

HOW CAN A MAN BE BORN WHEN HE IS OLD JOHN 3:1-10

Text: John 3:4

John 3:4

⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Introduction:

In what is probably the most famous Bible chapter, John chapter 3, there is recorded the story of a man who came to investigate Jesus.

The man's name was Nicodemus, and in his conversation with Jesus he was confronted with the revolutionary news of the new birth.

Before Nicodemus could even begin his interview, the Lord very abruptly said:

John 3:3

³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

There are three things that I want us to observe about this man Nicodemus, and the truth that Jesus conveyed to Him. Notice first of all:

1. THE POSITION NICODEMUS HELD

John 3:1

¹ There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

This information is important, because it tells us something about the rank and stature of this man who came one night to meet with Jesus.

Nicodemus reminds us that no matter whom we are, high class, low class, or no class, we all need to have a meeting with the Lord Jesus.

Notice a couple of things about this man Nicodemus, and his position in life. Notice first of all that:

A. He Was a Respected Man

The Sanhedrin was the highest authority for the Jewish nation. It was the “Supreme Court” of its day. It controlled religious as well as civil affairs in Israel.

Only the most educated and important men of the day would have had the privilege of sitting on this council.

It is likely, therefore, that almost everyone in Israel would have known Nicodemus by name. They would have looked up to him with respect and reverence.

Nicodemus had what so many people strive for – the respect and admiration of others. He was a respected man.

B. He Was a Religious Man

Notice that he was “of the Pharisees.”

When most church people hear the word “Pharisee”, they think “hypocrite”. While that certainly was true of many of the Pharisees, that is not what the title originally meant.

The Pharisees were a devout, Jewish religious party. They were the fundamentalists of their day. They held to the authority of Scripture, and the traditional doctrines of the Jewish faith.

They were meticulous in their observance of the Law, and strict in their doctrine and theology.

No one would have ever accused Nicodemus of loose living, or of being a theological liberal. He was religious in every sense of the word.

There is an indication here that all his social respect and all his strict religion were not sufficient to answer the deepest needs of his soul.

Notice a second truth we observe about this man and his meeting with the Lord. Notice not only the position Nicodemus held, but notice also:

2. THE PRINCIPLE NICODEMUS HEARD

It is interesting to me that in this meeting, Nicodemus doesn't get to say very much before he is hit with the blow of a strong truth from the lips of the Lord.

Notice:

John 3:2

²The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Nicodemus opened the conversation with a compliment. He said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

Almost as if the Lord paid no attention to this statement, verse three says:

John 3:3

³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto

thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

With that statement, Nicodemus was confronted with principle of the new birth, an event that the Lord said was essential to seeing the kingdom of God.

Notice a couple of things about this principle, and what it meant to Nicodemus. First of all:

A. It Contradicted His Learning

The Lord told Nicodemus that no man could see the kingdom of God without experiencing a second birth. Later on in verse seven, Jesus repeats emphatically the same principle, saying:

John 3:7

⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

This was something that would have totally contradicted what Nicodemus had learned as a devout Jew.

Nicodemus had been taught that being a part of the kingdom relied on two simple things – being Jewish, and obeying the Law of Moses.

The idea of a second birth goes against what most people believe to be true.

Most people, like Nicodemus, suppose they are right with God. Most people assume, like Nicodemus, that the path they are on is the right one.

Just as it was for Nicodemus, this principle is contradictory to what most people believe. Notice not only that this principle contradicted his learning, but notice also:

B. It Convicted His Life

As Nicodemus sat there that night, hearing this teaching about the necessity of a new birth, he realized that though he had the respect of his neighbors, and though he was deeply religious, he had never experienced a change so radical that it could be described as being “born again.”

Nicodemus had been born once, and in all his years his life had never been changed by any sort of “second birth.”

If this “new birth” was required in order to see the kingdom of God, then Nicodemus was in trouble. He knew that nothing like being “born again” had ever happened to him.

While no one remembers being born the first time, if you have been born again, you will remember it.

Nicodemus, for all his public respect and pious religion did not possess the requirement of the new birth. The teaching of the Lord convicted his life.

There is one more truth that I want us to observe from this text. Notice not only the position Nicodemus held, and the principle Nicodemus heard, but notice also:

3. THE PROBLEM NICODEMUS HAD

Look at the response Nicodemus gave to the idea of a “second birth”. In verse four, he asks:

John 3:4

⁴ Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Then, in verse nine, this great religious leader’s last recorded words in this chapter are:

John 3:9

⁹ Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

Nicodemus, in spite of all his theological training and religious experience faced a critical problem. He could not grasp the basic teaching about a man’s need to be born again.

In much the same way, there are multitudes of people today who know Scripture, and understand theological

principles, and yet they have a major spiritual problem. That is, they have missed the most basic doctrine of Christianity. “Ye must be born again.”

Notice a couple of things that Nicodemus failed to grasp. First of all, He did not:

A. Realize the Priority of the New Birth

John 3:7

⁷Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Nicodemus was obviously baffled by the teaching he was hearing. When the Lord saw his surprise, He said, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

He probably said to himself, “I thought if you went to the Temple regularly, you would surely make it to heaven.” “I believed that if you read the Scriptures, and tried to obey what God said, that would be enough to earn the favor of God.”

Nicodemus failed to grasp something that so many have missed as well. Religion can’t save anyone. Good works aren’t good enough to make up for a man’s sin.

Nicodemus’ problem was not only that he failed to realize the priority of the new birth, but notice also further that he did not:

B. Recognize the Process of the New Birth

Nicodemus asked, “How can these things be?” Notice verse five. The Lord said:

John 3:6

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Nicodemus didn't understand the process of the new birth, but it was not because the Lord did not try to explain it.

The Lord then asks Nicodemus a question in verse 10.

John 3:10

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Nicodemus knew the Bible, and knew religion, and yet he did not know the fundamental truth that a man had to be born again in order to enter Heaven.

Close:

Though we are not certain when Nicodemus followed through with the words of the Lord, but later events in his life seem to testify of his new birth experience.

John 19:39-40

³⁹ And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about

an hundred pound *weight*.⁴⁰ Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Have you been born again?

Are there those in your life that need to be born again – lets pray that they will hear, understand and respond correctly to the Gospel,