

“You Must Be Born Again”  
*John 3: 3-5*

Hello Listeners;

The last three weeks on this program we’ve been busy with some of the Bible’s teaching concerning the Holy Spirit and his work. Today we’ll seek to understand what it means to be *born of the Spirit*.

To do that we’ll turn to the Gospel according to John, chapter 3 where we read of the Lord Jesus in conversation with Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.

He had come to Jesus at night, possibly in order to have a quiet and uninterrupted conversation with Jesus. He acknowledged Jesus as Rabbi, that is, Teacher, and said “*We know you are a teacher who has come from God.*” ( ch. 3: 2a) Nicodemus was even willing to acknowledge what to him was the proof of Jesus’ special relationship to God as he said, “ *For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.*” ( v. 2b)

At first glance that doesn’t appear to be a question. However, i think it is clear Nicodemus wanted to know the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Though it was indeed, a kind of *veiled* question<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> considered such by the late Rev. Cl Stam in [The Spirit and the Bride](#), p. 60

Nicodemus said, “ *We, we know you are..*” and with that “*we*” he must have meant other members of that Jewish ruling council. They certainly would have admitted that Jesus was someone special seeing the miracles he performed as well as his teaching *with authority*, ( Matthew 7:29).

The Lord Jesus did not directly answer Nicodemus unspoken question. However his answer indicated that the matter of Jesus’ identity went much deeper.

Jesus didn’t say “ *Nicodemus you need to modify your understanding of Jesus a little* “ No, but what you need is *rebirth*” *which is nothing else but a mighty work of God through the Holy Spirit.* <sup>2</sup> Jesus declared, “ *I tell you the truth* “, ( which is the modern equivalent of “Amen, Amen” the literal words the Saviour used. “ *No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.*”

It is clear from Nicodemus’ response that he did not understand Jesus’ answer. He appeared to think Jesus meant Nicodemus was to enter his mother’s womb once again.

But Jesus straightened Nicodemus’ thinking out by declaring, “ *...No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit*” ( v. 5 ). Jesus did not introduce the matter of the kingdom of God carelessly for from very early in his ministry he had emphasized the coming of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 60, 61

<sup>3</sup> see e.g. Matthew 4:17. This kingdom is God’s all-encompassing spiritual rule over all things. Jesus, to whom was given all authority in heaven and on earth is King of this kingdom. We are to acknowledge his kingship over all things.

To have entered that kingdom which is God's grand ownership or kingship of all things and so to be under his rule and to be part of it and to enjoy it really means to have everlasting life! For that kingdom is that territory where God's rule is recognized and honored. It's that joyful territory where Christ's grace is found in abundance. His free, unmerited, sovereign favour that cannot be bought but may be yours by means of a true faith.

That will surely involve a radical and amazing change in the heart and life of a person. It's God's own work and he carries it out by means of His Holy Spirit. It is also called conversion or regeneration. One of the creeds or confessions of the churches sponsoring this program <sup>4</sup> speaks of the Gospel being preached to people. So that the Holy Spirit brings light and life to people so that they might rightly understand the things of the Spirit of God.<sup>5</sup>

That Holy Spirit digs deep as it were into the inner recesses of people's hearts and minds. Christians confess

*He opens the close and softens the hard heart. He instills new qualities into the will so that he makes the will which was dead, alive; which was bad, good, which was unwilling, willing and which was stubborn, obedient. He moves and strengthens it so that, like a good tree, it may be able to produce the fruit of good works.*

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<sup>4</sup> Canons of Dort, ch. 3&4 article 11 [Book of Praise](#) p. 577, 578

<sup>5</sup> this is based on Hebrews 6:4 and 5; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14

Nicodemus had a very difficult time understanding what Jesus meant by this being “*born again.*” He was a leader of the Jews and a scholar at that. The trouble was he was used to the idea of salvation and eternal life by means of works of the law. in other words, by an act of human beings <sup>6</sup>

Jesus used an illustration taken from the action of the wind in order to get the idea of this new birth across to Nicodemus. He said

*You must not be surprised at my saying.... The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.* John 3:8

Not a single person can direct and govern the wind. It acts with marvelous independence. Yet surely it must be there for especially when striking an object it does make sounds. “*So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.*”

Why does Jesus mention water in the same breath as the Spirit? Because water means washing, cleansing, and live. Both water and the Holy Spirit therefore are synonymous with new life.

But Nicodemus didn't understand. *Though he was likely a prominent and widely respected teacher of the nation of Israel he really was ignorant regarding this very important matter concerning a fundamental life-change.*

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<sup>6</sup> W. Hendriksen speaks of it in this way in his commentary on John, p. 134

It shows again that one's pre-conceived notions, as firmly held as these may be can miss the mark and leave one guessing as to the most important things in life.

But that's exactly why Jesus Christ spent so much time teaching people, all people, rich and poor, those with little schooling as well as those with university degrees. For they all needed to know the secret of the Kingdom of God. Everyone of them needed to know about the Holy Spirit. All the world needed to know about the forgiveness of sins, those sins that weighed people down or, as was/is also the case, left them careless and apathetic.

Jesus went on to challenge Nicodemus and with him the whole of those teachers of the law he represented. Not only to challenge them but to admonish and correct them for their failure to understand and believe.

*I tell you the truth, ( said Jesus) we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony..... I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe,; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things ? ( v. 11a, 12)*

It is here that Jesus joined himself with all the prophets of God and spoke for them all. You may remember that shortly after Jesus was raised from the dead he joined two disciples who were going to a village of Emmaus. They didn't recognize him until the Lord broke bread with them. This after Jesus had taken the time to take them

through the scriptures explaining to them what those scriptures which include those prophets said concerning him.<sup>7</sup>

Dear listeners, today too there is much confusion as to who Jesus is and what he did and does. Confusion, doubt and unbelief as well about God's requirement that must be met if you and I are to enter the kingdom of heaven. May we not be confused but may we stand in awe and wonder at the goodness of Almighty God and the mercy of His Son Jesus Christ . May we eagerly embrace the Holy Spirit and pray that He might open our eyes and our hearts wring faith and the renewal of life in us.

Then we must be eager to know God's Word, seeking a church that proclaims God's truth. Seeking communion with those who also desire to complete their spiritual journey. A journey which God has said will be richly rewarded. At its end ( which at the same time is a wonderful new beginning) as well as the new life that we may already begin to enjoy today A new life which culminates in glory in the presence of Christ on a new earth. Seek then his kingdom and cherish the Lord and Giver of life. always.

Amen. Till next time may the peace of God sustain you. Amen.

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 24