

Lesson 1

"GREATER THINGS"

JESUS and NICODEMUS

"¹There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: ²The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. ³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ⁴Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? ⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. ⁸The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. ⁹Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? ¹⁰Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? ¹¹Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. ¹²If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? ¹³And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. ²¹But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

(John 3:1 - 21)

I. The Approach of Nicodemus to Jesus (verses 1, 2)

A. "A man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night"

(verses 1, 2).

1. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because he did not want his Pharisee friends to know about his visit with Jesus. The Pharisees did not like Jesus and resented the things He was saying and doing.
2. Nicodemus came to Jesus, not with a question, but a statement: "**Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.**" Even so, He was immensely curious.
 - a. He addressed Jesus as "**Rabbi**," meaning that he acknowledged Jesus as a teacher.
 - b. He acknowledged the miracles that Jesus performed. That had to mean that God was with Him.
 - c. This was not idle curiosity. He genuinely wanted to know more about this man and His power.



II. The Response of Jesus to Nicodemus (verses 3 - 8)

- A. **"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**
 - 1. Jesus was telling Nicodemus that He knew that it was difficult for Nicodemus to understand who Jesus was and the things He was doing. Jesus undoubtedly said this because He wanted to rouse curiosity in Nicodemus to ask questions, rather than make further statements.
 - 2. Nicodemus did not understand. He was totally mystified. He asked Jesus, **"How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"** (verse 4).
 - a. This opened the door for Jesus to explain and open the mind and heart of this lost man.
- B. The Nature of the New Birth
 - 1. Jesus replied, **"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"** (verse 5). Jesus explained that flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to Spirit (verse 6).
 - 2. Jesus used the analogy of the wind to illustrate the mystery of spiritual rebirth, emphasizing its unseen nature and power (verse 8).

III. The Struggle of Nicodemus to Understand (verses 9 - 15)

- A. **"Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?"** (verse 9).
 - 1. Nicodemus, despite his knowledge and position, struggled to grasp the concept of spiritual rebirth. He initially interpreted the words of Jesus in a literal, physical sense.
 - 2. Jesus chided Nicodemus for not understanding, even as a respected Jewish teacher (verses 9 - 12).
 - 3. Jesus emphasized that He is the Son of Man who came from heaven and ascended to heaven (verse 13).
 - 4. Jesus drew a parallel between Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness and the Son of Man being lifted up on the cross (verses 14, 15).

IV. The Teachings of Jesus Concerning Salvation and Faith (verses 16 - 21)

- A. **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (verse 16).
 - 1. Jesus declared that all who believe in Him will have eternal life. He died **"that the world through him might be saved"** (verse 17). Above all, Jesus emphasized the love that God has for all the world.
 - 2. To the contrary, those who do not believe are **"condemned already"** (verse 18).
 - 3. Jesus taught Nicodemus that unbelievers are in darkness, and are a stark contrast to believers, who **"cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God"** (verses 19 - 21).
- B. We can conclude that Nicodemus became a believer in Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Upon the crucifixion death of Jesus, **"And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury"** (John 19: 39, 40). This is one of those **"greater things"** of which Jesus spoke.