

The Gospel of John

You Must Be Born Again

John 3:1-8

INTRODUCTION

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 3:1-8 (NASB)

³ Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; ² this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."
³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁴ Nicodemus *said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Prayer

Verses 1- 21 is a **dialog** between Jesus and Nicodemus. The nature of a dialog is that you really don't want to interrupt it. Who among us likes to be interrupted in a conversation. Unfortunately, due to the extent of the material, it is too much to cover in one sermon. So, by necessity, we will interrupt the dialog. So this morning I will preaching through verse 8.

ILLUSTRATION:

Billy Graham tells of a time early in his ministry when he arrived at a small town to preach at a revival meeting. He arrived a little bit early in order to finish writing a letter back home that he wanted to send off.

As he finished the letter, he asked a young boy standing on the sidewalk if he could point him to the post office. When the young boy had given him directions, Mr. Graham thanked him and asked him if he would like to come this evening to the revival.

Mr. Graham told him that if he would come to the meeting this evening, I will tell you how to get to heaven. The little boy said "I don't believe I will be there."

Mr. Graham said "Why not?"

The boy said, "Sir, you do not even know the way to the post office. How do I think you are going to know how to get to heaven?"

For as amusing as that conversation is, it does address the fundamental, basic question that all people want to have answered.

I. HOW DO I GET TO HEAVEN?

For most of us, as we are sitting here in the church, we may think, I have a handle on this.

I would like to ask you, do you really?

There are many people who do not know. If someone came up to you and asked "How do I get to heaven" could you tell them? At the beginning of Jesus' ministry there was a lot of people wanting to know what Jesus was all about and what He was teaching. This leader of the Jews named Nicodemus was one of those people.

There is an evangelistic question that goes something like this...

"If you were to die and stand before God today and He would say to you "Why should I let you into heaven?" what would you say?"

The answer to this question is very revealing. If you were to randomly ask ten people this question, most would not answer it as the Bible would answer it.

This is one of the most important questions in this life that we **must** know the correct answer to. Our eternity depends upon it. Yet people are still fuzzy on it.

This is what we see here between Jesus and an inquisitive Nicodemus as this question is played out before us in this dialog. Nicodemus really wants to know how to get to heaven. He is seeing a man who is performing many signs and miracles that could only be accomplished if God were with Him and understands that this is not an ordinary man. So he wants to hear from Jesus how to get to heaven. As a religious leader, he is not sure.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and leader of the Jews in Israel. According to John 7:50-51 he was a member of the Sanhedrin. Each city could have a Sanhedrin, which functioned as the "lower courts." It was the highest ruling body above the Jewish people. Under Roman authority in the time of Christ, the Jewish nation was allowed a measure of self-rule, and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was the final court of appeals for matters regarding Jewish law and religion. This was the body that ultimately condemned Jesus, yet they had to get Pilate to approve their sentence since the death penalty was beyond their jurisdiction under Roman law. It appears that Nicodemus was part of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

In verse two we read that Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night. It is interesting that this plays upon the last three verses in chapter 2.

John 2:23-25 (NASB)

²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus, on His part, was not

entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, ²⁵ and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

The implication is that Nicodemus is one of those people. He was one of those people who liked the show that Jesus was putting on. He even acknowledged that the show had some sort of divine linkage to it. But he may not have recognized that the signs that He was doing was pointing out that He was the Messiah that had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament. But Nicodemus was impressed! He was impressed with the show Jesus put on. So we read that he comes to Jesus at night.

Why at night? Well, possibly it was because he wants to know about Jesus but he doesn't really want to publicly associate with Him.

I am sure you know people who are like that!

That is Nicodemus. He comes to Jesus at night and that is where the conversation begins. Nicodemus says...

“Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as a teacher*; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Nicodemus has witnessed these signs. And he knows that He is a man sent from God. He probably does not realize that Jesus **was** God in the flesh. He probably just thinks that He is a man that is favored by God. He is obviously not saved. We know that by Jesus' response.

John 3:3 (NASB)

³ Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Where did that come from?

Nicodemus makes a comment that Jesus must be a teacher from God and Jesus tells him he must be born again.

Why did Jesus respond that way?

Well Jesus knew what was coming from Nicodemus' heart. Jesus knew what the real issue was for him. Just as He knew what the real issue was for Nathaniel back in chapter one and just as He will know the real issue with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4 and just as He will know the real issue with the man born blind in chapter 9, Jesus knows what their issues are. He knows what is going on in their hearts. And this is one of the **signals** that John uses throughout his gospel in order to identify Jesus as the Messiah, the One sent from God. Because **who can know the heart of man?** Only God! John is testifying that since Jesus knew the hearts of men that He had to be the one sent from God. What Nicodemus was really wanting to know was **what was needed in order to get to heaven?**

II. YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.

So Jesus gives him a simple five word answer. **You must be born again!** A good answer to a pretty important question, wouldn't you say?

Jesus tells him he must be born again in order to see the kingdom of heaven. This is a spiritual kingdom that unbelievers cannot be a part of. Their kingdom is here on this earth. This earthly kingdom is a kingdom that we became a part of when we were born because of the fall of man in the garden of Eden. In order to depart from this earthly kingdom and become a part of the kingdom of heaven, we must be born again.

This only confused Nicodemus.

John 3:1-8 (NASB)

⁴ Nicodemus *said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”

What does it mean to be born again?

John 3:5-8 (NASB)

⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The Greek word used here can mean "again" or it can mean "from above". To be born again is to be born from above. It is a spiritual birth. There is a word in Greek that means only "again". But Jesus uses a word here that has a double, thus veiled, meaning.

The Son and the Spirit have descended to earth in order to affect this new birth.

In order to enter into that kingdom that is above we must be born from above. He must make us spiritually alive. The Spirit is sent from heaven to apply that redemptive work of Christ to us. It unites us with Christ. We share in His death and resurrection. We die to our old worldly self and resurrect into a new righteous life freed from our sin because of Christ's death on the cross.

Born again or born from above is to be born of the Spirit. The Spirit of God literally takes up residence within you. And THAT is the mark that we ARE born again. This is an amazing thing to consider.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

You are the temple of the Holy Spirit Who IS IN YOU!

Just as the tongues of fire rested upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost signifying the presence of God in that place, so does Jesus tell us that we are the temple of God and the Spirit of God has taken up residence within us. The Holy Spirit is now in you. That is the essence of what it means to be born again. We are ONLY born again if the Holy Spirit is dwelling within us. It is only then that we are freed of our sin and are fit to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that the era of the New Covenant is the era of the Spirit. It is

an era of blessings. We will be cleansed from our sin and God will dwell within us. The ultimate change that is going to happen to you in heaven is going to be started right now.

Does this mean that everything we face in our future on earth will now be free of grief and misery? Of course not! It is important that we understand that because we do not want to be disillusioned by our Christianity and thus fall away from it. We still live in a world of sin. And pain and disappointment and grief will continue until Christ comes again.

Christianity is not a life of complete comfort but the blessings that come with it is a foretaste of what heaven will be like. Do not believe that once you are born again all of your problems will vanish.

When you are born again nothing happens to your flesh! You will still sin despite your desire not to. You will still have a body of corruption. And Satan will still make every effort to destroy your faith. That is the reality of one who is born again and still living on this earth.

The fact that we now have been born again opens up a whole new arena of struggles for us. Struggles that we never ever had before.

The youth group realized this when they asked the following question on "Why Night". "Why do we have so many rules that we have to follow?"

Before we were born again we did not have a problem with greed, lust, covetousness, and pride, but now we do. Our desire now is to avoid the lusts of the flesh and seek the righteousness of God that Paul called the fruits of the spirit.

We now hate the lusts of the flesh, yet they confront us continuously and cause us to struggle within ourselves to avoid them. They suddenly become thorns to us. These things used to be pleasurable to us, but now when we catch ourselves committing a sin, we are miserable because of it. That is because the Holy Spirit that is dwelling within us is convicting us to stay away from sin and seek righteousness.

Paul talked about how hard it was to do good.

Romans 7:18-19 (NASB)

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

The war between the flesh and Spirit will be an ongoing battle. We may do things that will bring absolute ruin upon us, don't be discouraged, because the Spirit ultimately overcomes as long as we continue the fight.

III. WHAT MUST I DO?

So what is our responsibility in this battle?

- Our part is to continuously apply ourselves to the Word of God. Read it. Study it. Hear it taught and preached. And live it to the best of our ability.
- We devote ourselves to prayer and fellowshiping with God's people.

- We observe communion to constantly remind us of what Jesus has done for us.
- We must maintain the proper mindset that sin no longer has power over you.

Romans 6:11-14 (NASB)

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Sin no longer has control over you. This is vital to the battle. Because so many will say when they fall to sin "I just couldn't help it". It is an admission to the fact that they felt powerless. That admission is actually an admission that you have been deceived. Because we are promised that sin does not have power over you. Thus the proper mindset is critical. We must reckon **ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus**.

CONCLUSION:

I want you to understand the implications of what it means to be born again.

- You have been granted a new life. Your sins have been wiped away.
- The Holy Spirit is living within you. Your body is a temple of God.
- You have been given a new identity. You are now a Christian.
- You have become a child of God. You are a part of God's family.
- You are now a member of His kingdom.
- You now possess this guarantee of inheritance that is yet to come.

These are all foretastes of these heavenly blessings that will be ours for eternity in the presence of God and all of His glory.

Being born again is something that God effects. It is not something that we bring upon ourselves. If you are born again, it is because God has graciously acted upon you through His Spirit.

Then Jesus says just as the wind blows where it chooses so does the Spirit of God. God acts upon you as He pleases.

You may say "If God only chooses whom he wishes to act upon, then I am doomed". And I would say, if that is your mindset, you are right where you need to be. Because in the end, you cannot do anything to make yourself born again. Just like you could not do anything to make yourself be born to your mother.

So what can we do?

You must cry out to God to have mercy on you. You must seek God's grace. And we are told that if we seek for God, we will find Him. God, Who knows the heart, will grant His Spirit to those who really want Him!

The Family of God.