

THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

(A Study of the Gospel of John)

How Can I Have Life?

TEXT: John 3:1-21

Introduction: John says that he wrote the gospel “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.” (20:31)

To this simple yet profound statement one might address many questions:

When can I have life?

Where can I find this life?

Why do I need this life?

But the most important question is not “when,” “where,” or “why;” it is “how.”

How can I have life?

Many today seek the answer to that question.

How can I have life rather than mere existence?

How can I have a full and meaningful life?

How can I have life after death?

But the question is not new. **A man asked this question to Jesus nearly 2 millennia ago.**

John 3:1-3 ¹ There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I. WHO NEEDS TO BE BORN AGAIN?

A. Nicodemus

1. **Who was this man?** What do we know about him? From this passage and others that mention his name we know that Nicodemus was ...

✓	Moral		✓	Teacher
	Murderer			Adulterer
	Thief		✓	Sinner
✓	Religious		✓	Fair

2. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. We do not know why.
 - a. Perhaps he was afraid to be seen with Jesus in daylight.
 - b. He may have wanted a personal, private conversation that the cover of night would offer.
 - c. It might have been his only or first opportunity.
3. **Nicodemus acknowledged several things about Jesus**, all of which were both good and true.
 - a. **He called Jesus Rabbi, meaning Master.**
 - b. **He said Jesus was a teacher from God.**
 - c. **He said that Jesus could do signs.**
 - d. **He said God was with Jesus.**
4. But **knowing these things about Jesus was not enough**. Jesus said, **John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**
What did Nicodemus lack? He was not born again.

The Greek for "again" has a double meaning. It means

- "again" and
- "from above."

Both meanings fit.

A person must not only experience a second birth

- **but the second birth,**
- **the one that comes from above.**

Two things Nicodemus could not do since he had not yet been born anew:

- cannot see the Kingdom of God
- cannot enter the Kingdom of God

B. Who Else?

Who else did Jesus include in His statement in John 3:3? Everyone

No person who has not experienced the new birth can either enter, nor even see, the Kingdom of God.

- A seminary degree in theology,

- a perfect attendance record at church,
- a history of faithful financial support to Christian work,
- a good moral life,
- a religious awareness,
- kindness to others,

are all insufficient to allow a person into God's Kingdom A person who is not born again cannot understand spiritual matters.

1 Cor. 2:10-14 ¹⁰ But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ 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.

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN AGAIN?

John 3:4-13 ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? ¹¹ Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

A. It is the work of the Spirit.

“That which is born of flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

- **You cannot produce a spiritual birth by physical means.**
- **Jesus describes this spiritual birth with two phrases:**
 - **born of water**
 - **born of the spirit**

1. Born of water can mean (possible interpretations)
 - a. Physical birth
 - b. Born of “the Word” – indicating the roll of the Word of God in salvation.
 - c. Repentance and regeneration (Titus 3:5)
2. Born of water cannot mean water baptism
 - a. If baptism were necessary for the new birth, then nobody in the Old Testament was saved for baptism was not practiced.
 - b. Baptism is a human work, and salvation is not by works. (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - c. If baptism were necessary for salvation, the thief on the cross who trusted in Christ would not have been saved, but Jesus said to him, “Today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Personally, I strongly favor the understanding that born of water means repentance because

- Jesus came preaching “Repent and believe the gospel.”
- Jesus said, “Unless you repent you will all perish.”
- The connection with water was that the baptism of John the Baptist was a baptism of repentance.

Therefore Jesus was saying that the new birth is one in which there is

- **A turning away from the old life of sin**
- **A beginning of a new life given by the Holy Spirit**

B. It is mysterious.

1. **Do not be concerned that you cannot see this new birth or fully understand it.** You cannot see the wind, yet it blows. You do not know where it comes from or where it goes, but you feel it. The Spirit works like that.
2. **You can know what I tell you is true,** not because you comprehend every detail, but **because the one person who knows heavenly things, who left heaven and will go back, tells you it is so.**

III. HOW DOES GOD ACCOMPLISH THE NEW BIRTH?

John 3:14-21 ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest

his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

A. An Old Testament Illustration (14-15)

Numbers 21:4-9 ⁴ Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. ⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." ⁶ So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. ⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

The Problem: Serpents biting Hebrews and killing them.

What Moses did: Made a serpent; hung him on a pole.

What the people did: They looked, and they were healed.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

B. Jesus applies this to us.

1. **The Problem: Sin is killing everybody. (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)**

What God did: Made Christ to be sin. (2 Cor. 5:21) And hung Him on a cross.

What the people must do: Look in faith; believe.

Let us read carefully again

John 3:16-17. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Read 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

What is the eternal status of those who trust in Christ?

Not condemned

What is the eternal status of those who do not believe?

Condemned already

2. Undoubtedly, some of the Hebrews bitten by the fiery serpents thought it to be a ridiculous gesture to look in faith toward a brass serpent hung on a wooden pole.

They tried their salves, ointments, and remedies; and they died. God had one way for them to be saved. They refused it and perished.

Some today wonder what possible effect a man dying upon a cross could have upon others. So they try their medications, theories, and therapies to solve life's difficulties and bring life meaning.

But God has one way to give men life; eternal life, abundant life. Jesus said, "I am the way." Those who refuse it perish.

CONCLUSION: Have you been born again? Have you repented of your sin and trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?