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Bible Lesson 19 (BTJ)

1. Introduction

Jesus' teachings and miracles distinguished him from other Jewish religious leaders. As his popularity grew, these leaders, especially the Pharisees became increasingly antagonistic toward him.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, approached Jesus by night to talk with him. He recognized that the miracles performed by Jesus had to come from God. Jesus interaction with Nicodemus is unique because he got to the core of the issue. Nicodemus needed to be born again and Jesus made this point clear to him. This story is included to introduce the truth that people do need to be born again.

This lesson also shows how Jesus continued to minister to the people in many ways according to their needs. He demonstrated his divinity and power to forgive sins. The opposition to Jesus grew because he claimed to have the power and authority to forgive sins and demonstrated his claims by producing supernatural evidence through healing people.

The longer Jesus ministered among the Jews, the more divided the people became about who he was. This lesson shows again that there are two ways to respond to truth. Many of the Israelites witnessed Jesus performing supernatural miracles and believed in him. On the other hand Jewish religious leaders refused to take acknowledge the miracle of Christ as evidence of his divinity. This led to their increasing hatred and plotting to get rid of Jesus.

Jesus chose disciples to follow him. His goal was to show them who he was through his teachings and his life example. This was to prepare them for their ministry while he was still with them and in the future.

As these Bible stories about the life of Christ continue to unfold, more is revealed about his purpose for coming. In history, Jesus wanted people to understand why he came to live among mankind. In history, Jesus wanted people to understand who he was as he taught and performed many miracles. Through teaching these lessons it is intended that people should have a greater understanding of who Jesus, the Deliverer, was in history and how it applies to us today.

2. Review

Setting: Teacher walked over to Wade's house in the village. Others were there and they

were talking about John, Jesus, and the last lesson.

Wade: We are talking about John and Jesus. First God sent John to preach to the Jews. Later he sent the Deliverer, Jesus, to the Jews.

Teacher: That's right. Do you remember why John was sent to the Jews before the coming of Jesus? Why did God first send John?

Wade: God sent John ahead of Jesus because he wanted him to preach to the Jews. God wanted the Jews to realize they were sinful people who needed his mercy and grace.

Teacher: Many of the Jews did not believe they were spiritually needy people. They thought they were good people. Why did they think they were not sinners?

Wade: The Jews thought since they were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob they were not as spiritually needy as other people. They believed God favored them because they were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In reality, they were not as good as they thought they were.

Teacher: Why did God not accept the Jews on the basis of their ancestry? Did not their heritage help pay for their sins?

Wade: God does not accept a person's heritage or ancestry as the basis of forgiving sins. The payment for sin is death.

Teacher: That's right. How were the Israelites supposed to come to God?

Wade: God showed the Jews how to offer an animal as a substitute for their sins' payment. A person who brought that animal sacrifice as a substitute for his own death was accepted by God because he believed God and obeyed God's ways. However if a person offered that same sacrifice thinking that he was not a sinner because he was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God did not accept that sacrifice. God demands that people have faith in him, not in their own goodness.

Teacher: What message did John preach to the Jews? What did he tell them to do?

Wade: John preached that the people should turn away from their wickedness and evil living. He wanted them to admit to God that they were sinners who needed the mercy and grace of God to save them.

Teacher: Did the Jews repent when John preached to them?

Wade: Some of the Jews repented of their wickedness. However the Jewish religious leaders did not think that John's message applied to them. They believed the good things they did made them right with God.

Teacher: What did John say about Jesus?

Wade: John declared, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." When I heard that, I thought about all the animal sacrifices that people had offered to God because they admitted that they were sinners and they wanted God to forgive them of their sins. The animals were sacrificed and died in the place of the sinner.

Teacher: I'm glad that you are thinking about the meaning of the teaching. God wants all of you to understand the meaning of the teaching. He wants you to be saved from the guilt and penalty of being a sinner. He does not want you to continue to follow Satan's evil ways.

Wade: Satan tempted Jesus three times. He wanted Jesus to obey him and to sin against God. Satan is the true enemy of God. I was upset and angry at Satan for trying to bring ruination to Jesus our Deliverer. He failed to get Jesus to sin. I was excited when I heard how Jesus remained firm and faithful to God and defeated Satan.

Teacher: Do you think Jesus could have sinned against God?

Wade: Jesus did not lust for things of this world like we do. He came to be our Deliverer and refused to allow himself to be enticed by Satan's temptations. Jesus could not deny himself then, he cannot deny himself now. When he commanded Satan to leave, Satan could no longer stay around him to tempt him again. Satan had to submit to the authority and power of Jesus because Jesus is God.

Teacher: Jesus did many miracles that showed his love and concern for people. He had the power to heal people from their sicknesses. He healed many people and he even cast out evil spirits in demon-possessed people. Is there anyone equal to him?

Wade: No one is equal to Jesus. No one can do miracles like he did unless the power of God is within him. The stories about Jesus healing many people show us that he is the greatest of all who have lived. Who has ever lived on earth with the power and authority to do what Jesus did?

Teacher: You are right. All the miracles that Jesus did prove that he was divine. He was not merely a man like we are. He was God in the flesh, the true Deliverer whom God sent to save people from the penalty and guilt of being sinners.

3. Nicodemus Talks to Jesus

Jesus performed many miracles among the Jews. Many of the Jews were excited about Jesus. Some people who saw his miracles wondered, “Who is this person? How can he heal people and cast out evil spirits? By what authority does he do all of these miracles?” Some people recognized that no one could possibly do the miracles Jesus performed unless God empowered him.

The Pharisees, the Jews’ religious leaders, also saw the miracles which Jesus performed. Many of the Pharisees were jealous of Jesus because he had power and authority over sicknesses and evil spirits. As Jesus’ popularity grew, they increasingly became skeptical of him. Instead of believing in him, they rejected him. They even accused Jesus of performing all of his miracles by the power of Satan. These Pharisees were very sinful and wicked. They refused to believe in Jesus even though they saw evidence of his divinity many times through the many miracles he performed.

The Pharisees believed that God would accept them because of the good things that they did. The Pharisees did not believe that they were sinners like other people. They were deluded by their self-righteousness. God saw them as sinners because they did not trust in him. They trusted in their own good works.

One of those Pharisees was a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was like many of the other Pharisees. He believed and followed their traditions. However, when Nicodemus thought about the miracles which Jesus performed he knew that they did not have their source of origin in Satan. He knew that Jesus could only perform many kinds of miracles by the supernatural power of God. Nicodemus was compelled to learn more about Jesus even though many other Pharisees hated Jesus without a cause.

One night Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, “Rabbi, all of us know that God has sent you to teach us. The miracles that you have performed are undeniable evidence that God is with you.”

Jesus listened to Nicodemus and replied, “I am telling you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Nicodemus was startled. “What does that mean? How is it possible for an old man to go back into his mother’s womb and be born

again?”

Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus was trying to teach him. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand his need before God. Even though Nicodemus was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it did not mean he was not a sinner. All people are descendants of Adam which means they are sinners by nature. Being a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not take away Nicodemus’ sinfulness. Only God could help him with his sin problem.

Do you remember what happened in the Garden of Eden? When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, they willingly disobeyed God’s prohibition. They willingly obeyed the Satan’s lies and sinned against God. Instantly they became sinners and their open relationship with God was gone. They were afraid of God and tried to hide from him. God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. Now they had to live outside of the Garden of Eden.

Later, outside of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had children. What kind of children did they have? Were they without sin? Were they perfect like God had created Adam and Eve? No, they were not sinless, perfect children. They were sinners like their parents. From that time on, all people are born sinners. That means everyone needs God’s help to be saved from the guilt and penalty of their sin. That’s why Jesus told Nicodemus ‘you must be born again.’ Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand that it was impossible for him to become righteous by his own effort. He wanted Nicodemus to understand that in order for him to be related to God spiritually he needed to be born again.

How could Nicodemus be born again? Could he do something to make this happen? Could he do something to change his evil nature? No, he could not change his own evil nature. Only God can do that. Nicodemus needed to admit that he was a sinner. He needed to give up being self-righteous. He needed to admit that God’s assessment of him, that he was a sinner, was right. He needed to submit to the authority of the Word of God. Whenever you hear the Bible stories, do you feel conviction in your heart that they are truth? The conviction comes from God’s Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit exhorts you, “The Bible stories are true, believe them.”

When you believe the Bible stories, it’s like you are being washed by the Word of God. The meanings are made plain in your mind by the work of the Holy Spirit. In order to enter the kingdom of God, a person has to be born again. If a person believes the Word of God, he can be born again. However, people who do not believe the Word of God cannot be born again. It is very important to believe the Word of God and to be born again. When a person is born again, the Spirit of God will change him so that he can know, love, and obey God.

Then God will declare that person to be righteous.

Let's talk about your belief in the Word of God. Do you believe the Word of God? Do you believe the lessons that I am teaching you? God wants you to believe the Bible stories that you are hearing because they are his messages for all of us. He wants you to trust him. He wants you to trust his word. If you do not trust his message, if you do not believe the Bible's teachings, then you will not be born again. You will remain in your sin, unforgiven, and you will have to pay the penalty for your sin which is death.

Everyone in this world has been born once. They have been born with a sinful nature and are sinners. They are guilty of being sinners by nature and of having sinned against God. When they die, they will have to pay for their own sins in the never-ending fire of punishment.

People who believe God's Word and trust its message are born again. Why are they be born again? They are born again because they believe what God teaches them. They admit that they are sinners and need to be saved. They admit that they are guilty and deserve the death penalty for their sins. They trust in God's way to be saved from the penalty of sin. People who are born again are now in the family of God. When they die they will be in the presence of God forever.

Why did Jesus speak to Nicodemus about him needing to be born again? Jesus wanted Nicodemus to realize his own ways could never save him from the guilt and penalty of his sin. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand his need to be born again. He wanted Nicodemus to look outside of himself for spiritual help. He wanted Nicodemus to believe the Word of God and to trust God's way for his own salvation.

4. Jesus Must Be Lifted Up

As Jesus explained to Nicodemus that he needed to be born again it was hard for him to understand everything that Jesus was saying to him. Nicodemus had always trusted in his own good works. He had believed that being a son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made him right with God. He was confused about Jesus' explanations about needing to be born again.

Jesus knew that it was hard for Nicodemus to understand what he was saying. He said to him, "Nicodemus, you are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things?" Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that he should have been able to understand what he was teaching. However, at this time Nicodemus was a self-righteous Pharisee. He

believed his own goodness made him right with God.

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about an earlier time when Moses made a bronze serpent in the wilderness. At that time God punished the Israelites for their rebellion against him. He sent fiery serpents to bite them. People who were bitten by snakes suffered and died. Then God told Moses, “Make a bronze serpent and hang it up on a pole in the middle of the community. Tell the people who have been bitten by the fiery serpents to look at it and they will be healed.” Moses obeyed God’s instruction and fastened the bronze serpent to a pole and set it up in the middle of the Israelites’ camp. Persons who had been bitten by the serpents looked at it and were healed. Persons bitten by the serpents who did not look at the bronze serpent died because they did not obey Moses’ instruction.

In the same way that the Israelites died of the poisonous serpents’ bites, everyone dies because of sin. What is the payment for sin? The payment for sin is death. Just as the Israelites could not heal themselves from the poison of the serpents’ bites, neither can anyone save himself from death which is the penalty for being a sinner. The only way a suffering Israelite could be saved was through God’s provision. The only way sinners can be saved from having to pay the penalty for their sins is through God’s way.

Why did Jesus speak to Nicodemus about the bronze serpent? Jesus wanted Nicodemus to clearly understand that there was only one way for the Israelites who were bitten by the poisonous serpents to be spared death. In the same way, there is only one way for people to be made right with God. That is why Jesus said, “As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, likewise the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.” There is only one way to be born again, to be forgiven, and to become a member of God’s family. That way is to trust in Jesus, the Deliverer. A person who trusts in Jesus will be born again, have his sins forgiven, and receive eternal life.

5. Jesus Came to Save People

Although Nicodemus was a self-righteous Pharisee, Jesus loved him. He did not want Nicodemus to die in sin. He wanted Nicodemus to trust him and to be saved from sin’s penalty, death. Jesus knew that Nicodemus went to see him at night because he did not want the other Pharisees to know what he was doing. The Pharisees hated Jesus for no reason at all. They were jealous of him because so many people followed him and wanted to know more about him.

Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that he loved him. He told Nicodemus that God loves every person in the world. Why does God love all the people in the world? God loves all

people, because he wants them to be saved from the guilt and penalty for being a sinner. God wants people to be saved and spend eternity with him. Satan hates people. He wants them to die in their sin so they will go to the never-ending fire of punishment and be separated from God forever.

This is an important point: God loves people. He wants everyone to believe in him, to trust him. That is why he sent Jesus, the Deliverer, to save people from their sins. God wants everyone to believe in Jesus. God wants everyone to know Jesus is the Deliverer. Anyone who believes the Word of God and trusts God can be forgiven of their sins and be born again. People who are born again, will go to be with God when they die and they will be with him forever.

A long time ago God promised to send the Deliverer. He first made this promise to Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden. Later he told Abraham that one of his descendants would be the one through whom all the world would be blessed. He told Abraham that his descendants would be as many as the stars or the sand on the seashore. At that time Abraham did not have any descendants. Yet he believed God's promise because God, who cannot deny himself or lie, spoke it. God saw his faith and declared him righteous. That means, God declared Abraham not guilty of being a sinner. He saved him. God's promise to Abraham was made many years before Jesus, the Deliverer lived in the land of Israel. The meaning of God's promise to Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed because of his descendant is about Jesus the Deliverer. The Deliverer is God's only Son. God did not send another person who had a human father and mother to be our Deliverer. He sent a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the Deliverer just like he had promised. Why did God do this? He did it because he loves people and he wants them to be right with him. He does not want anyone to die in their sin and go to the place of the never-ending fire of punishment.

What does a person have to do to be saved from the penalty of sin? A person must be born again. Listen carefully: To be born again or saved by God a person must believe in God. He must trust the Deliverer Jesus, believing that he is the one who can make a person right with God. When a person believes in Jesus, God will make him a new person. That means instead of being condemned and in the family of Satan he will be made right with God and be in God's family.

Should a person try to do something in addition to trusting the Deliverer Jesus for his salvation? No, there is no use in trying to help God do something which he has already completely done for us through Jesus the Deliverer.

If you believe God's Word, if you trust him completely, where will you go when you die? If

you believe God's Word, you will agree with its description of who you are. You will admit that you are a sinner. You will not try to cover up your sinfulness. If you believe God's Word, you will trust Jesus as your Deliverer, and you will be born again. All people who are born again are now no longer under the power of Satan. They are no longer in his family. They are now in God's family because he saved them. When they die, they will go to heaven and be in the presence of God forever. People who are born again receive everlasting life from God. That means they will never be separated from God.

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus he wanted him to understand the necessity of him being born again. He wanted Nicodemus to quit trusting in his own goodness and self-righteousness. He wanted Nicodemus to understand that there is only one way to be made right with God. What is that one way? That one way is through Jesus, our Deliverer.

Jesus also gave Nicodemus a warning. What did he say in this warning? Listen carefully: Jesus said that people like darkness more than they like light. That is not good, it is sin. Why do people like darkness more than light? People are born in sin so they think living in sin is fun. They do not want to think about God and living for him. They do not think about the fact that someday they will die. They just live for themselves.

Are you living for yourself? Do you think about the consequences of dying in sin. Have you thought about God's assessment of who you are by nature? Do you agree with God? Or do you just live for yourself without giving thought to the consequences?

Jesus wanted Nicodemus to understand an important truth. People who do not believe in him, the Deliverer, are not in a right relationship with God. People who refuse to admit that they are sinners, are essentially saying they prefer darkness and sin over truth and light. People who hate God's good Word and only live in sin will die in their sin and be punished forever for their sinfulness. However, everyone who believes God and trusts him will not die in their sins. They are born again and receive eternal life. They will live forever with God.

6. Jesus Healed People and Forgave Sins

The news about Jesus continued to spread in the land of Israel. People were interested in him and they wanted to know more about him. The news of his great works of healing people and casting out evil spirits, spread throughout the land. No one had ever seen anyone perform miracles as he did. Nor had they ever heard anyone teach with authority as he did.

While Jesus was in Capernaum many people came to the house where he was staying. It was so packed with visitors that there was no more room anywhere, even outside the door.

Everyone desired to see and hear Jesus teach them. While he was preaching God's Word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They knew in their hearts that Jesus had power to heal this crippled man and they wanted him to heal him. This man was helpless. He could not cure himself. The doctors could not cure him. His physical condition was pitiful. The only hope for him was for Jesus to show mercy to him and use his supernatural power to heal him.

The crowd was so large and the house was so packed that they couldn't make their way inside the house to be with Jesus. Now what should they do? Give up and go home? No, they did not give up because they believed in Jesus. They desperately wanted Jesus to heal this man so they went up on the roof with the man lying on his mat. Then they dug a hole through the roof above the place where Jesus was in the room below. Then they lowered the man on his mat through the hole in the roof down right in front of Jesus. Jesus saw their faith in him and he said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven."

Let's think about this: Why did Jesus say to the man on the mat 'your sins are forgiven'? Was this man a very evil, wicked man? Was he paralyzed because he was so evil? All sicknesses and diseases are the outcome of Adam and Eve sinning against God. Just because he was paralyzed does not mean that he was extremely sinful. Jesus told the man his sins were forgiven because he loved the man and he wanted to demonstrate his authority to forgive sins while others were watching him. Jesus wanted the people to clearly know who he was— the Son of God with the power and authority to forgive sins.

Some of scribes were in the house with Jesus because they wanted to scrutinize what he was doing. They did not believe in Jesus. They were self-righteous religious leaders who wanted people to think highly of them because they copied and studied the Scriptures. They considered themselves to be well educated in the Scriptures and to know their meaning.

As soon as the scribes heard Jesus say to the paralyzed man 'your sins are forgiven' they judged Jesus within their hearts. These teachers were offended at Jesus' statement and thought to themselves, "What is he saying? He is blaspheming God! Only God can forgive sins!" These scribes hastily concluded that they knew more about God than Jesus did and that Jesus had sinned against God. They were so angry at Jesus! "How dare he claim to have the authority to forgive sins!" they thought.

Do you think Jesus was surprised at their reaction? No, he knew how they would react because he is God and he knows everything. Then Jesus exposed their secret, unspoken accusations against him and asked them saying, "Why do you question in your hearts what I just said? Which is easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'? I will prove that I, the Son of Man, have the authority on

earth to forgive sins.”

Jesus turned to the paralyzed man lying on the mat and said to him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” The paralyzed man heard Jesus’ command and he jumped up. He could stand up and walk! He grabbed his mat and went out through the whole crowd who had witnessed the event. They were stunned, amazed and they praised God for this wonderful supernatural act of God saying. “We have never seen anything like this before!”

Let’s talk about the scribes wrong reasoning: Why were the scribes upset with Jesus? The scribes reasoned that only God can forgive sins and that was correct. The Bible teaches us that only God can forgive sins. They were wrong, however, in accusing Jesus of wrong doing. When they reasoned that Jesus had sinned by forgiving the man’s sin they showed their unbelief in Jesus. They did not believe that he was the promised Deliverer whom God said he would send. They did not believe that he was divine. Jesus did not sin when he forgave that man’s sins. Because Jesus was God, he had the power and the authority to forgive the paralyzed man’s sins. Today, he has the power and authority to forgive people’s sins.

As soon as Jesus healed the man, he jumped up, grabbed his mat and walked away. The scribes should have repented of their sinfulness and their unbelief in Jesus. They should have fallen down and worshiped him! The evidence that he was divine was demonstrated for everyone to see and understand. Jesus was more than an ordinary man. Think about what Jesus did. To prove to everyone that he had the power and the authority to forgive sins, Jesus told the paralyzed man to pick up his mat and walk.

When the paralyzed man heard and obeyed Jesus’ command to get up and walk, he jumped up, grabbed his mat and walked away and thereby proved the point Jesus was making. If the man could not have gotten up and walked away, Jesus would have shown his claim to have the power to forgive sins was not credible. But, the man actually walked away! This miracle proved that Jesus had the power and authority to forgive sins as well as the power and authority to heal sicknesses. Everyone present should have bowed in awe and worshiped him. No exceptions!

7. Jesus Chose Matthew to Be His Disciple

Jesus chose some men to be his disciples. He wanted them to accompany him as he ministered to the Jews. He wanted them to see his compassion for people. He wanted them to listen to the words he spoke as he taught the multitudes so they would learn about him and from him.

One day, Jesus was by the Sea of Galilee teaching the crowds who were coming to him. As

he was walking along, he saw Levi, also called Matthew, sitting at his tax collector's booth collecting taxes for the Romans who governed them. Because he was a Jew working for the Romans, many people did not like him. The tax collectors usually made the people pay more taxes than necessary and kept some for themselves. This dishonest practice gave them a bad reputation among the people. Jesus saw Levi and called to him, "Follow me and be my disciple." Levi heard Jesus' call and got up and followed him.

Why did Levi leave his tax collecting job and follow Jesus? Levi followed Jesus because he believed in him. Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests. He also invited many tax collectors and other people who were considered to be bad sinners to eat with them. Levi showed kindness to people who were disliked by many others. Some of the Pharisees who were religious teachers saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and other sinners. They would never have done something like that. They were too good to eat with tax collectors and sinners. These Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does Jesus eat with such awful people like the tax collectors and sinners?" These Pharisees would never stoop so low as to eat with tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus heard the complaints of the self-righteous Pharisees and said. "People who are healthy do not need a doctor. Sick people need doctors. As for me, I have come to call those who know they are sinners and need help. I have not come to call those who think they are righteous."

Let's think about Jesus' statement about his reason for coming. Why did Jesus say he came to call needy sinners? Why didn't he come to seek self-righteous people? A person who is self-righteous does not believe that he is spiritually needy. In fact, if he is told that he is needy, he will not listen because he thinks he is already good. He justifies who he is by his own standard. By contrast a person who knows that he is needy will listen to someone who wants to help him.

Jesus came to help people who are sinners. He knew that sinners already knew of their spiritual destitute condition. Jesus came to tell sinners to change their minds about their sins and come to him. He came to call those who would agree with God that they are helpless sinners and deserved death. He wants them to believe in him and to trust in him, the Deliverer.

If a self-righteous person repents and admits that he is a sinner, God will be merciful to him. However, if a self-righteous person continues in his own self-righteous ways, God would not be merciful to him. That person will not be forgiven of his sins.

8. The Sign of Jonah

Jesus performed many miracles among the Israelites. Many of them saw him heal sick people, cast out evil spirits, and have compassion on many, many people. However, the scribes and the Pharisees refused to believe in him. One day they came to him and said, “Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove your authority.” These Pharisees did not believe in Jesus. He had already performed many miracles which proved his authority. They were being rude and disrespectful to Jesus.

Jesus knew the Pharisees did not believe in him. He replied to them, “Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign. The only sign I will give you is the sign of Jonah the prophet. As Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.”

These evil men did not believe in Jesus even though they had witnessed many miracles. They were content with their self-righteousness. They did not want to learn from Jesus, nor did they believe that he was the promised Deliverer.

Jesus also told these Pharisees that the people of Nineveh were more righteous than they. The people of Nineveh were not Israelites, but when Jonah preached to them, they repented and believed in God. Unlike the people of Nineveh, the Pharisees did not repent of their unbelief. They tenaciously held on to their self-righteousness. The people of Nineveh responded to a prophet with God’s message. The Pharisees did not respond to the message of God in the flesh, the message from Jesus, the Deliverer. Because Jesus was much greater than Jonah, the Pharisees and all the Jews should have readily welcomed him, and listened to his message. However, many of the Jews who heard John and Jesus preach that they needed to repent, refused to turn from their ways to believe in God. They believed that they were already righteous before God.

9. The Pharisees Plot to Kill Jesus

Jesus continued to teach the Jews and show compassion on them. One Sabbath day he went into a synagogue and noticed a man who was there with a deformed hand. Some of Jesus’ enemies were also there in the synagogue. They watched Jesus closely. “Will he break the Sabbath Day and heal this man’s hand or not?” they wondered. They wanted to see whether or not he would heal that man’s hand on the Sabbath day which was against their rules. These wicked men thought if Jesus healed that man’s hand on the Sabbath day, they could accuse him of working on the Sabbath day.

Do you think Jesus knew what these evil men were thinking? Of course Jesus knew what they were thinking. He knew they were evil and he knew they hated him. But Jesus knew what was the right thing to do. He showed compassion on the man with the withered hand

and said, “Come and stand in front of everyone.” Then Jesus turned to those evil men and asked them, “Does the law allow good deeds to be done on the Sabbath day, or is it a day for doing evil? Is the Sabbath a day to save life or to destroy it?” Everyone understood the meaning of Jesus’ questions but no one would answer him. They knew that his questions exposed their evil and faulty reasoning.

Jesus looked at all the people around him. He was deeply saddened by the hardness of their hearts. They did not care about the man with the crippled hand. They merely cared about their self-righteousness. They wanted everyone to see how well they followed their rules governing the Sabbath day. Knowing their evil hearts, Jesus said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” The man obeyed Jesus and held out his hand and it was restored. His hand was now normal and he could use it. Everyone who saw this miracle should have rejoiced and worshiped Jesus in great awe.

But the Pharisees who saw this miracle did not rejoice. They were angry at Jesus. Why? Because Jesus healed a man’s crippled hand on the Sabbath day. From that place the Pharisees went away and met with some other people to develop a plan to kill Jesus. They hated him so much for no reason at all. Without thinking, they followed Satan’s temptation to resist Jesus and to hate him. As the Pharisees paraded their self-righteousness, they were doing exactly what Satan wanted them to do; reject Jesus.

10. Jesus Chose Twelve Disciples

Jesus continued to draw large crowds who wanted to see him because the news about his great miracles had spread far and wide throughout the land. When the crowds followed Jesus, he had compassion for the people and healed many who were sick. Whenever people who were possessed with evil spirits saw him, the power of the spirits would throw them on the ground in front of him and cry out, “You are the Son of God!” But Jesus warned them not to reveal who he was. Jesus expelled the evil spirits from demon-possessed people and they were normal again.

The evil spirits knew who Jesus was because God had created them as good angels and at that time they existed in God’s presence. However, they had sided with Satan when he rebelled against God. That is how they left their essence of being good angels and became evil spirits. That is how they knew who Jesus was. Though the evils spirits or demons will never be good angels again, they did know who Jesus was when he lived upon the earth in a human body.

The Jewish religious leaders, however, did not believe that Jesus was God. Even though they saw Jesus perform many miracles, they refused to believe in him. To them he was just

another man, an opportunist who desired a following. They hardened their hearts against him and the evidence that clearly showed that he was divine.

Then Jesus went up a mountain and called people whom he wanted to come and follow him. He wanted them to be his disciples so that they would learn many truths from him. He wanted them to hear his teachings and see how he lived among people.

Jesus appointed twelve men to be his disciples. They accompanied him in his ministry and witnessed his life and teachings. Later Jesus sent them out to preach and gave them authority to cast out the demons. The names of the twelve men that he appointed are Simon Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot.



Show #66: Jesus taught his disciples

Jesus chose these men to be his disciples. He wanted to train them and have them assist him in his work. All of these men were common people. None of them were rich or highly educated. Judas Iscariot, one of the men chosen by Jesus to be his disciple, did not believe in Jesus. Later you will hear more about Judas and his evil ways.

11. After the Meeting

Setting: The meeting was over and some of the people gathered to talk about the lesson.

Paul: The story of Nicodemus talking with Jesus is one that we need to understand. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a self-righteous man, yet wise enough to seek Jesus so he could learn from him.

Miriam: Nicodemus feared the other Pharisees. That is why he went to Jesus at night. He did not want them to know about his visit with Jesus. The Pharisees hated Jesus without a cause. They were self-righteous. They did not believe they were sinners like other people.

Paul: Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again. Nicodemus didn't understand what he meant. I am still trying to figure out the meaning of Jesus teaching. Do you understand what it means?

Miriam: Jesus told Nicodemus that a person has to believe God's Word and allow God's word to rule his thoughts. That means a person must admit that he is a sinner and without a way to save himself. It also means that people must trust God and believe that Jesus, the Deliverer, is the only way to be made right with God.

Paul: That's right. I understand what you have said but I need more time to think.

Miriam: Jesus gave Nicodemus a lot to think about, didn't he? His message to Nicodemus applies to us. We need to ask ourselves, "Am I truly believing in God?" We must truly believe in God and be afraid of the ways of the Pharisees. They thought they were so good that they did not need someone to deliver them from the penalty and guilt of their sin.

Paul: Sometimes we have acted like Pharisees, haven't we? We have looked at other people and thought that we were better than they. Even though we sinned, we still thought we were good people. That was wrong thinking. Today I know better. Today I admit to God that I am a helpless sinner and I need to be saved.

Miriam: Jesus did many good deeds. He healed the sick people, he cast out demons from demon-possessed people, he showed compassion to many people, and he always spoke the truth. These things show us that he was very special. He was greater than any other person can ever be. That is why we must believe that he was the chosen Deliverer. He was the one God promised to send, the chosen descendent of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

Paul: Jesus never broke God's law. He never did evil to anyone. But the Pharisees hated him without a cause.

Miriam: Their hatred and jealousy blinded their eyes to reality.

Paul: That is true. The time he healed the crippled man's hand, everyone should have been very happy, but, the Pharisees were jealous and angry. When he taught the people, he always spoke the truth. He knew how to explain the Scriptures so that everyone could understand. The Pharisees could not take it that he was much greater than they.

Miriam: I have been thinking about these stories. I believe in Jesus. I believe every story that we are taught about him. I wish I could see him right now because I would like to say to him, "I believe in you because you are the true Deliverer."

Paul: Yes, I agree with you. This teaching is so good that we must continue to come to every meeting. We must help each other understand everything that Teacher is teaching us. I know there is more that I need to learn and understand about Jesus. I want Jesus to save me from the guilt and penalty of my sin so that when I die my spirit will go to be with God forever.

12. **Review of the Lesson's Themes**

In order to be saved, people must be born again: Jesus clearly taught this to Nicodemus and this point needs to be emphasized so that people understand salvation only happens God's way. **Man can only be saved by God's way.** No one can save himself or do any work to merit salvation.

Faith in God is required for salvation: Without exercising faith in God, people cannot be saved. The story of Jesus, the Deliverer, provides examples in history where the expected response to events and teachings is to believe in Jesus Christ, who was God in a human body.

God communicates with man: God wants people to know how they can be saved. That is why Jesus spoke clearly about the necessity of being born again. That is why he appealed to Old Testament events that required faith in God for deliverance.

Jesus is divine: Jesus performed many acts that showed he was God, not just another ordinary descendant of Adam. It is important to point out that Jesus in the flesh was God. Emphasize that because Jesus is divine, he had the authority and power to forgive sins. This fact must be understood. It is one of the important points of this lesson.

Religious hypocrisy and self-righteousness lead to condemnation: Point out the futility of trying to work for salvation. The Jewish religious leaders' hatred for Jesus broke the very law they 'religiously' followed. **Emphasize that God hates any self-righteousness.**

Jesus Christ was kind, compassionate and came to save sinners: No religious leader in history ever came with a purpose such as his. Bring out the point that Jesus wants to save everyone from sin's penalty. **Emphasize his desire, power and authority to forgive sins.** Stress that it is very important to believe what the Bible teaches about Jesus.

13. Practice Telling the Bible Stories

At the end of this lesson, practice telling the story you have just heard to each other. Everyone needs to practice teaching Bible lessons by telling the stories. Does the meaning of the stories grip your heart? Tell the stories with excitement! Tell them in a culturally appropriate way that exudes your belief and confidence in them.

Practice telling the stories of this lesson in pairs. One pair should teach one of the stories in the lesson following this lesson's Table of Contents for divisions in the lessons.

The Table of Contents at the beginning of the lesson lists the stories for each lesson. Some of the stories or sections of a story are short so they should be combined with another section to make the exercise of practicing to teach by using stories a profitable exercise.

When you are teaching a lesson by telling the story, use culturally appropriate questions and illustrations to keep the story interesting and to make the people think about the lesson's meanings. Be prepared to engage the audience with questions which are crafted to bring out how well they understand the meaning of the story. Emphasize the important points when telling the stories.

Use visual aids or objects used in the lesson when you teach a story. Show the pictures at the right time in the story. When illustrations are used, be sure to bring them to a right and logical conclusion. If you do not make the right conclusions through telling the story, people will likely guess what it means and they could easily come to a wrong conclusion.

After you have practiced telling stories to each other, talk about ways to improve your story-telling ability. Be open to critique and be kind to each other as you work together to help each other become master story-tellers. The goal of teaching God's Word via telling Bible stories is not to merely impress your peers; it is the salvation of spiritually lost people.

As you tell the stories ascertain how well you present the stories and the themes. Does your teaching tend to highlight man? Or does it focus on God working in history? Do you tell the story so that God is highlighted? Or is man, in a subtle way, the main actor in the story? Make sure that the role of God in these stories is the main focus of your teaching.

14. Teaching Tips for Teachers

General Note:

It is important to be well prepared to teach this lesson because new important truth is presented and it needs to be understood by you the teacher as well as the people you are teaching. Be prepared to discuss with the people any questions they may have without going beyond the historical time of this lesson.

It is possible that some people may seem to understand spiritual truth that has not yet been taught to them due to the nature of this lesson. In other words as you teach about needing to be born again, there may be people who are trying to sort it out and project what they need to do to be saved. Do not assume that their understanding is complete. At this point you need understanding from the Holy Spirit about what to do and say to them. Remember that salvation is of the Lord, and only through him.

If you have people attending the meeting who have already heard some sort of gospel presentation from other sources, they may also make statements about events of the life of Christ which you have not yet taught. Again you need wisdom from the Holy Spirit to know how to respond in these situations. Remember that faith requires an object. In order to have faith in Christ for salvation, his complete work needs to be understood.

As the story about the life of Christ continues to unfold expect an increased level of excitement and interest by those who have been regularly attending the meetings. If there are others who have been doubters or in opposition to this teaching, you may find at this time additional antagonism toward the Word of God and the teaching.

Because this is true, more than ever your ministry needs to be committed to God in prayer and you need to be fully prepared to present every lesson accurately.

Lesson Point #3-4:

When teaching about Nicodemus' visit with Jesus, focus on Jesus' interaction with him. Mention that Jesus never responded to the statements Nicodemus made about him. He knew exactly what Nicodemus needed to understand and went to the heart of the issue. Nicodemus needed to be born again and he needed to believe in Jesus for that to happen.

Jesus appealed to the historical account of the bronze serpent which Moses made and placed on a pole in the Israelites' camp. Anyone who had been bitten by a poisonous serpent was supposed to look at the bronze serpent on the pole for healing. If they obeyed Moses' instructions they did not die.

Israelites who truly believed in God did not doubt what Moses said, they believed it, looked at the bronze serpent, and were spared from death. Jesus used this illustration to make the point that faith is required for salvation.

Since this story was taught earlier (Lesson 15: Point 5), appeal to it just like Jesus did and use the pictures or illustrations that you have that accompany this story to reinforce that faith in God is required for salvation.

Lesson Point #5:

Emphasize that Jesus' main purpose for coming was to save people. The miracles that he performed were done to validate who he was in history. And be sure that the people understand this point. It is possible for people to be enamored with the great works of Christ without believing in him for their salvation. That is why it is important to keep in focus the purpose of Christ's coming when teaching about his miracles.

Lesson Point #6:

As you teach this section, be careful to present the truth that Jesus had the power and authority to forgive sins. This miracle along with his teachings in this event clearly show his divinity. This is an important aspect of this short story. Again, make sure that the people understand that the healing was done to validate his earlier statement that the man's sins were forgiven. If you have to go over this point several times, do it. You do not want to miss emphasizing what this story so clearly brings out. Jesus in a human body was God. This means he was divine. That truth remains today. He is divine.

Lesson Point #8 & 10:

Because Jesus is God, he had the authority to tell men to follow him. As the creator and owner of all things he knew whom he should choose to be his disciples and he had the authority to do so. Emphasize that his power and authority are unparalleled by any human agent or being.

Jesus chose his disciples because he wanted them to accompany him and learn from him so they would be prepared for their future ministry. Jesus is God which means he is creator.

Lesson Point #9:

In history the Pharisees hated Jesus for no reason at all. Emphasize that Jesus was God in the flesh and he was holy, righteous, and never did any wrong deed to anyone. Point out that the Pharisees hated Jesus because they listened to the temptation of Satan to resist Jesus.

At this point stress how important it is to make right decisions about evidence. Stress that Jesus' miracles and teachings were in front of the elite Jewish religious leaders and the

common people. The religious leaders, especially the Pharisees, saw themselves as being right before God and without any spiritual needs. Therefore the teachings and miracles which Jesus performed became stumbling blocks to them. They were jealous of his supernatural power and oratory skills when he explained Scripture. The response of the Pharisees and other religious leaders to Jesus many miracles and teachings was sin against God. Emphasize over and over that this is the wrong way to respond to the teachings of the Bible about Jesus.

Emphasize that God wants everyone to accept the teachings of the Bible about Jesus. Stress the point that faith is required by God for anyone to be saved.

15. To the Honorable Teacher

If any part of this lesson is misunderstood, go over that part again. Play that part of the lesson again. Summarize that part briefly for the students then play that part a second time. Then ask questions to ascertain whether or not this part of the lesson is now understood.

Be prepared to use proper illustrations to clarify a given lesson point. Sometimes it is helpful to use a picture and talk about what is portrayed in the picture as you teach.

Stress to the students that the important themes of this lesson must be understood before proceeding to the next lesson.

Simple drama can be useful to make a point clearer in the people's minds. Before using drama, be sure that it is culturally appropriate to do so. If people are not accustomed to understanding simple drama, it may be best to not use it.