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# Born Again?

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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If all I do is come on the air and tell you what you already know to be true and if I agree with what you already think, there is hardly any point, it is a waste of your time and it is a waste of my time, but if I can make you think, if I can challenge your assumptions, if I can cause you to go deeper into something, that you may not have thought deeply about before, then the time is well spent.

I want to read to you from the third chapter of John, in the Living Bible, about something you haven't necessarily thought about before.

"After dark one night, a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus, a member of the sect of the Pharisees, {2} came for an interview with Jesus, "Sir," he said, "We all know that God has sent You to teach us. Your miracles are proof enough of this." {3} And Jesus replied, "With all the earnestness I possess, I tell you this, unless you are born again, you can never get into the kingdom of God."

Now this is an odd thing, because Nicodemus brings up the topic he came to talk about, and Jesus bypasses it completely and shifts gears.

Nicodemus said, "We know You are a teacher come from God," and he doesn't even really get his question out and Jesus interrupts him.

One thing that Nicodemus was hoping, was that Jesus was merely a teacher come from God, because it was becoming very apparent to most people that He was rather more than that.

Jesus cuts to the chase. He says, "With all the earnestness I possess, I tell you this." This is important! "Unless you are born again you can never get into the kingdom of God."

"Born again?" Exclaimed Nicodemus. {4} "What do you mean? How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

I have heard a lot of arguments, theologically, about what Jesus meant by the expression 'born again.' What did the Greek words mean? Well in the first place, Jesus and Nicodemus were not speaking Greek. They were probably speaking Aramaic or even more likely they were speaking Hebrew. This is an account put in by John later and John wrote this in Greek so let's not argue about that.

The question is, what did Nicodemus understand Jesus to be saying? He understood Jesus to be talking about the process of birth as we know it. When a child comes forth out of his mother's womb into the world and breathes his first breath. That's what Nicodemus understood.

Jesus replied, "What I'm telling you so earnestly is this, unless one is born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

So, Jesus is talking about something a little bit beyond mere human birth. In fact, while there has been some discussion about what water means in this context, chances are it's the water connected with birth, and He's talking about the combination of the two different kinds of birth, the birthing of birth of the flesh and the birth of the Spirit.

Jesus says, you have to have both obviously. You have to be born into this world as a human being and then you have to be born again spiritually.

But what did Jesus mean by that? The presumption by many people is that they have already had this spiritual rebirth that Jesus is talking about with Nicodemus. Now I don't want to pick a fight with anybody on this particular issue, but if by 'born again' you mean the process of renewal that follows baptism. If you mean the feeling that you had a fresh start in life. If you mean that all your sins have been forgiven, you have gone into the waters of baptism and you have been born out of the waters of baptism as a new man. Okay, I'll accept the fact that you have been born again.

But here's the problem, that's not what Jesus is telling Nicodemus. Listen to what Jesus says about being born of the Spirit.

"I tell you the truth." Jesus said to Nicodemus in verse 5, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of the water and the Spirit. {6} Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

So, you have to ask yourself, at this point in time, "Am I flesh? Or am I spirit?"

Jesus continues, {7} "You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." {8} The wind blows where it pleases, you hear its sound, and you can't tell where it comes from and you can't tell where it's going."

The spirit is somewhat like a ghost, it is like the wind in the trees. You don't see the wind, you only see the effects of it.

Jesus continues, "So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." Now if you just think about what I read there, what Jesus says when He talks about being born again, and being born of the Spirit, He says, "When you are born of the Spirit, you are like the wind in the trees."

People may hear you go. They may see the effect of it. But they don't see you. In other words, you have been changed into a spirit being, born of the Spirit.

Now like I said, I'm not necessarily arguing with you whether you have been 'born again' or not. I'm talking about what Jesus is talking about.

Nicodemus says in verse 9, "How can this be?" {10} Jesus answered and said, "You are Israel's teacher, and you don't understand these things. {11} I tell you the truth. We speak what we know, we testify what we have seen and still you people will not accept Our testimony. {12} I have spoken to you of earthly things and you don't believe, how then would you believe if I speak of heavenly things? "

The difference is that the flesh is earthly, and the spirit is heavenly.

Jesus continues in verse 13, "No one has ever gone to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man. {14} And just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, {15} that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life. {16} For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

So what Jesus is saying is that if you are born of the flesh you're going to die. You will pass through the days of your existence on this planet. You will fill out your life and when you get to the end of it, you are going to die and go to the grave and unless you are born again, that is, unless you are born of the Spirit, in fact born of the Spirit in the resurrection of the dead, that is the end of you. What makes the difference? Belief in Jesus.

Jesus continued in verse 17, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

Frankly, sometimes listening to some preachers, I would think that they thought that God did send His Son into the world to condemn the world, and there's no question that Jesus condemned sin. There is no question whatsoever that He condemned hypocrisy, but He didn't come to condemn the world and He did not come to destroy the world, and in fact when Jesus comes back, He's not coming back to destroy the world. He's coming back to save it.

There is something in the book of Revelation, about the wrath of the Lamb, that Jesus is coming back and He's mad. This is the way somebody has characterized it. Well, yes, Jesus does come back in anger with those who are destroying the Earth. He comes back to destroy those who destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18), but He's coming back to save the world from destruction (Zechariah 14). Those men who are destroying the earth are those whom Jesus is going to destroy, it is those people who are going to feel the wrath of the Lamb, not the people of the world who have been abused by them, who have been confused by them, who have been deceived by them. No-no! These people are being saved by Christ from what those men are doing.

Jesus continues in verse 18, "Whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned, whoever does not believe, well he stands condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

There seems to be a presumption here, that if you've heard and you don't believe, well you're in a lot of trouble, but if you haven't heard, you still have hope.

"This is the verdict," {19} "light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light, because their deeds were evil."

And sadly, that's the way of man.

"Everyone who does evil, hates the light, and will not come to the light, for fear that his deeds will be exposed. {21} Whoever lives by the truth comes to the light, so that he may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

And thus, ended Jesus' fascinating conversation with one of the great leaders of the Jews of that time.

Can a man enter into his mother's womb again and be born? No! But he can enter into the heart of the earth into the grave and be born again in the resurrection from the dead.

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*The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit [RLDEA.com](http://RLDEA.com) where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.*

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### **Discussion Questions**

1. Have you ever looked closely to what Jesus said to Nicodemus?
2. What are your thoughts in regards to Mr. Dart's conclusions about this conversation?
3. Is it possible that one can be partially 'born again' after baptism but not completely until they are fully made into spirit?
4. What are your thoughts in regards to the point that Jesus didn't come to condemn the world but instead to condemn sin?
5. What are your thoughts about Jesus' point that we have to be born of spirit to enter the Kingdom of God?