

You Must Be Born Again **JOHN 2:23-25 & 3:1-17**

The third chapter of John is the Gospel in miniature. It tells all there is needed to know about how to be saved.

However, the last three verses of chapter two help us understand the doctrine in chapter 3 much better.

Here is the setting. Jesus is at the temple during the Passover season. He is doing his normal thing - helping people who are hurting. He is healing the sick, casting out demons, and in general, doing the supernatural things that only God can do.

When the people see the supernatural miracles he is performing, they believe in Him, but not in terms of a soul saving belief. It is kind of like the way we believe in magician's tricks. It is great entertainment, but we don't have faith in the magician because we know there is deception involved. They just couldn't see the hand of God in what Jesus was doing.

As we look at our Scripture we can see some of the things involved in both belief and unbelief.

READ SCRIPTURE AND COMMENTS

John 2:23-25

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

COMMENT: I could fill up the church if I could cause a limb to grow, or call fire down from heaven. Some people will come to witness a miracle but will not attend to hear the soul saving Gospel.

24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,
25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

They believed in Jesus with a superficial kind of belief, but Jesus did not commit Himself to them, or believe in them for He knew that it was merely empty accolades they were heaping upon Him. He knew the heart of these kinds of people. We don't have the same kind of insight Jesus had of people, but we have enough to know when they are not sincere. Jesus knew then, and we know now that the miracles of God are not for entertainment. They are to glorify God, and anything else is blasphemy in the eyes of God. Jesus clearly didn't have anything to do with these phony believers. However, there was one person who was watching Jesus carefully. We read about him in the next chapter.

However should precede Chapter 3. It implies one man believed that the miracles performed by Jesus were from God.

John 3:1-17
(However),

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

COMMENT: Nicodemus defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin and helped take Him down from the cross.

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.

COMMENT: Notice Nicodemus' comments. He tried to build Jesus up before asking questions.

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. Notice also that in the King James Bible Jesus preceded His answer with a verily, verily. This signifies an extremely important truth.

COMMENT: Jesus answered the question that was in the heart of Nicodemus before he verbalized it.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

COMMENT: Nicodemus couldn't grasp the concept. This indicates his earthy interests. This is what we all do at times when we should be dwelling in spiritual things.

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.

COMMENT: Explain water birth and spiritual birth. Jesus clears up in next verse.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

COMMENT: Water is referring to the natural birth. Spiritual birth is referring to the Supernatural birth.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

COMMENT: You can experience the effects of the wind. You must experience the effects of the Spirit to be born again. You can't tell where the spirit comes from, you must experience the power of God.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

COMMENT: Jesus was saying, you mean that you're highly educated and don't know these things. Nicodemus must have attended a theological seminary.

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

COMMENT: Here is the testimony of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but you still won't believe.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

COMMENT: Jesus is again talking about the wind, natural birth, and supernatural birth. He is saying that if you don't believe me about the natural things – you can't possibly believe me about the supernatural things.

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

COMMENT: He is talking about His place before He came to earth. Then he says' "Let me give you an example."

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

COMMENT: This is a picture of Christ. When we look upon him. We are spiritually healed. He then gave us the Gospel in miniature. There is enough Gospel in the next verse to save the whole world.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

COMMENT: I'll have to comment here on the treatment of this verse by modern Bible scholars. They have taken begotten out and made Jesus like any other son of God. Two things to notice, God loved and we must believe.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Here in John 3:16, we see the total gospel summarized. God loved His creation enough to send His only begotten Son to save it.

COMMENT: Talk about how man failed and God kept trying in the Garden of Eden, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and finally Jesus.

All that is necessary is to believe in Him, but this is not a superficial kind of belief such as Jesus was experiencing in Chapter two. This is a total knowledge, faith belief. You know for sure it has happened.

Let me illustrate. Suppose it is cloudy and I say "I believe it is going to rain." It may or may not, and you might say, "I don't believe it will rain." Your belief is just as good as mine even though they are diametrically opposed.

But, suppose I am standing in a pouring down rain and then I say, "I believe it is raining." You, nor anyone else, would doubt that. This is the kind of belief that saves. You know, without a doubt, that Jesus Christ, God's only Son, came into the world to save it, and only through his shed blood can one have eternal life.

This is what being Born Again is all about. It is not only belief in Jesus Christ, but also belief in all that He claimed to be. He gave us supernatural miracles to serve as God's witness that He is who He claimed to be. He left us with the Holy Spirit to confirm in our hearts that He is all He claimed to be. He left us with the record in the Bible so that those who would search the Scriptures would confirm in their hearts that you must be born again to see the kingdom of God.

Today, in our modern society, we hear a lot about the new birth, or at least lots of people claim to be born again. But, I'm afraid many of these who claim to have experienced the new birth are believing in Jesus like those in chapter two. When I was stationed at Robins Air Force Base, I occasionally attended a revival in one of the local churches. The evangelist told a story that we need to hear.

He was holding a revival in a South Georgia town and things were going about the way revivals usually go these days. A few people had come for rededication but nothing of great significance had happened.

Along about the middle of the week, he preached on this very topic, "You must be born again." When he gave the invitation, he noticed the pastor's wife get up from about halfway back and come down the aisle. He expected the usual kind of recommitment. You know how it goes; I enjoyed your sermon. I'd like to rededicate my life. Pray for me type thing.

But to his surprise, he saw tears in her eyes as she approached him. In fact she was sobbing so hard he could hardly understand her.

She related to him that this was the first time she had fully understood the Gospel and that she had lived a life without Christ for the last 20 years.

Here was a lady who had helped her own husband with many revivals. She was a leader in the church. She had led many prayer groups. But, she didn't, understand the most basic truth of the Bible - You can't work your way into heaven, you must be born again.

I know that many of you are wondering why she took so long to discover this simple truth. It was because she was following Jesus for the wrong reason. She was looking for recognition, enjoying the position of being the minister's wife, and feeling good about herself for all the good things she was doing. She finally discovered that her good works wouldn't get her to heaven. She needed something else that only Jesus can give.

Perhaps some of you are thinking, "**Didn't Jesus say to love our neighbor?**" Yes He said that and many other things about our behavior, but none of these count for anything unless we've experienced the New Birth.

In today's religious world of Cheap Grace, liberalism, and unbelief there is no longer an emphasis to enter into a covenant with God. It is all too easy in the modern evangelist appeal of easy believe-ism. Let me tell you some of the things the New Birth is not.

It is not reformation. Turning over a leaf will not save you. Jesus told a story about a man who tried it. He got rid of one demon, but it returned with reinforcements. You can't clean your own house. It takes a higher power. One must invite the Holy Spirit in take the place of the void, or he'll be worse off than when he first started.

ILLUSTRATION: Preacher and pornography.

The New Birth is not a loud profession. (Demons and Judas.) There are many who want to tell about how much they love Jesus, but they live like they love the devil instead. We have to be skeptical of those who are always telling us how great they are. Let their actions speak, not their voice.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell about man in revival at Mountain Grove Baptist Church who insisted in giving his testimony and then stole his partner's money and left the country.

The new Birth is definitely not just joining a church. Every person who is saved should join a church, but he ought to be saved before he joins. The problems we have in our churches today are brought about by unsaved people. The Holy Spirit never has caused problems in God's house, but Satan has. And every time you hear of some disgruntled member causing trouble in God's house, it is fairly safe to assume he or she

isn't saved. Sure some times even God's own will get out of line, but they quickly get back in line when they take it to

ILLUSTRATION: Doug Jordan and man who wanted to get rid of the Children's Director.

It takes regeneration to experience the new birth. It comes from a divine change in nature. We're all just sinners saved by grace. We can't do a thing about our lost state. But, God can. It takes divine action as the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts to take control of our lives. And, it is important that we understand that He must take control of our lives if we are truly Born Again.

It is a mysterious change that takes place. You and I can't explain it, but we can know it. You can't explain how God creates life, but you accept it.

Why can't the world accept His gift of eternal life and serve Him as He wants us to do.

I suppose those who haven't experienced the New Birth are wondering how can one be born again?

First - God must call. He does this in many ways, through a sermon, a song, a sorrow, or through your own thoughts. The spirit and the bride say come.

Secondly - He convinces and convicts of sin. God is the one who causes us to have the feeling of lost-ness in our hearts. When we respond to this conviction, we are on the road to becoming His child.

When we respond, He brings repentance faith. And by faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, He puts away sin and you become justified. He gives you a new nature and regenerates your soul. You are truly born again.

I would be remiss if I didn't tell you what happens to those who refuse to accept God at His word, those who die without Jesus. The book of Revelation tells about them. They will die second death which is not death as we understand it, but will spend eternity without God in torment. God gives them up, this is the second death. This clearly implies that man does not live outside of God. Many try it, but they will eventually end up having to die without God and spend eternity without Him.

INVITATION

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