

## **“You Must Be Born Again”**

Joseph J Graber 9/29/2013

**John 3:1-21**

### **The Story of the Hasidim**

- Hasidim means “godly” or “gracious”
- Under Greek rule, the Jews were coming under the influence of Greek thought and culture
- Prior to the Maccabbean revolt, their Greco-Syrian ruler brought in Jason to be the High Priest for the Jews in an effort to make the Jews conform to the rest of the empire
- Jason built a gymnasium and began to teach the Jewish children Greek games and encouraged them to wear Greek clothes.
- Jewish Hellenists from the cities were going along with this, but the Hasidim, ordinary middle class Jews who loved God, were concerned that their sons and daughters were embracing the decadent Greek life style and culture.
- When the Maccabbean revolt began the Hasidim were also active. They took measures to make sure that their Jewish religion as proclaimed by Moses and the Prophets was not lost.

### **Pharisees in the Time of Christ**

- The Name Pharisee means, “Those who separate themselves”
- They came from the Hasidim
- First appeared during the reign of John Hyrcanus in 135 BC
- At the time of Christ there were about 6000 Pharisees
- Josephus, a contemporary Jewish historian, describes the Pharisees as “a body of Jews who profess to be more religious than the rest, and to explain the laws more precisely.”
- In addition to the 613 laws of Moses, the Pharisees tried to clarify each law with additional rules. They would have long discussions on such topics as whether or not it was alright to eat an egg that had been laid on the Sabbath.

### **Now we Come to Nicodemus, a Pharisee in the time of Christ**

#### **John 3**

1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

### **Why Did Nicodemus Come At Night?**

1. Jesus was busy all day – Nicodemus didn't want to interrupt his public ministry
2. Nicodemus was busy all day – as a member of the Sanhedrin; He came to Jesus at his first opportunity
3. He was afraid of the other Pharisees – He didn't want to be seen with Jesus
4. He wanted a private conversation with Jesus – not to talk politics, but to talk about his own soul

### **The Fruit of The Night Visit**

#### **John 7**

45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?"

46 The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

47 Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived?"

48 "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?"

49 "But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."

50 Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them,

51 "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"

52 They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee."

53 And everyone went to his own house. (NKJV)

### **John 19**

38 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus.

39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.

40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

42 So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

### **What was the message that changed Nicodemus?**

#### **John 3**

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

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

7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"

### **As a Teacher In Israel, Nicodemus Knew**

#### **Ezekiel 36**

25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

28 "Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

#### **John 3**

11 "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.

12 "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

13 "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

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

15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

## The Serpent In The Wilderness

### Numbers 21

4 Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.

5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread."

6 So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

8 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live."

9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.



## The Serpent: 680 Years Later

### 2 Kings 18

1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign.

2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah.

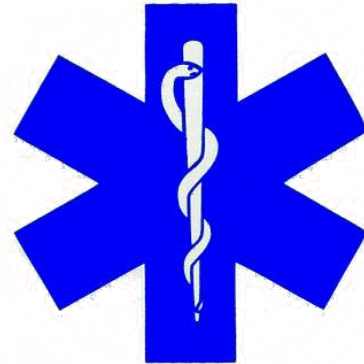
3 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.

6 For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.

7 The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.



*“Just as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the wilderness...*

*..even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life”.*

*John 3:14-15*

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## The Heart of the Message

### John 3

16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

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

20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

## The Light Defined

### John 8

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

## What We Learn from Nicodemus: From the Writings of Another Pharisee

### 1 Corinthians 1

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--

31 that, as it is written, **"He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."**

## The message to Nicodemus is the message to all of us:

Whether wise or foolish,  
rich or poor,

we have to surrender everything that we are to Jesus Christ.

We must leave our pride at the foot of the cross in order to receive the fulness of Christ's love.