

TEXT John 3:1-19; Romans 8:1

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES 1 Samuel 10:9; Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:9; 5:4,5

OBJECTIVE The students will be capable of describing the results that take place in a person’s life when one is saved.

KEY VERSE Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. — 2 Corinthians 5:17

RESOURCE MATERIAL Tract No. 30 — The New Birth

Brand-New

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The Pharisees were a group of Jewish religious leaders in New Testament times who were trained in the Old Testament laws, but made many strict rules of their own. Pharisees were the most influential sect of the Jews. They wore distinguishing garments and were zealous in following tradition and the Law. *Pharisee* means “the separated one.” They were very much against Jesus, and he denounced them in the bitterest language. See Matthew 15:7,8; 23:5,13-15,23 and Mark 7:6.

The highest Jewish council of the day, the Sanhedrin, began after the Babylonian captivity, and resembled our supreme court. The council consisted of seventy-one men: Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, and scribes. It was

headed by the high priest with authority over religious and civil matters. It finally became extinct about A.D. 425.

Rabbi was a title of respect applied to Hebrew doctors and teachers.

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day made a great pretense of keeping the Law of Moses. Actually they were bound by the traditions of the elders who put their own interpretation on the Mosaic Law. Jesus said, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). Nicodemus must have realized there was more to serving God than just keeping those traditions.

YOUR OPENER

RESPONSES

1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. The Bible does not tell why he came to Jesus by night. Was it because of Nicodemus' busy daytime schedule, or Jesus' activities that kept the two apart? It was more apt to have been the former, for Jesus always had time to receive those who came to Him. Being a member of the Sanhedrin and ruler of the Jews, was Nicodemus afraid of the opinions of his peers if they had knowledge of the meeting? In any case, his coming to Jesus by night marks every reference to Nicodemus in the Bible. Add to the discussion the thought that the important thing about Nicodemus was that he did come to Jesus as an honest inquirer.

2. Students may reply that curiosity, a hunger for something real, or a need for a miracle in their own lives would attract people. Jesus had earlier left Capernaum, and with His disciples had proceeded to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. While in Jerusalem it seems that Jesus performed a number of miracles, extraordinary events manifesting a supernatural work of God (John 2:23). The Jewish people were looking forward to the coming Messiah, and the working of miracles convinced many that Jesus was indeed that Messiah. For example, Nicodemus heard and believed that "no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

3. Individuals in the class will respond with different paraphrases, but the essence of Christ's statement is that it is necessary to have a spiritual rebirth in order to enter Heaven. Discuss with the class that Heaven will include only twice-born people. Why is this true? Rehearse with class participation that ever since Adam and Eve's transgression, people have been born in sin (Psalm 51:5). The natural carnal man is prone to sin; in fact, he cannot avoid sinning, until a spiritual rebirth in Christ Jesus takes place.

4. Jesus said that there is no exception. No doubt Nicodemus was a good person. As a Pharisee he was committed to keeping the Law of Moses in scrupulous detail, but was it possible for the Law to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4)? The Law and all its ordinances was a temporary expedient, pointing toward the perfect atonement of Jesus Christ. Discuss with your class that being good in our own strength is not sufficient. In dealing with an unconverted heart the Holy Spirit will always uncover sin—if not open sin, then covered sins such as anger, malice, hatred, jealousy, and envy. Jesus made the necessity of the new birth very plain.

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Because of the original sin of Adam and Eve, we are unable (without Christ) to live without sinning against God and against our fellowman. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). However, the Bible has outlined certain steps that a person may take in order to have his sins forgiven. If we follow these steps carefully, acknowledging Christ as the Son of God with power to forgive and keep us from sin, honestly inviting Him to be Lord of our lives, a miracle happens. We become a brand-new person in Christ Jesus, as expressed in our key verse.

- 1. What kind of person was Nicodemus? Why did he come to Jesus by night?
- 2. Why would the working of miracles attract a person to Christ?
- 3. Explain in your own words what Jesus told Nicodemus.
- 4. Why is there no exception to the necessity for the new birth? What about "good" people?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. Once a person is born again, how is it possible for him to live each day without sinning against God? See 1 John 3:9; 5:4,5,18.

6. Jesus healed a man at the pool of Bethesda and gave him a special command. What was this command (John 5:14)? What explicit directions did Jesus give to the woman taken in adultery, whom He forgave (John 8:11)? What significance must be placed upon these instructions?

7. List the works of the flesh, of which a Christian will not be guilty (Galatians 5:19-21). Which part of the key verse applies to these things?

8. When "old" things pass away, what are some of the "new" things that come into our lives?

9. Review John 3:16; Romans 5:1; 8:1 and 12:2, and list some additional results of being born again.

5. When a man is born again his sins are forgiven and gone, and God gives grace to live a life without sin. Ask your students if any sin will enter Heaven. If not, why not? A person's sins have to be forgiven before he can go to Heaven. Jesus' death on Calvary has made this possible. There are those who profess to know Christ, yet they say that the best of men in this life will sin in thought, word, and deed every day. Why would they say this? It is true of the natural man, but note again the key verse for this lesson. When the new birth in Christ is received, a miraculous change takes place in the heart: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." It would be tragic indeed if Christ had given His life on that cruel cross only to leave men with just their own human ability to serve Him. Thank God, He gives more grace. See Titus 2:11,12.

6. The command was "sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Jesus said to the woman, "go, and sin no more." The significance of these instructions is that Jesus expects those who follow Him to live without sinning in this present life. For an interesting aside, have the students recount some testimonies of people who have been born again and have gone forward in life to "sin no more."

7. The works of the flesh are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Discuss with your class that the works of the flesh are the "old things" that pass away from the Christian's life.

8. Your students' answers to this question should provide a thrilling account of the joys and blessings of salvation. You might wish to set up a circle response with your students, asking each of them to contribute one thought about the change that occurs at the new birth. See 1 Peter 1:3-9 as an additional text.

9. John 3:16 — everlasting life. Romans 5:1 — peace. Romans 8:1 — freedom from condemnation. Romans 12:2 — transformation. Not only does God, through Christ, forgive us for past sins but through Him we are given power to go and sin no more. Sinful desires are replaced by a deep desire to please God. As the Apostle explains in Romans 8, we no longer live as servants to the flesh, but instead are controlled by the Spirit of God. The works of the flesh are replaced by the fruit of the Spirit. What a change! Close the lesson, reinforcing the thought that our Christian victory over sin remains as long as we daily yield ourselves to God and righteousness and trust in Christ to do His work in our lives (Romans 6:17-23).

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Do you think there are people who resemble the Pharisees today? Describe some characteristics that would be the same.

In your own words, how would you have explained to Nicodemus what it means to be born again?

What did Jesus mean by His reference to Moses' lifting up the serpent in the wilderness?

Describe the metamorphosis of a butterfly. Liken that to the changes that take place when one is converted. What happens to our "old self"?

How can we have the hope of the Resurrection?

How old must one be before he can be saved? How old were you when you first learned you must be saved?

What well-known and often-quoted verse is in this lesson? Can you say it by heart?

What is the meaning of the word *condemnation*? How does one get rid of feeling condemned?

The ANSWER story tells about a monarch. What kind of monarch? Make a comparison between that monarch and a person who has been born again.

THINGS TO DO

Obtain pictures of a caterpillar and butterfly (or, better yet, real ones) to show the total change from one creature to another.

A couple of days ahead, put a carnation stem in red colored water. Take an undyed carnation to class plus the dyed flower to demonstrate how the life-giving Blood of Jesus flows through us when we are born again.

Early in the week, sprout some alfalfa seeds. (You could use corn, beans, etc., but they would take longer.) Take sprouted seeds and unsprouted seeds to class to show

how the unsprouted look dead, but when soaked in water they sprout (come to life). Compare this to how we can be born anew through the Blood of Jesus, which gives us life.

Use a hand fan to demonstrate the wind. (You can feel it, but can't see it.)

Take an old and a new item (old and new shoe, old and new toy, etc.) and see which the students think is best. Just so, our new self in Christ will be much better than our old self.

Answers for ANSWER

Born Again!

New life is given to all who choose to follow Jesus and live for Him. The words below are from the Bible text. Find them in the wordfind.

GOD
JEW
LIFE
FLESH
JESUS
LIGHT
RABBI
RULER
SAVED
WORLD
HEAVEN
MARVEL
SPIRIT
BELIEVE
CONDEMN
KINGDOM
TEACHER
TESTIFY
WITNESS
DARKNESS
MIRACLES
BORN AGAIN
NICODEMUS
EVERLASTING

K S A R U L E H E H C A E T
I E E M S V I M A P Y R G B
N L J A J F P S D B K G W N
G C C R E V E I L E B F I U
D A H V W V H L R Y O I T K
O R E E S B K R O D R S N S
M I A L T Z S U W A N U E S
J M V O L E X Z S W A M S E
E V E R L A S T I N G E S N
S Z N E E T A T V Q A D B K
U P W E D O V R I N I O T R
S P I R I T E E H F N C M A
D I H L G O D X A J V I Q D
T H G I L C O N D E M N I C

