

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN (Jn. 3:1-7)

Jesus had caused debate in Jerusalem. This was during the first of the Passover times mentioned in the Gospels, after He began His 'open' ministry. While He was speaking in and around the temple, one of the people who had heard about this, - he might even have been watching and listening, - was Nicodemus, an eminent and highly-respected Pharisee. He came to Jesus during the hours of darkness, and made a statement, **Jn. 3:2** Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. ... It wasn't directly a question but it was a comment searching for an explanation, and in response, **3** Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. **4** Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? **5** Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of 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** Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. **8** The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. **9** Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

Some of that sounds complicated, but let's pick out what is simple. This is a very important message which tells us the Kingdom of God is entered through the process of being 'born again' ... Those are two statements which need to be explained ...

Firstly, the Kingdom of God is the spiritual rule over those who submit to God's authority. When you become a Christian, you become a child of God, and you become a citizen of the Kingdom of God. That means you live by principles and criteria which is different to this world, and by which you serve God. As a citizen, - more correctly, - a subject of the Kingdom, God is your King and your priority ... Before you were saved, He wasn't, but since you have become a Christian, He has become, - and you are realising it more, - the main focus in your life. ... Being a Christian has changed your life because you are under new authority. It also means your destiny after this life has changed because one day you will be with God for ever.

The second statement refers to being 'born again', - that describes the process of you coming to faith, - to believe, - in Jesus Christ as your Saviour. That does not happen automatically, but it takes place when you consciously confess your sin to the Saviour, He forgives you, and He comes into your life and takes over ... and He set you apart as His child. ... And now, what is His is yours, and

what is yours is His. You have been ‘born again’, - a completely new relationship for God is your Heavenly Father. ... It is a tremendous change, in fact, the Bible describes it as passing from darkness into light.

From the Bible’s perspective, - using the New Testament as our basis, there is only one kind of Christian, ... and it is not a Baptist kind, or a Presbyterian or a Pentecostal kind ... there is only one kind of Christian, and they are those who are ‘born again’. ... That is an amazing description ... How many of us told our parents we wanted to be born? How many of us told into what circumstances we wanted to be born? How much of a say did we have?

It wasn’t up to us, and yet, these are the words and terms Jesus used to describe becoming a believer/Christian, ‘born again’. But here is His point ... God is to be given all the glory for my salvation and yours because just as you had nothing to do with our physical birth, neither did we have anything to do with our spiritual birth. In other words, our salvation is all of God, - it is all of Him! ... Being born physically is something over which we had no control, and being born spiritually is something that happened because *God* is in control. ... God looked upon you, - even before you were born into this world, before you had taken a single breath of its air, - and He loved you and decided to save you ... he’s the Father, and we are the children. ... Being born again is the act of God by which He *recreates* you for His glory. ... Being born physically is *generation*, and being born again is *regeneration* ... And Jesus said to Nicodemus, **Jn. 3:3** *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*

So, to belong to the Kingdom of God and to know you are going to Heaven, you must be ‘born again’. That is what Jesus said. It is not complicated. It is not difficult. ... How we need to keep it simple!

However, often such simplicity is too simple for our minds to want to understand. God loves you, and that is why He saved you, and He continues to love you ... and always will love you, for eternity. But it goes against the grain of what we believe about how we reckon it should be. Fundamentally, we believe we must do something which ultimately interferes with God’s process of salvation. We reckon God needs some ‘human’ help, and we appeal to our standards of morality and religion because we feel we have to contribute something to make us good enough for us to become a Christian ... But that is the whole point, - what is there we can possibly contribute to God, especially when He gave His Son for us?! There is nothing! ... And for us to suggest there is something undermines God’s plan of salvation. ... Put it another way, ... how

ridiculous does it sound that you contributed to the decision your parents took for you to be born! ... It would be nonsense!

For example, here is how some people insist upon it, ... before he became a Christian, Paul the apostle would have argued he was good enough because he had been **Phil. 3:5** *Circumcised the eighth day*, - he was depending upon the occasion his parents took him to the synagogue when he was only eight days old ... and many people depend upon the time their parents carried them as a little baby into a church to be 'baptized'. Now, you will not find that practice anywhere in the Bible, but many believe if you are brought to be baptized, it makes you into a Christian. No, that is wrong, it doesn't! It has absolutely no effect upon you spiritually ... except for this, like Paul, it might make you mistakenly believe you are something you are not ... a Christian.

Paul also wrote of how he belonged to **the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin**, ... I'm a Protestant, I sometimes go to church ... I'm a Roman Catholic, I sometimes go to Mass ... I'm depending upon where and how I've been born. But that is of no consequence. You could be born in a palace, but as far as God is concerned, it makes no difference in relation to your relationship with Him, and where you will spend eternity. Rich and poor are all the same when it comes to the need for salvation ... privileged and non-privileged, educated and non-educated, it makes no difference for **Rom. 3:23** *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ...* **11** *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

Paul continued, **an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee**, - I was as *perfect* as you could get! If you had have asked me, I would have told you, **6** ... *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

... But, was he born again? No, because here is how he responds, **Phil. 3:7** *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 ... and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, ... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

Salvation comes through faith which is a gift from God, and God gives that gift because He is gracious, - He gives us that which we do not deserve. ... Now, we all have faith of some kind or another, - everyone has faith ... We exercise faith when we get up in the morning, when we turn the switch, when we get into our car ... faith and believing is something we do since we get out of our bed

until we get back in again! ... But the faith to believe is altogether different and apart from anything this world affords because believing faith, - faith to believe in God, - is the faith which is all given by God, - we would never believe in Him if He did not give us the right faith to believe. And that also means there will be no one in Heaven who has contributed one iota to their presence there, - every subject of Glory is there because Christ died for them, Christ saved them, Christ kept them, Christ changed them ...

I will not boast in anything,
No gifts, no power, no wisdom:
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,
His death and resurrection.

Salvation is all a gift of God ... a gift we neither deserved, sought for, or worked towards because it is by God's grace alone we are saved, **Eph. 2:8** *through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* ... I had as much to do with my parents bringing about my birth, as I had to do with God bringing about my *rebirth* ... for I had nothing to do with either ... and my salvation is all to God's glory!

And Jesus simply said to this man who was used to theology, doctrines, and creeds, **Jn. 3:3** *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God* ... You don't need to take a divinity degree. You don't need to go back and discuss it with your peers in the Sanhedrin, but Nicodemus, **7** *Ye must be born again!*

We could exhaust ourselves by arguing with people about various spiritual issues, but basically, that is what it comes down to, **7** *Ye must be born again.* It doesn't matter how tired and fed up people get with hearing it, it does not change the fact ... if you want to reach Heaven, **7** *Ye must be born again* ... You must repent of your sins and ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come into your heart and take over your life.

How does that happen when you (i.e. *me*) say just as there is nothing we can do to influence our parents concerning our own birth, how then can we influence God? ... Well, that is the wrong question coming from the wrong direction ... But here is how you believe ... Picture the little baby, - that little person in the mother's womb ... and picture that little baby as the months in the mother's womb develops ... and then it comes to the point where that little baby is born, and what is the first thing he/she does, but cries out! ... In the same way, when you are born of the Holy Spirit, - that is a work generated by God alone, - and you come to the stage spiritually-speaking when you are about to be born ...

what happens when you leave your mother's womb? ... You cry out! ... And the person who comes to faith in Christ *cries* out, what must I do to be saved? ... And at that moment the Saviour answers and salvation is applied ... **Ye must be born again.**

That is how you come to belong to the Lord, - through faith you cry out to Him as your Saviour.

What about the person who has yet to cry out? If you are not saved, - if you are not yet a child of God, - but you see this simple illustration as it has been described, and you are feeling it tugging at your heart ... come to the Lord Jesus and be saved. Don't struggle any longer, but believe.

Nicodemus went away and he continued to struggle with the concept Jesus had set before him. Sometime afterwards, though, - while God's irresistible grace was striving, - he realised what Jesus was saying and he was 'born again'. The struggle against the Gospel ended, and he willingly put his faith in the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A ruler once came to Jesus by night,
To ask Him the way of salvation and light;
The Master made answer in words true and plain,
"Ye must be born again!"

... It is the same message throughout the Scriptures, as Peter also preached, **12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.** That is our Gospel, for it is the only way God presents in His Word as to how we can be saved ... 'born again'! Amen.