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

1 Corinthians 1:14-17

¹⁴ *I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;*

¹⁵ *Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.*

¹⁶ *And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.*

¹⁷ *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*

John 4:1-2

When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

² *(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)*

Paul was not sent to baptize and Jesus did not baptize, so to teach that baptism is required for salvation requires a person to do spiritual gymnastics to harmonize these Truths. Then there is the thief on the cross who was not baptized.

Luke 23:42-43

⁴² And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

⁴³ And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Let me give you one more thought to consider. Possibly Jesus was pointing to Genesis 1 and the creation.

Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

When the miracle of creation happened the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters and this brought about the creation of the world. Possibly Jesus was pointing Nicodemus back to this and stating that man needs the Holy Spirit to bring about a miracle within him by causing a new creation/new birth.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature(creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Getting back to the John, we cannot be sure what Jesus meant by the water. We do know it was not baptism. We also know that the new birth comes by the Holy Spirit.

Notice John 3:5-6

Here in verse 6 Jesus is speaking of that which Nicodemus would have understood clearly. Jesus speaks to take Nicodemus back to creation.

Genesis 1:24-25

²⁴ And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

²⁵ And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Each animal produces after his kind. Deer beget deer, lions beget lions, cats beget cats and the list goes on and on. In the same way the flesh can only beget flesh. The new birth is a spiritual birth and for that reason there is no way that man has the ability to bring about the new birth. If we were left to ourselves there would be absolutely no hope for us at all. We have no ability to produce anything spiritual. I have heard people make statements about certain celebrities and they say that they are so spiritual, but they are not saved. The truth is they are spiritually dead. They have no spiritual life, and they can produce nothing that is spiritual. The flesh can only beget flesh and nothing else.

Notice John 3:6 again.

It is the Spirit that brings about the new birth.

Job 14:4

⁴ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

A spiritual birth takes place when a person trusts in the Lord Jesus. When a person is born again through the Spirit, he receives a new nature and is made fit for the kingdom of God. This can only happen by grace through faith. Our responsibility is to place our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We could never do any work that would bring about a spiritual birth.

Conclusion:

Notice John 3:7

Let us not miss the Word, "MUST" because this shows us that the new birth is a necessity for a person to be saved. This is not an option. It is required to be saved from the penalty of sin and to have a relationship with Jesus and the Father. There is no other way. Religion will not do it, church membership will not do it, good works will not do it, we **MUST** be born again.

2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?