



Silverdale Baptist

Encountering Jesus ~ You must be born again.

John 3:1-6; Eph 2:1; Isa 64:6; Matt 7:22-23; John 16:8; 2 Cor 5:17; Acts 2:36-38

08/06-07/2022

Big Idea

Jesus said we must be born again. Our first birth gives us physical life, and our second birth gives us spiritual life.

Getting Started

When is your birthday?

How do you know? (Don't laugh)

To be physically on this earth, you must have been physically born. To be in heaven bound, you must be spiritually born again.

When were you born again?

What do you remember about that experience?

In this series, we have seen what happens when people encounter Jesus. We learned that the blind begin to see (John 9), and the lame begin to walk (John 5). This week we learn about the greatest

miracle of all, new birth. When the spiritually dead encounter Jesus, they have the opportunity to be born again.

Leader note: *We have included Pastor Tony's notes in this lesson. These notes are intended to enhance your discussion, not to constrain it.*

It is possible that someone in your group may hear the gospel clearly for the first time today. We are praying for you! Listen not only to the words of your group but to their hearts as they discuss these verses. Be ready to pray with anyone who wants to know Jesus.

Learn

You must be born again.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:1-8.

What do you learn about Nicodemus from this text?

How does Nicodemus describe Jesus?

How does Jesus contrast physical birth with spiritual birth? (vs. 5-6)

What is the main thing Jesus is saying in this paragraph?

Why do we need a new birth?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 2:1-3.

Paul is writing to a gentile church, the church of Ephesus. Sometimes Paul addresses the Gentiles, sometimes the Jews, and sometimes both groups.

How does Paul describe the spiritual condition of the Gentiles without Christ? (vs 1-2)

In verse 3, Paul includes the Jews in his description. What is the spiritual condition of the Jews without Christ?

For both Jew and Gentile, what is our spiritual condition without Christ?

To sum it up: We are born spiritually dead.

What are the religious counterfeits?

1. Religious performance is not enough.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER RE-READ JOHN 3:1-3

The Pharisees were the most legalistic and religious people in Israel. They were committed to a strict interpretation of the laws of Moses and even added another 613 laws. Nicodemus was not only a Pharisee but a "ruler of the Jews." This means he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of Israel. The 70 members of the Sanhedrin were the religious elite of Judaism. Pastor Tony pointed out that these men fasted several times a week and prayed at the Temple several times a day. No one was more religious than these 70.

Again, how is Nicodemus described in these verses?

If Jesus told the most religious man any of us have ever heard of that he needed to be born again, what would He say to us?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ISAIAH 64:6.

How does God describe our best efforts to be righteous?

To sum it up: Our righteousness is never good enough.

2. Religious knowledge is not enough.

According to John 3:2, what did Nicodemus know?

From Jesus' response, was Nicodemus' knowledge enough?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:22-23.

In these verses, what do the "many" call Jesus?

What did the "many" do in Jesus' name?

But, how does Jesus respond to them?

How does Jesus describe their actions (casting out demons, performing miracles)?

Bottom line, what is Jesus' problem with the "many"?

To sum it up: God wants a relationship with you.

How are we born again?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:1-6.

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, how did Nicodemus respond?

In verse 6, what is Jesus' answer?

1. Conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 16:8.

(Jesus is speaking. The "Helper" is the Holy Spirit)

According to verse 8, what will the Holy Spirit do when He comes?

How is this concept connected to being born again?

The Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Without the Holy Spirit's conviction, we would never experience or understand our need for repentance. The other thing significant about this verse is that the Holy Spirit brings conviction, not us. People may bring condemnation, but the Spirit brings conviction. It is not the same thing. Conviction brings repentance.

But, what is conviction?

Acts 2 is the record of Peter preaching the first Christian sermon. Peter preached the gospel in the heart of Jerusalem, where 50 days earlier, Jesus had been crucified. Verse 36 ends the sermon, and verses 37 - 38 record the people's response.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:36-38.

What happened to the people when they heard Peter's sermon?

How did Peter answer the question, "What shall we do?"

Conviction is our response to the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit pierces our hearts. He wounds our conscience. Our response to conviction should be to repent and believe. Peter says repent, and we will look at belief, the other side of repentance, in a moment. But, first, to repent means to change your mind, to do a U-turn. We were in control of our lives, doing whatever we wanted. To repent is to stop and give control of our life to God. From that moment, He is God over your life, and you are not.

However, we will not repent unless we believe God is real. We will not trust God unless He has convicted us of sin, and we will not repent unless we trust Him.

"Repentance and faith are like two sides of the same coin."

Pastor Tony

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 20:21

What was Paul's message to both Jews and Gentiles?

Paul's message combined both repentance and faith. Both are vital, and both are required.

2. Infusion of life by receiving Christ.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17.

How is a Christian described in this verse?

What passed away?

Does this describe you?

If not, why not repent and surrender your life to Christ right now?

Apply

What did Pastor Tony mean when he said it was possible to miss heaven by 18 inches?

Do you know God, or do you know about God? What is the difference?

What does the conviction of sin and repentance look like in your life?

Have you ever received Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

Would you surrender your life to Him right now?

Who will you share the good news with this week?

Pray

Father, if someone here does not know You, would You please send Your Holy Spirit to pierce their heart and bring conviction. For those of us who do know You, please give us opportunities to share the good news with others. Amen.

Dig Deeper

John 3:1-8

Jesus Christ the Teacher

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, which meant he lived by the strictest possible religious rules. Not all of the Pharisees were hypocrites (as one may infer from Jesus' comments recorded in Matt. 23), and evidence indicates that Nicodemus was deeply sincere in his quest for truth. He came to Jesus by night, not because he was afraid of being seen, but most likely because he wanted to have a quiet uninterrupted conversation with the new Teacher "come from God." The fact that Nicodemus used the plural pronoun "we," and Jesus responded with the plural "ye" (John 3:7) may indicate that Nicodemus

was representing the religious leaders. He was a man of high moral character, deep religious hunger, and yet profound spiritual blindness.

In order to instruct Nicodemus in the basics of salvation, our Lord used four quite different illustrations.

Birth (vv. 1–7). Our Lord began with that which was familiar, birth being a universal experience. The word translated “again” also means “from above.” Though all human beings have experienced natural birth on earth, if they expect to go to heaven, they must experience a supernatural spiritual birth from above.

Once again, we meet with the blindness of sinners: this well-educated religious leader, Nicodemus, did not understand what the Saviour was talking about! Jesus was speaking about a spiritual birth, but Nicodemus thought only of a physical birth. The situation is no different today. When you talk with people about being born again, they often begin to discuss their family’s religious heritage, their church membership, religious ceremonies, and so on.

Being a patient teacher, our Lord picked up on Nicodemus’ words and further explained the new birth. To be “born of water” is to be born physically (“enter a second time into his mother’s womb”) but to be born again means to be born of the Spirit. Just as there are two parents for physical birth, so there are two “parents” for spiritual birth: the Spirit of God (John 3:5) and the Word of God (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23–25). The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and, when the sinner believes, imparts the life of God.

Jesus was not teaching that the new birth comes through water baptism. In the New Testament, baptism is connected with *death*, not birth; and no amount of physical water can effect a spiritual change in a person. The emphasis in John 3:14–21 is on *believing*, because salvation comes through faith (Eph. 2:8–9). The evidence of salvation is the witness of the Spirit within (Rom. 8:9), and the Spirit enters your life when you believe (Acts 10:43–48; Eph. 1:13–14).

Water baptism is certainly a part of our obedience to Christ and our witness for Christ (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 2:41). But it must not be made an essential for salvation; otherwise, none of the Old Testament saints was ever saved, nor was the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43). In every age, there has been but one way of salvation—faith in God’s promise—though the *outward evidence* of that faith has changed from age to age.

Human birth involves travail (John 16:21), and so does the birth from above. Our Saviour had to travail on the cross so that we might become members of the family of God (Isa. 53:11). Concerned believers have to travail in prayer and witness as they seek to lead sinners to Christ (1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19).

The child inherits the nature of the parents, and so does the child of God. We become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Nature determines appetite, which explains why the Christian has an appetite for the things of God (1 Peter 2:2–3). He has no desire to go back to the foul things of the world that once appealed to him (2 Peter 2:20–22). He feeds on the Word of God and grows into spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:11–14).

Of course, birth involves life; and spiritual birth from above involves *God’s* life. John uses the word *life* thirty-six times in his Gospel. The opposite of life is death, and the person who has not believed on Jesus Christ does not have God’s life, eternal life, abundant life. *You do not manufacture Christians any more than you manufacture babies!* The only way to enter God’s family is through the new birth (John 1:11–13).

Birth involves a future, and we are “born again to a living hope” (1 Peter 1:3, NASB). A newborn baby cannot be arrested because he or she has no past! When you are born again into God’s family, your sins are forgiven and forgotten, and your future is bright with a living hope.

Nicodemus must have had a surprised and yet bewildered look on his face, for the Lord had to say, “You must not be surprised that I told you that all of you must be born again” (John 3:7, ϩΗ). But Nicodemus was born a Jew! He was a part of God’s covenant people! (Rom. 9:4–5) Certainly his birth was better than that of a Gentile or a Samaritan! And his life was exemplary, for he was a faithful Pharisee! He could well understand Jesus telling the *Romans* that they had to be born again, but certainly not the *Jews*!¹

Ephesians 2:1-3

Sin’s Work against Us (Eph. 2:1–3)

In these three verses, Paul gives us a full-length picture of the terrible spiritual condition of the unsaved person. Note his characteristics:

He is dead (v. 1). Of course, this means spiritually dead; that is, he is unable to understand and appreciate spiritual things. He possesses no spiritual life, and he can do nothing of himself to please God. Just as a person physically dead does not respond to physical stimuli, so a person spiritually dead is unable to respond to spiritual things. A corpse does not hear the conversation going on in the funeral parlor. He has no appetite for food or drink; he feels no pain; he is dead. Just so with the inner man of the unsaved person. His spiritual faculties are not functioning, and they cannot function until God gives him life. The cause of this spiritual death is “trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). In the Bible, *death* basically means “separation,” not only physically, as the spirit separated from the body (James 2:26), but also spiritually, as the spirit separated from God (Isa. 59:2).

The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost derelict on skid row may be more decayed outwardly than the unsaved society leader, but both are dead in sin—and one corpse cannot be more dead than another! This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live (1 Tim. 5:6).

He is disobedient (vv. 2–3a). This was the beginning of man’s spiritual death—his disobedience to the will of God. God said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Satan said, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4), and because they believed this lie, the first man and woman sinned and experienced immediate spiritual death and ultimate physical death. Since that time, mankind has lived in disobedience to God. There are three forces that encourage man in his disobedience—the world, the devil, and the flesh.

The world, or world-system, puts pressure on each person to try to get him to conform (Rom. 12:2). Jesus Christ was not “of this world” and neither are His people (John 8:23; 17:14). But the unsaved person, either consciously or unconsciously, is controlled by the values and attitudes of this world.

The devil is “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This does not mean that Satan is personally at work in the life of each unbeliever, since Satan as a created being is limited in space. Unlike God, who is omnipresent, Satan cannot be in all places at one time. But because of his demonic associates (Eph. 6:11–12), and his power over the world system (John 12:31), Satan influences the lives of all unbelievers, and also seeks to influence believers. He wants to make people “children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2; 5:6). He himself was disobedient to God, so he wants others to disobey Him too.

One of Satan’s chief tools for getting people to disobey God is lies. He is a liar (John 8:44), and it was his lie at the beginning of human history, “Ye shall not surely die,” that plunged the human race into sin.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 294–296.

The unsaved multitudes in today's world system disobey God because they believe the lies of Satan. When a person believes and practices a lie, he becomes a child of disobedience.

The flesh is the third force that encourages the unbeliever to disobey God. By *the flesh* Paul does not mean the body, because of itself, the body is not sinful. *The flesh* refers to that fallen nature that we were born with, that wants to control the body and the mind and make us disobey God. An evangelist friend of mine once announced as his topic, "Why Your Dog Does What It Does," and, of course, many dog lovers came out to hear him. What he had to say was obvious, but too often overlooked: "A dog behaves like a dog because he has a dog's nature." If somehow you could transplant into the dog the nature of the cat, his behavior would change radically. Why does a sinner behave like a sinner? Because he has the nature of a sinner (Pss. 51:5; 58:3). This sinful nature the Bible calls "the flesh."

Is it any wonder that the unsaved person is disobedient to God? He is controlled by the world, the flesh, and the devil, the three great enemies of God! And he cannot change his own nature or, of himself, overcome the world and the devil. He needs outside help, and that help can come only from God.

He is depraved (v. 3b). The lost sinner lives to please the "desires of the flesh and the wishes of the mind" (literal translation). His actions are sinful because his appetites are sinful. When you apply the word *depraved* to the unsaved person, you are not saying that he *only* does evil, or that he is incapable of doing good. You are simply saying that he is incapable of doing anything to merit salvation or meet the high standards of God's holiness. Jesus said that lost sinners do good to each other (Luke 6:33), and to their children (Luke 11:13), but they cannot do anything spiritually good to please God. The natives on Malta who kindly assisted Paul and his friends after the shipwreck certainly did good works, but they still needed to be saved (Acts 28:1–2).

He is doomed (v. 3c). By nature, children of wrath! By deed, children of disobedience! The unsaved person is condemned already (John 3:18). The sentence has been passed, but God in His mercy is staying the execution of the sentence (2 Peter 3:8–10). Man cannot save himself, but God in His grace steps in to make salvation possible. "But God!"—what a difference those two words make! This leads to the second work.²

Isaiah 64:6

64:5–7 Isaiah also confessed sin on behalf of the community, thus justifying God's judgment against them. Though they were like a **polluted garment**, they will now obey and experience God's salvation. *Polluted garment* means clothes stained by menstrual blood and thus rendered ritually unclean (Lv 15:19–33).³

Matthew 7:22-23

7:21–23 By referring to himself as **Lord** and depicting himself as the ultimate judge of humanity, Jesus implied his deity. True disciples affirm Jesus's lordship, submit to his authority, and obey his commands. Jesus insisted that a person is confirmed as a true disciple not by prophecy, exorcism, or working miracles but by living a transformed life made possible by God. The disobedient lifestyles of

² Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 17–19.

³ Tremper Longman III, "[Isaiah](#)," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1132.

lawbreakers are inconsistent with genuine discipleship. Jesus's words, **I never knew you**, show that these were never truly disciples.⁴

John 16:8

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of one particular sin, the sin of *unbelief*. The law of God and the conscience of man will convict the sinner of his *sins* (plural) specifically; but it is the work of the Spirit, through the witness of the believers, to expose the unbelief of the lost world. After all, it is unbelief that condemns the lost sinner (John 3:18–21), not the committing of individual sins. A person could “clean up his life” and quit his or her bad habits and still be lost and go to hell.⁵

2 Corinthians 5:17

Adam was the head of the old creation, and Christ (the Last Adam, 1 Cor. 15:45) is the Head of the new creation. The old creation was plunged into sin and condemnation because of the disobedience of Adam. The new creation means righteousness and salvation because of the obedience of Jesus Christ. (See Rom. 5:12–21 for the explanation of the “two Adams.”) Because we are a part of the new creation, everything has become new.

For one thing, we have a new view of Christ. It is unfortunate that too great an emphasis is given in music and art on Christ “after the flesh.” The facts about the earthly life of Jesus are important, because the Christian message is grounded in history. But we must interpret the manger by the throne. We do not worship a Babe in a manger; we worship a glorified Savior on the throne.

Because “all things are become new,” we also have a new view of people around us. We see them as sinners for whom Christ died. We no longer see them as friends or enemies, customers or coworkers; we see them the way Christ sees them, as lost sheep who need a shepherd. When you are constrained by the love of Christ, you want to share His love with others.

But we should also look at other Christians as a part of the new creation, and not evaluate them on the bases of education, race, finances, or position in society. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).⁶

Acts 2:36-38

He explained why it happened: to save sinners (vv. 36–41). The Holy Spirit took Peter's message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners. (In Acts 5:33 and 7:54, a different Greek word is used that suggests anger rather than conviction for sin.) After all, if they were guilty of crucifying their Messiah, what might God do to them! Note that they addressed their question to the other Apostles as well as to Peter, for all twelve were involved in the witness that day, and Peter was only first among equals.

Peter told them how to be saved: they had to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus Christ. They would give proof of the sincerity of their repentance and faith by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, thus identifying themselves publicly with their Messiah and Saviour. Only by repenting and believing on Christ could they receive the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2, 14), and this promise was for both the Jews and the “far off” Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–19).

⁴ Robert H. Stein, [“Differences in the Gospels,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1512.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 362.

⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 648–649.

It is unfortunate that the translation of Acts 2:38 in the *King James Version* suggests that people must be baptized in order to be saved, because this is not what the Bible teaches. The Greek word *eis* (which is translated “for” in the phrase “for the remission of sins”) can mean “on account of” or “on the basis of.” In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist baptized on the basis that people had repented. Acts 2:38 should not be used to teach salvation by baptism. If baptism is essential for salvation, it seems strange that Peter said nothing about baptism in his other sermons (Acts 3:12–26; 5:29–32; 10:34–43). In fact, the people in the home of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit *before they were baptized!* (Acts 10:44–48) Since believers are commanded to be baptized, it is important that we have a clean conscience by obeying (1 Peter 3:21), but we must not think that baptism is a part of salvation. If so, then nobody in Hebrews 11 was saved because none of them was ever baptized.

Acts 2:40 indicates that the Apostles continued to share the Word and to urge the people to trust Jesus Christ. They looked on the nation of Israel as a “crooked generation” that was under condemnation (Matt. 16:4; 17:17; Phil. 2:15). Actually, the nation would have about forty years before Rome would come and destroy the city and the temple and scatter the people. History was repeating itself. During the forty years in the wilderness, the new generation “saved itself” from the older generation that rebelled against God. Now, God would give His people another forty years of grace; and on that day, 3,000 people repented, believed, and were saved.⁷

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 410.