

## Great Stories of the Bible - 05/15/22

Nicodemus

**TEXT- John 3:1-21** *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus,*

**INTRO – This conversation took place after Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the first time during the Passover Feast.**

**John 2:23-25** *Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*

This is the most important chapter in the Bible, for it deals with the subject of salvation of a man's soul. Some religious groups have so confused this subject that many average church members, let alone religious leaders like Nicodemus, have no idea what it means to be born again.

- Salvation is not praying a prayer
- Salvation is not living a good life
- Salvation is not being religious
- Salvation is not religious reform
- Salvation is not resolution.
- Salvation is not baptism
- Salvation is not church membership
- Salvation is not doing good

**Daniel 5:27** *Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.*

**Romans 7:18** *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

Nicodemus was a pharisee, a ruler of the Jews. He was most likely part of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish judges of that era. He was aware of the miracles Jesus performed.

The Pharisees were a devout sect of Judaism and were divided by the philosophies of two separate men. There is no doubt that Nicodemus was a devout man, wealthy and with great influence.

Not every Pharisee was opposed to Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee who rightly considered Jesus "a teacher who has come from God" and honestly sought answers from Him (John 3:1-2). Nicodemus later defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-51) and was on hand at Jesus' crucifixion to help bury the Lord's body (John 19:39). Some of the early Christians were Pharisees, as well - **Joseph of Arimathea**, who was his disciple, and an **unknown number** of "those of the party of the Pharisees who believed", among them the Apostle Paul — a student of **Gamaliel**

The Pharisees were strict followers of the Law and in many cases followed man-made laws. Some were hypocrites and reprimanded by Jesus.

### I. The Necessity for the New Birth - John 3:1-5

**A. It is necessary to see the kingdom of God - John 3:3**

**There is no other means to be saved. Jesus is the Way!**

Nicodemus was a moral, religious man, one of the chief teachers (rulers) of the Jews.

Spiritual truths cannot be grasped by the carnal mind of sinful man (**1 Cor. 2:10-14**).

Being religious and moral does not make a man fit for heaven; he must be born again, that is, born from above.

**John 1:12-13** *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

All of us are born in sin. Our "first birth" makes us children of Adam, and this means we are children of wrath and of disobedience (**Eph 2:1-3**).

No amount of education, religion, or discipline can change the old nature; we must receive a new nature from God.

**B. It is necessary to enter the kingdom of God - John 3:5**

By "the kingdom of God" Jesus did not mean an earthly political kingdom. Paul described the kingdom of God in **Rom 14:17** *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* When a sinner trusts Christ, he or she enters God's kingdom and family. Only by being born again can we enter the kingdom of God.

### II. The Nature of the New Birth - John 3:6-13

**A. The new birth is a spiritual birth - John 3:6-7**

That which is born of the flesh (the old nature) is flesh, and is under the wrath of God. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit and is eternal.

(**2 Peter 1:4** *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*)

You cannot produce a spiritual birth with physical means. This is why "born of water" in **John 3:5** cannot mean literal water, for baptism would mean applying a physical substance (water) to the physical being.

Salvation is not of works (**Eph 2:8-10**) Christ came to save, yet He did not baptize **John 4:2** *Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples* **Paul separated baptism from the gospel. 1 Corinthians 1:17** *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel . . .*

**The new birth can only be produced by spiritual means.**

What are these means? **The Spirit of God (John 3:6 and John 6:63)** and the **Word of God. 1 Peter 1:23** *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* **James 1:18** *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

**B. It is a mysterious birth - John 3:8-10**

No one can explain the wind, and no one can explain the working of the Spirit. Both the Spirit and the believer are like the wind. Nicodemus, instructed in the Law, should have known the truth of the renewing work of the Spirit. **Eze 37:1-28.**

**C. It is a miracle birth - John 3:11-13**

Many things are mysterious but still real. Jesus assures Nicodemus that the new birth is not a fantasy, it is a reality. If a person will but believe Christ's words and receive Him, he or she will discover how real and wonderful the new birth is.

**III. The Basis for the New Birth - John 3:14-21**

**A. Christ had to die - John 3:14-17**

Christ again refers Nicodemus to the OT, this time **Num. 21:1-35**, the account of the brazen serpent. Looking to the serpent in faith brought healing. In like manner, Christ was made sin for us, for it was sin that was killing us. As we look to Christ by faith, we are saved. Christ experienced our judgment when He was lifted up on the cross. Christ had to die before men could be born again; His death brings life. What a paradox!

**B. Sinners have to believe - John 3:18-21**

Faith in Christ is the only means of salvation. God's command to Moses in **Num\_21:1-35** was not that he kill the snakes, make a salve for the wounds, or try to protect the Jews from being bitten. It was that he lift up the brazen serpent and tell men to look by faith. Not to look meant condemnation; faith meant salvation. John here goes back to **John 1:4-13**, the symbolism of light and life, darkness and death. Sinners not only live in darkness, but they love the darkness, and refuse to come to the light.

**IV. The Confusion about the New Birth John - 3:22-36**

**John 3:25** *Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.*

It is evident that Nicodemus came "out of the dark" and finally became a born-again Christian.

In **John 3:1-36**, we see Nicodemus in the darkness of confusion; in **John 7:45-53** we see him in the dawn of conviction and in

**John 19:38-42** we see Nicodemus in the daylight of confession, openly identifying himself with Christ.

**Eternal life is not the same as going to heaven. Salvation begins at the moment of conversion and will eventually take us to heaven.**

**CONCL –**