

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a believer in Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

In this ninth series, the Bible teaches five truths about the kingdom of God. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM. We will meditate a new Bible passage, memorise a new Bible verse and then review the previously memorised verses together.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is John 3:3,5. We will meditate the truths in the Bible together. Let me read John 3:3-14. In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 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 whenever 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." How can this be? Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "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. 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."

The memorisation verse is: Enter into the kingdom. John 3:3,5. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:3,5.

(T) **First. What does it mean, "to be born again"?**

The real thing Nicodemus wanted to know was "What good thing must I do in order to enter the kingdom of God?" His unspoken question was "How do I get eternal life?" Jesus answered him with a riddle. A riddle is a saying with a hidden meaning. Jesus said, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again".

One. To be born again means to be born from above, from God's Spirit.

The word born again literally means *to be born from above*, that is, from God who lives in heaven. It also means *to be born anew*, that is, *to be born all over again* spiritually after you have been born physically. In John 3:6, Jesus says, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit". To be born of the flesh means *to be born physically with a sinful human nature*. To be born of the Spirit means *to be born spiritually with a new spiritual nature*.

Two. To be baptised with water is only a sign and seal of being baptised with the Holy Spirit.

In John 3:5, Jesus says, "No man can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of *water and the Spirit*". In Matthew 3:11 we also read about *water and the Spirit*. John the Baptist says, "I baptise you with water ... but Jesus Christ will baptise you with the Holy Spirit". The meaning is that people are only born again by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives. People are born again when the Holy Spirit uses the preaching or teaching of the Word of God to regenerate people (1 Pet 1:23). People are never born again by merely the baptism with water. The baptism with water is *the sign* or pictorial presentation and *the seal* or confirmation of what the baptism with the Holy Spirit has done! The sign is valuable only when the thing signified accompanies the sign. The sign of baptism with water has meaning only when you have been born again by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Because we no longer read in John 3:6,8 about the birth of water, but only of the birth of the Spirit, it proves that the one great essential in God's eyes is to be born of the Holy Spirit!

Three. To be born again by the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity and a sovereign work of God.

In John 3:7-8, Jesus says, "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." Like all the Jews, Nicodemus believed that people could save themselves by perfectly obeying the law of the Old Testament and a host of man-made regulations. Now Jesus surprised him by teaching him that salvation is a gift from God and not a work earned by man! Jesus teaches him that in order to be saved, a person must be born again by the Holy Spirit and not by the works of law.

In the beginning stage, salvation is a sovereign act of God and man is completely passive. Nobody on earth can direct the wind. It acts with complete independence. Likewise, nobody on earth can direct or control his own salvation. The Holy Spirit of God acts with complete sovereign independence from man. Regeneration is a sovereign work of God over which man has no more control than he has over the wind. Nicodemus should have known from the Old Testament that he is corrupt. Genesis 6:5 says, "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." And Isaiah 64:6 says, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." Nicodemus should have known from the Old Testament that he is absolutely unable to save himself. In Isaiah 43:10-11 the God of the Bible says, "Before me no god was formed. Nor will there be one after me. I am the LORD and apart from me there is no saviour." Nicodemus should not have been so surprised at the teaching of Jesus.

(S) Second. What is the kingdom of God?

The kingdom of God is the kingship, sovereign rule and complete power of God over all people and all things. The kingdom of God is in particular the kingship and rule of God through Jesus Christ that is recognized in the hearts and operative in the lives of God's people. The kingdom of God is the realm in which the lordship of God through Jesus Christ is recognised and obeyed and in which the grace of God through Jesus Christ prevails. This kingship or rule of God through Jesus Christ is based on the work of salvation of Jesus Christ for his people and the application of that work by the Holy Spirit in his people.

The kingdom of God expresses itself in the complete salvation of believers (Mk 10:24-27) from the beginning when they are born again to the end when they enter the new earth. The kingdom of God expresses itself in the reign of God through Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of Christians now on this earth (Lk 17:20-21). The kingdom of God expresses itself in the constitution and growth of believers as a Christian Church on this earth (Mt 16:18-19). The kingdom of God expresses itself in the intellectual-, physical-, social- and spiritual influence of Christians on every aspect of human society (Mt 5:3-16; Rom 14:17). The kingdom of God finally expresses itself in a redeemed universe: at the second coming of Jesus Christ the destroyers of the earth will be destroyed and God through Jesus Christ will reign for ever in the new heaven and new earth (Mt 25:34; 1 Cor 15:24-26; Rev 11:15,18).

(T) Third. What does it mean to enter the kingdom of God?

To enter the kingdom of God is the same as receiving eternal life or being saved. John 1:12-13 says, "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but born of God." Thus, the fact that a person believes the gospel and receives Jesus Christ into his heart and life is the visible evidence that he is born again. And a person who is born again has entered the kingdom of God.

To enter the kingdom of God is the same as receiving eternal life or being saved. John 3:16-18 says, "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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." Thus, the fact that a person believes the good news about Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection is the visible evidence that he is no longer condemned, that he is no longer lost, but is saved and possesses eternal life.

A comparison between John 3:3-8 and John 3:16-17 teaches that the sovereign act of God precedes any act of man, that is, being born again precedes believing in Jesus Christ! In its initial stage the process of changing a person into a child of God precedes his conversion and faith. This is also the teaching of John 1:12-13 and John 6:44,37 and John 17:6. The fact that you believe in Jesus Christ and receive him into your heart and life proves that you have been born again. God has already taken the first step: he has sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for your sins. He has sent the Holy Spirit to convince you of the truth. Now you must take the next step: believe the truth of the Bible and pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and life. God has taken the first step: he has given the door through which you enter into the kingdom of God and the presence of God. Now you must take the next step: enter through the door!

(S) Fourth. How important is it to enter the kingdom of God?

In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus Christ says, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." A person begins by entering the narrow gate into the kingdom of God. After that he begins to walk on the narrow road that leads to life in its final perfect form on the new earth.

In Luke 13:24 Jesus warned the Jews that they must enter through the door. He said, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from'." Jesus said that the Jews would see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and

all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but they themselves thrown out. People would come from all the nations in the east and the west and the north and the south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

It is absolutely important for you and everyone else to enter the door into the kingdom of God. Because very soon the day comes that Jesus Christ will stand up and close the door. Then there will no longer be any opportunity to be saved.

(T) Fifth. Who is the gate to the kingdom of God?

Jesus Christ is the door into the kingdom of God. In John 10:9 Jesus Christ says, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."

These words of Jesus Christ mean the same as his words in John 14:6, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

And these words mean the same as his words in Matthew 11:27-30, "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The apostles clearly teach that Jesus Christ is the only Way to be saved. In Acts 4:12 they said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

(S) Sixth. What does Jesus mean when he speaks about knowing and testifying about the heavenly things?

In John 3:11 Jesus says that John the Baptist and he himself knew and testified about the heavenly things. But the Pharisees and Nicodemus did not accept their testimony. Jesus could say this, because with his penetrating eyes he could look right into the heart of Nicodemus and see his hesitation to believe what Jesus was teaching (cf. 2:25).

One. The earthly things.

In John 3:12, Jesus says, "I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe". He had been speaking about things, which are heavenly in character and in origin, but take place on earth, like baptism and regeneration. Although regeneration of people by the Holy Spirit is clearly taught in the Old Testament in Ezekiel 36:25-27, the majority of Jews rejected it. God said, "I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." Regeneration takes place in the sphere of human experience on earth. Therefore anybody, who knew the Old Testament and reflected on his own natural inability to please God, would have understood the necessity of being born again! Other earthly things are the coming of the Messiah to his own people, the death and resurrection of the Messiah, and the proclamation of the good news to the Gentiles everywhere in the world. But now that Nicodemus and people like him think that these earthly things are incredible, how would they ever believe when Jesus speaks to them about the heavenly things?

Two. The heavenly things.

The heavenly things are especially God's eternal plan of salvation, which Jesus explains in John 3:13-18. Only the Son of God has always been in the presence of God and knows all the decisions that were made in heaven. Therefore, God's plan to save *his people from every nation* in the world and how he would save his people through the cross lies completely outside the range of man's knowledge until it is revealed to man. Only Jesus Christ descended from heaven to earth. Only he knows God's eternal plan of salvation. Only he reveals it to man and fulfils it for man!

(T) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is "Enter into the kingdom" and the reference is John 3:3,5. Let us memorise the Bible verse together. Then let us take turns to say that part of the verse alone without looking at the Bible or notebook.

(T+S) Enter into the kingdom. John 3:3,5. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

(S) Enter into the kingdom. John 3:3,5. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

(T+S) Enter into the kingdom. John 3:3,5. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:3,5.

(T) Enter into the kingdom. John 3:3,5. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:3,5.

(S) **POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED**

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.
Series “Christian parents”, verses 1-5.

(T) To love by spending: 2 Corinthians 12:14-15. I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions, but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. So I will very gladly spend for your souls everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? 2 Corinthians 12:14-15.

(S) To develop all areas of life: Proverbs 22:6. Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6.

(T) To teach God’s Word: Deuteronomy 6:6-7. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

(S) To bring up in the Lord: Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4.

(T) To love through discipline: Proverbs 13:24. He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. Proverbs 13:24.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.