

Jesus and Nicodemus Discuss the New Birth

May, 26 A.D.

John 2:23-25

John 3:1-21

Early Response to Jesus' Miracles

Text:

John 2:23-25, Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Commentary:

John 2:23-24, Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men.

I. On the occasion of this Passover trip to Jerusalem many believed on Jesus because of the signs (John's word for miracles) they saw him perform.

A. Jesus performed many miracles, only a very few of which were recorded.

B. Wonder what miracles Jesus performed during this first Passover of his public ministry!

II. Jesus knew the nature of humans, knew how fickle humans are, and did not trust himself to those who, at that time, believed on him because Jesus realized they could "pull the rug out from under him" at any time.

John 2:25. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

I. Jesus fully knew and knows the nature of man.

- A. Jesus instantly read the character of both Peter and Nathaniel. God knows each of us as well!

- B. The belief of the Jerusalem multitudes was evidently not "saving faith" such as was evidenced by Andrew, Peter, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew who stood with Jesus day in and day out!

Seeking Answers for Life's Questions

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

Text:

John 3:1-21,

- 1. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;**
- 2. this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."**
- 3. Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."**
- 4. Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"**
- 5. Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**
- 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**
- 7. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'**
- 8. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."**
- 9. Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"**
- 10. Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?**
- 11. Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.**
- 12. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**
- 13. No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of man.**

14. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

15. So that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

16. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

17. For God did not sent his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

18. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

20. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

21. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Introduction:

I. If you were alone with Jesus, what would you like to ask him?

II. What changes need to be made in your life to make it optimally in keeping with the will of God, truly fulfilled?

III. Jesus' teachings and actions and John's preparatory ministry had focused much attention on Christ's ministry.

A. John pointed his disciples to Jesus.

B. Andrew brought Simon and John brought James to Christ. Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus.

C. Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee.

D. Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple.

IV. Nicodemus knew of this notoriety and went to Jesus personally to investigate, to learn more of this unusual person.

Commentary:

John 3:1, 2, Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

I. John chapter 2 ends with many believing on Jesus in Jerusalem.

A. However, this was not enough for these people to be trusted by Jesus.

B. John 2:23-25, No when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man. For He Himself knew what was in man.

C. Against this background Nicodemus visited with Jesus.

II. Nicodemus (Greek: innocent blood; Hebrew: victor over the people) was a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, a ruler of the Jews (a great man, a prince).

A. Nicodemus was certainly one of those believers who was included in John 2:23-25.

B. These believers needed more to achieve true discipleship than simple belief.

III. Nicodemus is mentioned in the Gospel of John three times.

A. John 3:1-21.

B. John 7:45-52, The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

C. John 19:39, 40, Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

IV. Nicodemus confessed his and others' belief that Jesus was a teacher come from God.

A. Nicodemus' conclusion was based on the signs Jesus had been presenting!

B. Note: The Bible does not say why Nicodemus came to Jesus at night.

John 3:3, Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I. Being "born anew," "born again," "born from above" is essential to "seeing the Kingdom of God," Jesus said.

II. The requirement for seeing the Kingdom and enjoying its blessings is forsaking the old life of sin and becoming a new creature in Christ.

III. Those who would enter the Kingdom (see, understand the kingdom) must begin completely anew, experience a startling monumental change, regeneration.

IV. The Kingdom is that domain, sphere of influence over which Christ reigns as sovereign.

V. John 18:36, 37, Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

VI. John 19:19, Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

John 3:4, Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

I. Nicodemus confused the physical birth with the spiritual birth.

II. Nicodemus simply did not understand that of which Jesus was talking.

III. Nicodemus said, "It is impossible to be born again."

John 3:5, Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

I. The new birth into Christ's Kingdom involved both water (baptism) and the Holy Spirit.

II. Ephesians 1:13, 14, In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view for the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

III. Acts 2:38, 39, Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

John 3:6, That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

I. Physical birth is one thing.

II. Spiritual birth is something else altogether.

III. Jesus spoke of two different births which must not be confused or intermingled one with the other.

John 3:7, 8, Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

I. People cannot see the wind, but we can certainly see the force of the wind.

II. People cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can see the effects of the Spirit in changed lifestyles, saved souls and regenerated lives.

John 3:9, Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"

I. Nicodemus simply did not understand how a person could be born again, changed, revolutionized so that everything became new including actions, words, thoughts, goals, perceptions...

II. Mark 4:26-29, And He was saying, "The Kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows – how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

III. We do not have to fully understand the new birth to experience its benefits.

John 3:10, Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"

I. Jesus upbraided Nicodemus for not understanding these basic teachings of the new birth. Nicodemus was himself a teacher of Israel.

II. The Pharisees put their trust in rigid observance of the law in keeping with their interpretations and traditions.

III. Nicodemus should have been able to see the contrast between legalistic conformity and the colossal regeneration of the new birth by which all things are viewed/perceived as being entirely different.

John 3:11, Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.

I. Here Jesus used the pronoun “we” to include his disciples.

II. Jesus and his disciples declared the truth of the new birth and the Kingdom of heaven, but Nicodemus did not believe what Jesus and his disciples taught.

John 3:12, If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

I. Earthy things taught by Jesus included the need to be regenerated/born again while living in His world.

II. Heavenly things taught by Jesus included heaven, hell, the spirit world, the final judgment and the resurrection from the dead.

John 3:13, No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of man.

I. Jesus here claims his uniqueness as God’s messenger.

A. Jesus ascended to heaven.

B. Jesus descended from heaven.

II. “No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of man.”

John 3:14, 15, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; So that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

I. Jesus here makes reference to his passion, to his being lifted up on the cross.

II. Those who truly believe in Jesus and whose lives are thereby remade will receive eternal life.

III. This was similar to Moses' raising the bronze serpent on the standard which resulted in the healing of those afflicted with snake bites when they looked at the bronze serpent. Numbers 21.

IV. The brazen serpent eventually was worshiped as an idol and destroyed.

A. 2 Kings 18:3-6, He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

I. The saving faith here being discussed is the life changing regenerating faith of the new birth!

II. This saving faith was not the kind mentioned in John 2:23-25.

III. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that the world's lost could be saved.

John 3:17, For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

I. The purpose of God's sending his Son into the world was to save the world.

II. The purpose of God's sending his Son into the world was **not** to judge the world.

III. The Jewish leaders, perhaps including Nicodemus, expected the Messiah to:

A. throw off the yoke of the Romans.

B. execute judgment on the Gentiles.

C. restore the glory Israel had enjoyed under David as King.

IV. Christ's goals were not the goals of the Jewish leaders!

John 3:18, He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

I. The person who believes on Christ is not condemned.

II. The person who does not believe on Christ is condemned already.

III. Only in Christ is there salvation.

John 3:19, This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

I. As people then and now respond to the light of Christ, whether positively or negatively, their destiny is sealed for better or worse.

II. The matter of belief and unbelief has more to do with moral orientation (loving darkness or light) than intellectual factors.

John 3:20, 21, For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

I. Everyone who does evil hates (avoids) the light because the light reveals and reproveth the works of darkness.

II. Everyone who lives in keeping with the light is drawn to the light with a view to the lights' revealing his deeds as honorable and commendable.

III. As we teach the gospel we will encounter many different reactions produced by many different factors/motivations.

Note: In a very abbreviated form, this concludes the Jesus – Nicodemus dialogue.

Conclusion:

I. Jesus declared, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

II. The Scriptures emphasize this fact repeatedly.

- A. 1 Samuel 10:6, Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.
- B. Jeremiah 31:33, “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”
- C. Ezekiel 36:26, 27, “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”
- D. Joel 2:28, 29, “It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions, Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

III. What are we to do to continue the progressive new birth in our own hearts and lives and to enable the new birth to be universal?

Jesus and Nicodemus Discuss the New Birth

Questions

1. While _____ was in _____ at the _____, many people saw the _____ signs he was doing and _____ in his name.

2. Jesus knew all men and would not _____ to them. Jesus knew the _____ of _____, knew how _____ are, and did not trust himself to people who could “_____ the _____ out from _____.”

3. _____, a man of the _____, a _____ of the Jews, came to Jesus by _____.

4. _____ said, “_____, we know that you have come from _____ as a _____ because no one can do these signs you do unless _____ is with him.”

5. Jesus replied by saying, “... unless one is _____ he cannot see the _____ of _____.”

6. _____ asked Jesus, “How can a man be _____ when he is _____?” Jesus answered, “... unless one is _____ of _____ and the _____ he cannot enter into the _____ of _____.”

7. _____, a _____ of _____, did not understand the meaning of what Jesus was saying.

8. "As _____ lifted up the _____ in the _____, even so must the _____ of _____ be lifted up."

9. "For _____ so loved the _____ that he gave his _____, that whoever _____ in Him should not _____, but have _____."

10. "... the _____ has come into the _____, and men loved _____ rather than the _____, for their _____ were _____."

11. "... everyone who does _____ hates the _____. ... he who practices the _____ comes to the _____."

12. If you were alone with Jesus as was Nicodemus, what would you like to ask him? _____

13. Nicodemus means "_____ " or _____." Nicodemus was a _____, a member of the _____, a _____ of the Jews.

14. Whatever happened to Moses' brazen serpent? _____

15. What is the last we hear of Nicodemus in the New Testament? _____

Finished exam can be mailed or dropped off at:
Mason Street Church of Christ
2600 N. Mason Street
Appleton, WI 54914
920-734-0785