

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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“Ye Must Be Born Again”

Introduction

For some time the ancient rabbi had been pondering the questions which rolled across his mind like the waves of the sea. This Jesus who was the talk of the city of Jerusalem, miracles were being done by Him and He certainly was a teacher like no other rabbi. “Who was He? Where did He get his in-depth knowledge of divine things? How did He do the miracles He did for there was no denying them?” There was little or no advanced warning about His coming, just one day John Baptist pointed Him out and said, “Behold the Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29). His teachings were so authoritative and precise and despite referring to Himself constantly in an exclusive manner, there was no egotism in what He said. To say, “I am the Light of the world” (Jn. 8:12) or “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6) was just so factual. This rabbi, the chief rabbi, determined that he had to find out for himself, but how? If the other rabbis and Jewish leaders knew he was associating with this Jesus it could spell trouble. During the day it was impossible to speak to him privately, besides, He was so often in other people’s homes and he could not go there uninvited. There was only one thing to do, find out where He went in the evening hours and see him in the darkness. So it happened, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night (Jn. 3:2). He soon found himself completely out of his depth in spiritual understanding for he said unto him, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (Jn. 3:3). The Lord said to him, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3). Now Nicodemus was really perplexed. Taking each word or clause and considering them presents a very sobering set of truths.

The Basic Truth - “Ye must be born again”

- 1) “Ye”
 - a) Looking at Nicodemus the ruler of the Jews, this religious man, in our wording, similar to the Archbishop of Canterbury or an Archdeacon in a local church, the Lord said, “Ye must be born again” and “Except a man be born again, *(or born from above inducing a different type of birth)* he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Then, just in case Nicodemus missed the absoluteness and finality of it, the Lord said a second time, “Ye must be born again” (Jn. 3:7). In my mind’s eye I can see Nicodemus sitting in the night shades stroking his beard and looking at Jesus, then to the ground or into the distance, and then back to Jesus. He understood the term “born again, for when a Gentile proselyte became a Jew and was baptized, it was said, “He is born again”, but the way Jesus said it, it was different. How or why would he, a Jewish Rabbi, need to be born again?”
 - b) Pondering the words deeply he could have thought:
 - i) “Ye” that indicates the individual, including me!
 - ii) “Must” indicates an absolute necessity.

- iii) “Be” indicates something I am not now but need that experience or I shall never, despite all my religion and works for God, see the Kingdom of God.
- iv) Clearly, a decision needs to be made for without this being “born again” the individual cannot see the Kingdom of God. I can see him questioning:
 - a) Have I, religious Nicodemus the Jewish rabbi, ever been born again? If not, how can I be born again and see the Kingdom of God?
- c) Possibly his mind would have gone back to his people, the Jews, in ancient Egypt when God had given a decree. The decree being when the Destroyer came through that night and if the firstborn was to be alive in the morning a lamb had to die and it’s blood put on the door posts and lintel of the house and they were all to go in (Ex. 12). The Jewish lad and the Egyptian lad were all under the same condemnation. It was irrelevant if one had a pagan background and the other a son of Abraham, both were under the condemnation of death. It did not matter if the firstborn was an ungodly child and the other was a God fearing individual, both were under condemnation. In the words of John, they were “condemned already” (Jn. 3:17-18).
 - i) This is the first step toward salvation, being “born again”. It does not matter if I am a really evil sinner or someone who is stupendously helpful, one who cares little for the things of God or one who by good works seeks to make themselves pleasing to God, they each are “condemned already”. There is no need to wait until the judgment or try to adjust things in their lifestyle, the judgment is passed. Every individual who has never known what it is to be converted to God, to be born again, is even as they live moment by moment are under the condemnation of God. The condemnation could not be nullified by good works for they were under condemnation by birth! Each was born under this sentence and no works could ever cancel that condemnation.
 - ii) It is a matter all must face the reality of. No matter what my background is, no matter if I am peeved off at God, no matter if some christian did something for which I have never forgiven them, I personally am under the condemnation of God and sentence means banishment from God, in other words, “Hell for all eternity”.

2) Must

- a) On this most serious matter, when in question is “Heaven or Hell for eternity”. There must be no room for not knowing. If I was in Vancouver and wanted to get the bus to Abbotsford where I live, how foolish I would be to ask someone who is as ignorant as I am about routes how to get home. It would be just as foolish to get on the first bus I see and hope it was going my way. In preparation for the quickest non-returning journey of my life, that being death, wise is the individual who believes God’s truth and not the lies of man. Jesus, who never lied says, “Ye **MUST** be born again (Jn. 3:7).
- b) The options of every individual on the face of the earth, be they a commoner or royalty, wealthy or poor, educated or illiterate, are the same, “Ye must be born again” or never see the “Kingdom of God”. The decision is personal and individualistic. No one can make that decision for another. Foolish is the individual who blames someone else for wanting nothing to do with the gospel, for it is possible the other individual will be in Heaven and the one who wanted nothing to do with it banished in Hell. No one to blame but themselves for it was their decision to be born again and be sure of Heaven or to reject God’s prescribed way and be banished in the blackness of darkness without an iota of hope for mercy for all eternity.

3) Be

- a) It is a very real experience, a deliberate turning from dependance on what I can do to inherit eternal life to putting my dependence on the finished work of Christ on the cross. When our Lord was on earth a rich young ruler came and asked, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk. 18:18). He thought he could inherit it by his sincere good works. The Lord told him to sell all that he had and so trust in the Lord, depend on the Lord for everything. He could not do that. Losing self dependence and to depend on God’s grace alone He could not do. He wanted to do something for salvation. “Be” means total acknowledgement of one’s own inabilities to gain or work for God’s favour. The thief on the cross was born again and could not do a religious deed for Jesus said, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:43). To be born again is the acceptance of God’s free gift. As the scriptures say, “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). The hymn writer penned it well, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling”.

4) Born again

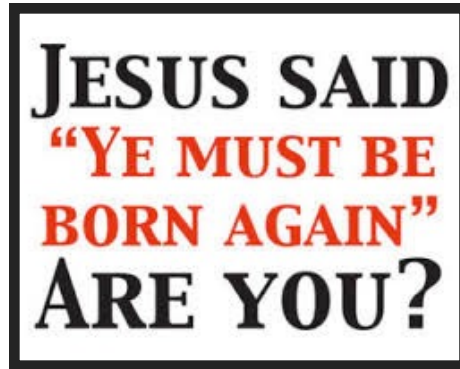
- a) I was born into this natural world without any activity on my part. All was done by another, so with salvation. The Lord explained to Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16). Note the word “HAVE”.

It is not may have or there is a possibility of having, but right now an individual can know with assurance, “I have eternal life, I have been born again”.

Conclusion:

The decision is the individual’s, the choice is the individuals, no one is in Hell because there was no salvation for them. They made a decision of, “I will not trust the words of the Lord, I will try to get to Heaven my own way”. That is fatal for the scriptures say, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man (or woman), but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). The decision is yours. Oh that you may heed the warning and choose life in Christ.

. . . *Rowan Jennings*



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