

YOU NEED A NEW BIRTH

John 3:1-15

Born-again Christian is redundant. There are no Christians who are not born again. But there is much confusion about being “born again”

1.WE NEED A NEW BIRTH – John 3:1-6

- No matter who we are, we need to be “reborn from above.” Even the very religious Nicodemus is absolutely lost without a new birth. Nicodemus was an extremely religious, powerful, and knowledgeable man. He was a religious expert. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, the teacher of Israel, a member of the Sanhedrin, the leadership council of the Jews. The Sanhedrin had 71 members, with the High Priest presiding over it. Nicodemus comes to see Jesus at night probably to keep it private, or perhaps simply to have extended uninterrupted time with Him. He respectfully calls Jesus “Rabbi” and seems to think God is at work in Him. But He is still lost and clueless spiritually. Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter. Jesus knows who we are – John 2:25. Nicodemus needs a new birth and a new heart. Unless Nicodemus has a new birth from above he cannot see the Kingdom of God. To “see the Kingdom of God” is ultimately to witness and participate in God’s Saving Kingly rule in the age to come. This new birth is shocking to a man who assumes he is okay with God. Some Rabbis spoke of “proselytes” being “like a new born child,” but how could Jesus say this to a true-born religious Israelite? Does Jesus really think an old man can start all over?
- Jesus says to us, like Nicodemus, unless we are born of water and the Spirit we cannot enter the Kingdom of God. There are two births: that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. This being born of water does not refer to natural birth or to baptism. Being born of the water and Spirit is one supernatural God-given event, not two. We are cleansed and given new life, including a new heart by the Holy Spirit. It refers back to the Old Testament - Ezekiel 36:25-27. Nicodemus as the teacher of Israel should know this passage and other passages – Ezekiel 37:9, 10; Jeremiah 31:33.

2.ONLY GOD GIVES NEW BIRTH – John3:7-8

- Being born anew is not a command, it is a statement of fact. We must be born anew to see the Kingdom of God or enter the Kingdom. But being born of God is not something we do ourselves! You cannot make yourself born again. Without the cleansing of the new birth by the Spirit, no one enters God’s Kingdom – Titus 3:5-7.
- The new birth is a gracious, free, and sovereign work of God’s Holy Spirit. Jesus compares new birth by the Spirit to the blowing of the wind. “Wind”, “breath”, and “Spirit” are the same words in both Greek and Hebrew. Just as the wind is beyond human control, so is being born of the Spirit. But the results of the wind can be seen. So can the results of new birth. No one naturally can respond to God – John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1. The Spirit has to breathe life into us and show us our desperate need of Jesus Christ – Ephesians 2:5. This is new birth or regeneration. It is resurrection from spiritual death. Becoming a Christ-follower is always a miracle! Only God saves. Being alive unto God is the radical difference between non-believers and believers.

- The Spirit and the Word go hand in hand – James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23. Let us not resign in despair and think we can do nothing. We are responsible to pray and give out the Word. God brings people to Jesus by using His Word through the drawing of the Lord and Lifegiver, the Holy Spirit. *“If you have in your heart today any affection for Christ at all, it is because God the Holy Spirit in His sweetness, in His power, in His mercy, and in His grace has been to the cemetery of your soul and has raised you from the dead.” – R.C. Sproul.*

3. NEW BIRTH RESULTS IN BELIEF IN JESUS (AND A NEW LIFE!)– John 3:9-15

- Nicodemus still doesn't get it – “How can these things be?”. Jesus chides him for his ignorance even though he supposedly is a teacher. The blindness of the human heart is why we need new birth - 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. Jesus is the Only ONE who has come from Heaven to tell us the True Way. The only True Way to God involves the absolute necessity of Christ's death and resurrection (“the Son of Man being lifted up”). Moses lifting up the serpent illustrates the cross of Christ - Numbers 21:4-9. We have to look and live. We only have to look to Jesus Christ and His cross-work for us to have eternal life. Eternal life is parallel to entering the Kingdom of God. It is new life which begins now and extends through eternity and the coming Kingdom. Only those who have new birth will look in faith and believe in Jesus. *“The single, unmistakable sign of the new birth is faith in Jesus.” – Matt Carter.* Nicodemus seems to finally have been born from above after the death of Jesus – John 19:38-40.
- The ongoing evidence of eternal life and new birth is a new direction in life. It includes new desires and a new purpose. Now you live for the honor and glory of God. You are not trying to earn His favor, but live for Him because of His favor.

Concluding Applications:

- Have you been reborn from above? Have you looked to the cross of Christ alone for your salvation?
- Do you have new desires for God and His Word and to live for Him? Is your life headed in a new direction – toward Christ?
- Is living for Christ and loving Him your greatest joy?