

# The Nature And Effects Of The New Birth

*Salvation*

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John chapter three starting with verse number one and I will read down through verse number eight. John chapter three verses one through eight.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 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.

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.

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?

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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 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.<sup>1</sup>

We have had some messages and studies recently about this message that Jesus had with his friend Nicodemus as recorded in John chapter three and we have looked at a couple of different things. I thought it good for us to go back to the beginning of the chapter and look at the start of this conversation that they shared together. For this whole section—John chapter three starting in verse one and running down through verse number 21—is really dealing with one issue, one critical question. And that is the new birth, being born from above, being born again, a new birth, birth of another.

And Jesus makes it the central point in his conversation with Nicodemus. And he makes it and identifies for Nicodemus how crucial this issue really is for he said to him in verse

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:1-8.

number three, “Unless you understand this, you won’t understand the kingdom. It is that vital. It is that crucial an issue. If you miss it here you won’t get it. You will miss the gospel. You will miss the kingdom of God. You will not understand it if you haven’t had this experience in your life.”

A very vital question. And it has become increasingly vital in our day because it seems like everyone has been born again. We see it in business. My business has been born again. Apparently they had had some rough times and now times are much better and they are making more money so their business has been born again.

We hear people talk about having gone through some difficulties in their lives, perhaps the loss of a loved one, maybe the loss of a job and then life turns and it is much better. “I have been reborn. I have been born again.”

Is that what it is talking about? Is that what Jesus means when he says to Nicodemus, “Unless you have been born again you won’t understand the kingdom of God”? Is he talking about a transformation of someone’s business?” Or is he talking about something different?

In addition, to complicate matters, the Church, the professing Church of Jesus Christ has failed on this issue because it has not given the clear message of what it means to be born again. They just haven’t. They talk about it. They use the terms, but they misuse the terms and they assume that anyone who comes down the road and shakes their hand and says, “Hey, pastor Jones, I have been born again.”

“Oh, isn’t that wonderful.”

They just take them at their word. That’s not good enough because the Bible demands evidence. And it demands some kind of proof and confirmation in your life that would indicate, yeah, you have been born again. It isn’t just some phrase that you throw off of the top of your head when you want to impress someone. Oh, it is far greater than that.

In fact, if you were to take a poll of those who profess to be believers and are members of prominent churches in our day, 75 percent of the people would say, “Oh, I have been born again. I have been born again.”

And yet there is absolutely no evidence in their lives to confirm that truth because as we examine it we will see that someone who has experienced the new birth has evidence that confirms that they have, in fact, been born again. It isn’t just a phrase. It isn’t just a statement that you make. There is some kind of evidence and we will get into that as we pursue through our study. So there is a misunderstanding not only by people who are not believers in Christ, but even by some who perhaps even are believers in Christ, but don’t really understand what it means. They have a false notion of what it means to be born again.

So there is this decline in the Church and decline among people who call themselves Christ followers that makes you wonder. Have they really experienced this new birth as Jesus talked about it? Or have they just had some kind of an emotional religious experience that maybe they enjoyed and made them feel good and gave them a measure of happiness and joy, but really wasn't the new birth. It is important to make that distinction.

Furthermore, to fail to properly understand the new birth denigrates God because you make God to be someone whom he isn't. And you take as truth that which God in his Word says is untruth and so you in the process of having a false understanding of this new birth, you deny to God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit the true honor and glory that they deserve by the truth.

So I want us to take a few moments in our study to examine two things from this new birth that Jesus mentions to Nicodemus. The first thing I want us to see is the nature of the new birth. And the second thing I want us to see is the effects or the evidence of the new birth.

My prayer is that if you have not experienced the new birth, that God will give it to you as part of our study and that you will truly experience what it means to be born again. And those of us who have experienced that new birth my prayer is that a reexamination of these truths will encourage us, strengthen us, edify us, make our faith more sound because of the knowledge of the truth.

The first thing I want us to see is the nature of the new birth and in examining the nature of the new birth, the first thing I want us to look at are the fallacies, what it isn't, false understandings, false notions of the new birth.

First of all, the new birth is not simply a reformation of life. There are many people who are experienced, or who have experience in their lives that a change. They perhaps grew up in a poor home. Maybe they had a very poor background and I am not just meaning monetarily, but they got into trouble in their youth They were rebellious. They perhaps even had trouble with the law and then as they have grown older and matured a little bit, they come to understand that that is not a good lifestyle to live and they want to live a happier lifestyle and so they change their lives. They reform their lives. They become law abiding people. They are good workers. They become good employees, perhaps even open a business and become successful in it and they raise a family and everyone is happy and they say, "I have been born again."

No, they haven't.

All they did just reform themselves. Now instead of living a life of debauchery and evil, they try to do good. They try to help people. That is not the new birth. The new birth is not simply a renovation of lifestyle. Once you were following evil practices and now you try to do good and you want to be a model citizen and you obey the law. No, that is not the new birth. That is not the new birth.

The second fallacy is this. Well, the Lord Jesus gave to us a wonderful example to follow. He was such a good man, such a great moral teacher. He gave us such a sound body of ethics to follow and I am just going to pattern my life after Jesus and I am going to try to do good just like Jesus did. And I am going to follow his example and I am going to be kind to people and I am going to try to help them and be good.

That is not the new birth.

You notice Jesus didn't say that. Jesus did not say to Nicodemus, "Try to live like I live."

Trying to imitate Christ, although it might give you a nice happy lifestyle, that is not the new birth.

A third fallacy is this. That the new birth is a process. Well, it is kind of ongoing, kind of like a human birth that takes nine months for the seed that is joined together from the man and the woman to grow and mature into a life that is issued forth from the mother and there is that child and it took nine months.

No, the new birth is not a process.

There might be a process involved as far as God dealing with you over time, but the new birth is instantaneous. One day you were darkness, now you are light. One moment you were sinful and rebellious against God and the next moment you were a child obedient to God. The new birth is an instantaneous transaction that occurs in your life.

A fourth fallacy is this. Oh, it is just cooperation. God does his part. I do my part and we both kind of work together in this synergistic relationship and, after all, God expects me to do certain things and he does his part and he is my buddy, my pal, my best friend and we just kind of work this out together.

No, that is not the new birth. It is not a cooperative effort. You are incapable of cooperating. Have you ever tried to go up to a loved one or a friend that has died and they are laying in the casket and you are there visiting the family and you go to the casket and you put your arm around them and you become friends?

No, you say, "How horrible."

Well, that is the picture. That is the picture of someone who is lost, who does not know Jesus Christ, who has never experienced this new birth. They are dead. There can be no cooperative effort between someone who is dead and God. It is not a cooperative venture.

Well, those are four very common fallacies prevalent in our day. And many people think when they have experienced one of those or maybe a combination of them, aha, I have had the new birth.

No, my friend, you haven't. Maybe a change, maybe things were different from what they were in your youth. Maybe you do live a good, moral life. But, my friend, that is not the new birth. That is not the new birth.

The new birth is similar to human birth in this regard. You had nothing to do with your being born, did you? You were born. It was your mother and father who came together in a union physically and you were the offspring of their union together. You had nothing to do with it. It was life given to you. You weren't asked whether you wanted it or not. No one counseled you ahead. Is this something that you want to do? Do you want to be born?

No. It is life that is given to you.

In similar fashion that describes the new birth from above. It is something that is given to you by God.

I can't give it to you. Your father and mother can't give it to you. A neighbor, a friend, a relative cannot give it to you. The only one who can give you that new birth is God himself. And he is the one who gives it. He gives it to you. He didn't ask you for your opinion. He didn't ask if you want it. He doesn't give it to you for a trial period to see if it is something you really want, you know, the old 30 day money back guarantee. If you don't like it, you can turn it back and get your money.

No. That is not how it works.

The new birth is something that is given to you by God.

Now notice where it says that here. It says it in verse number six, verse number five and six.

Nicodemus said to him, "Well, Lord, how does this new birth happen? I can't go back into my mother's womb again. How does it happen?"

And Jesus said, "You are born of the Spirit," verse number five.

And he reiterates it again in verse number six. There is a flesh. You are born of the flesh and then you are also born of the Spirit. It is something that the Spirit of God does in you.

Well, what does he do? What happens? There is infused into you divine life, not a reformed human life, not a modified human heart, a new heart, a new life that is given to you, that is placed inside of your life, something that God does by his Holy Spirit that brings into you the very nature of God himself. That is the new birth. That is the new birth. Something that God does by his Holy Spirit. He puts in you a new nature. He puts in you a new heart. He puts in you his very divine nature so that you become a partaker

of the divine nature. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, by the person of the Holy Spirit comes to live and reside within your body and life. That is the new birth. You cannot make that happen. That is something that God does. It is a gift of grace. It is called, in the theological term, regeneration. That is the theological term. It is called regeneration. It is a new birth from above, something that the Spirit of God does. He puts within you a new life principle that is totally different from anything you have ever had or experienced in your life previously. That is the nature of the new birth, something that God does, something that God gives to you.

Now, I mentioned that I not only would outline and examine the nature of the new birth, but the effects of the new birth. Something happens as a consequence of this new birth. Think for a moment of the changes In your life from your physical birth.

There are many years you obviously are not going to recall because you were a baby. I think that psychology people now tell us that if you can remember back to your third birthday or fourth birthday you are doing pretty well. So there is a long time there that you have no memory or recall of what happened. But you do know from observing other children, perhaps even your own children, that there is a lot that happens from birth to three, four and then as you have observed them grow and then you experience and recall what has happened to you since you were three, four, five years old and lots of changes.

But when the Spirit of God comes and brings to you this new birth there are changes. You cannot just say, "Well, I have been born again," and go on and live like nothing else has ever happened to you, live as just as the way you have always lived.

No, because the Spirit of God when he comes within you, he gives you a new mind, a new heart, new desires, new interests so that the things that once appealed to you prior to this new birth no longer have any appeal to you. You don't do them anymore.

Well, why is that? This new life in you points out to you that that is wrong, that that is evil, that is sinful, that is an offense to God and you love God and you don't want to offend him just like you loved your spouse or you loved your children and you don't want to offend them. You don't want to offend God so now you live differently. There is a change.

Let me just mention some of the changes that occur because of the new birth. Now I said earlier that a reformation, pure and simply of itself, was not proof that there is a new birth. But when you have had the new birth there is a change. There is a change. Always, always, always.

We have a very popular view in the professing Christian world today that if I have experienced this new birth I don't have to have any change in my life at all. I can do anything I want. After all, God loves to forgive to sin. I love to sin. I make God happy. I come to him and I... "God, forgive me." Boy, what a deal, huh? God loves me. He will never stop loving me. He loves to forgive sin. I love to sin still. Oh, that hasn't changed. I

still love to sin. So I just go to God and say, “God, forgive me,” and God forgives me and, oh, isn’t that wonderful?

No. That is not the way it works. That is not the way it works. Someone who has that viewpoint has never been born again because when you have been born again you don’t want to live that way anymore.

Well, why is that? Because of the indwelling presence of God. He [?] you. He challenges you.

“Now, why are you doing that? Don’t do that anymore. That is sin. That is an offense. You offend me when you do that.”

And God begins to work in our lives and there is a change. There is a renovation. There is a radical change that occurs in the life of one who has experienced this new birth.

You have a different attitude about yourself. You see yourself as the sinner that God says you are. Prior to that you didn’t think so much.

“I am pretty good. I give to the church. I go as often as I can. I read my Bible at least once a year. I pray every now and then when times get really tough. I am pretty good.”

No, you are not. You need Jesus.

And when you have experienced this new birth you have a different attitude about yourself. You realize that you are as sinful as God says you are and you need a Savior and you believe what God now reveals to you because you have a different view point in your mind, in your heart and you understand. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, “You won’t understand the gospel until you have been born again. You now begin to understand who Jesus really is and you trust him.”

Things you once loved you now hate. And the things you once hated you now love. There is a change.

Another affect that comes is this understanding that we receive when the Spirit of God opens our eyes through this new birth. We understand sin. We understand our condition before God. We recognize our need for a Savior. We recognize that God has provided a Savior in Jesus and I trust him. There is a new understanding that I receive through this new birth. There is a renovation that occurs.

The Scriptures tell us that those who have come to this new birth in Christ are slowly changed by God in his Spirit unto the image of Jesus, not by imitation, but in reality to begin to act like Jesus acted. You begin to love the unlovely. You begin to love God and want to obey him and follow him. It is coming from the inside. It is a work that God is doing in your life.

There is another change that occurs as a consequence of this new birth. And that is reconciliation with God. You see prior to the new birth you are an enemy. Yeah, you are an enemy.

“Oh, no, I am not. I love God.”

Oh, do you? Do you really, now? If you say that you really love God, then, you will do what God says. And God says, “Trust my Son.” He said it three times out loud so people could hear him.

“This is my Son. Follow him. Listen to him. Trust him and obey him.”

And if you have not yet come to a place of trust and faith in Jesus Christ than based on what God said—and I take God’s Word above your Word—you don’t love God like you say you do and like you think you do. Because if you really love God you would obey him and you would listen to his Son Jesus and you would trust him exclusively, not your church, not a religion, not all the years of faithfulness to God or to a church or to goodness or whatever you want to place in there as your object of faith. No, it is Jesus and Jesus only. You are united with Jesus and you are united with God now no longer an enemy.

We read, in fact... let me just read it. I was going to try and quote it and I can’t quite recall it.

Romans five and verse number one, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

How were you justified?

By faith.

By faith in what or by whom?

Jesus Christ.

So when you come to faith in Jesus Christ as a consequence of this new birth, what now is true of your relationship with God? No longer an enemy, at peace, reconciled. No longer condemned, someone who has experienced the new birth, evidences it, proves it, confirms it in the way in which they live.

How can the Spirit of God use these truths in your life and in my life? The first thing he can do is he can reveal to us the truth. He can open your eyes to see the truth about yourself. He can do it in this fashion. He describes to you your need of this new birth. Have you experienced it? Has God given it to you?

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 5:1.



And you say, “Well, I am not sure.”

Well, let me follow up with another question. Do you trust Jesus? Do you trust him? If you don't, then you haven't. If you do, you have. So my follow up question to you is this. Do you trust Jesus? Furthermore, will you trust Jesus? Because, you see, the manner in which God reveals his truth is through people like me, teachers and preachers who explain the truth and then the Spirit of God takes that truth and he uses it in your life to give you not only this new birth, but then to teach you and to show you Jesus, part of the process of that new birth as it comes and as it expands and grows in you.

The Spirit of God brings that about.

The second thing I would ask is this. These truths not only can they reveal to us the truth about ourselves and our relationship with God, but they can also bring to us great comfort. And they can do so in this fashion. If you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, they can encourage you, strengthen you, edify you, make your faith in Christ stronger because the Spirit of God takes the truth and says, “Yes, that is true. That is true. That is what you have experienced and you have thought about in your life and how you now love me and you are following me. Yes, that is true. And your faith gets strengthened as a consequence.”

And it also reminds you of your need of Jesus and thanking him for what he has done for you. And thanking God for giving you this new life that has resulted in your salvation and in your reconciliation with God. So it can be an occasion of great comfort and encouragement.

Another way it can be comfort and encouragement to you is if you have never yet fully trusted Christ there is hope for you. There is hope. If you have examined yourself and you see yourself as somewhat helpless and hopeless and what can I do and I want to be reconciled with God and how can that happen?

Here is how. Call upon him. Trust him. Tell Jesus that you trust him and trust only him and call upon him to save you. He will save you. That is his promise. So there is comfort in knowing that God through his Son Jesus accepts everyone who comes to him through Jesus the Son.

A third thing that the Spirit of God can do with these truths is he can examine you.

Where has the Spirit of God identified in your life your failure to apply these truths? Are you like Nicodemus, kind of confused by it all? Are you like Nicodemus trusting in his goodness? He came to Jesus thinking he was pretty good. After all, he was a ruler of the Jews and what that means is he was a teacher. He was a big deal in the religious community at the time that he lived, but he didn't know who Jesus was. That is why Jesus said to him, “Listen, Nicodemus, you got it all wrong. You are calling me a rabbi and you are calling me a good man and you have missed it. I am not that. I am someone

far beyond that and you don't see me for who I really am because you have never been born again."

Have you trusted Christ? Will you trust Christ right now? You don't have to do any special movement. You don't have to crawl around on your hands and knees. You don't have to say any special formulaic saying. All you need to do is call out to him, "Jesus, save me. I trust you."

A fourth thing that the Spirit of God can do with these truths is give you direction for this question. What changes do these truths require in your life? Because of these truths, they point out to you the failure of every other fallacy of idea or concept that you might know or have heard in which you hope that you might be saved. That is false. And you need to reject it.

Here is the truth. And those of us who have come to faith in Christ it needs to encourage us and remind us of what God has done for us. We didn't deserve it. We didn't earn it. We didn't buy it. It was given to us. And that is cause for great rejoicing and thanksgiving to God for what he has done.

I encourage you if you have never yet called upon Christ that you do so now.

Let's close in prayer.

*Thank you, Father, for your great gift. Thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus. Thank you that we can experience peace with you through faith in Jesus your Son. Father, I pray for my friends. I don't know if they have yet called upon Jesus your Son and those who listen to this study, I don't know whether they have or not. My prayer is that today will be the day that they would call and trust on Jesus and experience within them that life giving change that you have promised to those who trust Jesus and who give to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, honor, glory and praise for what you accomplish. Amen.*