

# THE NEW BIRTH

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JOHN 3:1-8 • TV444B

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by

**HENRY T. MAHAN**

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Zebulon Baptist Church  
6088 Zebulon Highway  
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### **John 3:1-8**

*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 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. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 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 which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Last week I brought you a message from a very well known portion of God's Word. Do you remember? "*For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.*" It is a very familiar scripture but understood by so few. This morning I'm going to bring another message and this message

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will be from an equally well-known passage of scripture. It is probably better known than **Ephesians 2:8 and 9**.

I'm asking you to take your Bible and I wish you would definitely pick up your Bible and stay with me for the next 26 or 27 minutes and follow in the scripture as I speak to you on: **"THE NEW BIRTH."** We're reading from **John Chapter 3: verses 1 through 8**. You know the scripture; this is our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus concerning the new birth. You need to hear me out. You need to listen to what I have to say on this subject. I am going to say some things that will be new to you but they are not new to the scriptures. They are just not being preached. Perhaps, you may receive some light on the subject of the new birth. It may be that God Almighty will be pleased by His Great Spirit to speak to our hearts concerning the new birth.

Now, let's look at it. Let's start at **John Chapter 3: 1**, beginning at the first line and let's take each line and read through this scripture and I will comment.

In **verse 1**, it says, *"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus."* Who were the Pharisees? This man was of the Pharisees. The Pharisees in that day were the religious leaders. They were men who prided themselves on being moral, righteous and holy before God and before men. They measured their holiness by their works and by their deeds.

In **Luke 18**, our Lord gave us an illustration: Two men went to the temple to pray. One was a Publican, a sinner, and the other was a Pharisee. He said that the Pharisee prayed thus with himself; He said, *"God I thank Thee that I'm not like other men; I fast twice a week, I tithe everything that I possess, I give alms to the poor, (that is his work involving morality), I'm not an extortioner, I'm not unjust, and I'm not an adulterer."* He spotted that Publican and said, *"I'm not like that Publican."* So, the Pharisees would not take the name, (sinner). They didn't think that they were sinners. They said, *"We be not sinners."* The Pharisees were deeply moral and religious.

All right, this man was a Pharisee. His name was Nicodemus. Back in those days, when parents named their children (especially the boys), they usually took a name that meant something to them. In the Bible or in a Bible dictionary, you can look up the word "Nicodemus". The word "Nicodemus" means "innocent blood." That is what his name means. This is the name that his parents gave him, "innocent blood."

No doubt, when this mother and father saw this fine son, having just been born, they said, "Ah, what a beautiful baby." There is no corrupt blood here. There is no pagan Gentile blood in his veins. He has pure blood and we are going to give him a fitting name, Nicodemus, "innocent blood." Oh, how far that is from the truth!

The scripture says, *"In sin my mother conceived me; I was shapen in iniquity; I was brought forth from the womb speaking lies. The wicked are estranged from the womb."* They didn't know this. He didn't know this. In the same verse, it says, *"There was a man*

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*of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*” Nicodemus was one of the 70 men. There was a council, a great Jewish council. They were the rulers of the synagogue. They were the rulers of religion and the Jewish nation, called the Sanhedrin. There were 70 men belonging to the Sanhedrin.

This man, Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin. He didn't know the Messiah. He knew not the heavenly things. Christ said to him, *“If I have told you earthly things and you don't understand, how would you understand if I told you heavenly things?”* Christ said, “Nicodemus are you a ruler of the Jews and you don't understand these simple things that I'm talking about?”

This man didn't know God. He didn't know Christ. He didn't know the scriptures regarding the Messiah, the Saviour. He was standing and looking at the Jewish Messiah and he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest court and council, and even being a teacher, he did not know the scriptures.

It is amazing how successful men can be in religion and not know the scriptures. You will see that today. It's amazing how high men can climb in religion and not have any grace, any knowledge or any understanding of who Christ is, what He came to do, why He did it or where He is now. You see, just like Nicodemus, they have a form of religion. Nicodemus had the form. He had the ceremonies and the religion. He had the so-called form of godliness and morality, but that is all it was, (form).

Look **at verse 2:** Well, he came to Jesus. It says, *“This Pharisee came to Jesus by night.”* Now, we all know why he came by night. He came in the night; he came under the cover of darkness because he feared the Jews. He knew that he would be put out of the synagogue, be put off the Sanhedrin and would be put out of office if they found him coming to see Jesus of Nazareth. They all hated Jesus of Nazareth. They despised Him, rejected Him, called Him a devil, and an imposter.

He came to Jesus. I want to say this about Nicodemus; I'm glad he came. It doesn't matter what time of night he came or what time of day; I'm just glad he came. It doesn't matter the reason for which he came, but I'm glad he came. He came to talk to Jesus Christ. He came to listen and to inquire about this man Jesus Christ. I'll tell you, I'm glad he came and at least he came. If he's ever going to learn anything about God, he is going to have to come to Christ.

The scripture says that, *“God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake to our fathers by the prophets, who hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son. No man knows the Father but the Son and He to whom the Son will reveal Him.”* You see; no man has seen God. The only begotten Son declares it. So, this man Nicodemus did the right thing, for whatever reason, at whatever time; it doesn't matter; he did the right thing. At least he came to Jesus.

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Mary sat at His feet and listened to Him. I wish people would come and listen. I wish folks would open their Bible and listen. God speaks today through His Word like He spoke then through Christ His Son. He speaks through His Word. I wish people would come and listen and take the Word and open it. I wish they would sit and listen. I wish they would inquire into the things of God just like we are doing right now. You are sitting there listening; you have your Bible open. Listen and see what God has to say. Let's see what the scripture says. Be quiet and listen. I don't care what time of night you come or for what reason you come. You may come to prove me wrong. That is all right!

Listen to what Nicodemus says in **verse 2**: "*Rabbi*" (Master), this man had been taught some etiquette. This man had been taught some respect. He came to our Lord Jesus and called Him (Master). He said this, "*I know you are a teacher sent from God; I know you came from God because no man could do the miracles that you do, except God be with Him.*"

I've had people come and sit and listen to me preach on this television program and not agree with what I had to say. They say this at the close of the message; "I've never heard it that way; that is what the Bible says; he's teaching the word of God. He's not just up there screaming and yelling, ranting and raving and raising money; he's teaching the Word of God. This is what the Bible says, so I'm going to come back and hear it again."

That is what Nicodemus said, He said, "*Master I know you came from God because you speak the Word of God and you do the works of God. No man could be doing what you're doing except God be with him.*" Even this Pharisee was no fool. Are you? He wasn't a religious fool. He didn't know Jesus Christ. He didn't know who He was or what He came to do, but he wanted to know and he wanted to find out. He knew He came from God. He knew He spoke for God. He knew He did the works of God. He knew God was with Him. This is an honest man. This is an observant man.

I wish you would compare preachers. I wish people wouldn't blindly follow men because of their charisma or their crowds or because of their so-called deeds. I wish they would listen and listen and listen to what they are saying. What are they saying?

Nicodemus came to listen. He said, "*Rabbi, (Master), I know you're from God because no man could do what you do except God be with him.*" Nicodemus had the law, he had the form and he had the ceremony, but he recognized that Jesus of Nazareth had something that he didn't have and he wanted to inquire about it. Nicodemus had the law, he had the form, and he had the ceremony. What do you have? You may have the same thing. He realized that Jesus Christ had something that he didn't have. He had the power of God, the presence of God, the truth of God, the Word of God and the promise of God.

What Nicodemus had didn't satisfy him or he wouldn't have come. Have you ever thought about that? This man, Nicodemus, high up in religion, nevertheless, came to Jesus by night and said, "*Master, I know you came from God because no man could do what you do*

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*except God be with him.*” I know something else that is going on in his mind. He’s not satisfied with his form, ceremony, and tradition or with his so-called righteousness. He knows Christ has something that he doesn’t have and that is the presence and the power, promises and the truth of God. He doesn’t know how to say it. He doesn’t know what he doesn’t have. He doesn’t know what he hasn’t heard. He doesn’t know what he doesn’t know, but he is inquiring. He’s come for the right purpose, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice, our Lord replied, (now listen), He said, “*Nicodemus, verily, verily, (or truly, truly, it’s equivalent), “Thus saith the Lord; this is the record.”* That is what He was about to say, “*Thus saith the Lord, (truly, truly),”* (this is God speaking). This is the authority of God speaking, “*I say unto you, (truly, truly), verily, verily, I say unto you,*” (authority). This is not comparing notes, and this is not guessing. This is authority, and this is God speaking! Listen to it, “*Except a man, (any man, you, me, Nicodemus or otherwise in the church or in the world) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

Those two words, “*born again;*” check in your Bible and see if you have a center reference. There is a figure beside the word, “*born again.*” There’s maybe a letter or a number. What does the center reference say? It says, “*Born from above.*” Nicodemus, “*Except a man, (you or any man, as high as you are in religion, as important as you are), unless you be ‘born again’ (not from below, born from above, born not by your acts, but by the acts of God, born of God, not persuaded, not talked into a decision, but be born again), he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

The whole religious world begins at the wrong end in the matter of the new birth. I hear people talking about the new birth. All of these top-line evangelists and important people talk about the new birth. They say to come down to the front of the church and be “born again.” They will say to read your Bible and get “born again,” believe and be “born again.” You are not “born again” because you believe, you believe because you are “born again.” You’re not “born again” because you love God; you love God because you are “born again.” Being “born again” comes first.

A baby isn’t born because he cries. He cries because he’s born. A baby’s not born because he breathes; he breathes because he is born. He’s born and then he breathes. He’s born and then he cries. He’s born and then he sees; he’s born and then he hears. He’s born and then he loves. That is what our Lord is saying to Nicodemus, “You’re not going to see the Kingdom of God; you are not going to understand the kingdom of God; you’re not going to perceive the kingdom of God unless you are born from above, born of God.”

It doesn’t begin with men; it begins with God. This whole religious experience begins with God. Salvation begins with God. Creation begins with God. “*Jesus Christ was in the world and the world knew Him not; He came unto His own and His own received Him not, but as many as received Him to them gave He the power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. We’re born, not of blood, (not of natural genealogy), not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but born of God.*” That is why they received Christ. That is why they believed on Christ. That is why they embraced Christ. It is

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because they were “**Born from above, born of God.**” That is first; did you know that? Read it!

Here stands a man that is religious, moral, and self-righteous. He is a student, and a governing ruler in the Jewish religion. He doesn't know who Christ is. He doesn't have any peace or joy. He doesn't see the kingdom of God or the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Christ said, “Your problem is that you haven't been born again.” *“Except a man is born from above; he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

In **James Chapter 1:18**, *“Of His own will begat He us through the Word of truth.”* What is the Word of truth? The Word of truth is the Bible. Who is He? He is God Almighty! Whose will? It is not our will; it is His will. *“Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth.”* What does “*begat*” mean? It means born. *“Begot He us with the Word of truth.”* The scripture says, *“He hath begotten us again unto a living hope.”*

In **First Peter 1:23**, it says, *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.”* Our Lord said, *“Nicodemus, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

In **verse 5**, (look a moment); our Lord said, *“Except a man is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”* Here He is talking about being a part of it and entering into the kingdom of God. In **verse 3**, He's talking about understanding it (He cannot see it). Except a man is born again, he doesn't even know there is a kingdom of God. He doesn't understand it. You see; the kingdom of God is spiritual and we are carnal. The kingdom of God is heavenly; we are of the earth. The kingdom of God is within you. It's not outward demonstration.

In **Romans Chapter 14:17**, it says, *“The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The Son of God has come and given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true.”* This is a true God; this is eternal life. It has to be a work of God, a work of grace, and a work of the Spirit of God before there is knowledge of and an understanding of an interest in the kingdom of God. Do you see that? *“Except a man, (I say this to you) truly, truly, except a man is born again, he cannot even see the kingdom of God.”* He can't comprehend it. He can't understand it. He can't see it.

Then, Nicodemus revealed his ignorance. Here is this religious scholar and his lack of understanding when he said, *“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb?”* My friend, it is not wise to make light of the scriptures. It is not wise to ridicule the Word of God even if you don't understand it. Our Lord said, *“I say unto you, except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Don't ridicule that and don't make light of it. If you are wise, you will inquire to what it means. The next verse tells you.

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Again He said, in **verse 5**, truly, truly, verily, verily, I say unto you, “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*” Unless he is “born again,” he cannot even see it, comprehend it or understand it. He has to be born of the water and the Spirit to enter. Without it, he cannot be a part of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a holy kingdom; it is for holy people. It is a spiritual kingdom for spiritual people. It is a Heavenly kingdom for heavenly people. It is not for carnal, fleshly people. “*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*”

What does “*born of water,*” mean? What is this water? It’s not baptism. It is not literal water. It is the Word of God. “*Of His own will, begat He us with the Word of truth. Wherewith all shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto the Word of God.*” In First Peter 1:23 it says, “*We’re born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.*” In Ephesians one it says, “*In whom you trusted after you heard the Word of God.*” The Word of God is the seed of life. That is right! “*The Word of God, the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation.*” Do you see that? He that is “*born of water*” is born of the Word, the seed of the Word.

Now, what is the Spirit? It is the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God takes the Word of God and regenerates the sinner. It makes that Word effectual to the heart. In First Corinthians two, the scripture says, “*The natural man receiveth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually are discerned. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and hath not entered the heart of man the things God has prepared for them that love Him; He hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit for the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God.*” The Holy Spirit takes the deep things of God and makes them known to us. So, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God, the seed of life and begets, or quickens and regenerates a sinner and he lives. That’s right!

Paul wrote to the **Thessalonians in Chapter 1**, he said, “*Brethren, I know your election of God because our gospel didn’t come to you in word only; it came to you in power in the Holy Ghost, in much assurance.*” So, here is how a man is born again. The Word of God is preached in the power of God’s Spirit and God’s Spirit takes that Word and sends it into the heart, that seed is planted in the heart and that seed lives. It is the Word of Life; that is what it is.

Christ is the Word of God. The new heaven requires a new nature. With the new birth, comes that new nature. You are children born of God and you are born babes in Christ. But we grow in grace and it is by the Word of God that we do grow. It is by the Word of God that faith comes. It is by the Word of God that we are comforted by the promises of God.

All right, look at **verse 6**. He said, “*Nicodemus, that which is born of the flesh is flesh.*” If you could reenter your mother’s womb and be born, you would still be flesh. You’re born

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from a natural father and from a natural mother. When a person is born of the Spirit; *“That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.”* You’re born of God and born from above. You’re born of the Word of God and born by the power of God. You’re also born of the Spirit of God. When a person is born, he cries. When he’s born, He receives Him (Christ). When he’s born; he hears. When he’s born; he believes. It is by the power of God that he you are born.

Watch this, He says in **verse 7**, *“Marvel not at this, (don’t be afraid) don’t be amazed at this, Nicodemus.”* Now listen to me, don’t go away; *“The wind blows where it listeth;”* the wind blows where it pleases. Isn’t that what He is saying? The wind blows where it pleases. Do you have any control over the wind? Neither do I! Go outside; the wind is blowing and it is blowing where it pleases. You can’t tell from whence it cometh and you can’t tell where it is going. It is a sovereign wind. It blows where it pleases; it comes from where it pleases and goes where it pleases. *“Even so, is everyone who is born of the Spirit of God.”*

Are you with me? This is my Lord speaking. *“Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* He is talking to a man (Nicodemus) that doesn’t even know what he is talking about. If a man isn’t born of the Word of God or the Spirit of God, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Don’t be amazed at this that I say, *“You must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth;”* it blows where it wants to blow. You can hear the sound. *“You can’t tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth, even so is everyone that is born of God.”*

Who commands the wind? God does. Where does the wind come from? It comes from God. Where does the wind go? It goes where God sends it. Who commands the wind? The disciples said, *“What manner of man is this that even the wind obeys His voice.”* In **Psalm 139** it says, *“He bringeth the wind out of His treasury.”* In **Psalm 145**, it says, *“He causeth the wind to blow.”* I’m saying this; the new birth is from above of God, by the Word, by the power of the Spirit, sovereignly, as God pleases. *“He will be merciful to whom He will and He will save whom He will.”*

Listen, just like the wind, is His sovereign grace.

It is all-sovereign and it is all free.  
Great God, how unsearchable are Thy ways,  
How deep thy judgments be.  
The Spirit like a heavenly wind  
Blows on this son of flesh.  
He creates a new heavenly mind  
And forms life afresh.  
The sovereign will of God alone  
Creates an heir of grace.  
Born in the image of His Son  
And saved by His sovereign grace.



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