

John 3:1–8

- 1 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 are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”
- 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, 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? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”
- 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”
- 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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 marvel 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 cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

“Born Again” John 3:4-8

INTRO:

The phrase, “*born again*,” became very famous years ago in a presidential election in which one candidate, Jimmy Carter managed to solidify a large portion of the evangelical vote behind him by openly declaring that he had been “*born again*.” But what does it mean to be “*born again*?” Is this a phrase that is open to any interpretation the user chooses to put on it, or is there a precise technical definition for this term?

The phrase “*born again*,” was first used by the Lord Jesus Himself here in **John 3** to describe an experience that is imperative for everyone who wishes to enter the kingdom of God. If we are really going to understand what being “*born again*” means we need to learn from Jesus, Himself. So, then let us return to that upper room

shrouded in night so long ago as Jesus explains to a man named Nicodemus what it means to be **“born again.”**

I. What the New Birth Is Not (v. 4)

II. What the New Birth Is (v. 5-8)

I. What the New Birth Is Not (v. 4)

“Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’” (John 3:4)

A. Having heard what Jesus said, in **verse 4**, ***“Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”*** If we put ourselves in Nicodemus' place, we would realize what he has just heard is radical to his theological system. How in the world could he or anyone else ever hope to enter the kingdom of God if it requires a second birth?

1. There are some who look at Nicodemus' response to the Lord's statement as compelling proof that ***another*** should be translated again. Yet, it is entirely possible the part of the Lord's statement Nicodemus was most reacting to was the concept of birth.

2. Birth is a radical experience. Birth happens once at the beginning of our life experience and is never repeated again. Birth is an experience we have no control over, and that we have no active part in. It happens to us, we do not make it happen! Birth is also the advent to a whole new experience, life outside our mother's body!

B. Once we begin to think through this we begin to understand why Nicodemus had a problem understanding what the Lord was saying. How could someone be ***“born again”*** or born ***“from above”*** or in any other way once he had been born the first time? Yet, as we are about to find out, the birth Jesus spoke about was not a repeat of a physical birth. This is a spiritual birth which takes place in the life through the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

C. Before we move on in this text to learn what the new birth is, perhaps we should add one more point to our consideration of what the new birth is not. It is not simply ***“a decision”*** we make. I want to be clear here. To be sure, we do make a choice, but the choice is not what makes us born again!

D. In summary, the New Birth is not a natural process arising out of natural choice. **John 1:12-13** says,

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

II. What the New Birth Is (v. 5-8)

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’” (John 3:5–8)

A. Now that we have a grasp of what the New Birth is not, let us consider briefly what the New Birth is.

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”

B. The first thing we learn in (v. 5) is the new birth is a second birth. One of the great debates that has raged on among scholars for literally centuries is what in the world was Jesus talking about when He said, we must be born out of water and spirit if we are to enter into the kingdom of God.

1. Perhaps, we should begin by pointing out Jesus was NOT talking about baptism here. Baptism does not save, and it does not even appear anywhere in the context. Jesus did not conclude by saying, you must be baptized and born again to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2. Whatever Jesus is saying, He is communicating with Nicodemus and so the term ***“water”*** must be related to something that Nicodemus would know and understand. Thus the cross reference in **Ephesians 5:26**, as compelling as it seems, is invalid support for the concept of the Word of God!

3. While there is convincing support for seeing water as a reference to the Spirit of God in the OT,

(Ezekiel 36:25-27 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them”)

I think the fact that He is answering a reference to physical birth in **verse 4** still compels us to see the reference to water as a reference to physical birth.

4. Nicodemus was taught that all that was necessary for him to merit eternal life was that he be physically born into the Jewish race. Underlining again the fact that heritage will not save, Jesus said, Nicodemus, the birth I am talking about is not a physical birth, the birth out of water. It is a supernatural birth, a birth out from the Spirit of God! It is a birth which has to happen in addition to your physical birth!

C. Not only is the new birth a second birth, it is a miraculous birth (v. 5-6). Jesus carries on the thought of the birth whose source is the Spirit of God. Jesus does this by repeating what He already said in a parallel statement in **verse 6**. The characteristics of each of these two kinds of birth is seen in **John 3:5-6**.

“Jesus answered, ‘truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”

1. First, ***“that which is born out of the flesh, flesh is.”*** When we were born physically, we were born to be just like the one who gave birth to us. We have little trouble understanding this. Consider my son David. I have been told that David looks like me. That is because David is my son. I am his father. He is flesh of my flesh! David has blue eyes like I do. He has blond hair like I do. He has internal corruption and sin, like I do!

2. ***“That which is born out of the Spirit, spirit is.”*** When we are born again (from above) through the work of God, the result is spiritual life. The apostle Peter called it ***“being partakers of the Divine nature.”*** There is a new life in us. Not like my fleshly life. It is a life that delights in obeying God and not in sin. It is a life that desires to please God in all that we do. It is a life that is like the Father Who has begotten us.

D. The new birth is a life-transforming experience (v. 8). To show us this truth the Lord Jesus uses the example of the wind. He says the wind blows where it wishes, and we can hear it, but we don't know much about it. Still, we can see the effect of its passing!

1. I remember as a child going to the scene of the worst tornado in the history of Grand Rapids. I never saw the tornado, but I sure saw where it had passed by. There were houses that were little more than match sticks, house trailers twisted by some unseen force into aluminum and wood pretzels, and huge trees uprooted and tossed about like so many broken sticks. No one doubted that a tornado had been there, we could plainly see the results.

2. Then I remembered a scene in this very Gospel in **John 9**. We read there as Jesus passed by He saw a man blind from his birth. Before Jesus came, he was blind, helpless, and hopeless. Then Jesus came into this man's life. Hear this man's testimony.

“He answered and said, ‘Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.’”

I don't have all of the answers theologically. I can't explain everything about what it means to be born again. But this one thing I know, I once was blind and now I see spiritually.

How about you and me?

Is there evidence that Jesus passed by in our lives?

Do we know that we know Him?

The first step is trusting Him alone for your salvation. If you haven't done that, do that today.

Then with the help of the Holy Spirit Who lives in you, seek to walk with Him, grow in Him, and learn to love Him more.

Hymn #186 ***The Old Rugged Cross***