

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

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John 3:1-21

1. Here we have the first written record of Jesus dealing with an individual about the need to be born again, or regenerated.

2. We could spend weeks examining all of the issues raised in this passage, but we will limit ourselves at this time to two messages.

NOTE: Years ago I read a series of ten sermons written by F. B. Meyer, all of which focused on just John 3:16.

3. In verses 1-2 we are introduced to a man named Nicodemus.

a. He was a Pharisee. (The Apostle Paul was also a Pharisee.)

b. He was a ruler of the Jews (a member of the Sanhedrin).

c. According to verse 10 he was a teacher with extensive knowledge of the Old Testament and other sacred writings.

d. He, unlike many other Jewish leaders, had come to understand that Jesus was a teacher sent from God, and that God was with Him.

e. He wanted to know more.

f. He came to Jesus at night because he wanted to talk to Jesus alone, and perhaps because he was fearful of that the other Jewish leaders would think.

4. In this message we will look at the new birth under three headings.

a. The necessity.

b. The means.

c. The result.

I. The necessity.

A. The new birth is necessary because Jesus said, "You must be born again." 7

B. The new birth is necessary because without the new birth a person cannot see or enter the Kingdom of God. 3, 5

C. The new birth is necessary because without being born again we must perish. 16

D. The new birth is necessary in order to escape the judgment of God. 17-18

E. The new birth is necessary because of man's spiritual condition.

1. Lovers of darkness rather than lovers of light.

2. Dead in trespasses and sin. Ephesians 2:1-6

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)**, 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

II. The means.

A. Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born again when he is old?"

B. The words, "born again," can mean, "born anew or over again," or, "born from above."

NOTE: Both ideas are present here.

C. Jesus stated, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

NOTE: There is not universal agreement as to what Jesus actually meant when He spoke of being born of water.

1. Some see this statement as a reference to natural birth; we must be born physically and spiritually.
2. G. Campbell Morgan believed that Jesus was referring to John's baptism of repentance.
3. Still others suggest that Jesus had the Word of God in mind here. Ephesians 5:25-28
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, **26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,** **27** that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.
4. B. H. Carroll taught that the blood of Christ was in view here based on several passages of Scripture.
 - a. Jesus asked Nicodemus, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"
 - b. The implication is that based on his knowledge of the Old Testament Nicodemus should have understood what Jesus was saying.
 - c. In Numbers 19 we are introduced to the water of purification that included the ashes of a heifer, and the sprinkling of the mixture was used for the purification from sin, or the cleansing of that which was defiled.
 - d. Note the following Scriptures.
 - (1) Ezekiel 36:25-27
"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.
 - (2) Titus 3:5-8
He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration (being born again) and renewing by the Holy Spirit,** **6** whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, **7** so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
 - (3) Hebrews 9:11-14
But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; **12** and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. **13** **For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14** **how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

e. In other words Jesus was saying, “Unless one is cleansed by My blood and renewed by the Holy Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

NOTE: This view stands the test of Scripture, and makes sense of Jesus’ question to Nicodemus in verse 10.

5. Apart from the Holy Spirit no one can be born again because He enlightens, convicts of sin, grants repentance and faith, and regenerates.

D. The new birth is accomplished through:

1. The lifting up of the Lord Jesus Christ. 14-15

2. The direct involvement of the Holy Spirit.

3. A response to the redemptive love of God as manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; we identify with our need of a Savior.

4. A turning from sin to the Savior.

5. A full surrender to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

III. The results.

A. We are born again from above.

B. We are possessors of eternal life.

C. We are no longer under God’s judgment.

D. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and enabled to walk in the Light.

APPLICATION

1. The new birth is an absolute necessity.

2. Those who are born again become the children of God.

3. The children of God will love their Heavenly Father, will serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

4. They will have a new mindset, a new heart, and a new direction for their lives.