

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

John 3,1-21 (3)

"In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

Last week we were encouraged by Nehemiah to challenge the great work of spiritual revival through cooperation. Instead of being intimidated by adversaries or false doctrines, we are allowed to work and fight at the same time to form 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams and to mobilize our sheep and the next generation. May God help us this spring to build our respective section of the wall at each school, faculty and university with one voice and experience God's mighty work.

Today we continue the study of the Gospel of John. In John 3, Jesus taught the necessity of being born again and said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Through Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, let us also find the clear answers for ourselves personally: "What is spiritual rebirth and how can I experience it? What is the kingdom of God and how can I see the kingdom of God?" May God grant each one of us the grace of being born again, that we may see the Kingdom of God and live a blessed new life under the Lordship of Jesus.

1. Unless one is born again (1-13)

Let's look at verses one and two: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." Nicodemus was a member of the high council, the Sanhedrin. The high council was presided over by the high priest and had 71 members: mainly Sadducees, but also Pharisees, priests, Jewish elders. The Sanhedrin was the supreme political and religious authority at the time of Jesus. Nicodemus had had a great career. He was a teacher of Israel. He was respected, honored and even envied. But in his heart, Nicodemus had a problem. He came in the middle of the night because he was tormented by the question: "How is it possible that I am a teacher of Israel and yet I do not understand the spiritual world? Why do I not see anything of the kingdom of God? Why do I feel so empty and burned out? What is it all about this Jesus? I must find out!"

When Nicodemus came to Jesus during the night, Jesus immediately addressed Nicodemus' spiritual problem. Let us look at verse 3: "In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Despite his knowledge and all the recognition he received, Nicodemus was deeply desperate because he lived without a relationship with God. Although he was religiously active, he had no personal relationship with the living God. Therefore, Jesus told him: "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What does it mean to see the Kingdom of God? It means to enter into a completely new, namely the spiritual world. People who see the Kingdom of God experience heavenly joy and deep peace of heart. To see the Kingdom of God also means that one stands under the kingly rule of Jesus and is ready to obey Jesus' word.

Are you born anew? Can you see the Kingdom of God? Is God your loving Father and you his be-

loved child? Is Christ the Lord of your life, or are you still ruled by your sinful ego? May God grant us the grace of spiritual rebirth, so that we can see the Kingdom of God, the spiritual world.

How does Nicodemus react to Jesus' answer? In verse 4, Nicodemus said to Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time in his mother's womb and be born?" His answer clearly reveals that in Nicodemus' heart there was not yet a kingdom of God, i.e., there was no reign of God and no spiritual world. He still lived in this earthly world. He believed only what he could see and understand and explain with his mind.

But Jesus did not give up the proud Nicodemus. Out of the shepherd's heart Jesus continued to speak to him. Let us read verse 5: "Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

First: From water. By "water" Jesus meant the water baptism practiced by John the Baptist at the Jordan River. John was the pioneer of Jesus Christ. He stood in the desert and preached repentance and baptized those who repented and made penance. To be born again, we must first repent on the basis of the Word of God. Repentance means to acknowledge one's sin on the basis of the Word of God, confessing it before God.

Secondly, by spirit. Spirit refers to the baptism in the Spirit, which those who hear the Word of God receive, accept it and the royal rule of Jesus Christ over their lives through repentance. 1 Peter 1:23 says, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."

When Augustine was filled with sorrow and despair, he heard a child's voice, which with a singing sound, cried out again and again: "Take and read; take and read! He wondered and came to the conclusion that this was a divine voice to him, telling him to open his Bible. The first paragraph on which his eyes fell was the word from Romans 13:13.14: "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." This word led Augustine to repent of his godless, sinful lifestyle and gave him the grace of spiritual rebirth. No one can be born again by his own power. But the living Word of God has power to change your life by 180 degrees. The Word of God lets you recognize your sin before God and confess it and it can help you to leave your old life behind and start a new, changed and influential life under Jesus' Kingdom.

Would you also like to see the Kingdom of God? Would you like to see the spiritual world where Jesus rules and Jesus is powerful? Then accept God's reign personally and experience the spiritual rebirth through the Word of God. Apostle Paul was once a proud Jew who cruelly persecuted even the first Christians, thinking that he was doing God a service. But when Paul met the resurrected Jesus and repented, he was reborn into a new creature. In Galatians 2:20 he testified to his new life under the reign of God: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Paul also encouraged and exhorted the believers with regard to God's rule over their new life, saying in Romans 6:13, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

The new life under the reign of God is a completely new and changed life. It has nothing more to do with our old, sinful, selfish life! It is a life where we obey Jesus' world mission command and proclaim the Word of God to the ends of the earth with the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus commands us in Matthew 28:19-20: "... Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. "And behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We are sinners by nature. Our own ego is at the center of it. But through the grace of spiritual re-

birth we receive a whole new life. Now Jesus is the Lord and the center of our lives and we live for the fulfillment of His holy mission. We live under Jesus' lordship, therefore we obey His word. We are no longer children of the world, although we still live in this world. We are children of God and God's holy people. Our greatest desire is to do the will of our Lord Jesus by going and preaching the gospel at all universities in Germany, Europe and even into the Muslim world and forming one-to-one Bible study teams with the young people.

A person who is born again of water and the Spirit leads a completely new life under the reign of Jesus. He who is born again has received the Holy Spirit and has become the child of God. His face shines and reflects something of the glory of God. In his heart there is the peace of God and a living hope. Such a person has received God's heart and God's vision. He carries the vision and hope of God for his generation in his heart: Germany, a kingdom of priests and Europe, a continent sending missionaries. He shares the grace received with others by forming one-to-one Bible study teams so that young people can meet Jesus, be born again and even experience a spiritual revival.

I lived under the dominion of my sinful ego for many years. Although I grew up in a Christian home, I did not know Jesus. I was even baptized and confirmed. But I was not born again. So I did not know the spiritual world and could not see the Kingdom of God. My goal in life was to have a career, to earn a lot of money and to make a big name for myself that would shine day and night with big letters. But God's initiative love and the life-giving power of the Word of God led me to repentance. Through Mark 8:29 "You are the Christ" I was allowed to repent of my selfishness and selfishness and receive Jesus as the Christ and Lord of my life. The prayer of Jesus on the cross (Lk 23:34a) "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" revealed to me the unconditional and forgiving love of Jesus, so that I was allowed to build my life on it and be born again. So Jesus changed a selfish salesman of light bulbs and vacuum cleaners into a Bible teacher and servant of the Word like D. L. Moody.

Let us read verses 6-8: "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." All Nicodemus had to do was to accept Jesus' words and let the Spirit of God work in him.

After Nicodemus asked, "How can this happen?" Jesus continued to say to him (10b-13): "You are Israel's teacher and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven - the Son of Man." All Nicodemus had to do was to abandon his fixed human way of thinking, overcome his pride, and with simple, childlike faith accept Jesus as the Savior promised by God and sent into the world. Let us repent of our sins on the basis of a word of God, receive the Holy Spirit and be born again to a new life under the Lordship of Jesus.

2. For God so loved the world (14-21)

In this section we want to reflect on the universal love of God and on the uniqueness of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Let us look at verses 14 and 15: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." These verses refer to an event during the desert migration of Israel (Gen 21:6-9). At that time the Israelites had grumbled against God and against the servant of God, Moses. God sent fiery snakes that bit around them, so that many people died because of the deadly poison. Just as the Israelites did at that time, so today all people without exception are infected by the deadly poison of sin. We human beings are as helpless before the poison of sin as the whole world is today before the corona virus. But the sin was and is even worse than the corona virus. All humans are infected by it. And the mortality rate is 100%!

When Moses lifted up a bronze snake and everyone who looked at it in faith stayed alive, a great work of faith was done. Those who looked at the snake in faith stayed alive. So we too: whoever lives in faith in the promise of God and trusts completely in the work of redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross, has life. Let us read verse 16 together: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This verse summarizes the core message of the Scriptures. God's motive is the love for lost sinners. And his goal is to save the sinners who never came to God, but rather had to be lost forever.

Why did God send Jesus into this world? Verse 16 gives us the answer: because God loved this world so much! God could have given up on us and destroyed the world. But instead, he promised to send a Savior into the world right after the Fall in Paradise. More than 300 promises in the Old Testament announced the coming of the Messiah, the Savior. But a perfect redemption could never happen through a sacrificial animal or a human being. There was only one way: God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, into this world as the perfect sacrifice. Jesus is the incarnated God himself. His substitutionary death on the cross had a great effect: all those who believe in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and accept the shed blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins receive the grace of forgiveness and are completely healed from the leprosy of sin. This is the work of faith.

We accept the love of God and the redemption work of Jesus by faith. We lead the new life by faith in Jesus. We believe his word. We believe his promise. This is really your whole new life - that we no longer live by looking, but by faith. Our reason for faith is Jesus himself. As Paul testifies in 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." The false teachings of our time are very loud: They want us to build our lives on another reason: On money, success, career, a good feeling or other people. But God's children build on the only solid and true reason: on JESUS and on his WORD. John 1:12 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--"

We live with the promise of God from Ezk 37,10 and 1.Peter 2,9, that God will make the spiritually dead bones of this generation alive through his word and that he will restore Germany and Europe to a kingdom of priests and holy people of God. God's servants M. Peter and M. Sarah came to Germany with God's promise and served the work of God in the past 40 years with devotion by holding fast to God's promise, especially Mk 11:22, Mk 6:37, Ezk 37:10. Out of the love of God, M. Peter gave up his doctorate and career opportunities and served the young people through the community of life. This allowed locals to be established as shepherds, Bible teachers and spiritual leaders, even to found blessed house churches for world mission and to grow the next generation as global spiritual leaders.

A cold-hearted computer person heard the word of God from John 5:6 "Do you want to get well?" and was allowed to experience Jesus' power to forgive and heal sins. Now he leads a new life of devotion to the Lord and is used by God as a spiritual leader and servant of the Word of God. A student used to lie on his bed as if paralyzed and listen to Wagner operas. But God's Word 2 Tim 2:15 changed him into a righteous and efficient gospel worker. He now leads a life of devotion, distributing the Word of Truth among the students.

We have received new life through faith in Jesus. But this new life no longer belongs to ourselves. We are dearly bought by the blood of Jesus. He has made us his property and called us to be a kingdom of priests and a Holy People. Let us look at verse 19: "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." Sinful man loves darkness. But he who repents may come boldly to the light of Jesus. Let us read verse 21: "But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

Whoever has accepted the unconditional love of God in Jesus Christ does not remain in darkness. He comes to the light of Jesus. He lives by faith and experiences that his work in God is done.

Today we have come to know the absolute necessity of spiritual rebirth. Through rebirth, God opens our spiritual eyes so that we can see the Kingdom of God and the beautiful spiritual world. We see how much God loved this world, that He gave His own Son Jesus, for me, for you and for all people, so that all who believe in Him may not be lost, but may have eternal life. Let us accept this love of God, live as children of God in the light of Jesus and give our lives for the spiritual rebirth and revival of young people with the promise of God (Ezek 37:10; 1 Peter 2:9).

Let us read the main verse (3) together: "In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."