

Religious but Lost

By Justin Morton

Many people in the world today identify themselves as religious. These “religious” people attend a local church, try to do good to others and perhaps even strive to follow a specific doctrine. Many people think because they are “religious” they will inherit the Kingdom of God. Does being religious guarantee one a reserved spot in heaven?

In John 3, we are introduced to a man named Nicodemus. This man was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews (member of the Sanhedrin) and according to Jesus, “The teacher of Israel” (Jn. 3:10). Many scholars believe this means Nicodemus was the most renowned teacher of the Law in all of Israel.

When we first read about this impressive man, he came to Jesus by night. We cannot know for sure why he chose to approach Jesus in the middle of the night. It’s possible this was out of fear of the Pharisees (Jn. 12:42), but it’s also possible he desired a private conversation with Jesus, who Nicodemus knew was, “A teacher come from God” (Jn. 3:2). Whatever the reason, Nicodemus came to Jesus. Little did he know, Jesus was about to teach this “teacher of Israel” what one needed to do to inherit the Kingdom of God.

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3). Being a Pharisee, Nicodemus wanted to see or enjoy the kingdom of God. And in his mind, being a descendant through the bloodline of Abraham and one who kept the Law, his place was reserved. What Jesus said didn’t make sense to Nicodemus (Jn. 3:4). How can a person be born a second time? Nicodemus was focused on a physical birth while Jesus was speaking of a spiritual birth. Jesus followed up by saying, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:5).

Jesus told Nicodemus the only way for a person to enter the Kingdom of God is to be born again. How is a person born again? By being born of water and the Spirit. A person’s goodness, religion or family heritage does not matter. Unless he or she submits to the Lord’s command of being born of water (baptized) and the Spirit (which we read about in the Word of God), he will not enjoy the Kingdom of God. Have you been born of water and the Spirit? If not, why not?