

People Jesus Met, part 30 – Nicodemus (The New Birth)

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.”
John 3:1

- First – He was a Pharisee
- Second – He was a member of the Sanhedrin

“Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are teacher come from God . . .’”
John 3:2

Question: “On what basis did Nicodemus come to believe this?”

Answer: “Nicodemus believed it based on the hard, factual evidence he saw all around him.”

“Nicodemus . . . said, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God for no one can perform the miracles You are doing if God were not with him.’” John 3:2c

The New Testament only records 31 days out of Jesus’ 3-year public ministry.

“And there are so many other things that Jesus did, that if they were all written down, I suppose even the world itself would not have room for all the books that would be written about it.” John 21:25

In actuality, Jesus saturated the land of Israel with miracles!

“Then Jesus touched the eyes of the blind men and their sight was restored . . . And the crowds went out from there and spread the news about Jesus all over the region.” Matthew 9:29-31

“The more miracles Jesus did, the more people kept talking about it.” Mark 7:36

“And great crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at Jesus’ feet – and He healed them all.” Matthew 15:30

“Because they heard what He was doing, many people came to Him from Judea, Jerusalem, the regions east of the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.” Mark 3:8

Everybody in Israel . . . everywhere . . .

- Had either heard about Jesus’ miracles from someone they trusted . . .
- Or had personally seen one with their very own eyes!

It was on the basis of this empirical, verifiable, eyewitness evidence that Nicodemus said:

“Only God could do the kind of miracles You are doing!”

“And, therefore, Jesus, You must be He!”

“Atheists represent a different way of thinking – an approach based on evidence.”

George Miller, Ashburnham, Massachusetts, USA Today – December 14, 2009

As followers of Christ, it is actually we who have the “evidence” on our side.

We have testimony from eyewitness after eyewitness . . .

- Certifying to us what they saw with their very own eyes . . .
- Backing it up with their lives
- And, in many cases, accepting martyrdom rather than deny it

Nicodemus got it right: "There is a God – and Jesus is He!"

"Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus, 'I tell you the truth, unless a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God.'" John 3:3

In spite of all his religious works, Nicodemus still wasn't sure he was going to heaven.

Jesus: "Nicodemus, to get into heaven and have eternal life, you must be born again."

"Nicodemus said to Jesus, 'How can a person be born when they are old? Surely, they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb and be born all over again.'" John 3:4

"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, unless a person is born of water and the Spirit, they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, but that which is born of Spirit is spirit.'" John 3:5

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that being "born again" has nothing to do with going back and being physically reborn.

Jesus: "What we need is an entirely different kind of birth – a spiritual birth that only God the Holy Spirit can do for us."

"We were born . . . (spiritually) dead . . . in our trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1

"But when we were dead in our sins, God made us alive in Christ, forgiving us for all our sins and cancelling the debt against us by nailing it to the cross." Colossians 2:13

Jesus did not die to make bad men good, or to make good men better: He died to make dead men alive!

Being "born again" is all about the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in our life . . .

- Whereby God nails our sins to the cross . . .
- And then "births us" spiritually . . .
- So that we become living, spiritual beings!

"Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again."'" John 3:7

"The wind blows where it wishes. You hear its sound, but you cannot explain where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 3:8

Jesus: "The wind is real even though you can't explain it."

Jesus: "In the same way, you may not be able to explain the mechanics of being "reborn" by the Holy Spirit – but brother, when it happens to you, you know it's real!"

"Then Nicodemus said to Jesus, 'How can these things be?'" John 3:9

"Jesus replied, 'You are Israel's teacher and you do not understand these things?'" John 3:10

"The days are coming, when I will make a covenant of peace with you." Ezekiel 34:25

"I will sprinkle clean water on you and cleanse you in My sight of all you impurities." Ezekiel 36:25

"I will give you a new heart and I will put a new Spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and I will give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26

In Ezekiel 37, God likens this new covenant to taking a valley of dead, dry bones – and making those bones come screaming to life.

So What?

"Therefore, if any person is in Christ, they become a new person; old things pass away – behold, all things become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Jesus came to earth 2000 years ago to give us a "new birth" into a "new life" that overflows with "new things."

#1 – A new relationship with God

"To all who receive Him, He gives them the authority to become children of God – children who are born not by natural birth or by a husband's will, but who are born by God. John 1:12, 13

When we are born again, God makes us a part of His personal family (adopted children of God).

(When we believe in Jesus Christ) ". . . we receive the Spirit of adoption as children, by which we say to God: 'Abba, Father.' Indeed, the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirits that we have become the children of God." Romans 8:15, 16

#2 – A new power over our passions

"Truly, truly, I say to you – whoever obeys their sinful passions becomes a slave to those passions." John 8:34

"But when the Son sets you free, you become free indeed." John 8:36

The supernatural, liberating power of Jesus Christ over our self-destructive passions is phenomenal!

#3 – A new purpose for living

"I'm telling you that fame and fortune are not what they're cracked up to be." Madonna

God gives born-again people a new purpose for living that transcends this world and brings true meaning and purpose to life.

"Jesus died for us, so that we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him, who died and rose again on our behalf." 2 Corinthians 5:15

#4 – A new assurance about eternity

No one will ever get assurance about eternity from religious works – or from any other kind of works for that matter! Only the risen, resurrected Christ can give this to us.

"He who believes in Me has eternal life." John 3:36

“And this is the record: that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has eternal life; and he who does not have the Son does not have eternal life.” 1 John 5:11, 12

“These things I write to you who believe in the Son of God, so you may know for certain that you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:13

As reborn followers of Christ, this is our spiritual birthright – to know for certain that we have eternal life and a secure place in heaven!

“. . . because death is a negation of the future and of the hope it holds out for a society of reason and virtue.” Lionel Trilling

D.L. Moody

“Some day you will read in the papers that Dwight L. Moody of East Northfield, Massachusetts is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it!”

“At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that’s all; out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal – a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint.”

“I was born of the flesh in 1837. I was reborn by God’s Spirit in 1855. That which is born of the flesh may die. But that which is born of God’s Spirit will never die.”

#1 – A new relationship with God

#2 – A new power over our passions

#3 – A new purpose for living

#4 – A new assurance about eternity