

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most basic truths of the Christian faith involves "salvation" and being "born again." Sometimes one uses these terms without fully understanding their meaning. Today we will study a passage that helps us understand better.

II. BIBLE READING

John 3:1-18 ESV Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. (2) This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, 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." (3) Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (4) Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (5) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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) Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (8) The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (9) Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" (10) Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? (11) Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. (12) If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (13) No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. (14) And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, (15) that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (16) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (18) Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

III. BACKGROUND

It was during the night when Nicodemus visited Jesus. One of the possible reasons was that he was a Pharisee and a Pharisee did not have a good relationship with Jesus because they thought that Jesus was not the Son of God. It was night when he visited Jesus because of the possible persecution of his fellow Pharisees to him.

Another possible reason why he visited Jesus at night is because Jesus was busy whole day at this is the only possible moment he could talk to Jesus.

Let us study their conversation.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. The New Birth (or Being "Born Again") (vv. 1-7)

1. When Jesus was conversing with the Jewish religious leader Nicodemus, He said unless a person is born again, he cannot get into the Kingdom of God (v. 3). What is meant by "born again"? Why do we need this new birth? This new nature?

2. How can one be "born again"?

NOTE: "Believe" here does not only mean mentally saying, "It is true." (Satan also believes Jesus is the Son of God, but obviously he is not saved.) It is believing in Jesus with all our heart, repenting of our sins and receiving Him as Savior and Lord. We turn over our lives to Jesus Christ to control. The center of our lives is no longer ourselves, but God.

3. Sometimes we meet non-Christians who live better lives than Christians. Do they need to be saved also?

ILLUSTRATION: Suppose all of us are required to swim from Haugesund to UK. Some jump off the seawall and sink right away. Some may reach halfway, and then sink. Some may even nearly reach UK, but 1000 meters before reaching shore, run out of strength and sink also. So none of us reach UK. In the same way, none of us reach God's standard, even though some may live very good lives (say 95% good). The reason Christians are acceptable in God's sight is because Jesus Christ is perfect and we come to God through Jesus Christ.

B. The Working Of The Holy Spirit (vv. 8-12)

1. What major point did Jesus illustrate in talking about the wind in verse 8?

2. What simple thing did Jesus want Nicodemus to do in verses 11 and 12? Are you willing to accept Jesus and believe His words? Verses 13-16 give several reasons for taking that step.

C. Why We Believe In Jesus (vv. 13-18)

1. How could Jesus demand the faith and confidence of Nicodemus or of any other person? Think about this as you make a list of everything, which verses 13-16, tells us about Jesus.

a. Jesus came down from heaven (v. 13), so He is qualified to tell us of heavenly matters.

b. Verse 14 refers to an incident recorded in Numbers 21:4-9.

Jesus' explanation and reference to Himself through this illustration speaks about the totality of His work: God becomes man, dies on a cross and is raised again. Thus Jesus' death on the cross brings about the reconciliation between man and God. Anyone who looks to Jesus by faith can be cured of the deadly disease of sin.

c. Verse 16 is an excellent synthesis of the Gospel. What does it say regarding God? Regarding Jesus? Regarding you?

REFLECTION: Do I want to have the Spirit act in my life? Do I want to be born anew?

V. CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul explains the meaning of the new birth in these words:

“Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come! ... for our sake He (God) made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:17, 21).