

What does it mean to be Born Again? | John 3:1-8 | 7/6/19

- Introduction
 - To be born again as it is used today
 - This is a common statement made by protestant evangelical Christians today.
 - **What comes across your mind when you hear someone say they are “born again”?**
 - This is the group of Christians who will commonly use this as a designation to separate themselves from other Christians.
 - Of course, this isn't necessary because ALL true Christians are “born again” it is impossible to be a Christian if you are not.
 - 1 John 5:1a
 - “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...”
 - However, the reason for this designation being used is because there are a lot of false perspectives of what being a Christian is.
 - You have many people who claim to be Christians, but when you ask them to tell you how or why they know this it becomes apparent, they have a very different view of what it means when you see it in Scripture.
 - An evangelical protestant will use this designation to denote their belief that their salvation is based on God's grace and their faith in Jesus Christ.
 - It depicts a change that God had made in their life.
 - Their faith is based on what Jesus reveals to Nicodemus in this passage of Scripture.
 - **They acknowledge that they have been spiritually changed and made new.**
 - **They are not just checking a box or associating themselves with a group of people for reasons unknown.**
 - Jesus and Nicodemus
 - Jesus meets with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews and gives him His plan of salvation for the world.
 - This is a powerful section of Scripture where Jesus Christ tells us how we can have eternal life.
 - Today's focus will be around what it means to be "born again," to be a new person and receive the new nature.
- Who was Nicodemus? | John 3:1-2
 - **Read John 3:1-2**
 - Nicodemus was a prominent Pharisee.
 - The Pharisee's were a sect of the Jews who were zealous for religious purity and obedience to the law.
 - This consisted not only of the written law of Moses (Mosaic Law) but also the spoken laws (tradition) that went far beyond Scripture to dictate how to live a proper Jewish life.
 - They were extremely zealous and strived to live by the law to the letter.
 - They were also the ones that were consistently rebuked by Jesus for their unbelief.
 - Matthew 23:13-14
 - "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you, neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves."

- Nicodemus sought Jesus with an open heart and was clearly given the plan of salvation when he met Jesus.
 - John 3:1-21
 - Nicodemus stuck up for Jesus in front of the Pharisees
 - John 7:46-52
 - Nicodemus bound Jesus's crucified body, applied spices, and helped lay Him in the tomb.
 - John 19:39-42
- **Do you see any similarities with Nicodemus's initial interest with Jesus that would be similar to how a lost person begins their interaction with Jesus today?**
- **Which do you think was a more significant cause that brought Nicodemus to Jesus: The proof of the signs, or his open heart?**
- One must be born again to see the kingdom of God | John 3:3-8
 - ***Read John 3:3-8***
 - To enter the kingdom of God
 - This is, of course, what is awarded to Christians, to those who have faith and believe in Jesus Christ.
 - This is the millennial kingdom spoken of in Scripture. It is the reward seen only by those who are Christians, those who are born again.
 - Jesus, through these verses, gives Nicodemus the truth on how one can be born again and that one must have faith in Him.
 - **Jesus saw the heart of Nicodemus**
 - **After Nicodemus tells Jesus that he believes that God was with Him, we see Jesus seem to respond to a question that wasn't asked.**
 - Jesus who sees the heart already knew what Nicodemus was after, Jesus already knew what He needed to hear.
 - **Being able to see into the hearts of all people is how Jesus truly sees all of us.**
 - John 2:23-25
 - 1 Samuel 16:7
 - "But the LORD said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."
 - **Jesus tells Nicodemus of the need to be born again so one can see the kingdom of God.**
 - Nicodemus didn't comprehend the need for one to be born again.
 - Nicodemus didn't understand initially what Jesus was referring to when He said that one must be "born again."
 - **Nicodemus wouldn't have thought that Jesus was talking about literally being born again, but he certainly didn't comprehend what Jesus was referring to.**
 - **To be "born again" is to be "born (conceived) from above" by going through the new birth (regeneration). To go through conception from a heavenly source.**
 - To be born again literally means "born (conceived) from above."
 - **It is not a physical birth or process, but it is spiritual and from God.**
 - **This signifies who is responsible for this new birth**
 - It isn't something that man does or is responsible for, but it is from above, it comes from God.
 - **We cannot make ourselves Christians, only God can do this.**

- **God does a work in our hearts, and we are changed, we are moving from darkness and into the light, becoming a child of God.**
 - **It is to be molded or fashioned by God.**
 - God does a work in our hearts to CHANGE us.
 - This is NOT just a simple checkbox on a piece of paper or some intellectual truth.
 - **There is a real spiritual change.**
 - **It is the process of putting off the old self to become something new.**
 - Ephesians 4:22-24
 - “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, **created after the lines of God** in true righteousness and holiness.”
- **Can you describe what it is like for you having gone through the spiritual birth? Is there a difference in who you are now, compared to who you were before?**
- **It means to have a spiritual transformation that moves one from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God.**
 - Colossians 1:13
 - “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,”
 - **We are part of the kingdom of darkness because of sin.**
 - This process of regeneration comes from the grace of God and is necessary to restore us and to remove the penalty of sin that we all owe.
 - Ephesians 2:1
 - "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins."
 - **When we are "born again," we go through spiritual regeneration due to our sinful nature.**
 - We are all born with original sin that we inherited from Adam. There must be a spiritual regeneration done within us; otherwise, the payment of death is due.
 - Romans 5:12
 - "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."
- **What does it feel like to be in the kingdom of darkness? Can you think of a time of what it was like before you were saved compared to now?**
- **To be “born again” is to become a child of God.**
 - When we are born again, this is how we become children of God.
 - John 1:12-13
 - “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

- Galatians 3:26
 - “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”
 - **This concept of being a child of God is brought into light when we understand what it means to be "born again."**
 - **We are conceived (spiritually) by our heavenly father, we now have a parent/child relationship with God and forever children whom He loves.**
- The Spiritual washing of water and Spirit | John 3:5
 - **Read John 3:5**
 - Jesus in verse 5 tells Nicodemus that one is born of water and Spirit.
 - There are different perspectives on what “water” might signify, but the context of this passage shows us that water and Spirit are a single spiritual birth and not separate events.
 - **When you look at the use of this in the Old Testament, the meaning becomes quite clear.**
 - When one is "born again" and receives the Holy Spirit, they go through a spiritual washing.
 - Isaiah 44:3
 - “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”
 - Titus 3:5
 - “he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.**”
 - **We are spiritually cleansed by the washing of the word**
 - Ephesians 5:26
 - “that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,”
 - 1 John 1:7b
 - “...we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”
 - **Can you describe what it means to you having been washed by the Word, to have been made clean?**
- **To be “born again” is to receive a new heart and to become a new creation**
 - Christ puts us through a spiritual cleansing. We are given a **new heart** so that the Holy Spirit can take up residence.
 - **This process of being born again causes a significant spiritual change.**
 - **He gives us a new heart that desires obedience to God.**
 - Our heart, before being renewed, sought the world and to **disobey God**.
 - Ephesians 2:2-3
 - “in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
 - **But now our heart of stone that desired evil has been replaced with a heart of flesh. It is one that desires OBEDIENCE.**

- Ezekiel 36:25-27
 - "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."
- **How amazing and wonderful it is, that with the Spirit, we DESIRE to obey God.**
 - **Can you describe what has been like for you to have a heart of obedience?**
 - **What is it like to have His Spirit that guides us to obey and follow Him?**
 - **How is this different from before you were saved or embraced the Holy Spirit?**
- **Having been born again, we are a new creation.**
 - We are born again as a new creation, even though we do not look any different on the outside.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17
 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."
 - **But on the inside, we are a new person. We desire to live our lives for Christ; we desire obedience to God and seek to live our lives to obey His word.**
 - This does not mean that we are now perfect and no longer have our sinful nature (it is still present).
 - But it does mean that we know desire the things of Christ, and if we lean on Him, we can put aside our sinful desires and live as Christ desires.
- On this side of the resurrection, it is our cause of being born again.
 - 1 Peter 1:3
 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"
- **What is it like to be a "new creation"?**
- **What are some examples of what God changes when one has been made into a new creation when you have been "born again"?**