

2/9/25

How To Enter The Kingdom Of God **Jn. 3:1-15**

Any person that examines the millions of religions of the world will be aware of the common denominator all have, personal works to merit acceptance by God.

* Here in is where Christianity differs from all human religions, all a person has to do is believe in the finished atoning work of Jesus Christ by His death and resurrection to be accepted by God!

We want to look at the first of several discourses selected by John, the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus about how to enter the Kingdom of God.

* The discourse is recorded only by John that reveals the one and only way all of mankind can enter the kingdom of God, it is the Key to heaven and one of the most important chapter of the gospel of John and the Bible!

The secret of entering the Kingdom of God is revealed to Nicodemus as he plays out three distinct roles.

I. Nicodemus the seeker. vs. 1-3

II. Nicodemus the skeptic. vs. 4-8

III. Nicodemus the student. vs. 9-15

I. Nicodemus the seeker. vs. 1-3

A. The identity of Nicodemus. vs. 1

* “There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.”

1. He is first identified by his religious order, “There was a man of the Pharisee.”

a. The Pharisees were the religious ritualists of the day and stands in contrast to the preceeding chapter division.

1) They had arisen during the Maccabean wars against Antiochus Epiphany who attempted to wipe out the Jewish religion and there were no more than 6,000 at any one time.

2) Their name meant the separated ones, not wanting to break the Law again and go back into bondage or captivity, so they built a fence by their oral and written interpretation to protect the Law, but ended up honoring the fence more since it was protecting the law.

3) They were the scribes and teachers of the Law of Moses.

a) The Mishnah was the codified scribal law, for example the section on the Sabbath extends to not fewer than twenty-four chapters.

b) The Talmud is the commentary on the Mishnah and in the Jerusalem Talmud the section on the Sabbath law runs sixty-four and a half columns and in the Babylonian

- Talmud it runs to one hundred and fifty-six double folio pages.
- 4) They were to live out the very law they taught, but for the most part were the epitome of hypocrisy.
 2. He is secondly identified by his name, "Nicodemus".
 - a. The name Nicodemus "Nikodemos" means conqueror.
 - b. A man of renown reputation.
 3. He is thirdly identified by his office, "a ruler of the Jews."
 - a. Nicodemus was a ruler "archon" a leader, a member of the Sanhedrin.
 - 1) The Sanhedrin was the ruling body of Israel comprised of elders, scribes and high priest that oversaw the affairs of Israel.
 - 2) The court comprise of 70 members, after the Old Testament order.
 - 3) The Sanhedrin consisted of the Pharisees, who were the ritualists and the Sadducees who were the materialists and of the priestly order.
 - b. Nicodemus was a prominent figure in the Jewish community.
 - 1) He was looked up to by his peers.
 - 2) He was looked up to by the people.
 4. He will be identified fourthly as the leading teacher of Israel. Jn. 3:10a
 5. He is identifies fifthly as wealthy.

- a. Nicodemus came to bury the body of Jesus along with Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret disciple of Jesus who had asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Jn. 19:38
 - b. Nicodemus brought 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes. Jn. 19:39
- B. The initial conversation of Nicodemus. vs. 2**
1. The time Nicodemus came to Jesus is stated, "This man came to Jesus by night." vs. 2a
 - a. Some say he came by night due to fear of his peers and label him a coward.
 - b. Others say he came to find fault in Jesus.
 - c. The context reveals to us that Nicodemus for whatever reason he came to Jesus by night was a sincere seeker and stands in sharp contrast to those who came to Jesus at the end of chapter two.
 - 1) Jesus did not commit Himself to them for they believed in Jesus for the signs and not genuine faith. Jn. 2:23-25
 - 2) Nicodemus could have come by night, taking a chance in view of the clash in the temple cleansing?
 - 3) Nicodemus might have come at night simply that they would not be interrupted or after the practice of the Rabbis who studied the law a night.
 - d. The contrasts of light and darkness are prominent in the gospel of John. Jn. 1:5, 9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:4-5; 12:35

- 1) Nicodemus came by night symbolizing the spiritual dark condition of his life despite his religious credentials and position.
- 2) This is the phrase he is identified by two other times, “he who came to Jesus by night”. Jn. 7:50; 19:39
2. Nicodemus addressed Jesus with respect, “and said to Him, “Rabbi.” vs. 2a-b
 - a. The title Rabbi means master or teacher.
 - b. The title is believed to originated from the Chaldees, signifying doctor or master.
 - c. The title was not used before the captivity except for describing officers of Assyria and Babylon, “Rabsaris” and “Rabshakeh”. 2King 18:17
3. Nicodemus confessed God sent Jesus. vs. 2c-d
 - a. The statement is not limited to him, “We know that You are a teacher come from God”. vs. 2c
 - 1) The plural “We” refers to other Pharisees, elders and scribes, as he.
 - 2) The word know “oida” means intuitive knowledge and translated perceive or understand, the exact same word is translated “see”. vs. 3
 - b. The reason he gives for believing that Jesus is from God are the signs is stated,

“For no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him.” vs. 2d

- 1) The statement that these signs were valid credentials to prove Jesus was from God is true in that He did all within the boundaries of the Scriptures and gave God the glory.
 - 2) The statement also is wrong for Satan can counterfeit signs and will through the Anti-Christ and false prophet.
 - a) He will come after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders and deceivableness of unrighteousness. 2Thess. 2:9-10a
 - b) The false prophet will do great signs, bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of man. Rev. 13:13
- * Signs and wonders must be judge by the Scriptures, if they add, take away or contradict them, then they are not of God! Deut. 13:1-3
- C. The incredible response of Jesus. vs. 3
1. Jesus declared that what He was saying was of the upmost importance and truth by the phrase, “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you.”. vs. 3a-c
 - a. The phrase “Most assuredly” is also translated “Verily, Verily” or “Truly, Truly”, it is the word “amen”. vs. 3, 5, 11

- * At the start of the sentence it indicate the proclamation of something very important and absolute truth, at the end it affirms the truth stated.
- b. When Jesus said, “I say to you”, He was declaring to be the supreme authority, not needing to quote Moses or the elders.
- 2. Jesus declared, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” vs. 3d-e
 - a. The phrase born again is “another” from above, describing the spiritual birth.
 - b. The requirement for Nicodemus and all sinners is first to be born again, if not he cannot see the Kingdom of God, Jesus says it three times. vs. 3, 5, 7
 - * The word see “oida” means to perceive or understand the Kingdom of God, even though Nicodemus was a Jew and a religious man, he was a natural man, his spirit was dead unable to receive, perceive or understand the Kingdom of God. 1Cor. 2:14
 - c. The Kingdom of God to the Jew meant the age to come when the Messiah would destroy His enemies, set up the Kingdom Age and reign for a thousand years.
 - d. The Kingdom of God to the Christian is present, Jesus ruling over their lives, and yet to come.
 - 1) The Church is not the Kingdom.

- 2) The Church will not bring in the Kingdom.
- 3) The Church is part of the Kingdom.
- 4) The Church will reign in the Kingdom.
- 3. Jesus answered Nicodemus not according to what he said, but according to what was in his heart, he was thinking of entrance to the Kingdom of God. Jn. 2:24-25

Illustration

When a little captive girl told the wife of the king of Syria there was a prophet in Samaria able to heal her chief captain’s leprosy, the King sent him with a letter, silver and gold to the King of Israel to be healed and Naaman the leper went with an open heart! 2Kings 5:1-5

Application

- 1. Have you come with an open heart having heard about Jesus? Jer. 17:9
- 2. Have you come because of the miracles that you’ve heard in the lives of others like Naaman? Eph. 2:8-9
 - * “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
- 3. Having come with an open heart, Jesus will reveal to you how to experience the greatest miracle by being born again. 2Cor. 5:21

* “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Nicodemus the seeker came to Jesus with an open heart!

II. Nicodemus the skeptic. vs. 4-8

- A. The response of Nicodemus to Jesus is with great skepticism. vs. 4
 - 1. The first question of Nicodemus reveals two things, “Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born again when he is old? vs. 4a-b
 - a. The futility of the natural mind to understand spiritual things, again. 1Cor. 2:14
 - b. The impossibility to comprehend such a thing being able to happen.
 - 2. The second question of Nicodemus confirms his blindness about spiritual things, “Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” vs. 4c
 - a. The question of Nicodemus are honest and sincere, even though he is skeptical.
 - * Notice Jesus does not rebuke him.
 - b. The question of Nicodemus clearly reveals his attempt to understand, as well as he can, but unable to grasp it in his mind.

- 1) Notice Jesus does not become impatient.
- 2) Notice Jesus continues to minister to him.
 - * “A bruised reed He would not break, and smoking flex He will not quench.” Matt. 12:20

- B. The answer of Jesus to Nicodemus is with great patience. vs. 5-8
 - 1. Jesus declared the same truth a second time by using a few different words to emphasize the source of the new birth and the results of the new birth. vs. 5
 - a. The importance of the statement is evident again, “Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you.” vs. 5a-c
 - 1) The important truth proclamation, “Most assuredly”. vs. 5b
 - 2) The supreme authority is stated again, “I say to you”. vs. 3c
 - b. The no exceptions clause, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” vs. 5d-e
 - * This truth is declared once again using other words as synonyms about the spiritual birth, we will look at them in reverse order.
 - 1) The first word that Jesus substituted is the word “enter” for “see” in verse

three, to emphasize the results of the new birth.

- a) Remember “see” means perceive or understand referring to the Kingdom.
 - b) Therefore the word “enter” has to refer to the Kingdom also, namely the one born again is able to understand and enter the Kingdom of God.
- 2) The second word that Jesus substituted is “again” or “above” in verse three by the phrase “of water” and “of the Spirit”, emphasizing the source of the new birth.
- a) Whatever meaning we give to both “water and Spirit” they must be true to the meaning of the word “again”.
 - b) The word “again” or “above” described the source of the birth, namely spiritual and from heaven.
 - c) Therefore the phrases “of water” and “of the Spirit” must refer to something spiritual and from heaven and not something earthly, which would only confuse the understanding of Nicodemus further!
- 3) Some declare “of water” means water baptism because John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus were baptizing, but this commits two errors.
- a) Jesus would be teaching that water baptism was a requirement to be

saved and enter heaven, undermining His finished redemptive work of the cross. Rom. 6:3-4; 1Pet. 3:19-21

- b) Jesus would be contradicting the heavenly source of the new birth, for water is sourced in earth not heaven.
- 4) Others have declared “water and Spirit” refer to the same thing, namely the purifying work of the Holy Spirit, committing three errors.
- a) First that Jesus is not using “water” as a metaphor, but a simile, like or as water.
 - b) Second that Jesus is being redundant by saying one had to be born of the Spirit and of the Spirit.
 - c) Third ignoring that Jesus is stating two things not one, water and Spirit.
- 5) The only meaning “of water” can refer to is “the word of God”.
- a) The term “water” is used in two ways in John, literal and symbolic.
 - 1)) Ten of the 24 times it is found in John and used symbolically.
 - 2)) Nine are used of the Holy Spirit, eight as Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jn. 4:7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15
 - 3)) One time at the Feast of Tabernacles as Jesus prophesied of

the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as rivers of living water. Jn. 7:38

- b)** The only times the term “water” is used symbolic of the “word” is here in our text because we have already shown that Jesus would be speaking redundant if it referred to the Holy Spirit, but the final determination comes from the mouth of Jesus Himself as He tells His disciple, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you”. Jn. 15:3

1)) This seems to be confirmed throughout the Scriptures. Eph. 5:26;
Ja. 1:18; 1Pet. 1:23

2)) There is another verse in our text proving “water” to be the word of God, referring to Moses. vs. 14

- 6)** Unless one is born of water, the word of God, the illumination, conviction and regeneration by the Spirit, he cannot and will not enter the kingdom of God.

- 2.** Jesus declared the same truth a third time by dismissing the understanding of Nicodemus about a physical earthly birth. vs. 6-8

- a.** Jesus first makes the distinction clear, the earthly birth has nothing to do with the heavenly birth, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” vs. 6

* Jesus dismisses the teaching that “water” refers to our earthly birth in our mother’s womb as a contrast to the spiritual birth from above. Job 14:4; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:10-12

- b.** Jesus secondly declared to Nicodemus for the third time the key to enter the Kingdom of God, “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” vs. 7

1) Jesus exhorted Nicodemus to not marvel, be amazed or puzzled He was telling him, “You must be born again”, Jesus returns to the original statement of verse three.

2) Jesus adds one more thing, the word “must”, which means obligation, ought with the idea of an absolute requirement without exception.

* The word is used three times in the chapter. vs. 7, 14, 30

- c)** Jesus thirdly illustrated the new birth, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” vs. 8

1) The word “wind” is the word “pnuma” and appears 35 times in the New Testament and this is the only time it is translated “wind”, so some teach

- the word “wind” should be translated “the Holy Spirit breathes”.
- 2) The only problem is John says, “The wind blows where it wishes, and **you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes**”, the context clearly is an illustration of the “wind” that a person can hear the sound, but cannot perceive where the wind comes from or where it goes, but only by the effects of the wind. vs. 8a-c
 * We do know where the Holy Spirit comes from “heaven” and where it goes “throughout the earth”!
- 3) The punch line and application is being born again, having their hearts transformed, “So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” vs. 8d
- 5) Jesus confirmed this when He told Nicodemus, “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? vs. 12
 a) The earthly things is the illustration of the natural wind and its affects; the context is important.
 b) The heavenly things is the supernatural spiritual birth of being born again from above.

- 6) Yes the Holy Spirit illuminates the word of God and makes it understood, convicts the sinner, who decides to repent to be born again from above! Jn. 1:12-13; Rom. 10:17; Eph. 2:8-9

Illustration

When Naaman the leper was told to go dip himself seven times in the Jordan by the servant of Elisha to be healed, he became furious and offended that Elisha had not come out to call upon God to heal him then and there, not to mention the ridiculous command to go dip himself in the muddy Jordan 7 times to be healed, so he turned away in a rage. 2Kings 5:10-12

Application

1. You may be sitting here skeptical and attempting to figure out how it is possible for a person to be born again from heaven, but your natural mind is unable to accept it, they are foolishness. 1Cor. 2:14
 * “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”
2. You might be saying like Nicodemus, “How can I be born again at this point in my life?” Eph. 2:1
 * “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”
3. You have to open your heart to the word of God as the Holy Spirit desires to reveal your need of repentance and salvation! Jn. 1:12-13

* “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Nicodemus the skeptic has been patiently ministered unto by Jesus!

III. Nicodemus the student. vs. 9-15

A. Nicodemus responded to Jesus with great interest. vs. 9

1. The question of Nicodemus revealed two things, “Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”
 - a. His ignorance as to the spiritual matters of the new birth.
 - b. His petition to be instructed as to the method of being born again.
2. Though Nicodemus was a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, he humbled himself to be instructed.
 - a. Though Nicodemus was a ruler of the Sanhedrin with all the authority he never challenged the authority of Jesus.
 - b. This is no longer the “how” of verse 4b that of a skeptic, but of a student who desired to be a disciple!

B. Jesus declared the evidence of the ignorance of Nicodemus. vs. 10-12

1. Jesus reproved Nicodemus mildly by two things. vs. 10

a. Jesus first pointed out his position of responsibility, “Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel?” vs. 10a-b

1) The article implies the distinguished position possibly the leading teacher, if not one of the distinguished teachers of Israel.

2) The teachers were to be the models for others.

b. Jesus next pointed out his accountability, “And do not know these things?” vs. 10c

1) “If the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.”

2) The statement implies that he should have known this truth.

a) The word know “ginoskeis” means to know by experience.

b) Ezekiel is one of the prophets that spoke of the new birth through a new heart and a new spirit. Ezk. 36:35-38

b) Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace!!! But now they are hidden from your eyes?” Lk. 19:42

2. Jesus reproved Nicodemus for his rejection of God’s witness. vs. 11

- a. Jesus qualifies the importance of what He is going to say again in two ways, “Most assuredly, I say to you.” vs. 11a-b
 - 1) First the genuine and truth of His words by the phrase, “Most assuredly.”
 - 2) Second His supreme authority, “I say to you.”
- b. Jesus declared His superior witness, “We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.” vs. 11c-d
 - 1) The pronoun “we” speaks of Jesus and others, “We speak, we know, we testify what we have seen.”
 - * This is the only time Jesus speak in the plural, “we”.
 - a) Some say it refers to John the Baptist, some to the Prophet.
 - b) Others think it refers to the Father, but Jesus never used the plural “we” for Him and the Father.
 - c) In our **context**, it has to stand in contrast to the “we” of Nicodemus, referring to the Jewish leaders, therefore the “we” of Jesus has to be John the Baptist, His disciples and followers.
 - 2) The pronoun “you” refers to Nicodemus and the Jewish leaders who did not receive the witness.

- 3. Jesus reproved Nicodemus for his inability to understand what Jesus had told him already. vs. 12
 - * “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”
 - a. The things Jesus had told Nicodemus were spiritual truth based on earthly things and he did not believe.
 - b. The things of Heaven would be even harder to believe, how would he believe them?
- C. Jesus declared the answer to the petition of Nicodemus, to be instructed about the method of being born again. vs. 13-15
 - 1. Jesus revealed Himself to be the unique revealer of heavenly things. vs. 13
 - a. Jesus declared, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven.” vs. 13a
 - b. Jesus identified the person, “that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.” vs. 13b-c
 - * He was and is the Son of Man, the title identifying His Incarnation and one like man, only Jesus uses it of Himself!
 - 2. Jesus told Nicodemus how to be born again. vs. 14-15
 - a. The message comes from the Scriptures, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” vs. 14a; Num. 21:4-9

- 1) The people of Israel spoke against the Lord and Moses, accusing Moses of having brought them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. vs. 4-5
- 2) God sent fiery serpents into the camp, and many were dying being bitten by the poisonous snakes. vs. 6
- 3) The people came to Moses and repented of their sin and pleaded for his intercession. vs. 7
- 4) God told Moses to make a brass serpent and set it on a pole in the middle of the camp that if any who had been bitten would look upon it, they would not die. vs. 8-9
 - * Here in is another evident fact that the “water” refers to the word of God.
- b. The application is unmistakeable, for it is an equal parallel, “even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”. vs. 14b-15
 - 1) Two absolute “musts” should not be missed.
 - a) The Son of Man **must** be lifted up.
 - b) The sinner **must** be born again, or he or she will never understand or enter the Kingdom of God. vs. 3, 5, 7
 - 2) The outcome is “eternal life”, age abiding life which primarily speaks of

- a quality of life and secondly life that never ends in fellowship with God.
- 3) The symbolism is incredible.
 - a) The pole represented the cross in the wilderness.
 - b) The brass serpent represented sin being judged on the cross.
 - c) The act of looking to the serpent on the pole in the middle of the camp represents faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.
 - * God desires that each of us to put our trust and faith in the revelation of His word, regardless of how ridiculous or impossible it may be to believe, for just as looking to the serpent in the wilderness would keep them from dying from the venomous bites, so our looking to Jesus who died for the sins of the world will keep us from perishing eternally!
 - * Jesus referred to being lifted up to die on the cross. Jn. 12:32-33

Illustration

The servant of Naaman exhorted him, “If the prophet would have told him to do some great thing, he would have done it. How much more then , when he says to you, wash, and be cleansed?” And he went down dipped himself seven times and his flesh was restored as a little child. 2King 5:13-14

Application

1. Are you open to admit your own ignorance about spiritual matters and blinded by Satan on how to enter the Kingdom of God? 2Cor. 4:3-4

* “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

2. Are you ready to learn as a student and receive and believe the way to enter the Kingdom of God as a child? Mk. 10:15

* “Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

3. Are you ready to trust the Scriptures that declare that faith in Jesus is the way to be born again? Rom. 10:17

* “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

4. Are you ready to change your theology, if it is corrected by the Scriptures? 2Tim. 3:16-17; 2Pet. 1:19-21

Nicodemus the student came to know that a man must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God!

Conclusion

The secret of entering the Kingdom of God was revealed to Nicodemus as he played out three distinct roles.

- I. Nicodemus the seeker came to Jesus with an open heart, so you must do!
- II. Nicodemus the skeptic was patiently ministered unto by Jesus, so have you!
- III. Nicodemus the student came to know that a man must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God, so we pray you do!