
YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN: JOHN 3:1-21

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3

Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, who visits Jesus at night for political reasons. Nicodemus is a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews — a man deeply religious, moral, and educated in Scripture. Yet Jesus tells him that all his religious knowledge and good works are not enough to enter or even see the kingdom of God. This would have been shocking to Nicodemus, who represented the religious elite of Israel.

Key Phrase: “Born again” (Greek: γεννηθῆναι ἀνωθεν / gennēthē anōthen)

This phrase literally means “born from above.” It carries a double meaning — a spiritual rebirth that comes from God, not from human effort or lineage. Jesus is saying that the natural birth (our first birth) gives us physical life, but to enter the spiritual realm of God’s kingdom, we need a new birth — a transformation of the inner person by the Holy Spirit.

1. Spiritual Rebirth is Essential, Not Optional

- Jesus doesn’t say, “It would be good to be born again,” but “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom.” Verse 7, “You must be born again.”
- This means no amount of moral behavior, religious devotion, or family heritage can replace spiritual regeneration.

2. The Kingdom of God is Spiritually Discerned

- “See the kingdom of God” means to perceive or experience it.
- **In verse 5**, Jesus says that you cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless you are born again.
- Without the new birth, a person cannot even truly understand spiritual truth because it is revealed by the Spirit.
- *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. I Corinthians 2:14*

3. The Work of the Holy Spirit

- Later in the chapter (John 3:5–8), Jesus explains that this new birth happens “of water and the Spirit.”
- The Spirit cleanses, renews, and brings to life what was spiritually dead - Ezekiel 36:25–27
- *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5*
- Vs.8 – The Spirit is sovereign like the wind; unseen but its power is seen in changed lives

4. New Identity and Nature

- Being “born again” means receiving a new nature — one that desires righteousness, holiness, and relationship with God.
- It’s not just turning over a new leaf; it’s becoming a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. II Corinthians 5:17*

5. Rejection of Jesus is a moral decision (John 3:16-21)

- Jesus did not come to condemn but to save. We were already in condemnation.
- Not choosing Jesus is loving darkness
- People practicing evil hate the light
- 3 responses to the light of the Gospel: They are drawn toward the light. They hide from the light. Or they attack the light - to put it out.

Practical Application

- Salvation is personal and transformative — It's not inherited from parents, culture, or church membership. Each person must be born again through faith in Jesus Christ.
- It brings a new vision — When someone is born again, they begin to see life through God's perspective, understanding His Word and His purposes.
- It produces fruit — True new birth leads to a changed heart, transformed behavior, and evidence of the Spirit's work (Galatians 5:22-23).
- You are not saved BY your works; you are saved FOR good works (see Ephesians 2:8-10)

Summary

Jesus' statement to Nicodemus reveals that entrance into God's kingdom requires spiritual regeneration, not religious performance. The new birth is a supernatural act of grace through which God imparts new life by the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Christ.

In short: You are not a Christian because you were born into a Christian family — **you must be born again into God's family.**

