

Born Again

Invisible hands formed us in our mother's womb and brought us into the world. The birth of a baby is a wonderful reminder of the mighty power of God, the Giver of life.

During a conversation with a respected Jewish leader, Jesus speaks about another kind of birth:

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and 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."

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

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 and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:1-8).

The new birth is indispensable for salvation. We cannot see or enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again. Nicodemus was a Jew - one of God's chosen people. He was circumcised (the Old Testament rite which is roughly equivalent to baptism), read the Scriptures and prayed regularly, and endeavored to keep the commandments. Yet Jesus insisted that unless he is born again, he will not see the kingdom of God. It is not enough to come from a good Christian family, to be baptized, and to be a religious and moral person. All those things will not give you an entrance into heaven. You must be born again!

You may ask, "I realize that the new birth is so important. So what must I do to get it?"

The simple answer is that you can do nothing to give spiritual life to yourself. The new birth is not something that *you* can do, or even help to achieve. The new birth is the work of Another, the Holy Spirit. We are spiritually dead because sin separates us from God. Now, just as a cadaver cannot resurrect himself, even so, being spiritually dead, we cannot give spiritual life to ourselves. We are completely dependent on the mercy and power of God. The Bible reminds Christians: "God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4).

Well then, are you "born again"? Is there evidence that you're spiritually alive? Are you a genuine Christian or one in name only?

The Bible tells us that "whoever *believes* that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1); and again, "He who *believes* in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

Do you believe that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who also became human; died for our sins and was raised on the third day? That is basic, and yet mere intellectual assent to the Christian creed is not enough.

You must also believe *in the Son*. In other words, you must rely on Him for salvation. You must completely trust in Christ, for He is the only Saviour. You cannot believe in the name of Jesus and also rely on Mary, or any other person. The apostle Peter warns us that “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Nor can you believe in Jesus while performing works - such as obeying the commandments, praying and attending church - in order to gain merit for salvation. The Bible declares that “by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, *not of works*, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Salvation is a free gift which is received by faith; it is not something we merit by our works.

To be sure, true Christians pray, obey God’s law, detest sin, pursue holiness and love one another. That is the positive evidence of genuine faith and, therefore, of being spiritually alive. Yet they do not dream of relying on any of these things to earn God’s grace. For salvation, Christians believe in the Lord Jesus - and in nothing and nobody else!

What do you say? Are you born again? Do you trust in Jesus Christ – or are you also relying on somebody else or your own merits?