

A Jewish Teacher Visits Jesus at Night John 3:1-16

by David Servant

Jesus explains to Nicodemus that spiritual rebirth is necessary for eternal life, and that faith in Him is the key to this rebirth.

Scripture: John 3:3-16, Romans 8:16, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 John 3:9

Topics: "Spiritual Rebirth", "Holy Spirit"

Description

David Servant preaches about Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, emphasizing the need for spiritual rebirth through the Holy Spirit to enter God's kingdom. He explains that before being born again, people are spiritually dead with a sinful nature, but through repentance and belief in Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives them a new nature as children of God. By using the analogy of Moses and the bronze snake, Jesus illustrates that belief in Him brings new life and healing to our dead spirits. David also discusses different interpretations of being born of 'water' and the significance of God's love shown through sending His Son for us.

Transcript

The Pharisees of Jesus' time were a very strict sect of Jews. They tried to follow all of God's laws fully as well as many laws they made up themselves, thinking they could earn their way to heaven. Nicodemus was not only a Pharisee, but also a member of the Jewish ruling council and a very well known religious teacher. He was amazed by the miracles Jesus performed, and was convinced that Jesus was sent from God. However, he didn't yet know that Jesus was actually the divine Son of God. So Jesus knew He needed to explain some very important things to Nicodemus.

He began by telling Nicodemus that, in order to get into heaven, he had to be born a second time. Nicodemus didn't understand what Jesus meant. He couldn't imagine how he could ever go back inside his mother and be born another time! So Jesus explained that He wasn't talking about his body being born again through his mother, but his spirit being reborn through the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that every person is three parts: spirit, soul and body (see 1 Thess. 5:23). Your body is what you can see in the mirror. Your soul is your mind and emotions. Your spirit is the real you that lives inside your body. It is not made of bones or blood, but of spiritual material. It has a shape and form, just like your body. When your body dies, you, as a spirit, will leave your body and go to heaven if you are a follower of Jesus.

It is people's spirits that need to be reborn in order for them to get into God's future kingdom because if a person is not born again, his spirit has a sinful, satanic nature that has no relationship with God. He is spiritually dead. But when a person repents and believes in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into his spirit and removes the old sinful nature and gives that person a new nature, making him a child of God. Before a person is born again, the devil is his spiritual father. After he is born again, God is his spiritual Father.

As Jesus said, none of us can see the wind, and neither can we see people's spirits being born again nor the Holy Spirit that makes people's spirits new. However, just as we can see the effects of the wind, for example, leaves moving in the trees, so we can see the effects of the Holy Spirit when He moves inside a person's spirit. When He does, people start loving God and serving Him.

Jesus also explained to Nicodemus what he had to do in order to be born again. He told Nicodemus that He would be lifted up on a pole, meaning the cross, and that anyone who believed in Him would then forever have the new life that the Holy Spirit gives. It was just like the story of Moses and the people of Israel in the desert. One time God became very angry with them because of their sins, so He sent snakes into their camp, and anyone who was bitten, died. Moses prayed for God to have mercy, and so God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and attach it to a pole. Moses then sent news to the people, "If anyone who is dying from a snake bite will come and look at the bronze snake on the pole, he will live."

The people who believed the news came, looked, and were healed. In the same way, all people have been filled with the venom of sin. Their spirits are dead and their bodies are dying. But if they will believe in the Lord Jesus who hung on the cross, bearing our sins, their dead spirits will be made alive and their bodies will one day live again forever. Have you believed that good news? If you have, you've been born twice! (Maybe you should try to convince your mom that you deserve two birthday parties every year!)

Q. Jesus said that people must be born of "water" as well as the Spirit. What do you think He meant?

A. Different Christians have different answers to that question. Some say Jesus was talking about when a person is born as a baby. When babies are inside their mothers, they are enclosed by a sac of water. Just before they're born, that water sac breaks, so water comes out before the baby does.

A second interpretation is that Jesus was referring to people being baptized. Everyone who believes in Jesus should be baptized in water soon after they first believe. However, you don't have to be baptized in order to be born again. Baptism represents what has already happened the moment a person first believes in Jesus: He was dead but now has come back to life. Being under the water symbolizes being buried, and coming out of the water symbolizes being raised from the dead.

A third interpretation is that water is symbolic for God's Word. Truly, in order to be born again, a person needs to first hear the good news of Jesus' sacrificial death. Then, if he believes it, the Holy Spirit causes his spirit to be born again. People need both the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to be reborn.

Q. We read the most famous verse in the whole New Testament today, John 3:16. It tells us why God gave us His only Son. Why did He?

A. Because He loves us.

Application: Since our spirits have been born again, we should follow the inward leading of our new nature to obey God, and not the evil leading of the old nature that we also still possess. We're thankful that one day that old sinful nature will be completely done away with when we get brand new bodies.

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