

Born Again
John 3:1-15

Introduction

The phrase “born again” has been used for millennia in the Christian community because Jesus used it in John 3. After Chuck Colson wrote a book by that title about his conversion to Christianity following the Watergate Scandal in 1974, the term was over used and abused in secular society for several decades to describe something repaired, replaced or renewed. It was not uncommon to find updated product lines described as “born again” as were products made from recycled materials. Real estate firms advertised retrofitted older houses as “born again.” People who came to strong convictions of belief in all sorts of things used the term to describe themselves including “born again pagans.”

Thankfully, such abuse has diminished though in an internet search this week I found a store in Idaho named “Born Again Resale & Consignment” and another in Georgia named “Born Again Antiques.” There was also an old hippie writing a blog under the title “Born Again Hippies,” and then there was the “Born.Again” hair treatment product that claims to bring hair back to life. So though the abuse has diminished, there is still a lot of confusion about what it means to be “born again.”

Webster’s 1989 Edition Dictionary defines “Born Again” as an adjective “*of one taking a new, different, and more religious course, e.g., a born-again Christian.*” That is better than it being a synonym for “recycling” or a renewed enthusiasm for something, but it also misses the point of what Jesus says in John 3. Jesus’ usage of it is a radical and humanly impossible demand. Please turn with me to John 3 to find out what Jesus meant.

As you are turning to John 3, let me remind you briefly of the context of this passage. Jesus has been baptized and started His public ministry. He has been tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He has chosen His first disciples and turned the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. He has cleansed the Temple of the merchants and money changers. Jesus has already publicly proclaimed His deity when He called the Temple “His Father’s house.” The Jews that questioned Jesus asked Him for a sign of His authority. Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple was in itself a sign according to Malachi 3, but they wanted more. They did not understand what Jesus meant by His reply, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (2:19), but His disciples did at a later time. John 2:23 says that during the week of the Feast of Unleavened bread that Jesus was doing signs which caused many to believe in Him. It is during this time that we pick up the story in John 3:1.

The Coming of Nicodemus - John 3:1-2

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."

Nicodemus searched and found Jesus because he had seen some of the signs Jesus had done that week and it caused him to want to know more. The text specifically points out that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, but it does tell us why. There have been many reasons offered for this, but coming at night was most likely done to avoid being noticed. It is possible that Nicodemus simply wanted to have a quiet conversation with Jesus without being interrupted. However, it is more likely he is trying to avoid any questions by the other Pharisees and by the chief priests. There was already at least some apprehension about what the Jewish religious leaders thought about Jesus. It is obvious that Jesus’ cleansing of the

Temple was a challenge to the authority of Annas the High Priest and a financial blow to him and his followers. We would expect them to be upset. Nicodemus would also have been concerned about the other Pharisees since they would not have been favorable toward a self-proclaimed teacher from Galilee. Regardless of why Nicodemus came at night, he is coming to Jesus with a very important question.

Nicodemus addresses Jesus as “Rabbi” which means “teacher.” This is a term of great respect and especially so coming from a Pharisee who was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body, and spoken to a Galilean who was not schooled in Jerusalem. This alone would have required a great humility on the part of Nicodemus.

The pharisees were an extremely devout and proud group, especially those from Jerusalem. They were meticulous at trying to keep the Law of Moses out of a sincere desire to honor God, but the Law was deficient to accomplish that. According to Romans 7:7 and Galatians 3:24, the Law was not designed to save a person. It was designed to teach them their sinfulness and need of God’s mercy and grace. The tragedy is that the Pharisees perverted the Law through their own traditions in the very effort to try and keep it. They generally looked down on other people as less holy and therefore of less value than themselves. They looked down on those from the region of Galilee as being ignorant country bumpkins. This would be similar to but even stronger than someone from a prestigious Law School such as Yale or Harvard looking down on someone who had no formal training acting as their own lawyer.

Yet, we find Nicodemus, a Judean Pharisee who is a member of the prestigious Sanhedrin, seeking out Jesus, a man from Galilee, and addressing Him with a term of great respect and seeking wisdom from Him. This is an incredible action. What caused it? As verse 2 notes, Nicodemus had seen the signs Jesus was doing and concluded that Jesus must have come from God as a teacher.

Historically, this was a time in which there was a wide spread expectation of the coming of Messiah. Not only was there an expectation that the time of the Gentiles spoken of in Daniel 9 would be soon coming to a conclusion, but John the Baptist, whom they believed was a prophet, was proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.

The Necessity of the New Birth - John 3:3-8

Nicodemus recognized that Jesus had come from God and he wanted to know what Jesus had to teach him from God, but Nicodemus had not even stated a question before Jesus addresses the heart of issue which is how can a man enter into the kingdom of God? Jesus said to him, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

What did Jesus mean by this? By the standard of Judaism at that time, Nicodemus was in a good position for he was a religious leader and a teacher of the law of Moses. Yet, Jesus told him that unless something radical happened to him, he would not see the kingdom of God. He would neither be able to understand it nor be part of it.

What Jesus said was very similar to a common Jewish simile of being as a new born. This simile was used to describe a number of occasions. When a bridegroom was married, he was seen as one who was newly born to a new life with his wife. In a similar way, when a king ascended to the throne, he was seen as taking on a new life. The simile also applied to proselytes who repented and converted to Judaism. In all these examples, the old life of the past was set aside and the new life with its responsibilities was then assumed. This metaphorical usage is very close to the Webster definition and common usage today of being “born again.” But Jesus did not say or infer that repentance would bring a person into the kingdom of God and they would become like a new born. What Jesus said was much more radical than that. Jesus said, *"unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Nicodemus did not understand this and so he questions Jesus in verse 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?"

Nicodemus understood that what Jesus said was radical. He did not say to become “as” or “like” a baby. Jesus did not use a simile, but another mashal as He had done when answering the Jewish authorities when He cleansed the Temple (John 2:19). It is another veiled, but very pointed saying. Jesus says directly that one must be “born again.” Nicodemus would have understood a simile and its usage if Jesus had used one, but He did not. He would have understood it if Jesus had spoken of entering the Kingdom first and then as a result becoming as a new born, but this is the reverse. It is so radical that Nicodemus responds with two related questions expressing what he sees as an impossibility. How could it be feasible that an old man could reenter his mother’s womb to be born a second time?

Jesus’ explains the mashal in verses 5-8, but the response causes Nicodemus to continue to wonder. *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. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' "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."*

Jesus again stresses the absolute necessity of being born again, but this time He gives a fuller explanation of what that meant. A person is not able to enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of both water and the Spirit. Nicodemus would have understood what was meant by being born of water, but the idea of being born by the spirit was hard for him to grasp.

There are several ideas offered in the commentaries in the attempt to explain what Jesus meant by being born of water and each has some plausibility. Most common is it referring to physical birth since Jesus follows the statement with the phrase, “*that which is born of the flesh is flesh.*” However, I take a minority view in interpreting this passage. I admit that I don’t like the ramifications of a requirement of physical birth since that would eliminate the possibility of the souls of those who were miscarried or aborted being in heaven. But more importantly, the near context in John 1 and the historical context of the major religious change taking place at that time lead me to conclude that Jesus was referring to the water of the baptism of repentance. The message of both John the Baptist and Jesus after He began His public ministry was “*repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” Let me explain further.

There were several Jewish rites that used water for cleansing from sin (Leviticus 11:32; 14:8,9; 15:13, 17:15; Numbers 19:12, etc.). Psalm 51:2 expresses well the heart of the righteous man to be cleansed, “*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.*” Ezekiel 36:25-26 expresses both the ceremonial cleansing with water and the promise of a new heart. “*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*” Nicodemus would have been familiar with these passages and the common practice of baptizing proselytes as a sign of their repentance from paganism. John’s baptism was the same as this except it was also for Jews as a sign of their repentance from sin to righteousness. John’s baptism of repentance as recorded in John 1 was causing a religious stir within the nation and Nicodemus would have been aware of this. That is the historical setting of John 3 and why I think that Jesus’ reference to being born of water is about this baptism of repentance.

The baptism of repentance was simply a ceremonial expression of the professed change of heart and mind by the individual from sinfulness to righteousness. This was what John was doing and why he said in John 1:26, 31 that he came baptizing in water. It was preparation for the coming Messiah who would baptize with the Spirit. That water baptism was only a shadow of the reality needed of being baptized by the Spirit. Nicodemus needed both, but the later was the critical element.

The baptism of repentance was an act of the flesh meant to demonstrate an inward change. Christian baptism is also an act of the flesh, but it is meant to be a public testimony of the person’s identification with Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. They have died with Him to their old life and been raised with Him in newness of life (Romans 6). It is good to repent and be baptized, but “*a new, different, and more*

religious course” in life is not sufficient for salvation. The flesh must act and repent, but that is not enough for entering the kingdom of God. The number of people that have been baptized in water but have not been born of the Spirit must be in the hundreds of millions if not billions. The person must also be born of the Spirit. Ezekiel 36:27 states this, but it was not understood even by a teacher such as Nicodemus.

In John 3:8, Jesus gives further explanation to the nature of the Spirit’s work. The word for Spirit, πνεῦμα / pneuma, is also the same word for “wind.” Jesus uses the commonality of the two meanings to show Nicodemus the nature of the Spirit. Man does not control the wind. It goes where it wants. He is only aware of its presence by what it does. He can hear it. He can feel it. He can see it moving things. Man does not control the Spirit. The Spirit moves as He desires. Man can only sense the result of the Spirit’s work.

This would have been a great shock for Nicodemus. He was brought up in a system that believed that a person could and should save himself by obedience to the Mosaic Law and all the traditions of the Elders. So many people today have the same fundamental belief that they can somehow earn their way to heaven and gain God’s favor by keeping some set of laws, regulations and traditions that they have made up for themselves. That was not true in the Old Testament. It was not true for Nicodemus. It is not true now. Man cannot see the kingdom of God by his own efforts in any way, shape or form. It is humanly impossible. None seek God on their own (Psalm 14:2-3). Even all human works of righteousness are filthy before our holy God (Isaiah 64:6). Man can feel sorrow for sin and go through all sorts of religious rituals to express that sorrow and desire to change, but regardless of how good any of that may be, it is not enough. There must also be the moving of the Spirit so that you are “born of the Spirit,” and man’s control over and influence of the Spirit is the same as his control and influence on the wind. There is none. It does not exist. It is humanly impossible.

How to Be Born Again - John 3:9-15

Nicodemus is still confused, but he is a true seeker of God and continues the dialogue with Jesus - John 3:9, *Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"* This is a fundamental question and the answer to it reveals the very nature of salvation. How can a person be born of the Spirit? Jesus’ answers Nicodemus with both a rebuke and an illustration that he would understand.

John 3:10-13, *Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things? 11 "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness. 12 "If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, [even] the Son of Man.*

Jesus expected Nicodemus to be able to understand what He was talking about. Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel. This is another indicator that Nicodemus was a mature man who was well respected for his knowledge of the law and diligent in keeping it. Israel was God’s favored nation to whom He had revealed Himself and His commands. Nicodemus was a favored individual who was able to spend his time in the study of the Hebrew Scriptures and teach others what it meant. This was a great privilege and he should have understood from the Old Testament what Jesus was talking about.

Jesus widens the rebuke in verse 11 to include all the teachers of Israel who were not receiving Jesus’ witness. The plural, “we,” is in contrast to what Nicodemus said in verse 2, “we know,” and probably refers to Jesus and John the Baptist for John had proclaimed this same truth in calling people to prepare for the one who would baptize with the Spirit (John 1:33). Jesus makes it very clear that He and John, in contrast to the Jewish religious leaders, were not making any speculations, but speaking about what they knew and bearing witness to what they had seen. Some of the religious leaders had drawn the conclusion that Jesus was from God, but they did not receive the testimony of Jesus and John beyond that. Neither they nor Nicodemus were yet ready to receive the teaching about regeneration by the Spirit.

In John 3:12 Jesus chides Nicodemus again, but this time it is also a warning. If Nicodemus would not believe the earthly things that he could experience for himself either personally or by observation, how would he be able to accept and believe the heavenly things Jesus would reveal? The doctrine of regeneration is in the Old Testament and had already been proclaimed by John the Baptist and Jesus. This was something Nicodemus could have read and heard for himself. He could also have seen its evidence in the lives of individuals changed by the Spirit. Nicodemus was a teacher of the law and should have understood from Jeremiah 17:9 and other passages that the human heart is desperately wicked and could not be changed by any legalistic system including that of the Pharisees. He should have understood from Deuteronomy 30:6 that any true change would require a circumcised heart that would be given by God. It occurs after repentance and results in obedience. The doctrine of regeneration was something “earthly” that Nicodemus should have understood by his own study and experience. But if he did not understand that, how would he understand the heavenly revelation of God’s plan of salvation that Jesus was now going to tell him about?

Jesus points out to him in verse 13 that the only one that could reveal the heavenly things was the one who had been there. Since there was no one, not even Moses, that had ascended to heaven, it would be someone that came from heaven. Only the Son of Man fits the description. The phrase “Son of Man” occurs some 81 times in the gospel accounts and is Jesus’ self designated title probably taken from Daniel 7:13-14. Only two out of 81 times does someone other than Jesus use the phrase. Those who heard Jesus say it understood it to be a messianic term. He is not a son of man but the Son of Man. It designates and describes Him as one who is unique among all men.

Jesus describes Himself as the Son of Man who descended from heaven (John 3:13), who speaks the language of his heavenly Father (John 8:28), is the link between heaven and earth (John 1:51), fulfils a heaven-inspired mission of suffering and dying for his people (John 3:14), has authority from heaven to function as judge in the present and the future (John 5:27), who is the object of faith (John 9:35), and displays the glory of heaven both in and as a reward for his suffering and death (John 3:13; 12:23,34; 13:31 - Hendricksen, pg. 207).

In verses 14 & 15 Jesus gives Nicodemus not only the answer to his question about the means of the new birth, but He also gives him revelation of heavenly things. He reveals God’s plan of salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice.

John 3:14,15 *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.*

Jesus refers to a story in Numbers 21:4-9 that was certainly familiar to Nicodemus. *Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. 5 And the people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food." 6 And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. 7 So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and you; intercede with the Lord, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. 8 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery [serpent,] and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live." 9 And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.*

Some people think that if God would grant them a miracle that it would be easier for them to believe and follow Him. That is not true. The Israelites saw miracle after miracle both in the land of Egypt and in their journey in the wilderness. They saw the ten plagues and the miracles of food, water and protection. They were living on the daily miracle of manna which Exodus 16:14 described as a “fine flake-like thing” that appeared on the surface of the wilderness when the dew evaporated. They

experienced so many miracles and yet they still did not believe or trust God, so they complained against Him. God sent fiery serpents among them as chastisement.

We do not know why these snakes are described as “fiery.” Perhaps it was their color, but the root word suggests it was from the painful burning effect of their poison if you were bit by one. Whatever the reason, the snakes certainly got the attention of the people. The text states many died because of them. When the people finally acknowledged their sin and cried out for mercy, God did not remove the snakes. Instead, He made a provision for their healing that would require them to demonstrate their faith in Him. Moses was directed to make a bronze snake and put it on a standard. Those who were bit by a snake would have to go and look upon the bronze serpent. If they did that, they would live. If they did not, they would die. (I find it interesting that a snake on a standard is the symbol used by the medical community).

Jesus tells Nicodemus that this was an example of the means to be born again. The basis of the new birth would be faith in the Son of Man who would be lifted up. Those that would believe would have eternal life. Those that do not will die in their sins.

The heavenly mystery revealed was that the Son of Man must be lifted up in the same way the Bronze Serpent was in the wilderness. That was the type and the Son of Man would be the fulfillment. This could only point to the cross of crucifixion to come. This is the first revelation Jesus gave concerning His coming to be a sacrifice for man’s sin. Jesus goes on in verses 16-21 to explain further, but we will examine that next week.

What Jesus says here is one of the most clear statements of the nature of saving faith given anywhere in Scripture. The nature of saving faith has been an on going theological debate for scores of years. Some have reduced faith to mere intellectual assent out of fear that any type of work would be associated with it. James 2:14-26 states that such a faith is dead. Others have focused on the profession of faith to the point that it becomes the means of salvation instead of God’s grace. Such faith is misplaced. Faith is always in an object and results in action in keeping with the belief and trust in that object. The object of faith that saves you from sin is the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, not in what you do. However, such a faith will result in taking action in keeping with what is believed. In fact, the actions are the evidence of what is believed.

Imagine that you lived among the ancient Israelites and you were just bitten by one of these fiery serpents. You know that unless something radical happens, you are going to die like so many others. You hear about what God told Moses to do and that the bronze serpent on the standard is now set up on the other side of the camp from you. What will you do? You could doubt the report and stay where you are, in which case you will die. You could agree the report is probably true, but do nothing because you think it is too late for you anyway. This is intellectual assent without personal application. You will also die. You could agree the report is true and even claim in a loud voice, “I believe God, so I claim my healing.” This is intellectual assent with a profession of faith. But it is a disobedient faith and worthless because if you stay where you are, you will still die. The only way to live is to believe the report and follow the instructions given. It is to trust God and obey His instructions. Regardless of however weak and stumbling your faith might be, regardless of whatever doubts might fill your mind, if you go to where the serpent is set up, and look upon it, you will be healed. You will live!

The same is true with belief in Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of how strong and bold your faith is, for it could be weak and doubting like the man in Mark 9:24 who cried out to Jesus, “*I do believe; help my unbelief.*” Others may have to assist and carry you as the friends of the paralytic man in Matthew 9 did, but if you go and look upon Jesus as the only means to be saved and forgiven of your sins, there will be given to you eternal life. It is an action of the Holy Spirit that is always accompanied by the fruit of repentance and action of faith. At the same time, it does not matter how vocal you are about your profession of faith in Jesus, if you do get up and follow Him, then your profession is a farce. You are only fooling yourself.

Nicodemus eventually did understand and did believe Jesus and became bold in his faith. After Jesus was crucified, it was Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea that prepared Jesus' body for burial and laid it in the tomb.

Nicodemus repented, believed and was born again by the Holy Spirit and he received eternal life. To be born again is more than a new, different, and more religious course. It is a whole new life. We were born dead in our trespasses and sin, but are made alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-10). This is the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, yet the offer is given to "whosoever believes." What about you? If you have already been born again, then rejoice and go tell others about Jesus. If you have not, then what will you do with Jesus' offer?

John 1:12-13 states, ¹² *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."* The new birth only comes by the will of God and not by inheritance, your will or the will of other people. The good news is that we know that God's will is that all come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9) and has sent His Spirit into the world to convict people of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). If the Holy Spirit is convicting you, if you are feeling guilty for your sin, then will you turn from your sin and self-righteousness and humble yourself to go to see the Son of Man lifted up, believe and receive eternal life? Or will you stay in your tent, bitten by the fiery serpent of sin and destined to die? You must be born again.

Sermon Notes - 6/30/2013

Born Again - John 3:1-15

Introduction

“Born again” is used by secular society as a synonym for renewal, _____ or replacement

Webster defines “Born Again” as an adjective “*of one taking a new, different, and more _____ course*”

In John 3, Jesus demand for Nicodemus to be born again was radical and humanly _____

Jesus had cleansed the Temple and was still in Jerusalem for the Feast and was performing _____

The Coming of Nicodemus - John 3:1-2

He came to Jesus at _____ - probably to avoid being seen

“Rabbi” (teacher) is a term of great _____, especially coming from a Judean Pharisee for a Galilean

Nicodemus believed Jesus must have come from _____ as a teacher because of His miracles

The Necessity of the New Birth - John 3:3-8

He had not even asked a question before Jesus addresses the central issue - how to _____ the kingdom of God

Nicodemus was a religious leader and teacher, yet not qualified to _____ God’s kingdom

A common Jewish simile of being _____ new born was used to describe new phases of life

Jesus made a _____ statement demanding a new birth before seeing God’s kingdom and did not use a simile

Nicodemus recognizes this is a _____ statement and responds with questions expressing the impossibility

Verses 5-8, Jesus explains the _____ (veiled, but pointed statement)

Born of water is most commonly understood to refer to _____ birth

The near context of John 1 and the historical context of John’s ministry suggest this is _____ of repentance

Several Jewish rites used water to ceremonial _____ from sin (Lev. 11:32; 14:8,9; 15:13, 17:15, etc.)

Psalms 51:2, Ezekiel 36:25-27, etc. expressed the desire to have a _____ cleansed from sin

John’s baptism of repentance was a ceremonial expression of a _____ change of heart and mind

John 1:26,31 - water baptism was a _____ of the reality of the needed baptism by the Spirit

Christian baptism is a public identification with Christ - but it does not save - you must be born of the _____

The same word, πνεῦμα / pneuma, is used for “Spirit” and “wind” - man _____ either

All systems of works based righteousness to save from sin _____ - Psalm 14:1-3; Isaiah 64:6

How to Be Born Again - John 3:9-15

John 3:9 - Nicodemus wants to know _____ a person can be born of the Spirit

John 3:10 - Jesus rebukes Nicodemus for being a teacher of the law and not _____

John 3:11 - Jesus rebukes Nicodemus and the Pharisees for not receiving the _____ of John & Jesus

John 3:12 - Jesus warns that if he did not believe the _____ things he would not believe the heavenly

John 3:13 - Jesus identifies Himself as the _____ that reveals what is from heaven

John 3:14-15 - Jesus answers his question with an earthly _____ and revelation from heaven

Numbers 21:4-9 - The Israelites experienced many miracles from God, yet still _____ against Him

The fiery serpents got their attention, and they _____ and cried out for God's mercy

God provided a means of healing that required them to _____ their faith - look on the bronze serpent

The bronze serpent was the type, the Son of Man would be the _____

Mere intellectual assent or profession of faith cannot save - such faiths are _____ (James 2:14-26)

Saving faith must be in the person and work of the _____, and such faith act according to its belief

Those bitten would die unless they believed God and _____ His command to look on the bronze serpent

Unless you believe God and obey His command to look on Jesus lifted up, you will _____ in your sins

You cannot control the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2), yet the _____ is to all

KIDS CORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) How many times was Nicodemus mentioned in the sermon? Who was he? What did he want to know from Jesus? How can you be born again?

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What does "born again" mean in popular usage? What is the context of John 3? Who was Nicodemus? What were some of the beliefs and practices of the Pharisees? What did Nicodemus want to know from Jesus? Why did he come to Jesus by night? How did he treat Jesus? Why was this surprising? Jesus' statement about being born again was close to but different from a common Jewish simile, how was it similar? How was it different? Why was Nicodemus confused by this? What did Jesus mean "born of water?" Explain. What did Jesus mean "born of the Spirit?" Was this a new doctrine or should Nicodemus have understood it? What O.T. references are there to it? What was the "earthly" things Jesus had talked about? What "heavenly things" was Jesus going to reveal? Who is the Son of Man? Numbers 21:4-9 tells the story of the Bronze Serpent. How did it save people? What did a person have to do? How does this relate to the Son of Man being lifted up? What does it mean to "believe" in Jesus? Do you "believe" in Jesus? What fruit of repentance and walk of faith gives evidence of that belief?