

Someone has said that, "They that are born only once will have to die twice, and they that are born twice, will only die once, and maybe not at all." In a moment I will explain that statement more fully.

The Bible plainly teaches that there are two births that are necessary in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. You see, the first time one is born, they are born of natural parents. Those who are born once physically will die twice. They will die physically, and then in Revelation 20:14 they will die what is called "the second death." However, those who are born twice, once by a natural birth, and the second time a spiritual birth, shall never taste the second death. They will die physically, but they will never die eternally. And some will even escape physical death, for there will be one generation when Jesus comes again who will never die even physically. We find that in I Cor. 15:51-54. Now in connection with the subject of the new birth I would like to draw your attention to John 3, and I would like to begin reading in verse one. This is what it says: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now I read the first three verses of John chapter three. These words of the Lord Jesus are in the imperative mood. "You must be born again." The Lord Jesus did not say that you ought to be born again, or you may be born again, or that it would be very profitable and advantageous if you were born again. Rather, he said, "You must be born again." This applies to every man and woman who has ever been born physically. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You see, this truth is very, very important and can never be overemphasized or preached too often. In spite of the importance of this subject, the new birth, and the absolute impossibility of entering the kingdom of heaven without that birth, it is one of the most neglected subjects over many pulpits today. It is a doctrine which many religious people and many church members do not understand. In many churches, the truth of the new birth is never preached, and in many others it is distorted. Regeneration, they teach, comes some other way than just through simple faith in the Lord Jesus and his death in our behalf upon the cross. They may teach that it comes through human parents, or baptism, or by confirmation, or that it is a slow process through lawkeeping. None of these are Biblical. In John 1:12,13 it says, "But as many as received him (the Lord Jesus) to them gives he the power to become the children of God, Even to them that simply believe on his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The new birth hinges on "But as many as received him...who were born (past tense)." In other words, those who receive Christ are born again; thus, they can refer to their salvation

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in the past tense. There was a time when I placed my faith in Christ; thus, there was a time when I was born again. The new birth is the result of faith in Christ. It says that we're "not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men." You see, one does not become a child of God because their mommy and daddy thought it would be nice, or even because the preacher thought it might be something that would be nice. One becomes a child of God because they apply personally the Gospel message, and they personally exercise their free will and volition in placing their faith and confidence in the fact that Jesus Christ died in their stead and in their place, and that he arose again to give them new life. Thus, they receive him and at the same time you receive Christ, you receive His quality of life, which is eternal. Thus, his life is new life, and that's when one is born again.

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You see, God does not remodel individuals. He wants to give them new life. That's what it means to be born again. It means to be born from above. In John 3:14,15 it says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have (present tense and present possession) eternal life." What's the key? "Whosoever believeth in him." Faith in Christ, belief in Christ, is the key to the new birth.

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The first question that the third chapter of John answers is, "Who must be born again?" Now the Lord Jesus did not choose a thief or a harlot to reveal the truth of the new birth to, but he gives this revelation to a man, who of all men, wouldn't seem to need regeneration. This man's name was Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a cultured man. He was an educated man. He was very refined, moral, ethical, and a law-abiding citizen. He was probably the finest man that could be found in all Israel, and yet the record is very brief. This man, though highly religious and highly educated, had never been born again. In verse 10 of John 3 he is referred to as a "master in Israel." In other words, he had a very high, respected position in the religious community. He had his Ph.D. degree. He is also referred to as "a ruler of the Jews," implicating that he was a member of the seventy ruling body organization, which is called the Sanhedrin. He was a Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin, and had his Ph.D. degree. This man was a religious, educated wheel in Israel. There isn't anything wrong with being educated or law-abiding; in fact, everyone ought to be. This would be true of a Christian. However, morality is not Christianity. Morality is a by-product of Christianity. There are many moral individuals who will not and have not place their faith in Christ. Nicodemus made the mistake of thinking that his fine moral qualities and education were sufficient apart from the new birth. How many are there today who labor under the same delusion and snare of religion, but have never experienced the new birth? They may go to church, say their prayers, even read their Bible or go to study classes, make an effort to keep the Ten Commandments, and live very exemplary lives, very

moral lives; yet never experience the new birth. This was true of Nicodemus. With all that he was, he had never been born again. In verse 2 of John 3 it says that the Nicodemus came by night, and he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." Now he comes seeking truth, and really, he puts himself in a corner for he says, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." The Lord Jesus says, "Well, since you accept my authority, and you acknowledge that I come from God (in other words, you admit that I'm God-sent) then, of course, you must without any question or doubt, have faith in what I say. The most important thing I have to say to you, Nicodemus, is 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' You see, this is the starting point." The Lord Jesus did not give him a discourse on polemics. He didn't argue with him about many social problems in the nation at that time. He really knew that Nicodemus couldn't really understand even the Bible until first of all he had been born again. So he got right to the point. Nicodemus had to be born again. No matter what other knowledge he had, no matter how highly educated he was, how cultured and refined, no matter how wise he might have been in many matters, until he was born again his eyes were completely shut and he could not see the simplest truths. This is why we have again in I Cor. 2:14, "The natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." You see, the new birth is the key to the Word of God. It is not a simpler translation. I don't care how many translations you have, until a person is born again they do not have the abilities, the insight, or the eye salve to show them that the truths of the Word of God center around a person and are designed to exalt a person. Only when I know and have that person and His life can Christianity produce through me the strength and power of another. A Christian is one in whom Christ lives, and when He is inside you are born from above and now belong to God. Let me ask you a question--Have you been born again?

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