

Week 6

Cleansing the Temple

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. As we have said John chose certain signs or miracles which would cause us to believe in Jesus and trust Him for eternal life.

The word sign can be used to mean warning but in the New Testament, for our study, it is used to mean; a token or sign of divine authority and power.

Last time we talked about the Jewish leaders constant demand for a sign from Jesus, but also they later wanted signs from the Apostles and Paul. This means they wanted signs of an outward proof of a Messianic Kingdom of earthly triumph and material blessing of the chosen people. Remember, most believed the Messiah would be setting up an earthly kingdom and they wanted evidence that Jesus was the one since He did not meet any of the rulers' criteria. He was not rich, powerful or anything like they expected.

Why should we note this? Because most Jewish leaders had forgotten all God had said in the scriptures regarding their the Messiah. They spent their time studying commentaries and other writings from sages and people they considered wise. They missed their Messiah because they did not value God's word nor spend time studying it.

John 3:1

As He teaches how to "be fishers of men" Jesus first encounter is with Nicodemas; 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. Nicodemas was a Pharisee-the most strict and conservative Yet he had a big problem, he was not sure whether all this rule keeping was gaining him eternal life. He evidently didn't know this was his big question because he started out talking to Jesus on a

totally different subject, but Jesus always sees what is inside a person.

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 are a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that You do, unless God is with Him”. Friends, this is the reason for the “signs”. They showed people that Jesus was no ordinary person; He was someone to reckon with, to listen to.

V3 Jesus said “you must be born again” and Nicodemus had no idea what Jesus meant by this. He responded by saying “how can this be?”

Jesus meant that Nicodemus had to become 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. It is comparable to the birth of a baby. All this is implied when Jesus said, “you must be born again”.

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, goods 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?

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.

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 life to his own soul. A 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, both come from God's Hand.

How is this creative power put into motion to cause me to be born again? I just have to ask for it.

This new birth 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 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.

V5-8 Jesus knew He had made a perplexing statement when He said "you must be born again". Nicodemus did not understand and perhaps you don't understand either. Listen to the explanation Jesus graciously gave as He uses illustrations from nature which we do understand.

New birth is like the wind blowing, you can't see it but you can certain see the effects of it.

A true definition of being "Born Again" means that a complete change of heart and character is produced in a man by the Holy Spirit of God, when he repents, believes on Christ. It is a change, which is frequently spoken of 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.

Now, I ask you, do you know anything about this mighty change, which 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, your habits? Can you tell a day or a time when your life changed?

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 your (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. 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".

You can know for certain you are headed home to heaven when you die, you don't have to wonder. Why would a good and loving God leave this to chance? He makes it very plain in His word and you can have the sure and certain hope of eternal life.

We are going to talk more about this next time.