

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **John 3:1-7.**

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; [2] this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." [3] Jesus answered and said to 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? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" [5] Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and 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] "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

B. Roger Merritt has said, "If being born hasn't given you much satisfaction, try being born again!"

C. Entrance into the kingdom of God is so special, that it requires a change called "the new birth."

D. Today's lesson focuses on what Jesus said and meant when He told Nicodemus that he must be born again.

II. BORN AGAIN INTO THE KINGDOM.

A. The kingdom of God is where God rules and reigns. He wants to rule in the lives and hearts of men (Jn. 18:36; Lk. 17:21).

(Lk 17:21) nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

(Jn 18:36) Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

B. The kingdom includes the church. God, X, angels, the OT faithful, and the church make up the kingdom (Heb. 12:22-24).

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, [23] to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, [24] and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

C. Jesus prayed for the kingdom to come in its fullness with the addition of those who are members of His church (Mt. 6:10a).

'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

D. To be a member of the church is to be a member of the kingdom (Col. 1:13,14; Ac. 20:28; Rev. 5:9,10).

(Ac 20:28) "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

(Col 1:13,14) For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

(Rev 5:9,10) And they sang[^] a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. [10] "And Thou hast made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

E. Notice also the FORCE OF THE EXCEPTIVE SENTENCE. Just as there is one and only one exception for divorce (Mt. 19:9), there is one and only one way to be a member of the kingdom--be born again.

III. BORN OF THE WATER.

A. When Jesus said that one must be born again. The second birth is that of the water and the Spirit. The first birth is physical, but the second birth is not of woman (3:4), but spiritual in nature.

B. There can be no doubt that when X speaks of being born of the water and the Spirit, He is talking about BAPTISM.

- C. Nicodemus would understand that Jesus was talking about baptism because John the Baptist preached and practiced it. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and would have understood that being born of the water meant immersion.
- D. Christ and the apostles submitted to John's baptism, and Nicodemus did not, even though he knew what Jesus was talking about. One should not question the passage in a way as to think that baptism is not in focus here.
- E. John's baptism is under the immediate discussion, but later this passage will apply to Xian baptism (Mt. 28:19,20; Ac. 2:38).
 (Mt 28:19,20) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 (Ac 2:38) And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- F. Baptism is an immersion in water that washes away our sins. Paul says that this washing regenerates, or causes a new life. Instead of coming forth from the waters of physical birth, one comes forth from the waters of spiritual birth (Ac. 22:16; Ti. 3:3-5).
 (Ac 22:16) 'And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'
 (Ti 3:3-5) For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. [4] But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, [5] He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

IV. BORN OF THE SPIRIT.

- A. Both are necessary to be born again. One must submit to being baptized in water that they might also be born again of the Spirit. Two separate baptisms are NOT in view here. Being born of the water and the Spirit comprise the one time of being born again.
- B. When a person is immersed into X for the forgiveness of past sins they receive the gift of the HS (Ac. 2:38).
 And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- C. So many things happen when one is baptized that relate to the HS:
 - 1. We begin our new life with the Spirit (Gal. 3:2,3; 1Cor. 6:19).
 (1Cor 6:19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?
 (Gal 3:2-3) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? [3] Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
 - 2. One is sealed in the HS for the final day (Eph. 1:13,14; 4:31).
 (Eph 1:13-14) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, [14] who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.
 (Eph 4:31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.
 - 3. The HS begins His work of sanctification (2Th. 2:13).
 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- D. But having the HS means having & whole new attitude. When one is baptized in water and in the Spirit they are to view life much differently than before they became a Xian:
 - 1. Our conscience is clean (1Pet. 3:21).
 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

2. Our hearts have been sprinkled clean (Heb. 10:22).

let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- E. It would seem that being born again means that the act of immersion takes care of the past (sins), and being born of the Spirit takes care of the future (attitude).
- F. Again, this is what Nicodemus and the Pharisees want to do; change their lives and their thinking! This is what many religious people today refuse to do--change their lives and their thinking. Yet, it is these very two things that are ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL to being part of the kingdom.

V. DO NOT MARVEL.

A. In Jn. 3:7,8; Jesus said not to be puzzled; even if you don't really understand how, it all works.

“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ [8] “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Even though the farmer doesn't understand how his crops grow, he plants and harvests nonetheless (Mk. 4:26-29).

And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; [27] and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows-- how, he himself does not know. [28] “The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. [29] “But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

- B. Albert Barnes says, about these verses: “Jesus tells him that he should not reject a doctrine merely because he could not understand it. Neither could the wind be seen but its effects were well known, and no one doubted the existence or power of the agent.”
- C. The knowledge of how God forgives the sins, or how the HS works in one's life is not necessary to the enjoyment of God's gifts. (How does a brown cow, eat green grass, give white milk, yellow butter and red meat!)

VI. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Being born again is not a feeling, received by prayer, or confession, or even having an experience. Living a good moral life is not being born again.
- B. Being born again means that one will be baptized by immersion for the forgiveness of their sins, receiving the HS who will help in the maturing process and the changing of attitude.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.