

1964
"The New Birth"
Bible Chapel
AM

Scripture Lesson: St. JOHN 3: 7-21

Text: - St. John 3: 7. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Introduction: - The coming of Nicodemus to Christ does not suggest to me that he was a cowardly man. Nicodemus was an intelligent, sincere, devout man; he believed Jesus to be a teacher sent from God. He said that he knew that he was a teacher sent from God, because no man could do the miracles that he was doing except God was with him. He therefore came to Jesus quietly, in the night, not for disputation or controversy, but to know the truth about who Jesus was, and his mission in the world.

It was because of this state of mind that Jesus at once gave him the very heart and center of the gospel. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus thought Jesus was speaking of a new physical birth and marvelled, saying, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Jesus explained that he was not speaking of a physical birth, but a spiritual birth, repeating his assertion, not only to Nicodemus, but to all men for all time, - "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." In his teaching our Lord often used parables, figures, and striking contrasts in order to make the great truths of divine revelation easy to understand. He could not have chosen a better figure than that of birth to illustrate the work

of the Holy Spirit in the individual by which he is recreated, born again, regenerated, made a new creature in Christ.

I.

Our Lord was never more emphatic in any of his teachings than in this strong statement, "Ye must be born again" in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. There must be a change so radical, so grand and so wonderful in one's nature, in order to become a child of God that Jesus calls it a birth, the coming into a man of a new conscious life, a translation from the kingdom of Satan, darkness and death, into the kingdom of God, into light and life. Multiplied thousands have experienced this new birth and are faithful witnesses to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Why should any one object to this new spiritual birth?

Let us remember always, that it is one thing to unite with some church organization and another, and a very different thing, to be born of the Spirit.

Before a man can be born again, there must be a consciousness of sin, a sense of being lost, and the need of a Savior. We call this conviction. The work of conviction is wrought by the Holy Spirit; He and He alone can reveal the wickedness of the violation of divine law. He can give the sinner's intelligence a sense of feeling of his guilt that can not possibly be wrought in him by any sort of human argument or influence. This work of the conviction for sin, wrought by the Holy Spirit, is a very important foundation work in the beginning of the

Christian character. No one can understand the need of salvation and approach Christ in the proper spirit of faith for the supply of that need, until they have had a "profound sense of their own sinfulness and guilt before God."

III.

Nature is full of the wonderful examples of the new birth. The lowly caterpillar, whose chief claim to fame is, that a type of tractor was named after him. His lot seems an empty and useless one, threatened by "land beast," and fowl, but one day he climbs up into a tree, throws a fiber rope around him, and goes to sleep. In a few short weeks the cocoon gives birth to a beautiful, resplendent, winged creature. "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (II Cor. 5:17). He soars over the old pitfalls that used to entrap him, and like a winged angel flies from one flowery fragrance to another. This is a natural thing that happens every year. It is a thing which is readily accepted, though it cannot be explained. It speaks to man, who by nature is given to evil, that there is a higher life for him. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownest him with glory and honor." (Heb. 2:7)

A certain old bachelor, who lived in a shell of selfishness for many years, was careless about his appearance, and uncouth about his manner, fell in love with a beautiful young woman. He now bathed regularly, the wrinkles disappeared from his trousers and the egg from his necktie. He bought a new convertible and some sport clothes. All of his friends said, "What has come over Tom?" Tom had

discovered the kingdom of romance; he had experienced a new birth. Oh, that he had found the new birth that Jesus talked about. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

One look at the average man will tell you that there is something wrong with mankind. Distressed, discouraged and unhappy; driven by passion and ruled by selfishness; quarrelsome and unfriendly, depressed and miserable, is this the creature of which the Bible says, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownest him with glory and honor." Man, as we see him, has no glory and very little honor. What is wrong. One young man, who was held in the grip of an appetite and of lust, said, "I guess I was just born wrong." Yes, that is the reason Jesus said, "Ye must be born again."

Conclusion:—The spiritual birth of which Jesus spoke differs in at least one respect. It is not thrust upon you as a natural consequence of events; you must want the new birth. By an act of your own free will, you must want it.

Man of his own free will, went away from God. He must, by deliberate choice, come back to God. God has done all that needs to be done, as far as the technical part of the transaction is concerned but there is one thing he cannot touch, that is your will. He cannot force you to accept the life he holds for you, holds out to you.

To the millions who have yet to believe and receive the life Christ so earnestly seeks to give, He says, "And ye will not come unto me, that

ye might have life!" (John 5:40).

In the last book of the Bible the Spirit of God still pleads for a yielded will, for upon that one point hinges our eternal destiny. "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

Christ lived, died and yet doth live. John's words, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men", (John 1:4), have been attested to in history and human experience.

Have you been born again? Have you passed from death unto life? Have you yielded you will to his will, and have you received this greatest of all blessings, the new birth. If you have I rejoice with you. If you have not, then I plead with you, accept him now, just now, for this may be your last chance.