

THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS

Lesson Three

II. The Ministry of Salvation (1): The Salvation of Nicodemus (John 3:1-16)

Burden to Impart:

Every person needs God's salvation. Regardless how good a person is, he or she must be born again in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Believing on the Lord Jesus is the only way to be born again.

Memory Verse: Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

John 3:5

Facts to Teach:

1. In lesson two we learned about the changing of water into wine. The people considered this to be a miracle. The Lord really performed this sign for the purpose of showing the principle of God's salvation, which is to change death into life. Our Lord came for life, not for miracles. In our lesson today, we want to learn of a very high-class, well educated, good and honest man whom the Lord said needed a new life. His name was Nicodemus.
2. Let us consider Nicodemus and try to get an idea what this elderly Jewish gentleman was like. Some of the good things about Nicodemus were:
 - a) He was a teacher with a high education. He taught the sacred Word of God, the Old Testament.
 - b) He was a ruler of the Jews. He had a position with authority and honor. Probably he was wealthy and highly respected.
 - c) He was an old man, thus he had a great deal of experience.
 - d) He was a moral man, which means he was of a clean and upright character.
 - e) He was truly seeking after God. Even though he was somewhat fearful of the Pharisees, he still came to the Lord Jesus by night.
 - f) He was very humble. Even though he was an elderly, well-educated man, he still came to see the Lord Jesus, who was only about thirty years old. That such a "high" person would come to see the Lord Jesus, a despised "Nazarene" indicates that he was humble. Also, he called the Lord, "rabbi," which is a title of respect.
 - g) Nicodemus was an honest man. His speech indicates his honesty.
3. In spite of all the above wonderful characteristics, Nicodemus was ignorant of God's way of salvation. From his conversation we can see that Nicodemus considered Christ merely to be a teacher from God. This indicates that he thought that he needed better teaching to improve himself. However, the Lord said that he needed to be born anew.
4. Nicodemus was probably the best man on earth (besides Jesus) at that time, and yet Jesus pointed out to him that to be saved is not a matter of merely being good, but of being born again. Nicodemus did not understand what the Lord meant by "being born again." He thought that he had to go back to his mother's womb and be born as a baby. The Lord Jesus answered that that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Jesus plainly told him that to be born anew is to be born of water and of the Spirit. Regardless of how many times he could have been born of his parents, he would have still been just a good natural man with a natural life. He needed the Spirit of God to regenerate his spirit with the life of God; then he would be born again.

(Continued)

THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS

Lesson Three

5. Just as each one of us, Nicodemus had a special organ deep within him, his spirit, made for the purpose that one day he might exercise it to contact God and to receive God into his being. This is to be born anew.
6. What is the way for us to be regenerated? How can we receive regeneration? In John 3:15, 16, 18, and 36, the Lord said, "Everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life"; "He who believes in Him is not judged"; "he who believes in the Son has eternal life." These emphatic words tell us that the way for us to be saved and regenerated is simply to believe in the Lord. Our education, righteousness, good works or money do not count. It is only faith that counts. To believe in the Lord means to receive Him. The Lord is receivable. He is now the life-giving Spirit, with his complete redemption, waiting for us to receive Him. Our spirit is the receiving organ. We can receive the Lord's Spirit into our spirit by believing into Him. Then we are regenerated and can partake of Him as life.
7. Since the Lord used the word "perish" in verse sixteen, he was indicating this to Nicodemus: "Even though you are so religious, so good, so educated and wealthy, you are perishing because you do not have eternal life. If you will only be born again and receive My life, you will never perish."

The Ministry of the Lord Jesus

Lesson Three

1. Who was Nicodemus? (John 3:1)
2. At what time did he come to see Jesus? (John 3:2)
3. What title did he use to address Jesus? (John 3:2)
4. What did he think Jesus was? (John 3:2)
5. Why did he believe that Jesus came from God? (John 3:2)
6. What was Jesus' answer to Nicodemus? (John 3:3)
7. Explain what Nicodemus thought Jesus meant when he said he must be "born anew." (John 3:4)
8. Do even "good people" like Nicodemus need to be born anew? (John 3:5)
9. Explain in your own words how to be born again and enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5, 16)