

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 12TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

BORN OF THE SPIRIT (JOHN 3:1-8) A PHARISEE AND A RABBI

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, could have been among those who witnessed the signs that Jesus was performing during the Passover Festival (John 2:23).

- The text tells us that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night but did not tell us why. It does not seem that he was motivated by fear, but most likely, Jesus was occupied during the day.

NICODEMUS CALLS JESUS "RABBI"

Nicodemus, a great scholar of the O.T., would have been wealthy, educated, and powerful. Though he was twice the age of Jesus, he put aside his role as a teacher and took on the role of student.

- We must approach Jesus with humility and maintain a teachable spirit so we can experience what He has for us.**

NICODEMUS ACKNOWLEDGES THE SIGNS

Though Nicodemus came to Jesus because of the signs He performed and even acknowledged He was from God, it was **not enough evidence of saving faith**.

- Reliance on signs will not save us; only a relationship with Jesus can save us. An acknowledgment or belief in Jesus is the beginning of salvation, not the culmination.**

JESUS OFFERS NEW INFORMATION

Jesus makes it clear that unless someone is **"born again they will not see the Kingdom of God."**

- In this statement, Jesus crushes the belief that the Jewish people had guaranteed entry into the Kingdom of God, because of their birth through the line Abraham. **There are no guarantees in our first birth into this world and we must be born again to see the Kingdom.**

UNDERSTANDING THESE TERMS

The ancient term used for being **"born again"** can also be translated as **"from above,"** so **unless someone is born from above, changed from the inside out, any talk of the Kingdom is pointless.**

- "The Kingdom"** can be **God's sovereignty over the universe, His reign over our hearts, a literal place** (Millennial Kingdom), or **eternity.**

"HOW CAN ANYONE BE BORN WHEN HE IS OLD?"

Nicodemus questioned, "How can this be?" "Am I to go back into my mother's womb?"

"How can I change when I am old?" Nicodemus' questions centered around one thing:

"What can I do to see the Kingdom?"

- It has never been about what we can do to inherit eternal life but what Jesus has already done** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT

Jesus tells Nicodemus, "unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "Water" can represent baptism, water at physical birth, the Word of God, and repentance.

- When we argue about the meaning of "water," we miss that **we do not need reformation, but a radical transformation by the Holy Spirit.**

"SO IT IS WITH EVERYONE BORN OF THE SPIRIT."

Jesus essentially tells Nicodemus, "do not get hung up on this. You do not have to understand everything about the wind to see its effects."

- There are going to be things in following Christ that we can know but may not fully understand. **We do not have to know exactly how this new birth, being born of the Spirit, works in order to experience it!**

HEAVENLY THINGS (JOHN 3:9-13) ARE OUR EYES OPEN TO SEE?

Nicodemus, like many of us, could not look past the physical to see the spiritual things being communicated to him.

- Nic, knowing the scriptures, believed this new birth had taken place, and he was no longer looking for it. **Unless we see the need for spiritual transformation, what more can Jesus tell us?**

"HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?"

Nicodemus asks a third question: How is this all going to happen? or "What does this all mean?"

- Jesus says, as the one with authority, that the way the new birth is accomplished through Him, the Son of Man, on a cross. **We must be born again, but we cannot do this on our own.**

SENT TO SAVE THE WORLD (JOHN 3:14-18) A BRONZE SNAKE ON A POLE

Jesus uses the story of Moses, recorded in Numbers 21, as a parallel to Himself. God punished the rebellion and ungratefulness of the Israelites by sending poisonous snakes to bite them.

- Moses interceded and created an image on a hill that the Israelites would look to for healing from the snake bites.

DO WE SEE THE CORRELATION?

Jesus was crucified on a cross and placed on a hill in a public place where everyone could see.

- In the same way that the Israelites would look to the image on a pole to be healed from the poisonous bites, **if we look to the cross, we will have the poison in us removed, and we will be healed.**

A POWERFUL DECLARATION OF THE GOSPEL

John 3:16 is one of the most quoted and popular verses in all Scripture, but our familiarity cannot cause the weight of what is said to be lost.

- God, the creator of the universe, loves His creation so much that He gave the greatest gift, His Son, to whoever would believe in Him, so that **we are delivered and invited into eternity with Him.**

TWO CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE

Four times in verses 16-18, Jesus uses a variation of "believe," making it clear that there are only two categories of people: believers and unbelievers.

- God did not send Jesus to condemn the world but to save it. We were already condemned because of our sin nature inherited from Adam. **Jesus was sent to the world to save us from destruction, not propel us toward it.**

STEP INTO THE LIGHT (JOHN 3:19-21)

WE CANNOT BLAME SHIFT

Where we end up for eternity is our responsibility.

- Those who reject the love of God, displayed on a cross, refuse all hope in the present, future, and for eternity. **If we respond to the love of God for us, we will not perish but have eternal life and fellowship with God forever.**

TRUTH IS NOT RELATIVE

The reality is that some will resist stepping into the light that is Jesus because they have fallen in love with the darkness and do not want their deeds exposed.

- However, **those who live according to the truth** (John 14:6) **step into the light so they can be transformed from the inside out.**

IT IS A PROCESS

- Our spiritual birth is much like our physical birth in that it is a long uncomfortable, and sometimes painful process that gives way to a beautiful end result.
- We don't question or resist the process. Instead, we must lean in and trust the process.

THE RESULT IS A NEW LIFE

- This process gives way to a new life. The churchy term is "regeneration," which is the Holy Spirit changing us from the inside out.
- This offer of a new life can be experienced there in this life and into eternity, but we must allow the Potter to shape what that life looks like** (Jeremiah 18:5-6).