



Sunday, March 15, 2009: The New Birth

Scripture: John 3:1-15

Sermon Notes:

1. After Jesus had deeply offended the Pharisees by cleansing the temple, Nicodemus came to him, asking a genuine question: "Rabbi, we know that you are from God..."
2. Although Jesus appears to change the subject, he is actually answering the assumption underlying Nicodemus' concern.
3. Jesus corrected the faulty Jewish view that he would be a military Messiah.
4. King Jesus would bring liberation and change to His people by individual regeneration from the power of sin, not by political liberation from Roman rule.
5. Jesus is answering the central question of all true seekers: how is Christ's kingship manifested?
6. To experience the kingdom of God truly requires inward spiritual regeneration.
7. John 8:31-59. Jesus' concern is spiritual Israel, not racial Israel.
8. In verse 4, Nicodemus does not ask about literal "rebirth" but his question reflects a reluctance to be remade – to be free from patterns of life, speech and thought.
9. Jesus answers that we cannot see the kingdom of God unless we are changed.
10. Baptism of water refers to John's baptism of repentance, which looked forward to the Baptism of fire by the Holy Spirit.
11. Jesus does not denigrate the flesh, but rather shows the necessity of an inward work of the Holy Spirit to accompany outward baptism by water.
12. Verse 10: Nicodemus should have known that the Old Testament is full of references to the new birth and the

expansion of the Kingdom's scope to include Gentiles: Ezekiel 36:25-28; Jeremiah 31; cf. Ephesians 2:11-22.

13. Jesus teaches that the bronze serpent lifted up in the wilderness looks forward to another emblem of judgment and mercy: the Cross.

Application Questions:

1. Do I understand the need for spiritual rebirth, or am I content with external forms of religion?
2. Why did the Pharisees' emphasis regarding the kingdom of God start with socio-political change rather than spiritual change in the heart of each individual?
3. Do I have misconceptions about the nature and scope of the Kingdom which need to be corrected by the Word of God?
4. What for Jesus defines true Israelites? See John 8:31-59.
5. Do you have regrets and pain in your past? How has God turned your history for good since your New Birth?
6. How is Jesus' death on the cross an emblem of judgment and mercy toward God's people?