



## **Born By grace**

### **Key Idea:**

Rebirth is radical spiritual transformation and a free gift from the Father, by the Son, through the Spirit.

### **Key Text:**

John 3:1-15

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “**Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.**”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “**Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.**”

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10 “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in

the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

## Key Points

1. Some people think “born again” means deep emotional ecstasy and an abandonment of fact for faith. Others says it’s reliance on a strict code of moral behavior — maybe even a holier than thou attitude. Then some believe “born again” is a brand of Christianity.
2. Nicodemus was a pharisee, a member of Israel’s ruling council, and a great scriptural scholar. He was neither someone who was broken and in need of an emotional crutch, or someone who needed more moral legalism.
3. Nicodemus came at night, perhaps because he didn’t want to be seen with Jesus but was looking for greater understanding, or maybe because he wanted to talk privately on behalf of the religious establishment.
4. Nicodemus doesn’t seem to understand what Jesus means when He says Nicodemus must be “born again.” He responds, “How can someone be born when they are old? ... Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”
5. Being born of flesh results in people being selfish, flawed, and attempting to make themselves to god of their own lives and the lives of those around them. But when God puts His Spirit in the heart of a believer, He provides the power to resist selfishness and make other choices.
6. “Born again” is a metaphor for transformed mental life, emotional life, and volitional life.
7. Jesus telling this especially moral leader of Israel that he must be born again means everyone starts at the same place when it comes to qualifying for citizenship in Christ’s kingdom. We “must” *all* be born again. The Spirit regenerates and faith saves, not our resume or good work.
8. “Born again” is a gift of God. Birth is something that happens to us, not something we accomplish, it’s something the mother makes happen through blood and pain. Our new birth required the blood and pain of Christ dying for our sin.

9. Rebirth is a gift God gives freely and for which we can never repay. We can only pay God's gift forward. Christianity is different than any other religion. We don't grope forward on our own to find a relationship with God. He pours His love out to us: from the Father, to the Son, from the Son to the Spirit, from the Spirit to us and out to the rest of the world.
10. Jesus draws the parallel between the bronze snake being raised on a pole to His own crucifixion on a cross. This would have been deeply meaningful to the Bible scholar Nicodemus, and it would have been driven home when He saw Jesus raised up on the cross.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. Did the sermon change anything about how you view the phrase "born again?"
3. One survey found that 38% of those who call themselves born again believe Jesus had committed sin in His life. Do you think they are legitimately born again?
4. What does it tell us about being born again that Jesus was instructing someone like Nicodemus; the pharisee, Israelite leader, and Bible scholar?
5. What is the contrast Jesus is trying to draw when He says, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."
6. Does being born again lead to mental transformation that allows us to see things differently?
7. Does being born again lead to emotional transformation that gives us a new conscience and understanding of the difference between right and wrong?
8. Does being born again mean you have new power to make new choices?
9. What does Paul mean in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 where it says anyone in Christ is a new creation: the old has gone, the new is here?

10. Who must be born again? Do our achievements, our morality, and our good deeds contribute to our salvation?
11. What does Jesus mean when He calls Himself the Son of Man?
12. When Jesus tells Nicodemus that just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man be lifted up so everyone who believes may have eternal life?
13. How do we repay God for His gracious gift of salvation?
14. Is being born again something we can initiate or cause? What happens to the mother when she gives birth? Is the pain of giving birth worth it to the mother? Why?
15. Why did Christ allow Himself to experience pain and anguish on the cross?
16. Who will I call or see to encourage this week?