

John 3:5 – 36

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~ **Our Spiritual Safari** met Nicodemus in the last leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God. Little Nikki mysteriously appeared out of the darkness and began questioning Jesus. Remember, Jesus would not commit Himself to the crowd in our previous report - and that crowd believed on Him. Unfortunately, they were only seeking some benefit or a miracle. Jesus didn't know them. Nicodemus, the Pharisee, was different. Nikki was a religious ruler of the Jews. We considered the myriad ways in which he functioned; and all the masks he wore. When he was at the meeting of the Pharisees, he was one of them. When he was out on the street, he was a very guarded, careful but revered religious ruler amongst the Jews. But when he got home at night, he was just plain little old Nikki; and his family, friends and wife only knew him that way.

Nicodemus approached Jesus as a Pharisee and said, "... Rabbi, WE know..." The "we" referring to the Pharisees. They all knew in their hearts that no man could do these miracles unless that man had come from God! That seemed to be a genuine compliment. Jesus never called Nikki a hypocrite; and if Nikki had of been a hypocrite, the Lord Jesus would have said so. Remember, Jesus knows what's in a man's heart. Jesus did, however, abruptly change the subject.

Nicodemus was likely sent by the Sanhedrin as an ambassador to align Jesus with their cause and theology. Jesus would have made a great ally for the Pharisees because of His popularity. The Pharisees never denied His miracles. Many were turning to Jesus. The religious rulers acknowledged all of that! Remember, the Pharisees wanted to throw off the yoke of Rome and that was their only concern; well, Nikki found Jesus to be concerned with Nikki, personally. Jesus just cuts him off when He said, "except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." This was a very definite detour for Nicodemus. The mask of the Pharisee just fell off here.

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Even so, this man, Nicodemus, is also a ruler of the Jews, so when the mask of the Pharisee fell off, the mask of the ruler was clearly seen. Nikki asks, "... how can a man be born again; can he enter into his mother's womb again..." - and all that? All Nicodemus can understand is the physical. Nikki has no spiritual discernment whatsoever....

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

~ Some people believe the water in this verse is a reference to water baptism. If it did refer to baptism, then this is a very strange expression. A physical birth is a birth of water; as in, the child en utero but, be that as it may, Jesus is talking about being born again spiritually, from above. In Scripture, water represents the Word of God. Jesus prayed, "sanctify them by Thy truth and by Thy Word!" The Word of God is the cleansing, sanctifying power God affords to mankind. Jesus also says, "ye are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you!" So, we can easily establish the Word of God being likened unto water throughout Scripture. Anyone who is ever born again will do so by the Holy Spirit opening the Scriptures to their understanding - and no other way. This safari states emphatically that no one can ever be born again without the use of the Word of God by the Holy Spirit making it real to their life and mind.

There are three great conversions recorded in the book of Acts, and they are very definite spiritual illustrations. The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, Cornelius and Paul the apostle are all recorded in Acts. These three represent the three sons of Noah; Ham, Shem and Japheth – and in every conversion case, we have the Word of God used by the Spirit of God. More specifically, we have the Word of God being used through the man of God to make the conversions. That seems to be God's only method in this day in which we live. If you think you will enter the Kingdom of God under any other circumstances than being in Christ, then you just happen to be woefully mistaken....

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

~ This fading body of flesh we are stuck in is not going to be changed for the better while we are inhabiting it. God doesn't intend to rehabilitate the flesh, make it able to do more - nor for it to live longer. In fact, the flesh cannot be changed; so, it is impossible for the flesh to change under its own volition. The flesh is absolutely corrupt, according to the Bible. God says the carnal mind is enmity against Him. Our carnal minds are not subject to the law, neither, indeed, can it be. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. God won't be improving the flesh or renovating it or developing it one iota. The flesh goes down into a grave unless the Lord comes before we die; in which case we are still to be changed to be made like Him. That 'change' means to get rid of our flesh because we can never be made obedient unto God in the flesh – there's simply no way. Make no mistake: God does not intend to save the flesh by any means. Spiritual birth is vital, we must be given a new nature and our old nature must ultimately be done away with. Our old nature cannot be salvaged in any capacity for any reason....

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

~ The second mask little Nikki wore is coming off fast now, too - as Jesus drives the point home with all of us. Air currents and wind patterns are something man will never understand, even with modern day sophistication of technological and meteorological gadgetry. Nikki doesn't understand air currents, either; and his head is swimming now. The wind bloweth where it will, friends. You are not going to change the wind, but the wind may start or stop at any time. If you have ever tried to track a Florida hurricane, you'll know that we know nothing about what wild wind does when it wants to. We can't tame it and we can't control it, but we sure can tell if it's blowing at any particular moment.

Moving along, I don't know how to explain the spiritual birth. SO many books are written by men that do not know that they do not know anything

about spiritual birth – or the wind, for that matter. I am willing to admit I don't know, and I don't see how we could know – and I'm pretty sure that's what Jesus means here. The wind bloweth where it wants to. Just like the wind, we don't know how or when the Spirit of God moves or operates in others lives; but we sure do know it when we see it move and happen. You and I can put on the masks before each other – and so many people do – but that mask only hides who you really are. When you come to the Lord Jesus, you'll have to take the mask off. God wants you to come as you are. That's the only time when the Lord can communicate with you and deal with you....

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

~ Jesus was being very nice with His subtle sarcasm. Nikki regretted asking the question the moment it left his lips, too. Here he was trying to keep up the front and he has to admit he has no idea what's going on. See, Nicodemus hadn't received the witness of Jesus - even as He spoke with Him....

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

~ This sure raises some questions about Elijah and Enoch, does it not? Their translations were to the place called Paradise – not Heaven. We know that very definitely because Jesus says here that He is the only One that has ever been in Heaven. The Old Testament saints always had an earthly promise; today, if we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord – and,

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as we just said, Christ is in Heaven. This is really a beautiful and glorious picture....

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

~ When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, all the people had to do was look to it. Now, as Moses lifted up the serpent, Jesus must be lifted up; and all you have to do is look upon Him, friends. That serpent represented the sin of the people. Christ was made sin for us on the cross where He bore our sins. After all of that, the Lord Jesus utters to Nicodemus the words that I am sure form the most familiar passage we have in the entire Bible....

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 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.

~ Jesus has already said we must be born again. We're also told the Son of Man must be lifted up; and the two are related. The death of Christ and the resurrection must be lifted up; and since He has been lifted up on the cross and bore the penalty for our sins then the Spirit of God can regenerate us at the point where we are born again. That is when we can trust in the One Who bore that penalty and that's when God will receive us. When we trust and believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died in our stead on the cross, we are saved.

Now, God never saved the world by love. That is one of the huge mistakes that float religious airwaves today. The love of God does not save a sinner. God saves by grace; by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves but by God that gives grace freely as a gift; and not of works lest any man should boast. God loved the world enough to provide a Savior. Those who don't accept Christ as their Savior are already dead and will remain so. Let's not trifle with this passage and play with the profound truths whereby we

reduce it to something that forms a self-help psychology and, as a result, becomes utterly useless and meaningless....

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

~ We remember the man who asked Jesus to sit in judgment before and the Lord made it very clear He was not the judge at that time - when He was here on earth. Jesus was here as the Savior – not a judge. When Jesus returns the next time to the earth, He will be the Judge. And what we have next is the judgment of the world. The day the world crucified Christ, they made a decision that must needs be judged of God....

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

25 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

~ John was the last of the Old Testament prophets and, of course, we find him walking out on the pages of the New Testament. John is not connected to the church in any way. We know the bride will be the church and John, the friend of the bridegroom, will be present at the marriage supper. I think John will give an equally striking testimony about this at that time. John makes it clear every step of the way that the Lord Jesus Christ is superior to any and all creation....

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

~ If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ then you have everlasting life right now. If you do not believe, the wrath of God abideth on you. Friends, I can't make this report any clearer than it is. That's the testimony of John the Baptist regarding the Lord Jesus Christ - and what a testimony it is. However, it's nothing compared to the testimony we are about to receive from John in this Gospel in our next report ~

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