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The Sabbath-School INTERNATIONAL LESSON. First Quarter, Lesson 9, Feb. 11, 1900. JESUS AND NICODEMUS.—John 3: 1-18. Read John 2. Commit Verses 14-17. GOLDEN TEXT.—For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. "This is the 'Golden Text' of the entire Bible." HISTORICAL SETTING. Time.—April, A. D. 27, about the time of the Passover, which was April 9-15. It was about two months after he had gained his first disciples, as we learned in our last lesson. Place.—Jerusalem; the upper chamber of the house where Jesus was the guest, and could be reached by outside stairway. John still preaching in the wilderness of Judea. In the development of His Work we see how Jesus begins his life, during its first three months. 1. He had gained five or six disciples. 2. He spent two months in Galilee. 3. He wrought miracles, which proved his authority and revealed his glory, his true inner nature. 4. He came to Jerusalem to the Passover, at which multitudes assembled for religious meeting. 5. He cleansed the temple, because it was a work that ought to be done, and the cleansing was a type of his work for the Jewish nation. 6. These things having awakened an interest, he propounded some of the essential fundamental truths of the kingdom of God. It is these that we study to-day. THE KINGDOM OF GOD.—Vs. 1, 2. Jesus came to Jerusalem to the Passover festival. During the feast he cleansed the temple, and taught in its porches. There was a man of the Pharisees. The strictest sect of the Jews, holding the most correct opinions (Matt. 23: 3) and looking for the Messiah. Many of them were very bad, mere whited sepulchers, but the most of them, like Nicodemus and Paul, were the best soil for planting the gospel truths. Nicodemus. All we know of him is recorded here and in John 7: 50; 19: 39, which implies that he became a disciple. A ruler of the Jews. He appears to have been a scribe, a teacher of the law, a man of wealth and prominence. His position as a member of the Sanhedrim, the Jewish supreme court and senate or parliament combined, was one of dignity and influence. Came to Jesus by night. Not from fear, but from common prudence. If so prominent a man had been seen consorting with Jesus, everybody would have known it, and great efforts would have been made to prevent his going farther. The quiet evening hour was the best time for his purpose. His going at all implies strength of character, desire for the truth, and honesty of purpose. Rabbi. Teacher, master. Thou art a teacher come from God. He was sure that there was some divine influence upon him. For no man can do these miracles except God be with him. They were worthy of a prophet. He came for light. The Jewish Conception of the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus felt that he was in the kingdom of God. He was a teacher in the nation that, since Abraham, had been the kingdom of God. There was no other outward kingdom of God on earth. The Messiah was promised to them. And he expected the Messiah to be the royal monarch of this kingdom and to triumph outwardly over all nations. THE NEW BIRTH.—Vs. 3-6. Jesus answered. Not to a spoken question but to his needs, to the deeper questions of his soul. Except a man (any one) be born again, or "anew." Whosoever is born anew, or is born from above, is born again. He cannot see the kingdom of God. The declaration is explicit that a new spiritual life is necessary. He cannot see the kingdom of God. Not only cannot enter the kingdom, but cannot see it, cannot understand what it is. Born when he is old. Nicodemus was old in the outward kingdom of God. Jesus replies by repeating his truth with emphasis. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit. Jesus now adds born of water to born of the Spirit. As water is not repeated, the emphasis lies on the Spirit. To understand this note several things in the circumstances: (1) John was baptizing with water as a symbol of repentance. (2) Baptism symbolized the cleansing of the soul from sin. (3) Baptism symbolized the outward profession, the entering into the visible kingdom. (4) Nicodemus was familiar with the

rite with this signification. (5) His mind re-tered on the outward kingdom of God. Jesus, therefore, says to him, You must not only be born of water, i. e., enter the outward kingdom as you have done, but you must also be born of the Spirit, or you are not really in the kingdom. (6) Jesus enforces this truth by the statement of a general principle. That which is born of the flesh, is of the same kind as that from which it is born. Outward things can bring men into only the outward kingdom. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Relating to the spiritual life of the soul, thus bringing men into the real, spiritual kingdom of God. What is the New Birth? It is not the impartation of new faculties or new powers to the soul. It is a change of character. In a converted man the chief subjects of thought, of love, of hatred, are changed. It is a change from sin to holiness. The New Birth is but the Beginning of the New Life. The birth of a child is but the beginning of its life. It is to grow, develop, unfold its powers, be disciplined and trained almost without limit. Ye must be born again is not a hard command, but a blessed privilege. It is not an obstacle, but a door; not a hindrance, but a stairway,—even steps to glory. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.—Vs. 7, 8. Marvel not. For the same mystery is seen in natural things. Must be. There is no escape from this law. But when men see the blessedness of this law of Christ, they will thank God that they may be born again. The wind bloweth. The term for wind in Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as in Greek, was also the term for spirit. Whers it listeth (pleaseth), i. e., according to its own unknown laws, and not according to our pleasure or will. Thou hearest the sound thereof, etc. You see the results, but you cannot tell the causes, which are beyond our reach. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. The Spirit's methods we cannot know, but the facts of the new life are plain and certain as that the strong wind bends the forest trees. We may not know the day nor the hour when we are born again, but we may know the fact by the fruits. THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH.—Vs. 9-13. Art thou a master, that is, teacher, and knowest not these things? You will find this truth in the Scriptures you teach (Ezek. 11: 19; 18: 31; 36: 26; Jer. 24: 7; 31: 33). Have you studied the Scriptures enough to teach, and not noticed this great truth? We speak that we do know. The we may possibly include his disciples. They knew the truth from experience. If I (now he speaks for himself) have told you earthly things, Things written and experienced in the earthly existence. How shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? Those truths which could not be learned without a revelation from heaven; divine forgiveness, the love of God, the divine nature of Christ, the atonement, the reality of life beyond the grave, the way to obtain it, the blessedness of heaven, the glories of the Messiah's kingdom on earth. No man hath ascended up to heaven, and brought back the testimony of an eye-witness, but he that came down from heaven, and therefore know absolutely the things which he revealed to men about spiritual and heavenly things. Even the Son of man. Thus showing that he was the one who had come down from heaven. Which is in heaven. His home is in heaven, and he maintains continually a vital connection with heaven. We are in ignorance and darkness without this revelation of Jesus Christ. These higher things are not theories, but facts attested by the witness of the only person who knows. THE WAY OF SALVATION.—Vs. 14, 15, 18. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Study the story in the Num. 21: 4, 9. Great numbers were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, and many died. The bite was incurable. Travelers tell us that to this day a mottled snake with fiery red spots upon its head abounds at certain seasons in the Arabah (the desert south of the Dead Sea). So inflammable is its bite that it is likened to fire coming through the veins. The serpent poison, like that of sin, pervaded the whole system, produced great pain, and ended in death. Moses was directed to make a brazen serpent, and place it upon a pole, and carry it through the camp, so that all could see; and whosoever looked upon this brazen serpent was cured. The looking was an act of faith, implying repentance and a return to obedience and God. Even so must the Son of man be lifted up. On the cross. The cross still holds up Jesus before the world. Point of Comparison. (1) The painful and deadly nature of sin, like the bite of the fiery serpents. (2) It is incurable by human power.

(3) The mode of lifting up, so that all may see. (4) The design was similar—to save those who were the same—looking, believing. That whosoever believeth in him. Accepts him as Lord. Believing is the act of receiving the new life from God. Whosoever includes everybody, the meaneat and wickedest, as well as the greatest and best. Should not perish. From the effects of sin, which end in destruction of the soul. But have eternal life. Be born again, have the new spiritual life by which he shall grow into a perfect man in Christ Jesus, and live forever in heaven. Eternal life is the life which endures beyond the grave, and grows fuller and richer as the ages roll on. It is a present possession of the Christian, and does not begin with the world to come, though it continues in it. It is more than mere endless experience. It is goodness, fullness of life, joy, peace, love. Faith the Condition of Salvation. (1) Faith leads to salvation. (2) Faith is so accepting the testimony of Christ as to do what he says and to follow his directions. He brings promises from God, and we accept them as true. (3) Faith is the act of choosing God as our God and Christ as our Saviour, of devoting ourselves to him, opening our hearts to him. Illustrations. Food provided will not save a starving man unless he eats. The doctor cannot cure a man who will not trust him enough to take his medicines and obey his directions. He that believeth not is condemned already. As a prisoner, condemned for his crimes, who will not believe in the offer of pardon from his king, remains in his chains and his prison cell. THE LOVE OF GOD.—Vs. 16, 17. V. 16 is not only the central verse of this lesson, but of the Bible. All the Bible circles around this verse, as the planets around the sun. Luther call this verse The Little Gospel, or The Little Bible. For the whole Gospel, yea, the whole Bible, is contained in these few words. God so loved. Love put to the highest possible test. The world. Not merely heavenly beings, but this poor, sinful world. It was this wonderful fact which the angels sang on the fields of Bethlehem. That he gave his only begotten Son. There has been an impression that Christ came to make God love men instead of hating them. But here we are told that God's love was the origin of salvation for men; that Christ came because God loved men. Nature gives us many hints of God's love; but we cannot be sure that God loves us, except by this gift of his Son. The argument is irrefutable. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" That whosoever believeth. The offer is unlimited. The only condition is faith. It is no more a hindrance than the stairs are a hindrance to coming out from a burning building, or a road is a hindrance to reaching a place. Not... to condemn the world. Or s. v., "to judge," for the world was already in sin, condemned, under judgement, as v. 18. But that the world through him might be saved. The condemnation is no part of the gospel. any more than the disease is a part of the doctor's remedy. He often has to make men feel that their hidden disease is dangerous that men may be willing to be cured; but his work is to cure. Abstainers of Bible Times. What says the Bible upon the temperance question? It speaks in bold words against the use of wine, and teaches by the lives of noted abstainers that stimulants are not necessary, that without them labor can be arduous and prolonged. The men of brain force and muscular vigor never tasted wine. Let us borrow the wand of the witch of Endor and call up Samucl. Can we find a nobler specimen of a man or one who lived more intensely than he? He is the historian, writing down these sacred records when literature was young. He is the statesman who could either crown kings or chide them. He was the saint who kept near to God as his right arm. He was the prophet through whose lips of fire Jehovah Himself spoke. But Samuel kept his garments all unspotted from the sin of Noah and of Lot. He tasted neither wine nor strong drink. He touched not the fruit of the vine even in its harmless, unfermented shape. Or let us call up Samson. The muscles of his brawny arms are like cords of steel. How he plays with the Philistine, carrying off their city gates upon his shoulder and pulling down the temple of their god! Even the jawbone of an ass, with his right hand clasping it, becomes as a scythe of steel, leaving its bloody swath behind it. But Samson was a total abstainer. No particle of his giant strength was drawn from the fruit of the vine. Or let us call up Elijah, the stern

hermite of the old dispensation, that champion of a forsaken faith. In one short day he builds his altar upon Carmel, challenging the priests of Baal to an ordeal of fire, and then at evening, when the strength of others is spent, he girds up his loins and runs before the royal chariot to Jezreel. And Elijah was an abstainer. So, too, was Daniel, who suffered no harm from refusing the royal wine. His face was fairer, ruddier, and purer than the faces of the Babylonian youths who had not, as he, the courage to say No. Or let us make way for the rough Baptist as he comes from the desert. With what tremendous energy he wrought and spoke. What thunders were in his tones when the mere echoes of his voice shook the royal palace and made Herod tremble in his purple! But John was an abstainer, from his birth to his sharp death he did not know the taste of wine.—The Rev. Henry Burton. The Cruel Cigarette. While sitting in a gentleman's parlor in Oklahoma, we noticed on the wall an artistic piece of penmanship in the form of a beautiful map, which our host said was made by his bookkeeper, an accomplished young Englishman. The superiority of the work indicated such genius as to prompt an inquiry as to the history and whereabouts of the penman. A shadow fell on the face of our host when he said the gifted young man was blighted in the forenoon of life and had gone to a premature grave. Pointing to a small Episcopal church across the street, he said this bright life was ended by his own hand while lying on a sofa alone in that building. He had a young wife, a charming little woman, a good salary and an extra half-thousand dollars which was sent him every year by his father; but he was a save, bound hand and foot, by an appetite for cigarettes. At the time of his death he was working in a bank. Notwithstanding his complete slavery to the cigarette, he would not light nor use one inside the bank building. He soon found that his mind was becoming so impaired that he could not avoid mistakes in his figures without being continually under the influence of the cigarettes. He would slip out and smoke at intervals. Too late, he awoke to the realization of his bondage, and his loss of will-power and utter helplessness to break the chain. At noon, he kissed his wife and baby good bye, and, as she thought, went to the bank. Late in the evening the banker called to ascertain why he had not appeared in his place of business. Search was begun at once, and he was found in the little church he loved so much, stretched upon a sofa with a last letter to his wife lying on a chair by his side. How They Carry Money. To the initiated a man's nationality is betrayed by the way he carries his money. The Englishman carries his loosely in his right-hand trouser's pocket—gold, silver and copper all mixed together. He pulls out a handful of the mixture in a large, open way and selects the coins he has used. The American carries his wad of bills in a peculiar, long, narrow pocket-book, in which the greenbacks lie flat. The Frenchman makes use of a leather purse with no distinguishing characteristics, while the German uses one gaily embroidered in silks by the fair hand of some Lottchen or Mina. The half civilized capitalist from some torrid South American city carries his dollars in a belt with cunningly devised pockets to baffle the gentlemen with light fingers. Some of these belts are very expensive. The Italian of the poorer classes ties up his little fortune in a gaily colored handkerchief, secured with many knots, which he secrets in some mysterious manner about his clothes. A similar course has charms for the Spaniard, while the lower class Russian exhibits a preference for his boots or the lining of his clothes as a hiding-place for his savings.—London Tit-Bits. Our prayer for guidance will not be heard unless we are willing to be led. CROUP, COUGHS AND COLDS are all quickly cured by Perry-Pain-Killer. It lessens the cough almost instantly, and cures readily the most obstinate cold. Manufactured by the proprietors of Perry Davis' Pain-Killer. TO THOSE OF SEDENTARY OCCUPATION.—Men who follow sedentary occupations, which deprive them of fresh air and exercise are more prone to disorders of the liver and kidneys than those who lead active, outdoor lives. The former will find in Perry's Vegetable Pills a restorative without question the most efficacious on the market. They are easily procurable, easily taken, act expeditiously, and they are surprisingly cheap considering their excellence.

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