

John 3:1-8. Christ's Conversation With Nicodemus.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus teaches Nicodemus about the necessity of being born again to see the kingdom of God and the role of the Holy Spirit in this process.

Scripture: Matthew 10:33, John 3:1, John 19:39, Romans 8:5, Galatians 4:6

Topics: "Spiritual Rebirth", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer delves into the intriguing conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, highlighting the privilege Nicodemus had to speak alone with the Son of God and the importance of seeking instruction from Jesus. Jesus, knowing Nicodemus' heart, addressed the need for spiritual rebirth to enter the kingdom of God, emphasizing the profound change required in the soul. The new birth signifies a transformation of desires and a shift from worldly pursuits to spiritual aspirations, a concept that may challenge some but is essential for true conversion. The work of the Holy Spirit in this rebirth is compared to the wind, unseen yet profoundly felt, bringing refreshing effects to the soul and leading to a deep sense of satisfaction and connection with God.

Transcript

What can be so interesting as to hear how the Savior instructed a person who desired to know the way of salvation! What a privilege Nicodemus enjoyed when he talked alone with the Son of God! What a privilege we enjoy when we read the account of this conversation!

Jesus could suit his conversation exactly to the case of Nicodemus, for he knew the state of his heart, and could tell with certainty what it would be the most profitable to say.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee; one of that sect who placed their trust in the outward observance of the law, and who neglected to purify the heart. He was a chief person, a ruler and teacher. It was not surprising, therefore, that he was ashamed to come to Jesus openly. He came by night for fear of the Jews, as we are afterwards told in John 19:39. Jesus did not refuse to receive him on that account, so compassionate is he to the infirmities of men; but if Nicodemus had not conquered this base fear of man, he could not have become the disciple of Him who has said, "Whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven," (Matthew 10:33.) Nicodemus afterwards grew so bold, that when the name of Jesus was held in the greatest contempt, he came forward with Joseph of Arimathea, and asked for his

body, that he might give it an honorable burial. But at the time we are reading of, he was still unconverted, and ignorant of his need of conversion; he was, however, desirous of instruction, and did not shrink from a private interview with the Lord. He came to the light, even the light of the world, the Son of God.

He began the conversation by telling the Lord that he believed he was a teacher come from God, because of the miracles he did; but it does not seem that he knew him to be the Lord of glory. Jesus immediately spoke to him of the concerns of his soul. The words "Verily, verily," show that the truth he was going to disclose was very important--"Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." How necessary it is for us well to consider the meaning of this declaration! Do we desire to see the kingdom of God? We must then desire to be born again.

What is it to be born again? Nicodemus did not understand the expression; he thought it related to the body, but it related to the soul. Our souls must be born again; that is, they must undergo a great change. As, when an infant is born, it undergoes a change, enters into a new world, has new desires, and joys, and sorrows; so when our hearts are born again, they have new desires, and joys, and sorrows. This doctrine has offended many people, who, knowing that they themselves were not born again in this manner, have attempted to deny the true meaning of the words. Some have declared that all who have been baptized are born again; but this cannot be true, for we read in Acts 8, of a man called Simon, who was baptized by the apostles, but who yet was not born again; for Peter said to him, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter; your heart is not right in the sight of God."

Water is the sign of the cleansing effects of the Spirit. God has appointed the use of water in baptism, to remind us of the necessity of being purified by his Spirit. No man can bestow saving grace upon another; it is the work of God alone; the apostles could not change the hearts of men; Peter could not change the heart of the wicked Simon, to whom we have just referred.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." What is meant by the term "flesh?" Does it mean the body? It means not only the body, but also the soul. The soul as well as the body is called "flesh," in Scripture, because the unconverted soul loves fleshly things; it only delights in the earth--all its desires are after the things of the world, its pleasures, profits, and honors. But when the Spirit changes a man's fleshly heart, then he has a spiritual nature; then he has desires after spiritual things, after holiness and heaven. By this sign we must examine ourselves. Do we love the things of earth most, or the things of the Spirit? For it is declared in Rom. 8:5, "Those who are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but those who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

But perhaps you may ask, "How is this change effected?" How does the Holy Spirit enter into the soul? Can a person see him enter in? No! the change is wrought silently and secretly; for this reason the Spirit is compared to the wind which blows where it wills; that is, which seems to blow where it likes, for man cannot control it, or even tell where it comes from. Thus, God sends his Spirit where He wills, and we cannot tell how this holy Spirit changes the wicked heart of man. We cannot see the wind, or understand its course; yet we perceive the effects of the wind; we can also behold the effects of the Spirit. Is it our great happiness to feel these effects in our own soul? Those who have felt the refreshing breeze spring up in the evening of a sultry day, need no argument to convince them that the wind blows.

How refreshing to the soul are the effects of the new birth! Before a soul is born again, it pants for happiness, but pants in vain; but when it knows that its sins are blotted out by the Savior's blood, then it feels satisfied, and like a long-lost child just restored to a parent's arms, cries out, "Abba, Father."

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