

Meeting Jesus

Nicodemus

Foundation

Bible passage : John 3.1-21

The Pharisees appeared devout and godly but were too focussed on their rules, rather than the heart of true faith. They reacted strongly against Jesus and He taught against them. But Nicodemus was different and, tentatively, willing to be seen to be different. Later we find him speaking up for Jesus (Jn 7.50) and assisting at His burial (Jn 19.39).

When he approached Jesus he seems to have been genuinely interested, but went at night so as not to be noticed. His opening words also show his openness to Jesus whilst His first response, as often, seems strange. He said something that was confusing, and apparently deliberately so. Nicodemus could have responded by dismissing it, but it actually drew him in to ask questions, which allowed Jesus to explain more.

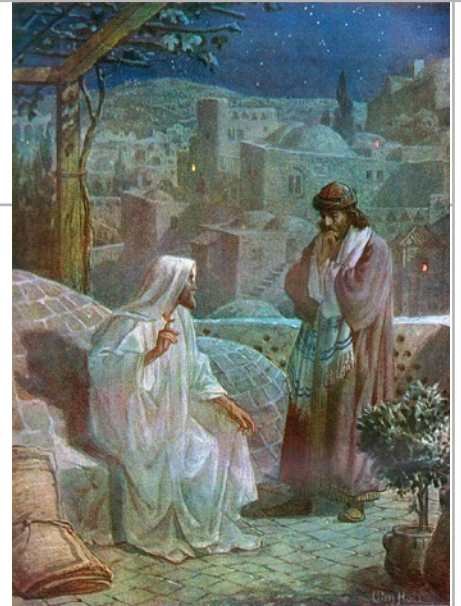
“You must be born again”

What Jesus said is hard to understand, and not easy to explain to others, but it is a very important truth. He said that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again. He went on to explain that this new birth is not physical but spiritual, through the Holy Spirit

Born Again & Regeneration

The theological term for being born again is regeneration. It is used of the whole creation in Matt. 19.28 and of believers in Titus 3.5. The core of the Greek word is *ginomai*, to be born, as in Genesis. John 3.5 & 7 use a pair of words which mean the same thing; “born” (*ginomai*) and “again”.

Nicodemus visiting Jesus by William Brassey Hole (1846-1917).



(v5). He also explained that this new life is made possible because He would be put to death for us (v14-15). All this means that we are dead to God because of our sin, but through the death of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit, we can have new life. As Jesus went on to say, that new life does not end when we physically die, it will be forever (v16).

Whilst Jesus spoke about being born again as a work of the Holy Spirit, from our perspective, as He says, we must believe in Jesus (v16-18).

The passage therefore shows us all three persons of the Trinity are at work in salvation. The Father acts in love, the Son was lifted up (crucified/raised), the Spirit gives new birth. It also shows that we need to accept what Jesus says (v11) and believe in Him (v5, 16 & 18).

Later tradition about Nicodemus is quite weak but it is said that he was baptised after the resurrection by Peter and John. Because of this he was stripped and beaten and driven out of Jerusalem. But his friend, the famous Rabbi Gamaliel, sheltered him.



Jesus explained that through the work of the Holy Spirit and by believing in Jesus we enter the Kingdom of God.