

Bible Study Lectures

The concluding scripture of this study is found in 1 John 5:8. "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Surely here is food for thought. Do these three bear witness in your life? Do you have the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in your life? Have you obeyed the command of Scripture and gone through the waters of baptism? And do you know the power of the blood to save from sin? Do these three bear witness in your life?

42. BORN OF THE SPIRIT

Essential to Adoption as Sons of God and Entrance to Heavenly Family

IN the silent dead of night on the river Niemen, that little stream separating Russia from old East Prussia, on June 25, 1807, there was a meeting of two men fraught with great consequences. At midnight two boats put off, one from either shore. Each boat contained a solitary figure dressed with military decorations. One was Napoleon of France, the other Alexander of Russia. They met, saluted each other, and anchored their boats in midstream. The meeting was momentous, for it was to settle the destiny of Europe, and to decide the division of territory.

With this introductory illustration Pastor Mitchell spoke in the mission marquee on Wednesday night on, the subject of the "New Birth."

ETERNAL DESTINY OF MANKIND

But there was another night meeting, eighteen hundred years before, of infinitely greater importance to you and me. It took place just outside the stone walls of old Jerusalem, on the shaded slopes of the Mount of Olives. At this meeting information was disclosed the acceptance or rejection of which will decide the eternal destiny, not of Europe only, but of mankind. The two who met on that momentous occasion were not empire builders of this world. One was Jesus, the Savior of men; the other, Nicodemus, who had great admiration for the masterly ability of Jesus as a teacher. "Rabbi," he said, "we know, that You art a teacher come from God." He sought instruction; his need was salvation. He addressed Jesus as a teacher; what he needed was a Savior. Not theoretical knowledge, but spiritual regeneration was his lack.

Jesus, the Master Teacher and Savior as well, came directly to the greatest need in the life of Nicodemus. Though he was a citizen of the highest civil and social standards, Jesus said to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3. Yes, Nicodemus, I mean you. "Marvel not that I say unto thee, you must be born again." John 3:7. Nicodemus was surprised that such a message should be pressed home to his own self. Did a man of his status need a new birth? To whom was Jesus speaking? A thief? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3.

An adulterer? A murderer? Oh, no; far from it! Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, learned, cultured, talented, honest, moral. Let us get the lesson. Had it been to the woman of Samaria who had had five husbands, or one of the fraudulent tax gatherers, we might have missed this great truth. The man who prided himself in his high moral qualities might have excused himself from the necessity of a new birth. But no! Catch the import of this great message. Nicodemus was uncondemned by the highest social standards, and was orthodox in his views, yet he heard the words addressed to his own heart: "Ye must be born again." The words of John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," apply not only to the sinner of the deepest dye, but to all men.

BORN OF THE SPIRIT

Three times in Scripture the word "except" is used with tremendous solemnity. In Luke 13:3: "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Matthew 18:3: "Except you be converted, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, in John 3:3, with marginal reading: "Except a man be born from above, he can not see the kingdom of God." Without the new birth of the Spirit a man is but gifted, moral, or refined flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is, flesh." John 3:6. And John 6:63 reminds us that the qualities of the flesh profit nothing. The expression, "born of the flesh," only means that a man's carnal nature is in control. Such persons cannot understand God's way or His message, or become members of the heavenly kingdom, any more than a singing canary can understand human communications or become a member of the human family. Unless one is born of the Spirit, one cannot please God, and would be out of place in heaven; he is therefore debarred from heavenly citizenship, until he enters through the "new birth" gateway to the kingdom.

Bible Study Lectures

"Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, If He's not born in thee, thy heart is still forlorn."

The issue cannot be evaded. He who is born but once will die twice. But he who is born twice will die but once, and that death has been changed into a sleep, which terminates with the resurrection.

Thus it becomes a very solemn question: Have you been born again, born from above, born of the Spirit? It is said of Wesley that he reached more than a thousand times from the text, "Ye must be again." And when asked why he preached so much from one text, he replied, "Because, you must be born again."

Romans 8:4 reveals the fact that the "righteousness of the law" - can only be fulfilled in those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And verse 9 states: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." The same experience is described by Peter, "That you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Romans 8:15 refers to those thus born of the Spirit, and led by the Spirit, as having "received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." 1 Peter 1:23 reads: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever."

THE NEW BIRTH

Being thus adopted into the family by this new birth, 1 John 3:2 explains: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Revelation 3:5 shows that the name is written in the book of life. And Revelation 3:12 and 14:1 refer to the Father's name being received.

Even in this world some countries require the birth certificate to accompany the passport before admission is granted. You and I are nearing the great boundary line of the eternal country. Is your birth certificate into the heavenly kingdom registered in the books of that kingdom? It will be necessary that our names are there as a result of the new birth, and that they have not been blotted out as a result of unconfessed sin. Will there be any luggage inspection? I well remember walking off the ship into the Customs Department in Wellington, New Zealand, in the closing days of December, 1926. I remember the Customs officer examining the goods of a Chinese. He was breaking open wrappings and examining each little detail. The Chinese said, "You all the time think he opium. He no opium."

Have you examined your luggage with a view to entrance into the last great port? Sins will have to be overcome, confessed, forgiven. No sins will enter heaven. Some may try to smuggle in some little pet sins, but they will be disappointed. Do you and I approach the border line of eternity with confidence? One of the saddest things one can imagine would be on the arrival at the last great customs port to be debarred entrance, because of not having been born again. Conversion and the new birth are two aspects of the one transaction. Conversion is our turning to God. The new birth is God's response by giving us the enabling presence and power of His Holy Spirit, who, if not grieved away or "quenched" by sin, will safely lead the ones he controls 'into the eternal harbor at last.'

43. PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD

Big Dividends to Those in Full Partnership

DESIRING to educate his son in the profitable handling of money, a banker gave him a half-crown to invest. He advised his son in interest to some boy who could be trusted. The father promised to increase his boy's capital if he invested the money wisely. When night came, the banker said: "Well, son, how did you invest your money today?" "Well, father," replied the little fellow, "I saw a boy on the street without shoes, and he had had no dinner; so I gave him my half-crown to buy something to eat."

"You'll never make a businessman," said the banker; "business is business. But I will try you once more. Now here is five shillings to invest; See how you can do it."

A loud peal of laughter from the boy followed this speech. He then explained to his father: "My Sunday-school teacher said giving to the poor was lending to the Lord; and she said He would return to us double; but I did not think He would do it quite so quickly."

Many others have learned by experience (but perhaps not as early in life as this banker's son), the truth of the words of Proverbs 11:25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat."

Not only are there definite blessings promised to those who are liberal in their gifts; but there are also special promises made to those who enter into partnership with God in paying what God claims as His.