

Week 7

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

John 3

We always keep in our minds the book as a whole and John's purpose for his gospel as stated in John 20:30-31. "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His Name." From all the signs Jesus did, John chose certain signs or miracles for his record, which would cause us to believe in Jesus and trust Him for eternal life.

According to VINES BIBLE DICTIONARY a sign is a mark of authority. We have discussed the Jewish leaders' constant demand for a sign from Jesus, and later they wanted signs from the Apostles and Paul. This means they wanted signs of an outward Messianic Kingdom of earthly triumph and material blessing of the chosen people. Remember, they believed the Messiah would be setting up an earthly kingdom and that is what they wanted. Jesus was not rich, powerful or anything like they expected. Why should we note this? Because the Jewish leaders did not know all God had said regarding the Messiah in the scriptures. They spent their time studying commentaries and other writings from sages and people they considered wise. They missed their Messiah because they did not know God's word.

The events of Chapter 3 occur in time, soon after Chapter 2, Jesus apparently being still in Jerusalem after the Passover. Each of the events of the next segments of the Gospel of John revolve around Jesus and one other person. It is instructive to note how He dealt with each one with their different backgrounds.

Let's listen in as Jesus shows the disciples and us how to be fishers of men. Nicodemus is the first of a series of individual encounters between Jesus and one other person. Each occurrence is a real encounter with a real person and shows all the different types of people Jesus reached in His ministry.

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

Nicodemus was a religious, and no doubt in his own mind, a very righteous person. He was keeping all the laws, rules and traditions of the Jews. He was a man of high status in the leadership in the Temple. Nicodemus was a Pharisee-the most strict and conservative sect of the time. The Jewish religious leaders were divided into several groups the 2 most prominent were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees separated themselves from anything non-Jewish and followed Old Testament laws. The Sadducees were the elite priestly class who freely mixed political agenda with religious; they were the authority and had the power. The Sadducees did not believe in life after death.

In addition to being a Pharisee, Nicodemus was also a member of the Jewish ruling council. Although the Romans controlled Israel politically, the Jews were given some authority over religious and minor civil disputes. The Jewish ruling body was the council, sometimes called the Sanhedrin, made up of 71 of Israel's leaders. So Nicodemus was a very prominent figure in Israel, as Jesus said "a teacher of Israel".

Yet he had a very big problem; he did not fully believe all this tradition and rule keeping would gain eternal life. Jesus knew what was in man", He knows me better than I know myself, I had better listen when He talks to me, I can learn a lot.

V2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs you do unless God is with him.

Nicodemus came at night, John again gives a time reference. We don't know why this is significant but we can guess that this "ruler of the Jews" did not want to be seen coming to this itinerate teacher.

What motivated Nicodemus to visit Jesus? He tells us himself, the signs got his attention; listen again to what he said, "we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do, unless God is with Him". Friends, this is the reason for

the “signs”, to get the attention of the people. They showed people that Jesus was no ordinary person; He was someone to reckon with, to listen to. Also note that Nicodemus stated that Jesus was a teacher, Jesus will soon correct that, He did not come as a teacher although He did teach, He came as a Savior.

V3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Jesus responded to the question in Nicodemus’ heart, not the unasked question, by saying that a great change had to take place for salvation, not following rules and traditions but a new birth. How many people did Jesus say would see the kingdom of God without new birth? If you said none, you are correct.

What needs to happen then is not something small; it is not a reformation, a teaching, a moral change, or an alteration of lifestyle. It is a thorough change of heart, will and character. It is a new creation. It is passing from death to life. It is the calling into existence of a new creature, with a new nature, new habits, new desires, and new hope. All this is implied when Jesus said, “you must be born again”.

Let me ask you now. Who is the first person Who said “you must be born again”. Not some slick TV evangelist, no, it was our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Are there any other options for obtaining eternal life? There are no other options.

V4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”

Nicodemus was not alone when he let Jesus know he was totally clueless about being born again. Maybe you don’t know what it means either. Do you want to see the kingdom of God? Please listen carefully and remember that Jesus is talking to a very religious, rule keeping, man. Does this describe you? Have you been following rules and traditions in order to try to pile up enough good works to offset your sins? How do you know how much is enough to balance your good and your bad?

Or have you blown it big time in life? Bad choices, bad behavior, nothing has gone right?

We are all in the same boat Romans 3:23 “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”-take some time to look at that verse. If you insist you are not “that bad”, ask God to let you know if the word “all” includes you. It includes me, for sure. Sin is not something you do, sin is something we are, “I will do it my way”.

This great change, this “new birth” is something we cannot give ourselves. Just like we cannot give ourselves birth into this life; no man is the author of his own existence, and no man can give eternal life to his own soul. A creative power from above must be put into motion, that same power that created the world. Man can do many things, he cannot give life, it is the prerogative of God. Physical life and spiritual life, all come from God’s Hand.

This great change also is something required to go to heaven, or to see the kingdom of God. Jesus’ words on this point are exact, “unless one is born again he can not see or enter the Kingdom of God. No religion, rank, money, rule keeping or education can get us into heaven. Include in that list, no good works, how do I know; look at Isaiah 64:6 All my righteous deeds are as a filthy garments and all of us wither like the leaf.

Now, I ask you, do you know anything about this mighty change that Jesus describes, has it happened to you? Have you been born again? Can any marks of the new birth be seen in your life, your conversation, and your habits? Can you tell a day or a time when your life changed?

Another description of Being Born Again is that a complete change of heart and character is produced in a person by the Holy Spirit of God, when he repents, believes on Christ and becomes a true Christian. It is a change, which is frequently spoken of or described in the bible; Ezekiel 11:19 and 26 “taking away the stony heart and giving a heart of flesh” “giving a new heart, and putting within a new spirit Acts 3:19 it is called repentance and conversion

Romans 6:13 calls it “being alive from the dead”

Colossians 3:9,10 calls it “putting off the old man and putting on the new.

I assure you if you come to Him with a sincere heart, acknowledge your sin, ask forgiveness, ask Him to rule your life; He will hear, He will answer.

When I talk about confessing your sin, what do I mean? I am not talking about specific, individual acts of bad behavior, although there is room to confess that too, I am referring to yours (and mine) willful insistence on doing it my way, thinking I can earn my way to heaven, and all the pride and self will that goes with it. This is what we all do, no one really tries to please God, we want to please ourselves. That is what needs to change.

This is the initial confession, Jesus said after you are cleansed, then we need to wash our feet daily-that is confess when we fall short of living the life that is pleasing to God.

Wanting to please Him rather than yourself is a good indication that you have been born again.

How can a man be born when he is old? Oswald Chambers said “Only when he is willing to die to everything in his life, including his rights, his own virtues and his religion and becomes willing to receive into himself a new life that he has never before experienced”.