

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

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To Study: John 2:12-22, 3:1-21, 7:45-52, 19:38-42; Numbers 21:4-9.

To Read in class: John 3:1-16.

Memory Texts:

Younger: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already." John 3:18

Older: "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." John 3:16

OBJECTIVES: To teach that:

1. Human parents are involved in the first birth, but God alone makes the second birth possible.
2. Individuals are dead in sin, therefore the new birth is necessary.
3. The new birth is a spiritual birth, not a physical one. It is from above, heavenly.
4. Each individual needs to become conscious of his need to experience the new birth.
5. Only those who are born again are fit to enter heaven.

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SCENE 1. VISUAL AIDS: In the temple, a figure of Jesus with a whip in his hand, chasing out the moneychangers and vendors with their animals.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Shortly after attending the wedding in Cana of Galilee, Jesus went to Jerusalem.
  - It was Passover time and Jesus entered the temple. Instead of finding activities having to do with the worship of God, the temple resembled a market. It was used for commercial purposes, including the sale of animals. Also present were moneychangers.
  - As a sign of His authority, Jesus made a whip and threw out the sales people and the animals.
  - His cleansing also involved those who sold doves. The law permitted the poor to sacrifice these birds instead of larger and more costly animals.
  - No one resisted this show of Jesus' authority.
  - Those who were supposedly the leaders of the people ought to have had the same zeal for God's house, but obviously their thoughts were far from those of God.
- Cmt.** In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter warns the shepherds, as leaders of the people, to avoid the practice of seeking dishonest gain.
- Obs.** Places used to spread the gospel ought not to be used for commercial activities or moneymaking projects.

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SCENE 2. VISUAL AIDS: Rooftop of a house in Jerusalem at night with figures of Jesus and Nicodemus talking together. Overlay on the left: Figures representing some of Jesus' miracles. Overlay on the right: A sign with John 3:8 written, and the two earthly examples used to explain the new birth, a newborn child and a tree bending with the wind.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Nicodemus visited Jesus at night and expressed the perplexity of some of the Pharisees.
  - The Pharisees were a strict Jewish sect responsible for teaching the people. They were intrigued and wanted to know from whence came Jesus' power to do miracles.
  - The Sanhedrin was the governing body of the people.
  - Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, (John 7:45 and 50). He was a teacher of the law, so he was well instructed in the Old Testament writings.
- Sug.** There is no point in speculating over the reasons he went at night. The Bible makes no comment on this.
- Lsn.** As Nicodemus did, it is always wise to discover more about the Lord Jesus.

**Cmt.** Nicodemus will be thankful throughout eternity for this interview with Jesus.

**Apl.** Children ought to take every opportunity to learn God's truths.

- Evidence of the authority of Jesus who performed miracles and had just cleansed the temple, made an impact on Nicodemus and others.

**Cns.** Unlike the people of John 2:18, Nicodemus recognized that there was something in Jesus that was not present in other men, for none could do the signs He did.

- Nicodemus did not yet recognize that Jesus was God manifested in flesh. He saw Him only as a teacher with unusual powers.

- The words of praise that Nicodemus directed to Jesus (v.2) showed that he appreciated what the Lord had been doing. He is seeking an explanation of the power that resided in Him.

- The Lord's answer revealed that unless he was born again, he would not understand any explanation.

- Jesus immediately introduced the topic of the new birth as essential to know the truth of God, revealed in Christ Jesus.

**Note: BORN AGAIN** is the translation of the Greek word "*anoten*" and means "be born from above".

- On hearing the words "be born again", Nicodemus' thoughts went to a natural birth.

- It is through the new birth that one enters into the Kingdom of God, and not just by being a Jew or by desiring to be there.

- Nicodemus shared with others the hope of an earthly kingdom thinking that the Messiah would free the Jewish people from the power of the Roman Empire.

- Jesus was saying that entrance into His kingdom was based only on being born again.

- Since His kingdom was characterized by righteousness, those desiring to be part of it needed a radical change to be able to participate in it.

**Apl.** Jesus does not reign over those who carry on in their sinful condition.

**Cmt. THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH, IS FLESH.** To repeat a physical birth would do nothing for the condition of a sinner. Besides being impossible, it offers no solution.

- Nicodemus did not realize that Jesus spoke of internal change, that of the heart and not something external affecting the body.

**Apl.** Most people remember their birth date, but not everybody has two birthdays. Only those who have received life through believing in Christ have been born a second time.

**Sug.** Speak to the students about the reality of the second birth. The first one prepares us to life in this world, the second for living in heaven.

**Cmt.** Through the new birth, one enters and becomes a member of the family of God. All members of this family possess spiritual life. They participate in the divine nature of God (2 Peter 1:4).

- Those that are born into the family of God have the same heavenly Father.

- Jesus spoke of the wind and the effect it produces when it blows. The Holy Spirit is similar to the wind in that when it acts in the life of a person, there is evidence of its presence.

**Cmt.** The wind is invisible, but powerful. Its effects are seen and heard. It acts with sovereignty.

**Cns.** Just as one cannot dictate to the wind about how to act, there is no question of manipulating the Holy Spirit, only of submitting to Him.

**Apl.** When the Holy Spirit imparts new life to a sinner that believes the gospel, there is a notable change in the way that individual conducts his life.

**Lsn.** Converted persons begin to detest the evil things that previously they loved. The things of God that previously did not interest them now draw their attention, and they value them.

- No one fully understands the behaviour of the wind but all take advantage of its benefits. So also no one completely understands the workings of the Spirit, but when a person responds with faith to the word of the Gospel, He performs the miracle of making the person a new creature in Christ Jesus.



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## SCENE No. 4. (OPTIONAL) Flash cards that illustrate part of John 3:16.

### DEVELOPMENT:

- To teach John 3:16, Krata Kraft has a book of flash cards that explain the verse part by part.
- If the teacher wishes, part of the class time can be used to teach this verse.
- Also, for the smaller children, bring a measuring tape to accompany the first card.

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### BIBLE DICTIONARY:

**THE SANHEDRIN** was the supreme court for the Jews during those times when first the Greeks, then the Romans ruled the country of Israel. It was made up of 70 men as well as the president, who was the acting High Priest at the time. This counsel ruled on all matters that had to do with the Mosaic Law.

**THE PHARISEES:** A prominent sect of the Jews in the time of Christ. They were opposed to Jesus and His teachings and they conspired to put Him to death. They believed in both the written and the oral law, in the resurrection of the body, in the existence of a spiritual world, in the immortality of the soul, in future reward or punishment depending on the works of each one.

The Pharisees were those who taught the Scriptures, but they added on many things that were not contained in the Old Testament.

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