

“YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN”

(John 3:1-8)

A. **Jesus** told *Nicodemus* that one “must be born again” to “see” & to “enter the kingdom of God.

1. This is very important because the kingdom is that which Jesus will present to the Father in heaven at the end of time (1 Cor 15:24).

2. That’s where I want to be; how about you?

B. **People** use the expression “*born again Christian*”, which is redundant since there are no Christians who have not been born again.

1. If I ask you, “Have you been born again?” I am asking you if you are a Christian.

2. If I ask you, “Are you a Christian?” I am asking you if you have been born again.

C. In the OT God promised to give His people a “new name” (Isa 62:2).

1. He also told them when He would give them that new name.

a. When the door of the kingdom was opened to Gentiles (Isa 2:2-3; Acts 10).

2. Just after Peter did that, “*the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*” (Acts 11:26).

Acts 4:12 – Nor is there salvation in any other, for ***there is no other name*** under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 26:28 – Then Agrippa said to Paul, “***You almost persuade me to become a Christian.***”

1 Pet 4:16 – Yet ***if anyone suffers as a Christian***, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

[The terms “born again” & “Christian” identify the same person, & it is misleading to use them together; I can think of no Scripture where that is done. **But** today we want to discuss what it means to be “born again”.]

I. JESUS INTRODUCED THE NEW BIRTH

John 3:1-5 – There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night & said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered & said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see [eido: to know] the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb & be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water & the Spirit**, he cannot enter [to go into] the kingdom of God.”

A. **One common** mistake that is made from this passage is that people mistake “*born...of the Spirit*” with Holy Spirit baptism.

1. HS baptism only occurred twice in the Scripture:

a. Apostles (**Acts 1:26-2:4**); Household of Cornelius (**Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-17**).

2. But even though Jesus is not referring Holy Spirit baptism in John 3, still the HS plays an important role in one’s being born again.

B. **The HS** provided the ONE thing that is needed before there can be a new birth.

1. A seed from which the new life will come.

Luke 8:11 – Now the parable is this: ***The seed is the word of God.***

The Holy Spirit searched the mind of God & then came to the earth & guided the apostles into all the truth (**1 Cor 2:10, 12; Jn 16:13**) that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.

Jas 1:18 – Of His own will ***He brought us forth*** [begat, produced] ***by the word of truth***, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

1 Pet 1:22-23 – Since ***you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*** in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 ***having been born again***, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, ***through the word of God*** which lives & abides forever.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO BE BORN AGAIN?

Acts 11:13-14 [the angel told Cornelius] – ...***Peter***, 14 ...***will tell you words by which you & all your household will be saved.***

Jas 1:21 – ...***the implanted word***, which ***is able to save your souls***

Heb 5:9 – He became the author of ***eternal salvation to all who obey Him.***

2. The HS uses God’s word to bring about a new birth, but His word must be obeyed.

C. **Another common** mistake that is made from Jesus' words in John 3:5 is that the phrase "*born of water*" refers to the water of a physical birth.

1. That wouldn't make any sense since Jesus had just informed Nicodemus that being born again had nothing to do with his mother.

D. **The "water"** of the new birth can be nothing other than the one baptism commanded by Jesus Christ.

Mark 16:15-16 – And He said to them, "Go into all the world & preach the gospel to every creature. 16 ***He who believes & is baptized will be saved;*** but he who does not believe will be condemned.

1. When one believes the gospel & is baptized a new & spiritual life begins within that person.

Rom 6:4 – Therefore ***we were buried with Him through baptism into death,*** that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ***so we also should walk in newness of life.***

Gal 3:27 – For ***as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.***

2 Cor 5:17 – Therefore, ***if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*** [born again]; old things have passed away; behold, ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW.

- He is new creation: a child of God
- He has a new Father, Lord, Savior, Comforter
- He has a new hope: heaven
- He has new goals, a new purpose in life (Matt 28:20)

Matt 28:18-20 – All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them ***TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS THAT I HAVE COMMANDED*** [the new purpose] you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

[Is that your purpose?

That's how you can tell when a person is Christian; **that's** how you can tell if one has been born again.

These concepts are simple enough, but still so many are confused about the new birth, especially as they read on in our text in John chapter 3.]

II. EVERYONE WHO IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT

John 3:7-8 – Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.’
8 ***The wind blows where it wishes***, & you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from & where it goes. **So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**”

- A. **The confusion** over this statement exists because the reader may not see that Jesus changed His emphasis.
1. He was talking about the process of the new birth (water & Spirit).
 2. But in these verses He is talking about the person who has been born again.
 - a. He is talking about the part of a person we cannot see.
 - b. The human spirit is born again; & our spirits are as invisible & elusive as the wind.

3. Jesus was telling Nicodemus that a person who is born again undergoes a process of change that the eye cannot see.

Eph 2:4-5 – **But God**, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved).

Acts 19:5 – [the Ephesians] were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

- a. We don’t actually see the wind; we see only the effects of it.
- b. In a similar vein, we cannot see the life one is given when he or she is born again (of water & Spirit), but we can certainly see the effects of it.
- c. Examples: Saul of Tarsus, Onesimus.

NO SEED, NO ROOT, NO FRUIT: A former Navy pilot tells of how he was living a wild, sordid life. **He** decided that his friends were his main problem, so he arranged to be transferred to another base. **But** it wasn’t long before he was back into the sinful lifestyle he had before. **He** wondered “Why do I do this?” **He** realized, “Because I want to.”

Before a person becomes a Christian his “want-to” is broken. **He** doesn’t “want-to” do the right things. **He** is not interested in God, His word, the Lord’s church, & holy living. **But** when a person is born again, God repairs his “want-to.” **He** still feels the pull of temptation, but he has a new set of goals & desires. **He** now “wants-to” love God, to prayer to Him & to let Him speak to him through His Word in the Bible. **He** wants to be around other people who love God; church attendance becomes meaningful. **There** is a new desire & sense of urgency to obey God. (A Treasury of Bible Illustrations)

“Walk in the Spirit, & you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh...If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16, 25)

[If we have not come to that sense of duty, then we need to seriously question whether or not we were born again.]

III. PARALLEL PASSAGES TO JOHN 3:5

Eph 5:25-26 – Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church & gave Himself for her, 26 **that He might sanctify & cleanse her with the washing of water by the word**, “in order that after cleansing her in the bath of baptism, he might sanctify her by his word” (Montgomery). “in order to make her holy, cleansing her with the baptismal water by the word” (Weymouth).

Titus 3:4-7 – But when the kindness & the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but **according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration & renewing of the Holy Spirit**, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

A. Here are two equivalent phrases, & both have the same meaning as John 3:5.

1. In Acts 2, we can see these phrases in action:

Acts 2:38, 41, 47 – **Repent, and...be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; & you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...**

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; & that day about three thousand souls were added to them...47...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

[**Back** in John 3, Jesus declared that such people may “see” & “enter the Kingdom of God”. **These** people on Pentecost were “translated” or “conveyed” into the spiritual kingdom of the Son of God (Col 1:13-14).]

CLOSING

Have you been born again?

The Son of God invites you to come to Him for a new life in a new kingdom while looking forward – with unshakable hope – to an eternal life in heaven.

“Come unto me, all ye that labor & are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek & lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, & my burden is light” (Matt 11:28-30).