

A BURNING TRUTH
LUKE 24:32

"Ye must be born again" - John 3:7. These startling, striking words were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to Nicodemus. We will all surely admit that He knew of what He was speaking, for He was the Son of God. His Wisdom and Knowledge should certainly be unquestioned in this so-called Christian land.

The man whom He addressed came to Jesus by night. He did not want anyone to suspect that he was interested in this lowly Nazarene, this Prophet whose fame was spreading throughout Judea. It was only the common, illiterate people - the "sinners," as the Pharisees said - who were influenced by the words of this Man; and Nicodemus was not of this character (in his own eyes). No, indeed; he was no sinner, as he would say. He was a moral man, a respectable citizen of the community; yea, he was an educated, devout Pharisee, "a ruler of the Jews."

So he came when it was dark; and the very manner of his coming expresses the marvelous fact which he figures - that the root of sin is hidden. It may often be, as in the present case, covered with a moral, respectable exterior - a coat of culture, refinement, education, etc.; but none the less true, the "sin" is there.

Nicodemus may not have realized his condition; he may have really believed that he was a good man, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the law. But Jesus wasted no time in explanations. He was rather abrupt in His address to this dignified, self-righteous Pharisee, who came in the dark. (Little did he realize that he was coming to "the Light of the world"). yet, he acknowledged that this Prophet was from God for, as he wisely concludes, "No man can do these miracles ... except God be with him" - John 3:2.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" - John 3:2. He goes right to the root of the trouble - the source of life. The tree is bad; consequently, the fruit is bad also, being of the same character. And though in the case of Nicodemus, the real fruit was not allowed to ripen, being nipped in the bud, as it were; yet the nature of the tree is not changed. The sin is there in the life of the flesh. This must be remedied. There must be another life for the human race - another seed, another birth - ere there can be any change of fruit.

The question of Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" assures us of the mystery of these words, "Ye must be born again." But, when we know ourselves, we "marvel not." We then acknowledge the truth which is so manifest - "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and cannot be changed. We behold the truth of this verdict upon the flesh, in our children, our family, and our friends, as well as in our enemies. They may have had every advantage as to environment - socially, educationally, and religiously; they may appear most noble, refined, aesthetic, and even saintly. Nevertheless, the evil is there, in every one born of the flesh. We must have another birth to get rid of the evil.

At the present time there is need to emphasize, as never before, the above requirement; for the world is being cleaned up - whitewashed, as it were - by human skill. A great reformation of the old creation is planned; the old man is going to be fixed up. Yes, he thinks to fix himself up. He imagines that he can bring in the Millennium by reformation.

Men dislike to be confronted continually with the positive outward evidence that they are sinners. The fruit of sin must be put out of sight, must be abolished forever.

Men do not like it (though "fools make a mock at sin" itself - Proverbs 14:9). They are going to create a new world, a beautiful world, according to man; purity, peace, and propriety are to reign on every hand. Men are determined to do this of themselves, independent of God. And yet the words of Jesus stand, "Ye must be born again." It will never change the flesh, to hinder it from doing what it desires to do; for the desires come from within, and cannot be reached nor controlled by prohibitions. This is beyond the power of man; for the desires are in the very life of the flesh. The desires are wrong, because the life is wrong. "Make the tree good, and his fruit good" - Matthew 12:33. It will not help matters any to hang some good fruit on the outside, and then endeavor to make ourselves and everyone else believe that it grew there. It will shortly be manifested that such is not the case; for truly, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." It cannot be disguised. But when we start right, get a new life, a good pure life, and thus become a good tree; then the good fruit follows naturally. It springs forth spontaneously, in due season, because the tree is good.

Marvel not, therefore, that Jesus said, "Ye must be born again"; because the flesh cannot enter heaven. It would not be heaven, if sin or sinful flesh were there. There must be a change. And Jesus tells us just exactly how this is accomplished - not by entering the second time into our mother's womb and being born, for that would only be another birth of the flesh; but it is accomplished by the power of the Spirit. And as the fleshly birth manifests that it is flesh, just so the spiritual birth manifests that it is spirit. The former is wholly earthly; the latter is wholly heavenly. Make no mistake. The fruit will follow according to the life. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It grows on the tree. It is not put on, but rather it is a result of the nature of the tree - a spiritual fruit.

Jesus Christ Himself is the Source of this life. He tells Nicodemus the wondrous fact, hitherto unknown, that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" - the Last Adam - that man might not perish because of his sinful life which he received from the first Adam; but that he might have another life, even "everlasting life." But the Last Adam had to be "lifted up" on a cross, made sin for us, ere this could be accomplished. He had to die as the old Adam, representative head and source of the life of the flesh, thus putting it out of the way forever: and then rise into newness of life, the Last Adam, representative Head and Source of the Life of the Spirit. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world," because of its sin, "but that the world through Him might be saved" - John 3:17.

Now there is only one condition, one way of receiving this new birth of the Spirit - "He that believeth on Him (the Son) is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already"; not because he has sinned, but "because he hath not believed in the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God" - John 3:18. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of obtaining the new birth, the spiritual life, and of entering into the Kingdom of God. "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" - John 3:36.