

“You must be born again.”

John 3:1-8

TEXT/INTRO: Take your Bibles and turn to the gospel of John and chapter 3 (repeat). I have preached on this topic before and many of you will remember it but after watching another preacher on-line, I felt I needed to bring it again. “You must be born again.”

I have referred to Jimmy Carter’s presidential campaign back in the ‘70’s when he told someone in the press that he was born again. The news media took it and ran with it. Mr. Carter even confessed to the world that he had “Lusted in his heart after a woman or two or three.” I know what he was doing, he didn’t want anyone to think he was saying he was “holier than thou.” Apparently no one did.

The news media implied that Carter was a typical Christian and a hypocrite. They had the false notion as so many have that once you become a Christian you can’t sin anymore. If you say you’re born again you’re saying to the world that you have stopped sinning. Which is one of the biggest lies Satan has sold to the world and the church.

And after that, Wall Street advertising firms took it and ran even further and suddenly all kinds of businesses were saying they were born again. One of the big auto companies said they were born again. Christian Dior took up the born again idea and if you want, you can buy t-shirts with the words emblazoned on the front “Born Again Christian Dior.”

I hope you have a Bible handy so you can read the passage that we’re going to be examining today. I realize that most of you are familiar with this passage and the truth that Jesus sets before Nicodemus on this night when Nicodemus came to Him. The exchange that took place between Jesus and Nicodemus wasn’t what Nicodemus expected. He just came to satisfy his curiosity and that of the other Pharisees in Jerusalem. Jesus was never one, and still isn’t by the way, to beat around the bush. Jesus liked to “cut to the chase.” And as we’re going to see, Jesus’ out-of-left-field response to what Nicodemus said, blew Nicodemus’ mind. Read along with me:

^{NAU} **John 3:1** Now 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 have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, 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? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into 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 be amazed 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 do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (Jn. 3:1-8 NAU)

As we begin I want to remind you that what we're reading is the God-breathed written word of God. Pay attention. There will be a quiz later. Not really.

"Rabbi, we know, and I think I speak for most of us, that You have come from God as a teacher; for **no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.**"

And why did some of the Pharisees believe that Jesus had come from God? Well, Jesus had done signs already in His ministry around Judea that pointed to Him as being at least a teacher sent from God. However, if you know anything about the history of the Jews going back to the time of Moses then you remember that they were stiff-necked, rebellious and blind sinners. And you will remember that God worked all kinds of signs and wonders in their midst as He delivered them out of slavery to the Egyptians but it was never enough to change their fallen natures. Signs and wonders are like that. They have the ability to get the

attention of those who are dead in their trespasses and sins but not the ability to change human nature. It takes the Spirit working through the gospel to bring about that kind of change. **“You must be born again.”**

Note this, Nicodemus wasn't called by the Lord Jesus to be one of His apostles or disciples at this point. Jesus would have only 12 men as His apostles and one of them was never really one of them, that would be Judas. After the Lord's ascension back to the Father, the 11 remaining apostles had to pick a Spirit-filled man to fill the position. So, Matthias became the twelfth apostle because he had been around all the gang from Jesus' baptism to His ascension. And while the apostles had almost from the beginning believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, their faith wasn't something they had decided to exercise but a gift from God. Read this, ¹³ *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

¹⁴ *And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."*

¹⁵ *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*

¹⁶ *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

¹⁷ *And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, **because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**"*

(Matt. 16:13-17 NAU)

I asked our Wednesday night Bible class if they had ever had a great idea just pop into their heads as great ideas are prone to do. I believe that they all said that such ideas had come to them in just that way. I had an idea for an invention just pop into my mind one day and I pursued it for a while and went through the process with Invent Help. What I need now is for the idea to pop into my head that says “Johnny, now's the time to take this to the next step. You need to get it into the hands of the right people so you can make a billion dollars or so off it.”

Everyone who has ever come to faith in Jesus has had the truth of the gospel come to them just like that. It is the gift of faith that the Spirit gives those whom God calls to Himself. Your new life in Christ is the gift of God. One day you heard a clear and genuine presentation of the gospel and you believed it. It came to you at that time that the gospel is all about Jesus and how He died in your place and paid for all your sins. Read this, ⁴⁴ *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

⁴⁵ *"It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. (Jn. 6:44-45 NAU)*

And this next verse expands on that truth.

⁶³ *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (Jn. 6:63 NAU)* And if you will link that to our text you can understand why Jesus said "What is born of flesh, is flesh."

And what do we call the words Jesus speaks to us that are "spirit and are life?" The gospel. There is no faith, no salvation, no forgiveness of sins, no justification apart from the gospel. The gospel is Jesus; Jesus is the gospel. ¹⁴ *How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?*

¹⁵ *How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"*

¹⁶ *However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"*

¹⁷ *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Rom. 10:14-17 NAU)* Salvation, beloved, is all of God from the beginning.

So, when Jesus said "You must be born again," that's what He was talking about. God the Father sending His Son to pay for our sins and then sending the Spirit to call us to Himself by giving us light and life

and faith in Jesus. Without the new birth there can be no faith. Without faith, there can be no new birth. “You must be born of water and the Spirit” if you’re to see and enter the kingdom of heaven.

We’re all born of water, that’s the natural birth, that is what is born of the flesh. That is the old man. To be born of the Spirit is to be born again in our inner man. And what a difference the new birth makes. Read this,

⁴ *Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.*

⁵ *You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.*

⁶ *No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.*

⁷ *Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;*

⁸ *the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*

⁹ **No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed, God’s seed that is, abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**

(1 Jn. 3:4-9 NAU)

Who cannot practice sin? The one who is born of God. Why can he not sin? Because God’s seed lives in him. And exactly who is this person who cannot sin? It is the inner man of everyone who has, by the grace of God, been born again, born of the Spirit, the “seed” of God.

God has graciously taken care of our inner man by causing us to be born again. At the rapture, He will take care of the body. But you must be born again.