

HAVE YOU BEEN BORN TWICE?

TEXT: *John 3:3: 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."*

The purpose of this writing is to bring the message of the great importance of the new birth before every child of God in such a way that you will thoroughly and accurately know how to lead a soul to Christ. Also, to inform the precious souls who are not born again, who may be entertaining false hopes of going to Heaven.

As God's servant I must warn you of this danger and show you the way of salvation, lest I should be willfully guilty of utterly blocking your only hope of Heaven. We are all dying here in our seats, for every breath we breathe is one less we will breathe. Each hour alive is one less hour we can live. Shall I be as uncharitable to you as hundreds of deathbed patients have had their loved ones and doctors be to them? Knowing they will surely die, they do not tell them the truth about their condition because they don't want to hurt their feelings. Under the guise of kindness and charity, they utterly block the dying person's only chance of being saved, and they send them to Hell out of so-called charity.

Many of you are entertaining false hopes of going to Heaven, hopes of your own making, or by the false hope given by some uncharitable preacher. You are very sensitive about your beliefs; you will be shocked at what I give you from God's word, but so was Nicodemus.



One night, as the shadows were creeping slowly over the earth's surface, a very strict religious leader of the Jews entered into the home where Jesus abode. He was a great scholar and a man held in high honor and esteem amongst his people. He came beneath the shadows of night to escape detection from the critical associates of his profession.

Nicodemus knew what was taking place all over the country. He watched the crowds leave his place of worship and flock to hear Jesus teach and heal. He followed the crowd, and his hungry heart was deeply touched by the gracious Words of Jesus. He concluded in his mind that "no man ever spoke like this man". Then he saw the impossible done. Jesus spoke to demons, and they left the bodies which they inhabited. Blind eyes and deaf ears were healed; cripples were made complete and whole again.

Nicodemus was an intellectual giant, but his eyes have seen the impossible, and his ears have heard words no one had taught before, so his mind was confused and entangled.

He returned to the synagogue to discuss with his colleagues the riddles that were consuming him. They came to a positive conclusion that the man, Jesus, must be from God, for no one could do the miracles he was doing “except God be with Him”. Nicodemus was beginning to believe, but hesitant for lack of courage to declare his convictions. He decided to visit Jesus at night alone. There Jesus will surely untie the knots of confusion.



With a very well-phrased introduction, he spoke to Jesus:

John 3:2: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, 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.

Human intellect says Jesus is a teacher from God. Divine revelation declares Him to be the Son of God. As long as we believe in Jesus as a good teacher, He can never be our savior.

Luke 19:10: For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Nicodemus had a clean record before the world, but before Jesus he had a dirty heart that wanted cleansing. I thank God for this honest seeker who said in his heart, ‘I am not satisfied with knowing Him at a distance. I must know Him more closely, even though I may be scorned by my followers or be in danger of losing my high position in the synagogue’.

Many questions were in his mind, but as he stands face to face with the Savior of the World, there is nothing more to be said, for Jesus waved aside the fine compliment and peered into the depths of his heart with great accuracy. Then, very tenderly and graciously, the Master spoke such Divine wealth of Truth that it enriched him forever; and by and by, Nicodemus came out into the light of understanding.

It was the most shocking, baffling statement ever made to Nicodemus! Jesus said:

John 3:3: 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."

This is the central doctrine of the whole Bible. This mystery which you and I must experience or be lost forever, is spoken to a moral, refined, educated, law-abiding Pharisee. If religion could save, Nicodemus certainly would have qualified.

Our dear Lord and Master, however, looked beneath the flattering introduction which might have disarmed most preachers and caused them to try to invent an easier way for that particular one to enter into the Kingdom of God. But he said, "You can't get in unless you are born again". God has no pets. Doubtless, almost any church today would have gladly welcomed Nicodemus into full fellowship and never questioned his spiritual state. Yet, Jesus declared tenderly that the morality and goodness of men and all their good deeds of tithing, praying, fasting and church attending utterly made them unfit to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus, in choosing to reveal the most important doctrine in the Bible concerning the new birth, directs us to the best character that religion can produce.

As the trouble was with Nicodemus, so it has been the trouble with us all. We have tried to find peace, joy, and rest for our souls and a hope of Heaven by doctoring the outside and neglecting the inside. The tragedy is in the fact that there is nothing known to man, no soap, dry cleaner, or spot remover that will take away our sins except the Blood of Jesus.

The tragedy is in the fact that there is nothing known to man, no soap, dry cleaner, or spot remover that will take away our sins except the Blood of Jesus.

Why did Nicodemus need to be born again? He was lost for the same reason we are all lost who have not been born again. We are all born in sin and are, by nature, children of wrath. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked [Jeremiah 17:9]. We have hearts that are poisoned by evil deeds and sins. We have tried to remedy it by fixing up the outside, but God works from the inside.

Religion is what man tries to do for himself. Salvation is what God does for us.

Religion offers its good works as a means of an inferior salvation. God offers Jesus Christ, His Only Son, for our salvation.

If I had the money, I would like to secure the services of some artist who could paint the letters in front of every church door: **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.**

Merely to try to live right is an insult to God whose infinite love made Him wrap His Own *Heart* in the human flesh of the Babe of Bethlehem. What need is there for a Savior if it were possible for us to be saved by our deeds? If allegiance to prescribed conditions of living assured us of an entrance into Heaven, then Christ would never have come. The very fact that Jesus was sent from Heaven proves conclusively that He came to accomplish something no man can accomplish without Him. Complete dependence upon Christ Jesus to save us from our sins is God's Purpose in sending Christ into the world.

The new birth is the miracle of a man being born when he is old. This is what jolted Nicodemus. Jesus ordinarily met men of the common classes with the necessity of repentance, forsaking sin, and having faith for salvation. There was no place in the storehouse of Nicodemus' knowledge where words such as these have any place. He is like present-day modernists who laugh at the Words of Jesus. The religion of the modernist does not confess man's sinful nature. Rather, it teaches that we are all sons of God, that we need only to have the divine spark fanned into life, and recognize the deity that is in us; that salvation is not salvation from sin, but merely from ignorance. There is much beauty in the religion of the modernist, but it is the beauty of cut flowers.

The religion of the modernist does not confess man's sinful nature.

It will soon fade and die. It is not rooted in the truth of the Bible, but it is cut from the rubbish of self-righteousness.

Read **John 3:3** again. It is personal — an individual matter. You may be swept in with the crowd joining a church on Easter, but if that is all that has happened, you are only a sinner inside the church instead of outside.

Baptism will not save you.

Baptism will not save you. You will be just a baptized sinner going in the water a dry one, coming out of the water a wet one.

There is also a widespread notion that men may be educated into Christianity. Religious education is one of the greatest abominations of this present day. This makes thousands of hypocrites, but not Christians.

Nicodemus thought surely his family tree would commend him. But Jesus said, "Listen to me, it would not make any difference if you could be born over again of the flesh into this world, you would be no better off the next time than you were this time".

John 3:5: 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.

You have never seen a thistle grow into a rose, or a beetle into a bird, neither a sinner grow into a Christian.

Suppose a law was passed stating that any admission into any government office, or any enjoyment of government protection, or the privileges of citizens could only be given to persons born in the United States alone. If you follow me, this supposed case will show the difference between any changes and reforms, morally, that men might make in themselves in order to eliminate the necessity of the new birth.

Suppose a man from Japan should try to enter our country and secure the privileges of citizenship knowing the law is absolute, unchangeable; that a man must be born here, or else no privileges can be enjoyed. Suppose he says, "I'll change my name. I will be called by some high-sounding American name". This is like going by the name of Christian without entering the family of God by being born again.

The Japanese man says, "But, I am ready to renounce my mode of dress. To become an American, I will dress in the latest style". It is not the outside that needs fixing up; it is the inside that needs to be made over.

"Suppose I learn the language?" No, not enough.

It is not enough to do the external things only, even joining zealous denominations which say, "Except you become a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Catholic..."

Mark 9:43-44:

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

It is not enough to do the external things only, even joining zealous denominations which say, "Except you become a Baptist, or a Methodist, or a Catholic..."

How do we get out of the worm family and into the butterfly family, or the family of God?

Having worked in orchards, I've watched the caterpillar chewing away on leaves. Suppose he said to me, "Preacher, I am so tired of chewing away on leaves and living such a useless life. I want to make a change. Will you help me?" Of course I would like to help an ambitious worm to live a higher type of life. But how, so I replied: "Say,

caterpillar, what do you want to make of yourself?” “I have been watching the birds fly and I would like to fly, also. Can you help me?”

What shall I do? Give him a few lessons in the principles of aeronautics, give him lessons in flying an airplane? No, that won't help. Shall I tell him to become a better caterpillar, or the best little caterpillar there ever was? No, that won't make him fly, the very nature is wrong. He is a worm and worms cannot fly. We meet the same problem in life. **It is not education that is needed to make born-again Christians. It is not reform or turning over a new leaf. We are still not changed in our nature, even though we may appear better to society.** So, I turn to God and I ask Him what to do.

“Lord, you made that little fellow, and I know you can do what is impossible to man. Please tell me something that will encourage this so dissatisfied caterpillar.” The best news in the entire world is given to me by the Lord of Heaven, and to the worm I go.

“Caterpillar, I cannot make you fly, because your nature is wrong. But I know Somebody that is able to change your very nature so you will be able to fly. Better still, my Heavenly Father will beautify you so you will not be able to even recognize yourself.”

“Please tell me when the Lord will start on me. I am ready now.”

“Let me ask you only one question: are you really sick and tired of chewing leaves? Have you lost your desire to live this kind of life?”

“Yes, Preacher, that is why I have called on you for help.” (This is the exact condition every sinner must be in before he can be born again.)

“Now, Mr. Caterpillar, just get alone with God, away from everybody. You will find Him waiting and ready to make the change in your very nature.”

So, off he goes; and suddenly he discovers he possesses equipment and knowledge he never before knew he had! He builds and designs a house. He has never seen one before, copies no one, and yet it is perfect for his species. He goes inside, closes the door, and prays through. He feels the glory within, and he bursts out with a gorgeous pair of wings which open to the sunshine of God's love.



Within a few minutes, without asking me how to do it, he takes off into the air to fly for the rest of his life. This is something he cannot understand.

So it is with the *new birth*. God makes a change in your nature. You find a capacity to pray, to repent, and to desire to live righteous, although not in yourself. You discover in yourself an ability to trust in Jesus. He completely changes your life and you are a *new creature*. After living the life here, to bless others and turn them to Christ with your testimony, you take off to Heaven to Life Eternal in the Kingdom of the born again.

Akron Shalom Bible Learning Center
www.AkronShalomMinistries.org