

You must be born again...to see or enter into the kingdom of God

By Leon King

We are not told how to be born again, but we are told of the necessity of the new birth. We are also told that the second birth is required in order to perceive or enter into the kingdom of God. One preacher said, "Born once, die twice; born twice, die once." He was speaking of both temporal and spiritual death.

In John 3:1-8, we read an account of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 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. 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. 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? 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. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 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."

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews who came to see Jesus at night. Apparently, he did not want to be seen with the Lord Jesus in the day time. Nicodemus recognized that Jesus was a teacher come from God - for

he had witnessed the miracles, which Jesus had performed. He believed that Jesus came from God.

Moreover, we note that Jesus made a statement most startling to Nicodemus in response to his greeting. *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Jesus made it plain to Nicodemus that he could never see (perceive) the kingdom of God unless he was born again. Nicodemus was puzzled and asked, *"How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"* Nicodemus was looking at things from the physical point of view only. He could not understand how a man could go through the natural birth process when he was fully grown and old. For him, this seemed impossible. Indeed, it is. The physical birth process was not what Jesus was referring to as we see from the next statement. *"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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

There is no doubt that the Lord is referring to a second birth - the first of which is a birth of flesh, and the second a birth of the Spirit. There is a natural birth and there is a spiritual birth. The natural birth is first; the spiritual birth comes later.

Jesus said, *"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 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."*

Here is another illustration from nature. The wind blows where it desires. We hear the sound of the wind, but nobody can tell where it came from or where it goes. It is the same with those born of the Spirit. In other words, the wind does what it wants to, and we can only observe the effects of it. It is precisely the same with a person who is born of the Spirit.

Jesus did not tell Nicodemus *how* to be born again; he simply told him that he *must* be born again in order to see or enter into the kingdom of God. The actual process of the new birth cannot be seen by onlookers, but there is evidence of it after it has occurred just as there is evidence that a wind has blown about us by the evidence it leaves. Some mornings, we wake to find limbs broken from the trees during the night. The limbs are scattered on the face of the snow. Thereby, we know that the wind came.

The how of the new birth is God's business. The birth comes by the power of the Holy Spirit in a manner connected to the Word of God. The effect of the new birth is faith toward God and repentance. Both repentance and faith are said to be gifts.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God:*** -- Ephesians 2:8

*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; **if God peradventure will give them repentance** to the acknowledging of the truth; -- 2 Timothy 2:24,25.*

Salvation is by grace through faith. Part of the salvation process is regeneration, that is, the new birth. It is a birth of God. Through regeneration, we are given a holy disposition to see our sin as God sees it, and a change of mind is worked in us. That change of mind is repentance. Also, through regeneration, we are given faith. Faith is believing what God has revealed. We receive Jesus Christ by faith - *but as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* Those who have such saving faith have been regenerated. They have been born of God. In John 1: 12,13., we read:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were

born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

You cannot help but see that those who are believing on his name are those which were born...*not of blood*. That is, being born again has nothing with what the natural man has the ability to do. *Nor of the will of the flesh*, - The new birth has nothing to do with the will of the fallen nature for it is true that the natural man cannot receive the things of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). *Nor of the will of man*...Not of the individual's own will nor of those who love him deeply in this world. As much as fathers and mothers might will their children to be born again, it takes an act of God and has nothing to do with the human will. The greatest two things we can do for our loved ones is: (1) point them to the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world, and (2) pray that God will regenerate them, giving them faith and repentance.