

The New Birth (3:1-21) 760

http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/jn/jn3_1.htm

INTRODUCTION

1. A commonly used phrase is "born again Christian"...

a. Often in the context of distinguishing between Christians who are "born again" and those not

b. Which is a really an incorrect distinction, for all true Christians have been "born again" -- But what does it mean to be "born again"?

2. The Bible uses the expression "born again" only a few times...

a. Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus - Jn 3:3,5,7

b. Peter in his first epistle - 1 Pe 1:3,23

-- Although the idea of being "born" of God is used many times Jn 1:13; 1 Jn 5:1

[In His discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus reveals much about being "born again." With His comments as the basis of our study, let's examine what the Bible reveals about "The New Birth". After we are introduced to Nicodemus (cf. also Jn 7:50; 19:39), we observe Jesus emphasizing...]

I. THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH (1-3)

A. NECESSARY TO SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD...

1. Unless one is born again, he cannot see (enter) the kingdom - cf. Jn 1:3,5,7

2. What is the kingdom of God? In brief...

a. The rule and reign of God in the person of Christ - cf. Matt. 28:18; Ac 2:36; Re 1:4

b. A spiritual kingdom not of this world - cf. Jn 18:36; Lk 17: 20-21

c. A kingdom made up of faithful subjects (i.e., the church) - cf. Co 1:13; Re 1:6,9

d. A kingdom both present and future - cf. Mt 13:41-43; 1 Cor. 15:24-26

-- Do you wish to be in the kingdom now and hereafter? You must be born again!

B. NECESSARY TO BE SAVED...

1. To be in the kingdom is to be saved from the powers of darkness cf. Co 1:13

2. Salvation requires a rebirth, a regeneration - cf. Ti 3:5

-- Do you wish to be saved from your sins? You must be born again!

[Nicodemus is confused, assuming that Jesus has in mind a physical birth. So Jesus explains...]

II. THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH (4-5)

A. INVOLVES BOTH WATER AND THE SPIRIT...

1. Note carefully: one birth involving two elements - water and the Spirit

a. Not two births (born of water and born of the Spirit)

b. But one birth (born of water and the Spirit)

2. Compare Paul's description - cf. Titus 3:5

a. A washing of regeneration (water)

b. And renewing of the Holy Spirit (Spirit)

3. An obvious reference to baptism

a. "There can be no doubt, on any honest interpretation of the words, that (born of water) refers to the token or outward sign of baptism, (born of Spirit) to the thing signified, or inward grace of the Holy Spirit. All attempts to get rid of these two plain facts have sprung from doctrinal prejudices... - Alford (Greek Testament)

b. "By water, here, is evidently signified baptism." - Albert Barnes

c. "Baptism by water, into the Christian faith, was necessary to every Jew and Gentile that entered into the kingdom of the Messiah." - Adam Clarke

d. "There is not any one Christian writer of any antiquity in any language but what understands it of baptism...I believe Calvin was the first that ever denied this place to mean baptism. He gives it another interpretation, which he confesses to be new." - William Wall (History of Infant Baptism)

-- The new birth occurs when one is baptized, for in that simple act of faith they are born not only of the water out of which they arise, but also born of the Spirit (regenerated) by the working of God at that moment - cf. Co 2:12-13

B. INVOLVES THE WORD OF GOD...

1. One is born again by the Word - 1 Pe 1:23

a. The incorruptible Word that is preached - cf. 1 Pe 1:25

b. The instrument through which the Spirit convicts the sinner. Jn 16:7; Ep 6:17

c. Which includes the command to be baptized - cf. Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16

2. Jesus sanctifies and cleanses His church by the washing of water by the word - Ep 5:26

a. The "washing of water" is another allusion to baptism - Jameison, Fausset, Brown

b. Yet baptism must be administered in conjunction with the Word of God to be of benefit -- The new birth involves several elements (water, Spirit, Word of God), all coming together when one responds to the gospel in baptism - e.g., Ac 2:37-39

[While there is evidence that one is born of water as they rise from the watery grave of baptism, the evidence of their being born of the Spirit comes later...]

III. THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW BIRTH (6-8)

A. SEEN BY THE EFFECT OF THE SPIRIT...

1. We should expect that what the Spirit produces is spirit (i.e., spiritual) - Jn 3:6

2. Like the wind (the same Greek word as Spirit), we do not see the Spirit itself but the effect that it produces -- Has one been truly born of the Spirit (i.e., born again)? With time there should be clear evidence that a change has occurred 1 Jn 3:14

B. SEEN BY THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT...

1. Paul describes the fruit (evidence) of the Spirit - Ga 5:22-23

2. Which comes not only being born of the Spirit, but walking in the Spirit - Ga 5:16,25

-- Where the fruit does not appear, either there was never any rebirth or one is walking after the flesh, not the Spirit! Ga 5:17

[As the discussion continues (Jn 3:9-13), it soon turns into a discourse (Jn 3:14-21), the latter in which Jesus describes...]

IV. THE BASIS FOR THE NEW BIRTH (14-18)

A. THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST...

1. Jesus compares His eventual crucifixion to Moses' lifting up of the serpent - Jn 3:14; Num 21:4-9

2. So people would be saved from perishing by believing in Jesus - Jn 3:15

-- Without redemption from sin, regeneration would be meaningless; the new birth provides both! - cf. Ac 22:16; Titus 3:5

B. THE LOVE OF GOD...

1. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that those who believe might have everlasting life (i.e., enter the kingdom of God) - Jn 3:16

2. God does not want anyone to perish or be condemned, but to be saved - Jn 3:16b-17

-- God's love for man is what makes Christ's sacrifice and the new birth possible! - cf. 1 Jn 4:9-10

C. THE FAITH OF MAN...

1. Those who believe in Jesus will not perish, but have everlasting life - Jn 3:15-16

2. They will not be condemned, unlike those who do not believe - Jn 3:18

-- The new birth requires faith in Jesus; without faith, being born of water is meaningless, and born of the Spirit impossible - cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 8:24; Ac 8:36-37

[Christ's sacrifice and God's love, in cooperation with man's faith, makes the new birth possible. Yet many remain condemned for lack of faith in Jesus. Why? Jesus offers one reason for...]

V. THE REJECTION OF THE NEW BIRTH (19-21)

A. MANY LOVE DARKNESS MORE THAN LIGHT...

1. Light (Jesus) has come into the world - Jn 3:19a; 1:5,9; 8:12

2. There are those who love the darkness instead, because of their evil deeds - Jn 3:19b

-- Their love for things of the world cause them to reject the light of Jesus - e.g. Lk 16:14

B. MANY DO NOT WANT TO BE EXPOSED BY THE LIGHT...

1. They know that coming to Jesus will expose their evil deeds - Jn 3:20; cf. Ep 5:13

2. But those willing to obey (does the truth), do not fear the light - Jn 3:21

-- Unwilling to give up their evil deeds, they are unwilling to submit to the new birth which acknowledges one's sinfulness and requires repentance - e.g., Ac 2:36-38

CONCLUSION

1. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus reveals much about being born again...

a. The necessity of the new birth (one cannot be a Christian unless "born again")

b. The nature of the new birth (a birth involving both water and the Spirit, i.e., baptism)

c. The evidence of the new birth (observable by its effects, i.e., the fruit of the Spirit)

d. The basis of the new birth (Christ's sacrifice, God's love, man's faith)

e. The rejection of the new birth (why many refuse to submit to it)

2. What about you? Have you been born again...?

a. Born of water and the Spirit (i.e., a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit)?

b. Born through the Word of God (i.e., by responding to the gospel message)?

c. Responding to God's love and Christ's sacrifice by expressing your faith in baptism?

Remember the words of Jesus...

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mk 16:16)

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" (Jn 3:7)