

## **Bible Study: To see the kingdom of heaven you must be born from above.**

*You will get more out of this study if you read the verses and ponder the questions several times a day. You'll also get more out of the study if you discuss it with others. Jesus says where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is there with them.*

### **Monday**                    John 3:1-3 (NRSV)

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

*Instead of the phrase "being born from above," some translations have "being born anew" or "being born again." What do you think Jesus means when he says that no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above (or born again or born anew)?*

### **Tuesday**                    John 3:4-8 (NRSV)

Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

*Jesus said you can tell who is born of the Spirit because you can see evidence of the Spirit's activity in that person's life.*

*Who do you know that you would say is born of the Spirit?*

*What evidence of the Spirit's presence do you see in that person's life?*

### **Wednesday**                Numbers 21:5-9 (NRSV)

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 we detest this miserable food." Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

*It helps to know the context of this story. The people were complaining against God's miraculous provision for them in the wilderness. They were sick of it. But they were the ones who rejected the far more amazing good that God wanted to give them in Caanan; they were the ones who chose to stay in the wilderness. Now they were unhappy with the consequences of their choice. So they complained and blamed God, instead of acknowledging their own guilt.*

*Psalms 32 says, "While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. . . . Then . . . I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin."*

*What do you need to confess to God?*

### **Thursday**                    John 3:9-17 (NRSV)

[Jesus said,] "Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows

where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

*The Augsburg Confessions say:*

*Instruction is also given among us to show that the faith here spoken of is not that possessed by the devil and the ungodly, who also believe the history of Christ's suffering and his resurrection from the dead, but we mean such true faith as believes that we receive grace and forgiveness of sin through Christ. . . . Augustine also reminds us that we would understand the word "faith" in the Scriptures to mean confidence in God, assurance that God is gracious to us, and not merely such a knowledge of historical events as the devil also possesses.*

*Do you believe in Jesus, believing that God is gracious to you, that God has forgiven your sin through Christ?*

**Friday**                      John 3:18-21 (NRSV)

"Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

*How many of your deeds do you want to be exposed by the light of Christ?*

*How many of your deeds do you want to stay in darkness?*

**Saturday**

*How to Get a Miracle (in four easy steps)*

- 1) Talk to God about the need.*
- 2) Do whatever God tells you.*
- 3) If you don't hear anything specific, do anything Jesus told his followers to do.\**
- 4) Repeat.*

*\*Jesus told his followers lots of things, but here's a reminder of the basics:*

*Love God with everything you've got.*

*Love yourself*

*Love those you see in need. (Announce good news to the poor, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, raise the dead.)*

*What needs of the world do you want to talk to God about?*

*What are you hearing God tell you?*

*When will you take action?*

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