

Sent: 11/12/2014 2:40:36 P.M. Eastern Standard Time
Subj: Last Nite's MOB Session

Men--Last nite we dealt with one of the greatest and most important portions of Scripture in the Bible--the 3rd chapter of the Gospel of John! It describes the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus--about "being born again"--and then ends with a flashback to the quickly diminishing ministry of John the Baptist. There are some great "take-aways" for all of us!

Nicodemus was a high-ranking member of the Sanhedrin--John calls him a "ruler of the Jews"--who "sought" Jesus by night, and seemed to recognize that He was a teacher "come from God"--based on observing the signs that He "was doing," as John said in 2:23-27. He was a Pharisee, of all things, but one who was actually open to what Jesus had to say and, in effect, responding just like everyone should have responded, based on what Jesus did and said! He was in some ways like Nathaniel, who Jesus called "a true Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." And we thought all Pharisees were just hypocrites who hated Jesus, and wanted nothing to do with Him--certainly weren't open to His teaching!

Nicodemus was obviously shocked when Jesus told him, with great certainty, that "unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God"--something he certainly wanted and expected to attain as a highly respected master-teacher and religious authority *par excellence* in the nation of Israel! What "on earth" did Jesus mean by "needing to be born again," Nicodemus wandered! It's a question just as pertinent for all of us today--and particularly for those in our world who consider themselves quite religious--like Nicodemus--or at least good enough to somehow have eternal life and get into heaven some day!

The term "born again" in the Greek actually means "born from above" or "born anew"--"coming from God"! Jesus then gets more specific with Nicodemus by adding that "...unless a man is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God"--probably referring to an Old Testament passage Nicodemus very likely was familiar with, but obviously never grasped: Ezekiel 36:24-27, which speaks of "spiritual cleansing" and God "...giving you a new heart...and putting My Spirit within you, causing you to walk in My statutes...so you will be My people and I will be your God." Whew!

Jesus is basically telling Nicodemus that he doesn't need more religion! He needs a "new heart"! A new birth"! Spiritual life! He--and all of us too--are "dead in our trespasses and sin" with no real connection to God (Eph. 2:5). That's the way we came into the world, and we need to be "born spiritually"--connected with God through Christ and have the Holy Spirit indwelling us! There are lots of related verses in the Bible making this clear, some of which we discussed last nite.

So, how is it possible for us to be "born again"? It required God to send His Son into the world to die on the cross for our sin. Jesus told Nicodemus that "just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life"--referring to His coming crucifixion, of course. Then John sums up God's great plan of salvation, in John 3:26--a verse known so well to all of us: "For God so loved the

world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Connoting a belief that "fully trusts"!

Like I said, there lots more verses that make this truth clear. Let me give one more! I Peter 1:3 says: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Wow! Something Nicodemus and all of us would want to have!

We also talked last nite about what happens to us as a result of being born again! Well, our lives are changed! We not only have the promise of eternal life, but we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us to help us live a life to honor Him every day of our lives! Like Jesse said last Sunday, we're "slaves and saints"--and so much more, now that we are believers! We'll see this more as we continue our study of John!

Well, there's more to last nite's lesson, and that concerns John the Baptist, who continues to point to Jesus as the way to eternal life--as well as to the consequences of rejecting Him! He knows his own role and realizes that it's "all about Him!" He even says, in 3:30, that "He must increase, but I must decrease!"

Applications for us? They're pretty clear! Examining our own faith? Figuring out how to share the "good news" with others? Being more like John the Baptist, in understanding our role in life, and putting Christ first in everything!

Thanks, men, for sharing--in our small group session--on how God has, and is, working in your lives! And for all the great snacks you guys provided for the men of MOB!

On to Lesson #10! Let's remember to pray for each other! May God bless your week!

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