

Born Of The Spirit

John 3:1-8

December 11, 2022

Pastor Francis Bezzam

¹ 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?" ⁵ 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."

Do you know that you as a believer, as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Christian, you are a citizen of heaven? And you have royal status in the Kingdom of God. And this regal status does not come by your merit, your achievement or accomplishment, your good work or any anything you can offer to God. Remember that the thief brought nothing to the wounded and bleeding Christ and yet he was given paradise (Luke 23:43). How is that? The answer: He was *conferred* upon. He was *imputed*. He was *awarded* the status to be a citizen of heaven. And who confers this citizenship? The King of this Kingdom, Jesus. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is unlike any other King or Lord. He is a King who lays down his life for his people. And his Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom. A Kingdom that has no end. The world we live in is a world of sin and darkness but the kingdom of God is kingdom of light, righteousness, peace and joy.

So this morning, we are going to take another look at this wonderful passage in the Gospel of John. Out of all the passages, this is one of the greatest passages and maybe the greatest.

And the central subject or main idea of this passage deals with this question. How does one *see* or *enter* the Kingdom of God?

And Jesus' answer is, "You must be born again". You must be born of the Spirit of God. We had covered this passage many months ago but my title today is "Born of the Spirit".

Last week, we saw the passage from chapter two where the Jews demanded a sign from Jesus. What was Jesus' reply? "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" John 2:19.

And the author writes in the last part of the previous chapter that Jesus did many miracles or signs. Here is what John writes – *“Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. ²⁴ But Jesus didn’t trust them, because he knew all about people. ²⁵ No one needed to tell him about human nature, for he knew what was in each person’s heart.”* John 2:23-25 (NLT)

Notice many began to believe in Jesus because of the miracles he did. And out of those many, one man a Pharisee wanted to meet Jesus in person one-on-one in the night.

This is where our passage begins.

Let’s look at verses *one* through *three*.

¹ 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.”

Notice how Nicodemus begins his conversation with Jesus.

Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.

The meaning of the word “know” is not explicitly clear in its usage. That is why a preacher or teacher has to explain it. This word “know” is generic for “see”, or “comprehend”, “be aware”. Nicodemus says “we”, not just him but his fellow pharisees possibly or maybe he is pretending to represent others as well. We don’t know. To Nicodemus, Jesus is a teacher a rabbi someone who is to be recognized or honored perhaps. Now, we don’t know the motive of Nicodemus at this point. But this is disappointing for a Pharisee to say because surely the teachers of Law knew about the prophets, the priests and the kings of Israel. And Nicodemus sees Jesus as a mere teacher? Surely, he is teacher but is more than a teacher. He is Prophet, Priest and King all in one.

And why does Nicodemus think Jesus is a teacher from God? Look at his reason? *Last part of the verse two.*

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.”

Nicodemus believes something about Jesus. It is better to believe in Jesus because of the signs. *But* is believing in Jesus *because* of the miracles a true of sign saving faith?

Today, there are all kinds of well-dressed, well-mannered, sophisticated looking men who are loud pushy but are frauds and cheats promising miracles supposedly doing signs in the name of Jesus. *And who do they promote?* Their own selves at your expense. Just because someone *believed* because they experienced a miracle in their life, should you conclude they are in the kingdom of God or citizens of heaven or have eternal life? Well, Jesus answers that question in verse *three*.

³ *Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Do you see how Jesus replies to Nicodemus?

Allow me to paraphrase this conversation. Nicodemus tells Jesus. Rabbi, we see, we know, we are aware that you are a teacher from God because no one can do these miracles unless he is from God. Jesus's reply is this "Hear me out Nicodemus. You see that I am a teacher from God because I do these miracles. But you want to see the greatest miracle in your life. You want to know and comprehend how great is the kingdom of God. You want to know and see the remedy for this world of darkness, violence and hatred. You want to experience peace, joy and true righteousness, then you must be born from above". Unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.

And hearing this answer, Nicodemus is just stumped and perplexed.
See his reaction in verse four.

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?"*

Nicodemus is struggling to understand this idea of born again. Nicodemus thinks about physical rebirth. But Jesus is talking about spiritual rebirth. You know re-incarnation is not a new idea in Eastern religions. Many in these religions believe that they will be born again as lower-level creatures if their bad karma outweighs their good deeds and vice-versa. And of-course there are others who believe in a nihilistic future. Nihilism is the belief that there is no meaning.

Jesus opens a radically wonderfully different realm. So as Nicodemus struggles to understand what Jesus means, Jesus offers more clarity.

Lets see verses *five* through *eight*.

⁵ *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.”.

Two major observations in light of Jesus’ response.

Observation *one*:

Being born again is necessary to *see* the kingdom of God.

Observation *two*:

Being born again is necessary to *enter* the kingdom of God. And you are born again by water and Spirit.

The water is a reference to the cleansing of our sins.

In the book of Ezekiel we see God speaking to the people of Israel how he will purify their hearts –

Chapter 36 verse 25-27 *“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart”*

And those who are not washed and cleansed of their sins, they are still outside in the kingdom of God.

And who are those specifically?

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11

Such were some of you. But you were washed. You were made clean. You were made righteous by the Spirit of our God. Those who continue in sin and unbelief are outside God’s kingdom but it is exactly those who were outside who have been born of the Spirit and are now citizens of heaven.

And in the rest of the passage, the emphasis is on the phrase “born of the Spirit”. This phrase “born of the Spirit” is also the same as “born of God”.

And in verses *six* through *eight* Jesus makes it so clear about what he is talking about.

You and I are flesh and blood. You were born from flesh and blood. This is not hard to understand. You have that question when children ask the question – Mom, where do babies come from? Not out of thin air. Flesh begets flesh. Its tangible.

What you cannot see is the spirit that is in you. Whatever causes you to live, breathe is invisible.

So Jesus tells Nicodemus. Don't be so perplexed or amazed that I said to you, "You must be born again". You understand how a baby is born. You understand that you have a soul and spirit.

In the same way, the Spirit of God moves sovereignly where He wishes. And when that Sovereign Spirit moves, you are born again. That is how you see and enter the Kingdom of God!

This is actually a rebuke to Nicodemus. Why?

Because, Nicodemus claims to see and know something about Jesus because of his signs and miracles. And Jesus' response is – you can't even see or comprehend anything about the Kingdom of God unless you are born of the Spirit.

Now, for the sake of time, I have covered this passage in a previous sermon but for today, I want to ask the question. How do you know you are born of the Spirit?

I have at least *four* observations or indicatives.

1. Faith that transforms and overcomes

Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? Do you believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world, the Promised Redeemer who has come into the world to save sinners? Then you have been born of God! *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.."* 1 John 5:1. This faith is gift from God. This faith didn't exist before. This is belief is first transformational faith. Just as the wind blows, there was a day or time period when the Spirit of God moved in your life and you were convicted of your sin. To illustrate this - On the day of Pentecost, many Jews who were gathered who did *not* believe in Jesus as the Messiah. But that day, the Spirit of God moved and three thousand people were born of the Spirit. They turned from *unbelief* to *belief* in Jesus as the Christ. And as Gentiles, you remember when you trusted in Jesus as the Christ. That day was the day when you were born of God! And something changed the day you put your faith in Jesus – you found the most beautiful the greatest treasure Jesus himself.

The same faith and belief that you have when you trusted in Jesus is the same faith helps you overcome this world. ⁴*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* ⁵*Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* 1 John 5:4-5. When you go through trials, tests and temptations in your life, maybe you are going through one in your life. But know that God is able to give you power and strength to endure and overcome. One author puts it this way – *"The smallest bit of faith in God is worth infinitely more than the greatest bit of faith in ourselves, or the strongest measure of faith in faith itself. Faith counts for nothing unless its object is Jesus Christ."* – Tim Challies

2. Affection for God and other believers

Do you love the Father? Do you have affection for God and other believers? Then you are born of the Spirit. *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him"* 1 John 5:1 *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."* 1 John 4:7. You know this love is a love that overlooks offenses because our offenses have overlooked by God himself. This is a love that sacrifices.

3. A growing hatred for sin

Do you have a growing desire to follow and obey the commandments of God? Do you have a desire to please what pleases God and hate what God hates? Then you are born of the Spirit. Yes God hates evil. *We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.* 1 John 5:18.

When you born of the Spirit, constant practice of sinning is weakened but not abolished. There is no Christian life that is completely devoid of any trace of sin. John tells in the first chapter of this epistle *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* 1 John 1:8

4. A bias for doing right

Those who are born of the Spirit have understood the character of God. That God is a righteous God. So those who are born of the Sprit practice doing right. Does doing right have higher precedence in your life? Then you are born of the Spirit. *"If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him."* 1 John 2:29

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Born Of The Spirit.** John 3:1-8

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What did Jesus mean when he responded to Nicodemus that "unless one is born again, he cannot see (or enter) the kingdom of God?"

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. How is one born of the Spirit and what are some characteristics of someone who is born of the Spirit? 1 John 5
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: In what way can you live as a citizen of heaven while still on this earth?