# Born Of The Word

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# Introduction

*"Ye must be born again."*

The Lord Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel. Nicodemus had come to Him with knowledge of the Scriptures and an acknowledgment that God was at work in His miracles. Yet the Lord brought him to a birth he needed to understand.

This is where we shall begin. Before we consider what Peter means when he says that we are born again by the word of God, we must understand the birth itself. Why did the Lord say that a man must be born again? What does the first birth give him? Where does the new life come from?

These questions concern every one of us. We all entered the world through natural birth. Through our parents we received human life and became part of a family. But the Lord spoke of another birth, a birth whose source is the Spirit of God. Understanding that distinction helps us see both our need and the greatness of what God has done for us in Christ.

We shall follow the Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. We shall then turn to Peter, who tells believers that they have been born again through the living and abiding word of God. James brings us to the Father's will: He brought us forth by the word of truth. Each passage opens something we need to see. Together, they teach us how God gives His people life through the gospel of His Son.

Birth tells us that this life has an origin. Seed directs our attention to the source from which it comes. The word of truth tells us that God brings us forth through the message He has given. As we understand these things, we begin to understand ourselves in the light of His work.

Beloved, if you have received Christ, this study concerns a life you have already received. You are a child of God. The Word will teach you what that means, establish your understanding and show you how to live from that reality. We shall take the Scriptures carefully, allowing each truth to prepare us for the next.

CHAPTER 1

# You Must Be Born Again

*"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."*

John 3:3

## The teacher who needed a birth

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. He was also a teacher of Israel. When he came to the Lord Jesus, he was coming as a man who already knew something about the things of God.

He recognised that God was at work in the miracles he had seen. He said to the Lord, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come

from God" (John 3:2). That was his understanding of the One before him: a teacher whose works bore witness that God was with Him.

The Lord's answer brought him to something he had not understood.

*"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Notice that the Lord spoke of a birth. Nicodemus had knowledge. He had religious standing. Yet there was a life he needed that neither his knowledge nor his standing could give him.

This is why the new birth must be understood. A man may learn about God, speak about God and recognise that God is at work. But knowing these things does not, by itself, make him a child of God. The life of God must be received.

Consider what the Lord's words meant for Nicodemus. He could not answer them by pointing to his position among the Jews. He could not present his learning as evidence that the birth had already taken place. The Lord had identified a need that reached deeper than everything Nicodemus had attained.

He needed to be born again.

The words "except a man" also show us that this was not a requirement for Nicodemus alone. No religious office could place a person beyond it. The Lord was speaking of the birth necessary for a man to see the kingdom of God.

## What kind of birth?

Nicodemus answered, "How can a man be born when he is old?" (John 3:4). He thought of the birth through which he had entered the world. Could a man return to his mother's womb and begin again?

His question helps us see the difficulty. He was trying to understand the Lord's words through the only birth he was considering: natural birth.

But another natural birth would still give natural life. Returning to the same source could not produce the life the Lord was speaking about. The answer had to come from God.

The Lord therefore directed him to the Spirit: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Beloved, this is the greatness of the new birth. God gives a life that human effort cannot produce. When you receive Christ, you receive more than instruction for improving your former way of living. You are born of God.

We must therefore understand both the necessity of this birth and its source. The Lord

who said that we must be born again also showed where that birth comes from.

## A birth from above

There is something helpful in the word translated “again.” The Greek word is anōthen. It can mean “again” or “from above.” Nicodemus thought of beginning natural life a second time. The Lord's explanation directed him to a birth whose source is above, in God.

Later in this same chapter, the expression “He that cometh from above” uses the same word (John 3:31). This helps us hear the depth of what the Lord was saying. The new birth is a new beginning because God gives a new life. Its greatness lies in where that life comes from.

Consider the difference this makes. A man may wish he could start his life again. He may think that, with different circumstances or better decisions, he would become the person he