

## **Born again = born of the Spirit = born of God**

**John 3:1-15** *Now a certain man, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council, came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus replied, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time, can he?"*

*Jesus answered, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must all be born from above.' The wind blows wherever it will, and you hear the sound it makes, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

*Nicodemus replied, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you don't understand these things? I tell you the solemn truth, we speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. If I have told you people about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."*

As sinful people we inherited a nature from our ancestors that was spiritually dead to God. We didn't know how to please God or relate to Him. In Scripture death most often means a *separation*.

God in His wisdom and out of love, made a way for us to return back to Him. This way back had to include a reawakening of our 'dead' or unresponsive spirit.

Our spirit, being like God in essence, is perfect and eternal. Jesus whilst explaining new birth to Nicodemus said it was a *spiritual* birth.

Our spirit has always been within, but unable to commune with God, or to relate to Him.

### **How then does this happen? How can our spirit be awakened, born again, renewed?**

If we are spiritually dead towards God, ***it must be God Himself*** who instigates the process. We may be seeking after Him, interested in Him, drawn to Him, but we cannot give ourselves new spiritual life.

How about this Scripture then? God's living **Word** has a part in the process ...

**1 Peter 1:22-23** *You have purified your souls by obeying the truth in order to show sincere mutual love. So love one another earnestly from a pure heart. You have been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, **through the living and enduring word of God.***

Also here it is by God's great mercy – underserved favour – not giving us what we really deserve..... and also through Jesus' resurrection.....

**1 Peter 1:3-5** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his **great mercy he gave us new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that is, into an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for you, who by God's power are protected through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

**So God's mercy and the Word both play their part in our new spiritual birth. But there's more. We also have to receive Him. We must also receive Jesus...**

**John 1:11-13** *He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him - those who believe in his name - he has given the right to become God's children - children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's decision, but by God.*

Then it is by God's design, His plan that we are born again to become His children. Jesus came but most rejected Him and His teaching; His new way of love and grace.

**So by His mercy, to His timing and plan, He brought us His word, and we believed it. More than that, we received Jesus Himself into us by faith, and by His Spirit.**

We became babies in God, newly born, needing to grow in the knowledge of Him who saved us, so that we can become mature, effective Christians. True followers.

**1 Peter 2:1-3** *So get rid of all evil and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. And yearn like newborn infants for pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up to salvation, if you have experienced the Lord's kindness.*

There is something about God's timing that is perfect. He knows every heart. He knows **who** will receive, and **when** they will believe. He allows us to go our own paths for as long as is necessary to become what we need to be in Him. Think about the prodigal son. He couldn't be who he needed to be until the father released him, and received him back rejoicing despite his poor behaviour.

**In Jewish culture a son who left the family home in an inappropriate way was thought of as dead. Not able to relate to the family, not able to receive from them, until or unless they returned repentant – with a change of mind and a change of heart.**

**Luke 15:20-24** *So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way from home his father saw him, and his heart went out to him; he ran and hugged his son and kissed him. Then his son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Hurry! Bring the best robe, and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Bring the fattened calf and kill it! Let us eat and celebrate, because this son of mine was dead, and is alive again—he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.*

**So if it is all to do with God, what can be done for those who don't yet know Him, who are not yet ready to receive the benefits of the Kingdom of Heaven. What can we do if we don't think we are born again?**

Remember that God wants everyone to be saved from the consequences of their sin, and has made adequate provision for that through His Son.

**If life is a journey toward God, then we do in fact have a responsibility towards ourselves. That is to first acknowledge God, then to humble ourselves, and repent – that is change our minds. Then to choose to believe, even against our so-called earthy wisdom. This opens the door for God who is ever waiting to come into our lives. He will then bring the gospel of the truth alive to us. He will then draw us towards Himself and do the work of regenerating our spirits.**

On behalf of others our responsibility is to watch – see those whom God has prepared... who He has sent to the open field to feed pigs.... who may be repentant, ready to switch tracks, ready to believe God and receive Him. Then we must bring God's word to them – the good news – the truth, the gospel, and fully expect God to make it alive for them, and bring them to new spiritual life; or make them born-again by sending His Holy Spirit into their inner man as a deposit for eternal life.

Every man woman and child on earth has made, and is making the same journey – toward God. Some will never receive Him, though many will. But no one has any excuse in God's eyes for not knowing Him. God has taken special care to make a way back to Him for every living soul.

There are in Theology two kinds of revelation that God has brought to the world. One is called **general revelation** and this scripture describes it well....

**Romans 1:18-21** *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, because what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened.*

However **general revelation** – given that man is corrupt, and the earth is corrupt, and we have a spiritual enemy – isn't sufficient to bring us to saving grace and being born again. For that we need **special revelation**.

**God's special revelation to mankind is in His Word, and in His Son Jesus.**

God took great pains to have His whole plan written down meticulously over centuries for us to pay attention to for our own benefit, and to know for the benefit of sharing it with others. God is revealed in Scripture. He made it that way. How can we then not read it?

Jesus is the way back to God on our life's journey. There is no other.

Salvation is a process that God **leads us to** and **through**. To accept God's grace and mercy is not enough, to read the Bible is not enough. To believe in Jesus is not enough. But accepting these, and also by acknowledging your need of God.... in an attitude of humility with a change of heart and mind..... asking God to come into your life by His Holy Spirit ... and then by faith believing His written word, and **it is** God's will that you enter His kingdom through being born again, then He will renew your spirit in His timing, and you will be born of God.....

If we are born again believers already, let us not shirk **our** responsibility of leading others to Him as part of our discipleship walk, part of our duty to our Dad ... as His loving children.

Who knows if the lady that serves you in MasYMas isn't your spiritual sister? If the guy at the club or bar isn't your spiritual brother?

They've simply lost the way home. How will they ever know that there **is a way home** if you don't tell them.

OK maybe they're not ready, not humbled enough, not ready to change their ways .... Don't worry - they'll soon tell you. But what a joy to find out that God has been working on them and they're desperate for God and a new way of life!!