

## John

Title: Our Great Need

Text: John 3:1-4

Take your Bibles, please, and turn with me to John chapter 3. The Gospel of John chapter 3 beginning with Vs. 1. Our subject: ~~OUR GREAT NEED~~. Or, what is the basic need of every person here today?

John chapter 3 contains the story of Nicodemus. And in this story we find what is sadly lacking among most of Christian teaching in this day and age. And that is, that some how a person can say the right words, do the right things, associate with the right people, and can then be described as a <sup>Jesus</sup> Christian. Dear friends, that teaching is false. And the proof is found here in John chapter 3. In this chapter Jesus remains this very religious man, Nicodemus, that in no way are we reforming ourselves. And in no way can we earn salvation by doing the right things. And thereby become a Christian.

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But, there is something mysterious about God's way. As the Holy Spirit will actually produce in you and in me an experience which will result in a brain new nature. Making us alive, spiritually, just as sure as we are alive physically. Oh, let me tell you, this is a tremendous chapter. Because if you study this chapter carefully, you cannot help but realize that in order to be a Christian, you must be born again. You must experience Spiritual new birth.

John chapter 3 beginning with Vs 1. Would you please stand for the reading of God's Word? (Read John 3:1-4) (Prayer)

So, here is a man from the moral standpoint had every reason to expect that he would be in the kingdom of God. Every reason to expect that he was everything that God wanted him to be as far as righteousness was concerned.

Now, I believe that most of us would not fall into the category of Nicodemus. I believe most of us are aware of our sin. We are aware that we have fallen far short of the glory of God. And we are aware that we need the forgiveness of God.

But, ~~there~~ are some folks who are like Nicodemus. People who believe that they have done so much good in their life that they certainly must receive the blessings of eternal life in heaven. People who believe that ~~if~~ they have done more good than bad, then God, if he is fair and just, must let them into heaven. <sup>Dear</sup> Friends, that belief is straight from Satan. It is not Biblical. And it certainly is not true.

And ~~this~~ story in John 3 proves that issue. Because Nicodemus, from the standpoint of moral purity, is a righteous man. A man who believes that because he is a Pharisee <sup>he</sup> is part of the kingdom of God. Yet, Jesus teaches him that he must be born again.

His position is also stated in Vs 10 when Jesus said to him, "are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?"

Now, something here that I believe I should point out. It is true in the Greek and also in the English. The little word "the" before the word "teacher" means "that he is the top dog." He is THE TEACHER.

When the definite article "THE" is used before a noun it specifies or identifies that noun. When it is left out it simply refers to the quality of what is being discussed.

Jesus is not saying that Nicodemus was simply a teacher. Just one of many teachers. Oh, no... He was asking, "ARE YOU NOT THE TEACHER OF ISRAEL AND YOU DO NOT KNOW THESE THINGS....."

So, from Vs 10, putting all these things together, we have a man with great political influence with a life of moral purity above reproach, and a man who has arisen to the top Rabbi of Israel. And this man is coming to Jesus to discuss with him the matter of His messiahship.

(2) Now, the second thing concerning the approach of Nicodemus is that he faced a very serious problem in his life in <sup>Coming</sup> ~~come~~ to Jesus according to Vs 2.

The Bible says "this man came to Jesus by night." There are all kinds of reasons people give as to why Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. But, I believe the simple reason is that he was a coward. <sup>That's right</sup> He was a big coward.

Let me tell you why I believe this. In Vs 2 Nicodemus says to Jesus, "Rabbi we know"...He doesn't say "Rabbi I know"...He changes the pronoun to "WE". He really wants to know. But he is a coward. And he uses the pronoun "WE".

Now, we do the same thing. We use the pronoun "we" when we don't want the person to know that it is really "I" that is interested. Instead of saying "I" have this problem...We are more apt to say: "We" have this problem. We often say <sup>that</sup> about an issue that is important to us.. "They don't like what you are doing." When in truth it is "I" that doesn't like what you are doing.

So, Nicodemus was a coward

But, there is something else here that is important. Even though He might be a coward---Nicodemus is doing what he is suppose to do as a member of the Sanhedrian. He comes to Jesus and ask: "Rabbi (meaning teacher) we know that you have come ~~from~~ God."

Now, immediately some would say: "There...Nicodemus is a believer." OH.. NO...That doesn't mean that he is a believer. It means that he believed that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. And the Rabbi's were suppose to be teachers sent from God. But, Nicodemus has a problem with Jesus because Jesus is performing miracles. Notice what he says: "For no one can do these signs or miracles that you do, unless God is with him."

Now, let me ask you a question. Is the fact that a person who performs miracles proof that he or She has come from God? NO, IT IS NOT!

You see, Nicodemus' whole approach to Jesus was wrong. And Jesus knew what he really needed. His question is that if you are the Messiah and doing these miracles, I am here to question it. This is my job. I am here to judge it. I am here to evaluate it. <sup>But</sup> The fact that a person does miracles is no proof that he has come from God.

Dear friends, if you have been programmed to think that way, you had better change your mind. Because the Bible says that <sup>in</sup> the last days there is going to be miracles done by false teachers and false prophets. And if it were possible even the elect (those who have come to know Christ) even the elect might be deceived.

Dear friends, do not believe that just because you have seen a miracle that, therefore, that <sup>means</sup> ~~man~~ that it has come from God. No way! That is not the test. That is not the proof.

O.K. what is the proof? The proof is what the WORD OF GOD SAYS. And Nicodemus was coming as a true ruler of the Jews should have come to a man doing miracles. And he is questioning on the bases of Deut. Chapter 18. This chapter teaches the importance of judging a man as to whether he is a true prophet or a false prophet. And so he approaches Jesus in a very kind manner saying: "no one can do these miracles unless God is with him."

Yet, all along he is questioning the credentials of Jesus to be the Messiah. And the thing that makes this exciting for me is that Jesus just ignores that problem. He didn't even talk about it. He just goes to the heart of the problem.

You see, Nicodemus' problem was not discovering whether Jesus' miracles were the credentials of His Messiahship. I hope you know that. Many people saw Jesus do miracles and heard what He said, and yet, still refused to believe in Him? Do you remember the story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus? He told that story to point out a simple truth. And that is,

that if you don't believe the prophets and Moses, you certainly will not believe if someone comes back from the dead.

Do you understand? The problem is in our hearts. That is why it is so important for our life, to understand this passage. We must be born spiritually. And we cannot reason ourselves into heaven. Salvation comes from God as God will cause a real spiritual birth in you. It is literal. It will happen.

And dear friends, that is our greatest need today. In fact, you can't even understand the Bible; you cannot discern things correctly until you have been born of the Spirit of God. Did you know that? It is true. That is why Jesus avoided the issue that Nicodemus was raising and instead he came to the heart of the matter. And that is that Nicodemus if you are going to see (meaning perceive or understand) the things of the Kingdom of God, you must be born again. And dear friends, if you really desire to understand this book, you must be born again. WHY? Because we are really dead spiritually. That is right. The Bible teaches in Eph. 2:1 that we are "dead in our trespasses and sins."

You know, I have talked to many people who question the Bible and the truth of the deity of Christ. And it just reminds me that people ~~can~~<sup>cannot</sup> never really see or understand until they are born spiritually. The Bible says that we are spiritually dead. Oh, man tries religiously so often to reach God. Or, man tries so hard to do what he thinks is right. But, it is all in vain. We are spiritually dead. We are separated from God because of sin. And sin is blocking a real understanding of God. And so, the thing that is needed is to bring us to spiritual life. In other words, we need a new birth that only the Holy Spirit can do.

So, we are <sup>spiritual</sup> dead. And <sup>we need spiritual</sup> the thing that is necessary is to bring us to life. In other words, we need a new birth that only the Holy Spirit can do.

(2.1) Now, let's look at Vs 3. The second thing that I would like you to see concerning our need of the new birth is the answer Jesus gives to Nicodemus  
Jesus said, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

(1.1) First, What is the meaning of the term "born again."

Often times when we refer to <sup>a</sup> true Christians, as if there was a false kind, because you are either a christian or you are not a christian, but we often say: HE IS A BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN. QUESTION: Is there any other kind?

What we mean is that a lot of people sort off Christianize the word "christian." Doing the right thing...saying the right thing...belonging to a church...liking God and so forth. Therefore, <sup>we</sup> call them Christians. Yet, <sup>most of us</sup> many who know what spiritual birth is all about, know that they are not really a Christian. And so they say: "Well, there is a born again Christian. And <sup>they</sup> that must be some other kind." RIDICULOUS...You are either a christian, or, you are not <sup>a christian</sup>

SO, WHAT DOES THE TERM "BORN AGAIN" MEAN?

The word "again" means "a second time". It can also mean "from above." For example..Look at Vs 31 of chapter 3...The same little Greek word translated "again" is here translated "from above." Vs 31 says.."He who comes from above".....And that word "from above" is the same Greek word that appears in Vs 3 and is translated "again."

So, we could correctly say that <sup>to</sup> be born again is to be born from above. That is from heaven...THUS WE SAY..SPIRITUAL BIRTH...

But <sup>meaning</sup> there is a clearer understanding, right there in the <sup>text</sup> text. It is found in the response of Nicodemus.

Jesus said, Vs 3, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Vs 4 Nicodemus ask.."How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb?"

So, the way Nicodemus understood the term "born again" was "Second".  
A second time."

So, the Bible is saying that you must be born a second time. And that is important throughout this whole passage. Your spiritual birth..becomeing a Christ <sup>man</sup> in the terms of the Bible, is just as real and very much like your physical birth. Just look at physical birth and you will then began to understand spiritual birth.

One other point. Jesus is not talking about reformation when he says "born again." You don't turn over a new leaf. That is not what Jesus is talking about. He is talking about being "born a second time." Life beginning

*A New.* Now, some people argue that what Jesus really means is a change of heart. You are born again when you come alive to the needs of people. That all of a sudden you will love like you have never loved before. Now, I believe that happens. But, once again, that is <sup>NOT</sup> the meaning of <sup>being born again</sup> ~~spiritual birth~~

You see, the Bible does not teach that when you are saved or born again, you have a change of heart. <sup>in fact,</sup> Did you know that? We should not teach that people have a change of anything. They don't have a changed heart. The Bible says that there is an addition. You are going to be given a new nature in Christ. You are going to be born of the Spirit. But, you still have that old sin nature, bother. You still have that old <sup>heart</sup> ~~mind~~, sister. You still have the whole old thing that you had before you were saved. God doesn't <sup>So away with your sin nature</sup> ~~change that at all.~~ God gives you a new nature in Christ. And that new nature is likened unto a brain new baby. Think about that.

A new baby cannot feed itself...it cannot understand itself...it cannot even verbal communicate yet...it cannot walk...Do you understand?

And new birth is like that. When you become a Christian it is just as difficult to understand as that little baby is trying to understand himself God has done something wonderful in you. And it may have come on you slowly in terms of now you are aware that you now have a new nature. <sup>or it may have happened</sup> ~~but~~ <sup>suddenly</sup>

~~There is a change of something. It is something to you for your nature in Christ. This will begin to grow in you. You will begin to understand more and more of the things that God has done for you. You will begin to know the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through His Spirit, each principle in your life and you will be born by those principles.~~

But, it is not a change of anything. It is the giving to you of a new nature in Christ, which will begin to change your attitudes and insights and abilities. And this change takes place when you put God's principles to work in your life. You see, you start living by the principles of God's Word. That is why, you need to be in a Bible study of some kind. That is why you need to have a time of personal devotions and prayer. That is why you need to be in worship. *You need these things so that your new nature in Christ will* ~~learning the principles of living from God's Word, you will have no assurance that you are~~ *grow to maturity* ~~spiritually born again. And you will operate your life on other principles that you have learned from a worldly source.~~

*Who have grown* Time after time after time, I have meet people ~~whose has never changed~~. Oh, they have been born again. But, nothing happened in their life. WHY? Because they haven't been apply the principles of God's word to their life. Thus, they have not been growing spiritually. And as a result they cannot understand that we are really alive in Christ Jesus.

But, make no mistake about it. When you are born again. You are born again. It happens in a moment of time just as surely as physical birth.

(2E) Now, secondly, let's ask the question - HOW? How is one born again? *4 basic principles*

(1) First, you hear the Gospel. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17) The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) You have heard the Gospel today. And maybe you have heard it many times. So, you have already met this first requirement.

(2) Secondly, you must be convicted of sin. You must believe that you are lost and need to be saved. On the day of Pentecost the crowd who heard Peter preach, convicted of their sin, cried out: "What shall we do?" The Philippine jailer said to Paul and Silas: "What must I do to be saved?" So, you must be convicted of your sin.



(3~~E~~) Third, you must repent of your sin. No one is ever born again unless he or she repents of all sin. You must ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin.

(4~~F~~) Fourth, you must trust Christ as your only savior. The Bible says that “he who believes in the son has eternal life.” (John 3:36) In John chapter 5:24 Jesus said, “He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life.” In Acts 16:31 Paul said to the Philipians jailer: “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.”

And there it is, dear friends. Those are the four principles which causes a person to be born again. You hear the Gospel. You are then convicted of sin. You repent and ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin. And you trust Jesus as your savior. And when you do that you are born again. You are saved. You are a Christian. You have a new nature in Christ. ~~You are able to understand the Word of God.~~ And you have the wonderful opportunity of being all that God want you to be.

Shall we close in Prayer?

*You who have an ear, let him hear what the Word of God says*