

The Kingdom Part II: The Kingdom and the New Birthⁱ

In Part I we discussed how near is the kingdom of God. Here we will look at the story of Nicodemus and Jesus. This will not cover all the lessons of this encounter, but will look at the kingdom of God in John 3.

Joh 3:1-3 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The 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. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be **born again**ⁱⁱ, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

I grew up in the Catholic Church and converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church when I was twenty. The words of Jesus to Nicodemus when I first joined the Adventist church meant that we would not see heaven if we were not born again. However, I am now convinced that this is not Jesus' intent for this passage. The meaning is much deeper.

In this passage Jesus points out that unless one is "born again" one cannot see the Kingdom of God. The Gospel of John is the last book of the Bible written according to some scholars. This makes it the only gospel written to second generation Christians. The term "born again" is not the best translation. The better translation is "born from above". This is an important distinction for Christian parents to share with their children. For conversion is different for children who have always known Jesus, as compared to those of us who have had to completely turn our life around. The Bible even states that John the Baptist was born from above in the womb.

That aside, Jesus says, "You must be born from above to see the Kingdom of God". He was not speaking of the future kingdom in heaven, but of God's kingdom here on earth. In the Kingdom Part I: John the Baptist and Jesus point out that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Here is Nicodemus sitting in front of God Incarnate and Nicodemus cannot see the Kingdom of God. And it was sitting right in front of him.

Jesus is clear that you are not "born from above" if you cannot see the Kingdom of God "by your hand". If you are wondering "What God is doing?" you are possibly expressing a lack of the new birth in your life. Do you begin to understand why we need to ask in these last days, "What does a finished work look like to God?"

Because evidence of the being "born from above" is that you see the Kingdom of God at hand. Nicodemus did not like what Jesus was implying. So he had a bunch of questions to try to take the pressure off. Jesus finally told Nicodemus the following. (This is the Ken Brummel translation.)

"Nick, you're not going to get this right now, but when you see the Son of Man lifted up as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness.....then you will understand".

The lesson that Christ had given to Nicodemus had not been in vain. Conviction had fastened upon his mind, and in his heart he had accepted Jesus. Since his interview with the Saviour, he

had earnestly searched the Old Testament Scriptures, and he had seen truth placed in the setting of the gospel. {CTr 234.4}

Nicodemus leaves the interview with Jesus and begins studying the Old Testament, the Bible of his day, differently than he had studied it before. The gospel became clearer to him. He likely saw Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9 differently.

When Nicodemus saw Jesus on the cross, he embraced the cross and cared for Jesus body. He knew this was not an accident. He knew this was the Kingdom of God being acted out on earth. He now experienced the “born from above” experience Jesus predicted he would during that interview nearly two years before.

The question for us is: “Do you see God’s kingdom around you? If you do not then you are not experiencing being “born from above”. For people living in the end time, we must see the Kingdom of God around us. Otherwise, we will likely fight what God is doing. Please seek God until you experience the Kingdom of God around you.

ⁱ King James Version is used unless otherwise noted.

ⁱⁱ Emphasis mine.