

## Great Words of The Bible

### REGENERATION

(Key Scripture: John 3:1-16)

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.<sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”<sup>4</sup> “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.<sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’<sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.<sup>10</sup> “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?<sup>11</sup> Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.<sup>12</sup> I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?<sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.<sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,<sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

By regeneration, or the new birth, we mean that act of the Holy Spirit whereby He communicates the divine life to the sinner, thus making him a child of God. The new birth is the key doctrine to every other truth revealed in the Word of God. To understand this doctrine is to open the door to an understanding of every other Bible doctrine. In the professing Church today, in every denomination, there are two classes of members – those who have been born again and who are therefore members of the true Church, and those who have never been born again.

## 1. WHAT THE NEW BIRTH IS NOT

- It is not a natural birth (John 3:4 and 6), though it is characteristically the same as a natural birth. We did not see the light of day until we were born; before we can begin to live spiritually we must be born again.
- It is not a psychological experience. Modern Theology has taught that “the new birth is a God complex...” The Bible does not teach this.
- It is not being religious. Nicodemus was very religious, but he was not born again (verse 10). He was the Master in Israel, yet he was blind concerning his need of, and the nature of, the second birth.
- It is not head knowledge (verses 2 and 10). Nicodemus had much intellectual belief; he began his conversation with the Lord Jesus by saying, “We know” (verse 2); but knowledge is no substitute for the new birth. Even the demons believe (James 2:19)!
- It is not mere external reformation. Who could be more correct outwardly than Nicodemus? – yet he was not born again – look up 2 Timothy 3:5 “5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”
- It is not self-effort or good works. Look up Ephesians 2:8-10 “8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” No amount of good works will produce the new birth. We are only to work out our salvation after God has worked it in (Philippians 2:12-13 “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.)”

It is not rites and ceremonies, such as baptism, confirmation or church membership. Look up Titus 3:5 “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth

and renewal by the Holy Spirit,” The word “water” in John 3:5 does not refer to the ordinance of baptism or to “baptismal regeneration”; baptism and church membership come after we have been born again – not before, or as a means of producing the new birth – look up Acts 2:37-41 “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” ...Titus 3:5 explains the significance of “water”.

## 2. WHAT THE NEW BIRTH IS

1. It is a new birth, a second birth, a birth from above. Note “again” in verses 3 and 7 – “from above” (margin).

2. It is being made alive from the dead; passing from death to life. By nature man is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), but by the miracle of the new birth he is raised to newness of life (Romans 6:4

3. It is being made a partaker of the divine nature. The new birth is the commencement of the life of God within the human personality – look up 2 Peter 1:4 “4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.. God does not alter or patch up the old nature; He gives us an entirely new one!

4. It is the human side of regeneration. Look up John 1:11-13 “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”, and note the last four words in verse 13.

5. It is a very great change. Look up 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”, and

compare Romans 6:4 “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” and Galatians 6:15 “Neither circumcision nor un-circumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.”

### 3. WHY THE NEW BIRTH IS NECESSARY

1. Because our Lord said so. Look up John 3:3 “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again”– how imperative this word is!
2. Because we all possess a fallen nature. However well educated and cultured we may be, Ephesians 2:2-3 describes our condition in God’s sight... “in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.”
3. Because by nature we are spiritually dead. Look up John 5:40 “ yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” ; Ephesians 2:1 and 1 John 5:12.
4. Because in our fallen state we cannot please God. God is holy and we are sinful, and we can never have fellowship with Him as we are – look up John 3:6, and compare Romans 8:8 “Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God”.
5. Because we can never enter the Kingdom of God until we possess a nature capable of enjoying the things of that kingdom. The stars are astronomically understood; a piano concerto is musically understood; flowers are botanically understood [?] and Heaven and spiritual things are spiritually understood -[?] therefore John 3:3 “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again”

### 4. HOW AND WHEN THE NEW BIRTH IS EXPERIENCED

How does the new birth take place? It is accomplished:-

1. By the Holy Spirit. Look again at John 3:5-6 and Titus 3:5, and notice the words “of God” in John 1:13. Thus, we see that the new birth is not the work of man; it is the operation of God the Holy Spirit.
  
2. Through the Word of God. The instrument the Holy Spirit uses is the Word of God – look up 1 Corinthians 4:15 “Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”; James 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:23. The Holy Spirit sows the seed of the Word in the human heart, and He thereby imparts the new life.
  
3. In response to Faith. Look at John 1:11-13 “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” and 3:14-15 “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” and compare Numbers 21:1-9. Also, look up Galatians 3:26 “ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,” . Have you believed? Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ and are you looking to Him alone for salvation?