

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who came from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him." In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:1-3)

This bible verse sets the stage for people today understanding what Jesus said to Nicodemus.

Nicodemus puzzled by the nature of the new birth asks how could these things be? He was blinded to the truth because he prided himself in being a righteous Jew with knowledge of the Law. Nicodemus would probably be welcome at any church today. He seems an ideal member-principled, morally upstanding, knowledgeable, courteous, and humble. However, Nicodemus has two big problems despite all of that outward religious appeal. He was blind to the truth and spiritually dead. The man was lost. That is, he did not have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus adhered to strict Jewish codes and laws, so he was certainly religious. But the problem of the lost person is not attitudes, conduct, or even character. We can change and control those through sheer determination, and many people do. What people really need is a change of condition. We come into this world with a sinful nature that is bent away from God.

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that all his outward goodness couldn't erase, replace, or change his nature. Instead, every person who desires to serve God must be born again. The Lord promised that if Nicodemus received Him as Savior, then he would enter into a brand-new life. His old sinful nature would be transformed so that he could have a real relationship with God. Instead of appearing to be a religious man, Nicodemus would be a true believer. No one gets into heaven on the strength of good works and kind behavior. When we stand before God, only our condition will matter. In place of our old, dead "flesh" nature, we want to show Him the living spirit we received when Jesus Christ came into our life. Condition: Manner of being or form of existence.

Nicodemus couldn't get his arms around the concept of spiritual rebirth. In essence Jesus said this new birth is not that complicated. There must be an inward cleansing that God will make possible through His Spirit. No longer will you be driven by ladders that you've propped up to try to climb to heaven. In your own power, you will never make it. When you accept Jesus you will immediately have a God-given bridge that will take you to Me and bring Jesus to you.

The problem is not that the Bible is unclear or inherently difficult to understand. The problem is that, Jesus said "you do not receive our testimony." (John 3:11) This is why unregenerate people cannot understand God's Word: not because it is unclear but because it is unacceptable to them. Being told he had to be born again offended Nicodemus' pride and went against everything he always believed. To understand the Bible we need Spiritual ministry.

Regenerate: To undergo spiritual conversion or rebirth. To become formed or constructed again.

What do you think it means for the Holy Spirit "to take up Spiritual residence?"

Have you ever known a "spiritual person?" How did you know they were spiritual?

