

Born of Water and of the Spirit

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Text: *John 3:1-17*

Let me start this message by reminding us that the Lord insisted that something radical must take place in our core being if we are to enter Heaven. According to our Lord Jesus Christ, you and I must be born again or we will not be saved. If this doesn't take place we will never see nor enter Heaven, but instead will go to a place called hell.

*3: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***

*5: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.***

*7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again.***

So **the all important question** today is ...

Are you born again? Can you honestly and confidently say that you have been born again? I hope this message will help you answer the question. What is born again? How do I know I have been born again?

You may have never heard of the term **born again** but that does not necessarily mean that you have not experienced it. My prayer is that as we talked about this subject, you would be able to say, yes that's what happened to me. Yes, I have experienced that in my life.

But for those who could not connect to what I will say this morning, it's not too late. You can be born again this morning. You may have arrived this morning not having been born again but you could leave this building today a completely new person.

Who is Nicodemus?

Nicodemus - a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews and a master of Israel (*verses 1, 10*)

Nicodemus was a well-respected leader in the Jewish community. He is a teacher which implies that he knows, believes and practices the Scripture (OT). He is a Pharisee which means that he is a moral and upright person at least externally.

*Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, **That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.***

*Philippians 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6: Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; **touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.***

Regarding the righteousness based on the law, without fault.

With all these, Christ told him “*Ye must be born again.*” All of Nicodemus’ religion, all of his amazing religious education, accomplishment and discipline and law-keeping, cannot change the fact that he needs to be born again.

I - The new birth is a universal necessity

In *John 3:3*, Jesus Christ did not say, except you, but rather, except a man, meaning that this is true to all men universally. **All men without exception need to be born again!** If a religious and a moral person who has all the national and spiritual privileges and advantages like Nicodemus (and John makes sure that we know that Nicodemus is a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews) needs to be born again how much more we who do not have the same privileges and advantages.

II - What is the New Birth?

1. What it is not

It is not religion. It is not morality. It is not reformation. It is not deciding to change one’s life style or behavior. Even if we would quit all our bad habits and vices, that would not be the new birth. Our trouble is not on the outside, but on the inside. We need a radical internal change.

2. What it is

Our Lord in verse 5 gives a twofold explanation of the "new birth," which lead Nicodemus to be amazed. *5: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born of water and of the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

1. Born of water

Various interpretations have been offered to explain the phrase born of water. **Some say that there are two births the natural birth and the spiritual birth.** Born of water speaks of the one natural, and born of the Spirit speaks of the spiritual birth. Those who hold this view interpret the water as the waters that break (amniotic fluid) and flow from the womb just before childbirth.

Others interpret the phrase born of water as referring to water baptism. Those who hold this view believe that water baptism washes away sins and is necessary for salvation. But we know that this interpretation is not according to the Bible’s overall teaching! If that is true, that baptism were necessary for salvation, why do we read, Jesus have refrained from baptizing people in ...

John 4:2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

Then we also read in ...

*1 Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? 14: **I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;** 15: **Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.** 16: **And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.** 17: **For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.***

John 3:9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10: Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Our Lord expected Nicodemus to understand this truth implying that He is speaking something that Nicodemus and the Old Testament people are familiar with. In the Old Testament **Water and Spirit** often refer symbolically to **spiritual cleansing and renewal** (*Numbers 19:17–19; Isaiah 4:4; 32:15; 44:3; 55:1; Joel 2:28–29; Zechariah 13:1*).

Jeremiah 33:8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

Ezekiel 36:24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. 25: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Ezekiel is prophesying what God will do for His people when he brings them back from exile in Babylon. He will cleanse them. He will forgive them. He will pardon them.

Born of water is symbolic of what happened to a person who has experienced new birth. A person who has been born again had been cleansed from sins.

Water – washes, cleanses, rinses

Born of water means **to be cleansed from sins**. It is to be washed from sins. It is to be pardoned. It is to be forgiven.

2. Born of the Spirit

Born of the Spirit means **to be renewed**. It is a new beginning. It involves inward renewal. It involves a changing in the inside. It is a recreation. It is an impartation of new life. It is to be raised from the dead.

Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart (heart of stone) out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27: And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes (be careful to obey my laws), and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Heart of stone

Heart of stone means dead. A stone is cold, hard, has no life, and does not respond. It is alive and responsive to many things but it is unresponsive and unreceptive to spiritual reality. It is cold and dead stone when it comes to spiritual things. He sees and feels beauty in a thousand things but when it comes to Christ and the Cross it is foolishness to him.

Heart of flesh

Flesh is soft, alive, easily pricked. Heart of flesh – a heart that is now responsive and receptive to spiritual reality. When Christ is lifted up and glorified, it gets excited. That is what happens in the new birth. The Christ that was not worthy before now becomes everything and precious. Only the people that had their heart change from a stony heart into a heart of flesh see the glory, beauty and preciousness of Christ.

27: And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That is what it means to be born again according to Jesus Christ. In the new birth we cleansed and renewed. We are forgiven and recreated. We need both cleansing and renewing. We must be changed inside and not only that we must be made a new man.

Unless our sins have been forgiven and made new person we will never see and enter the kingdom of God. Unless we are cleansed and renewed, we will never see and enter the kingdom of God.

We must be born of water and born of the Spirit, that is, we must be washed and renewed. *Titus 3:4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, **by the washing of regeneration**, (born of water) **and renewing of the Holy Ghost**; (born of the Spirit) 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;*

In the new birth we are forgiven and cleanse but not only that in the new birth we are given life. We are made new. We are transformed. That is why Ezekiel speaks of **a new heart** and **a new spirit**.

Marvel not ...

It was hard for Nicodemus to understand this necessity of new birth for he was externally a moral and righteous man. He was a religious man. He had all the right activities, right connection, went to the right place at the right time, but he failed to see his inward corruption. External morality was not enough he must be born from above, that is cleanse inwardly and renewed inwardly.

Christ is saying to Nicodemus that all his external morality and religious activities are not enough, that his condition is so bad that unless a person is thoroughly cleanse and radically change or transformed he or she will never be fit for Heaven.

Are you born again? Have you been born of water and of the Spirit? Have you been cleansed and renewed? Have you been forgiven and recreated?

III - How do I know I have been born again or I have been washed and renewed?

I know I have been born again when I have repented and believed the Gospel.

*John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16: 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**. 17: For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18: **He that believeth on him is not condemned**: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Look unto Jesus Christ the Son of God, for as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Cry to Him. Call upon His name. Ask Him to save you. Cry to Him for mercy, for forgiveness and pardon and salvation. Run to the Saviour. Cast yourself upon Him. And you will find Him willing, a ready, an able, and a gracious Saviour.

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.*