

R.A. Torrey:

DISCOVERY OF THE FACTS

1. Eternal Life Man's Greatest Need, vv. 1-13

Why did Nicodemus come to Jesus at all? Why did he come by night? (John 12:42, 43.) How many times is he spoken of in the Bible as "he that came to Jesus by night"? Is that a very flattering title? Are there any nowadays that deserve it? Will those who never come out openly on Christ's side be saved? (Ro. 10:10; Matt. 10:32, 33.) What did Nicodemus recognize in Jesus? On what ground? Was he right in thinking that the signs Jesus did were conclusive evidence that He was "a teacher come from God"? (John 5:36; 9:30-33; 14:10, 11; Acts 2:22.) Why is it then that men reject Jesus as such in face of all these miracles? (John 12:37-40; 15:22-24.) What was all that Nicodemus recognized his need of at the outset? What did Jesus show him that he needed? What sort of man was he? And yet, what did he need before he could see or enter the kingdom of God?

What is it to be "born again"? (John 1:13; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:17.) How can a man be "born again"? (John 1:12; 3:14; see Num. 21:8.) How had Nicodemus tried to dodge the searching force of Christ's word? What is unbelief always asking? Did Jesus tell him "how"? What did He tell him? How do we know that Jesus regarded this teaching as of more than ordinary importance?

Are we to understand from verse 5 that it is necessary for a man to be baptized in order to enter into the kingdom of God? (See Luke 23:39-43.) Are we to understand that it is through baptism that men are begotten again? (Compare 1 Cor. 4:15 with 1 Cor. 1:14.) What is the "cleansing water" of which a man must be born in order to enter into the kingdom of God? (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23.) Who then is the agent in regeneration according to verse 5? What is the instrument the Spirit uses? What is the sinner's part in the new birth? (John 1:12; 5:24.) What is the preacher's part in regeneration? (1 Cor. 4:15; Ro. 10:14.)

Why does every man need to be born again (v. 6)? (Ro. 8:7, 8; Gal. 5:19-21; Ps. 55:5; Gen. 6:5.) Is it enough to cultivate and refine and reform the flesh (vv. 6, 7)? (Gal. 6:15; Matt. 7:16; 12:33.)

By what figure does Jesus illustrate the operation of the Holy Spirit (v. 8)? What are the three points in which the operation of the Spirit is like "the wind" (v. 8)? (1 Cor. 12:11.) Did Nicodemus understand? Should he have understood all this before the Saviour told him? (Deut. 30:6; Ps. 51:5, 6, 10; Jer. 31:33; 32:39, 40; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:25-27.) Why didn't he know all this? (Matt. 22:29.)

Was Christ's doctrine about the Holy Spirit and the new birth mere guesswork and speculation (vv. 11, 32)? (7:16; 8:38.) What did He say was done with His testimony (v. 11)? Have men changed any in this respect? What have men done in all ages with God's testimony? (Is. 53:1; John 1:11; 3:32; 5:29, 40, 43, 44; Matt. 23:37; Acts 7:51, 52; 28:23-27.) Why do men treat God's testimony in this way? (2 Cor. 4:4.) What thoughts about Jesus does the 13th verse give us?

2. Eternal Life Purchased by the Death of the Son and Fully Offered to All by the Father, vv. 14-17

How was man's need of life met? What is meant by "lifted up"? (See 12:32.) What word shows the absolute necessity of the death of Jesus if men are to have life? (Luke 24:46; Heb. 9:22; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24.) What are the points of resemblance between Christ and the serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness? (1-3 Ro. 6:23, compare Num. 21:6; 2 and 3-5 Ro. 8:3, compare Num. 21:8; 4-6 "Lifted up," Gal. 3:13, compare Num. 21:8; 5-6 "Is. 45:22, compare Num. 2:18; 6-7 "Acts 4:12, compare Num. 2:19; 7-8 "Whosoever," compare Num. 21:9.)

What change does the Revised Version make in verse 15? What is its significance? Where did the sacrifice of the Son have its origin? How comprehensive was this love of God? Did it take in sinners? (Ro. 5:6, 8.) What little word sets forth the greatness and character of that love? What is the character of God's love as set forth in the 16th verse? The measure of it? Which made the greater sacrifice, the Son in humbling Himself (Phil. 2:6-8) or the Father in giving His only begotten Son? What more could God give? Of what is the giving of His Son a pledge? (Ro. 8:32.) What was the purpose of God's love in giving His Son? Who would have perished if He had not given His Son? (Ro. 3:23; 6:23; Gal. 3:10.) Who can have life eternal now that He has given His Son? Whom does "whosoever" mean? (John 6:40; Is. 45:22; John 6:37; 1 Tim. 1:15.) What does every one who believes get? How soon does he get it? (John 3:36; Acts 13:39.) What is eternal life? (John 10:28; 6:40; 17:3; 1 John 1:2; 5:20.) How is it to be obtained? (John 3:36.) What was God's purpose in sending His Son? (See v. 17 especially, R. V.) In what sense is the whole world saved by Him? (1 John 2:2, R. V.; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Ro. 5:18.) Who alone are saved by Him in the fullest sense? (1 Tim. 4:10.) Why are not all men saved by Him? (John 1:11; 5:40; Matt. 23:37.)

3. Eternal Life Accepted by Believers, Rejected by Unbelievers, vv. 18-21

Into what two classes does the 18th verse divide all men? Is there any middle ground between those who believe and believe not? What is the present standing before God of all who believe? (John 5:24.) Will those who believe ever be condemned? (John 10:28; Ro. 8:33, 34.) What is the present standing of those who believe not? Why are they condemned? What is the one sin that brings condemnation upon men? (John 16:9.) Are men

eternally lost because they have sinned? Why then are men eternally lost? Why is it that men do not come to Christ (v. 19)? What is the greatest proof of the badness of the human heart and its love of evil – darkness rather than light? If a man does not come to Jesus as “the Light of the world,” what does it prove? What lies at the root of unbelief? Why do men hate the light? Why do men hate Jesus? (John 7:7.) Why don’t you come to the light?

CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHINGS

1. The Triune God

(1). The Father:

His love”

(a) Its character; universal, holy – “demanding and providing an atonement, self-sacrificing, saving, self-imparting, infinite, 16.

(b) Its object: the world, 16.

(c) Its measure: “gave His only begotten Son,” 16.

(d) Its purpose: to save and impart life, 16.

(e) Its effect: all who receive get eternal life, 16.

(2). The Son.

Deity, 16; humanity, 14, 16; pre-existence, heavenly origin, omnipresence, humiliation, 13; divinely accredited, 12; an atoning Saviour must die that man might live, 14, 16; the light of the world, hated by the world, 19, 20; the touchstone of character, 19 – “21.

(3). The Holy Spirit.

His work”

Author of the new birth, 5; sovereign”

“Where it listeth,” mysterious” – “Not tell whence it cometh,” effectual” – “Hearest the voice,” 8.

2. Man

Lost by nature, 3 – “6; can be saved only by a death, 14; ignorant of the Word, 10; always wants God to explain, 4, 9; will not accept God’s testimony, 11; hates light, 19; deeds evil, 20; redeemed by Christ’s death, 14 – “17.

3. The New Birth

Necessity: universal, 3, 5, 7; because man is by generation only – “flesh,” 6.

Nature: impartation of the divine nature, 6.

Author: the Holy Spirit, 5.

Instrument: the Word, 5.

Method: looking unto and believing on the Saviour lifted up, 14 – “16.

4. Nicodemus

Moral, religious, orthodox, zealous, 1, 10; high aspirations, earnest seeker after truth, 2; and yet he must be born again, 3, 5, 7; loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, 2.