

Life in His Name – Part 5
You Must Be Born Again – John 3:1-15
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – March 5th, 2023

Intro:

- Today we are focusing on one of the most important passages of Scripture in the entire Bible. In this passage of John chapter three, Jesus explains the way into the kingdom of God. If you want to be in the kingdom of God, having eternal life, you must pay close attention to what Jesus teaches in this passage. Your eternity rests on these things.
- We have seen that the whole reason this gospel was written is to convince us to believe "**that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31 ESV)**". John presents one example, teaching, and testimony after another of why this is the case.
- Now in chapter three, John provides the details of a conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus, a leading religious leader of the time who came to Jesus under cover of night to investigate who He was. From this conversation, we learn how to enter into the kingdom of God. We are called to make a choice about who Jesus is and if we are going to believe in Him.
- Here is the sermon in a sentence: ***To enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again by water and the Spirit through believing in Jesus Christ.***
- I am asking God to confirm these things in our hearts so that we have a solid foundation for our faith and understand the gospel. I am also asking God that if there is anyone hearing this message who has not yet put their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sin to receive life in His name, that you will do so this morning. Let's turn to our passage together.

John 3:1-4 ESV

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 are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered 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? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

To enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again.

- Nicodemus was well-educated and well-respected. This was Rev. Dr. Professor Nicodemus, who was coming at night to investigate Jesus. His arrival at night signifies that he did not really want to be seen, indicating that this was a private investigation which would free him from the pressure of his official position and responsibilities.
- Nicodemus noted that Jesus was a Rabbi, and that Jesus was a teacher, "come from God," because of the signs Jesus was doing. Nicodemus had not crossed the line to think that Jesus was the Son of God, but there was an acknowledgment that God was with Him.
- After the introductory comments, Jesus gets right to the heart of Nicodemus. From Jesus's comments, we can understand more about Nicodemus, that he wanted to see (enter) the kingdom of God. Nicodemus had a heart after God and was motivated to enter His kingdom. This was the reason he studied, taught, and gave his life as a Pharisee. He had a measure of faith and truly

wanted to enter the kingdom of God, as I hope you do. Jesus told him that the only way to do so is to be "born again."

- Nicodemus was confused by the term "born again," as you would have been if you were in his position. This actual phrase was not found in the Old Testament. The concept was there, but the words were never said. So naturally, Nicodemus thought about a physical rebirth and said there was no way that this could happen. Then Jesus explained further what this meant.

John 3:5-8 ESV

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter 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 marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

To enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again by water and the Spirit.

- Alright, alright, what is He talking about here? "Truly, truly" means what I am telling you is set in stone. This is the only way. To enter the kingdom of God, one must be "born again," which means you must be born of water and the Spirit. So what does this mean?
- Well, this phrase would have made more sense to Nicodemus because of a significant teaching in the Old Testament found in the book of Ezekiel that he would have known. In this passage, God is telling His people, some 500 years before Jesus, people who were in captivity because of their sin, what He is going to do with them so that His holy name would be honored and seen as great among the nations. They would know that He is the Lord (which they were failing to recognize). This is what He said He would do to accomplish this.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 ESV

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. 26 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. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

- So, do you see what Jesus was talking about? To be "born again" means to have God forgive you of your sins, to cleanse you from following something other than God. This is what being "born of water" means—that we are forgiven and cleansed from our sins. It isn't speaking about literal water but about what water *does*; it washes away dirt.
- But the work of God must go farther than that. Not only must we be forgiven of our sins, but we must also be given a new heart which only comes from a new spirit that God gives us by His Holy Spirit. We will then have the heart and spirit to follow God in doing His will. We will then have a new heart to follow Him. Water cleanses us from impurity, and the Spirit transforms our hearts. In both Greek and Hebrew the word for **spirit** is the same as the word for **breath** and **wind**; thus to have the spirit is to be given breath—holy breath, God-given breath. Before that breath we're like Adam before God breathed into him. We're dead, lifeless.
- Notice all the stuff God does in this. He is the one who sprinkles clean water on us to make us clean. He is the one who gives us a new heart and a new spirit. He is the one who causes us to walk

according to His word and to carefully obey Him. You can't make yourself "born again." This is something only God can do—forgive us and give us a new heart.

- This is why Jesus said that all flesh can do is give birth to more flesh. We cannot come clean or get living breath on our own. We cannot force our way into the kingdom of heaven or be qualified to enter through our own efforts or on our own accord. Only the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit—can give birth to a new spirit in us. That is why we must be born again to enter the kingdom of God.
- You don't know where the spirit/wind/breath comes from (just like we can't really tell where the wind outside is coming from), because the wind/breath/spirit that gives us new life comes from heaven. God's Spirit, like the wind, goes where it wishes to go. You are not the source of God's Spirit. You don't know where it comes from, and you don't know where it is going. We can only hear it and be moved by it. We don't create it and we don't control it. This is how it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

John 3:9-15 ESV

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

To enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again by water and the Spirit through believing in Jesus Christ.

- So, Nicodemus was like, "how can these things be?" or "how can this happen?" Jesus was like, "you are the teacher of Israel, the people of God, and you don't understand this?" Jesus said, "I am telling you the truth." We know what we know because of what we have seen, and we have believed what we have heard. Jesus said, "I have come from heaven, and I know what I am talking about."
- Then Jesus gave an Old Testament reference to Nicodemus so that he would understand who Jesus was, what He was going to do, and that the one who believes in Him may have eternal life.
- To understand what Jesus was talking about, you need to understand the passage He was pointing to. This reference is recorded in the book of Numbers, where the people of God were walking in the wilderness between Egypt and the promised land.

Numbers 21:4-9 ESV

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." 6 Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it,

shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

- That is a strange story! What is that all about? The people were speaking against God, His word, His way, and His leaders. They were indignant and ungrateful. They did not trust God, that He would be able to do what He said He would do, that He would see them through to what He had promised them. You might say they were spiritually *unwashed* and without breath/life. They had sinned against God, and God said, okay then, you don't want to follow me when I am good to you. How do you like snakes?
- Because of the infliction of the Lord, they realized and recognized that they had sinned, and they sought the Lord to be healed. Then God directed Moses to set a serpent up on a pole. Those who looked to it to be healed, would be healed.
- Jesus said, "that's me." Anyone who looks to me for their need of healing will be healed. I will be lifted up, and if you put your faith in me for the forgiveness of your sin, you will be made whole and have eternal life.
- God's part is to wash us clean and change our heart. Our part is to look to Him, believe in Him, and through Him, live! All of us are "snake bitten." All of us have believed the lie and taken the bait and have bitten the forbidden fruit. The only way we can be saved from the death of the snake bite is to look to the one whom God has risen up. We can believe in Him for a healing that is soul deep, and we can be healed and given eternal life.
- All of this then brings us to the verse that most of us have memorized.

Conclusion

John 3:16 ESV

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- Now we can understand these verses better in the context of this chapter (and we will talk more about the rest of the chapter in the following weeks). Because of this, the Apostle Peter declares:

1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV

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, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

To enter the kingdom of God, you must be born again by water and the Spirit through believing in Jesus Christ.

- If you are already a believer, understand what has happened to you so that your faith may be built up and that you can explain this passage to others.
- Today if you are here and say, "I want to be born again. I want my sins to be forgiven, and I need God to give me a new heart," look to Jesus and believe that through Him, you will live eternally. I want to pray with you and for you in this.