

Gospel of John (Study 7 of 24, Chap 3 Start)

by G.W. North

This sermon explores the profound truths of spiritual rebirth as presented in John chapter 3, emphasizing the necessity of being born again to enter the kingdom of God.

Duration: 51:19

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 2:24 - 3:5, John 3:16

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. He explains that being born again is not just a conversion or a change in belief, but a spiritual event that occurs between God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The preacher highlights that Jesus only mentioned the concept of new birth once during his time on earth, but forgiveness of sins is the key aspect to understand. He encourages the audience to seek a deeper understanding of God's truth and to continually learn and grow in their faith.

Transcript

Alright, let's pray, shall we? Father, we thank Thee for Thine everlasting mercies. We praise Thee that Thou art the God of the mind as well as of the heart, and Thou art eternal life. Thou dost bring us into Thyself, Thou great, wonderful, mysterious God.

Who made Thyself plain in Thy Son, who said, If you see me, you see my Father. We thank You, Lord, for the wonder of truth. Keep us always wondering.

Let us never get to the place where we think we know it all, for it will surely change us into imitations. We thank Thee, Father, for the humility that comes with the Holy Ghost to keep us humble and meek like the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Well, as you know, we're in John chapter 3. I hope to get through it today. Not that I haven't spent, I suppose, many weeks, perhaps years of my life in or around this chapter. In the truth of it, I mean.

May God grant unto us understanding, illumination, blessing. So then, in the third chapter, as you will remember, in 25 of chapter 2, Jesus, he knew what was in man. And the Lord then takes up a typical man, or at least the writer does.

An ordinary, religious, decent, upright, straightforward believer. A man. Who was groping through to faith.

Mind you, he had faith. That is in the Jews religion, as Paul calls it. This is the thing that's so important for us all.

You know that we all have faith. None of you wondered whether there was any poison in the coffee you've just drunk. You just drank it.

You believed it was right. You believed it was good. You believed you were right in drinking it.

All right. As long as we see what we're talking about. But faith comes by hearing, says Paul.

And hearing by the word of God. Well, God made the word flesh. They could actually hear and see and handle flesh.

As John writes in his epistle. So let's keep this very clear. You remember in chapter 2, he invited them to destroy this temple.

Wonderful thing, wasn't it? He would say destroy this temple. He was speaking of what he knew they would do. And he was speaking in view of the thing being done.

And himself being that temple. What they couldn't do. But though they destroyed the temple, that is the body.

They couldn't destroy the voice that spoke in the temple. Or from the temple. And probably he spoke more clearly when they killed him.

Than in all the words that he had said. You understand what I'm saying? So, they couldn't do that. Let's go on then.

Because I can discuss that with you for the next hour. But we'll move on into the next chapter. There was a man.

And Jesus knew what was in him. Alright, verse 1, chapter 3. 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 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. So you are at least aware as I am. That immediately, that seeing miracles is not seeing the kingdom of God.

That's the big thing to understand. You don't see the kingdom of God until the miracle of God has been wrought in you. Called new birth.

People think they've seen the kingdom of God when they've seen miracles happen and all that kinds of things. But better the miracles that you can't see than those that you can. Those that you can are indication, straws in the wind.

Demonstration of God and all those things that we hear so much about. It's a glorious thing to understand this, but let's go on shall we. I know you probably thought I read that verse differently.

Yes, I do read the Bible differently from most people I will confess. You probably heard somebody gabble out, verily, verily. I say unto you, except a man be born again.

It's true. But he was confirming what the man said. We know that you're a teacher come from God.

He said, verily, verily. He was true. You know what that word true verily means.

What a marvellous thing it is. You know verily we get from the English word veracity. The absolute truth of it.

And he was saying it's absolutely true all that you said. Let's go on. But he got the other part wrong.

That God was with him. That is true of course. It's usual for men not to see the greatest truth.

They see a truth on the surface. Saw him do miracles and all that kind of thing. And he made a big statement as being the chief teacher in the land.

He was a ruler. And you know as the Lord said lower down in the writing of it. He said that these things had to be really, really seen.

Your knowledge on the surface. I hope we all understand this. Never appears to us as being surface knowledge.

The things we know. For instance you can have surface knowledge of the Bible. By the way when we get through into the epistle or when you do.

I mean I'm anticipating being with you for about ten more years if I talk like this. But I can't. When you get through.

When you graduated from the gospel to the epistle. You will find that John drops the word believe. And he substitutes for it knowledge.

We know. Not we believe. We know.

Now if I put the question to each one of you. What do you do? Believe or know? See Jesus didn't believe he was the son of God. He knew he was.

Pindia people believe they are Christians but they don't know. Not with the knowledge that God is intending that they are. It's a big thing to get inside.

This great truth is knowledge without a doubt. Without a doubt. Plenty of people got born again when they heard me just say that.

Knowledge. Belief. Without a doubt.

Never question it. In your own mind I think deep down in I mean where do you really are. I don't mean where you might be in a church or what you may do in a church.

But you really deep down inside just don't believe you know. Big thing to understand. You are really getting into Jesus all nature.

He didn't believe he was the son of God. He knew he was. That's the state into which you have to become.

A true person. God wants us to be. But let's not anticipate it.

For that's what I'm doing. Let's come into the chapter. So much is based on observation.

But observation of a lamb chop won't fill my stomach. That's the big thing to get into your heart. Verily, verily.

Verse three. I say unto thee, except a man be born from above. You will know I expect that that's your word in the Greek.

Amazon from above. Born from above. Not born again except that it is an again birth because you were born once in the flesh.

So the translators put it in pandering to our lack of knowledge. They wouldn't understand born from above. We wouldn't understand above.

We wouldn't mean born from above. But if you put again, then that rather simplifies it. For human minds to grasp.

Except a man be born from above. That means again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Oh.

Now Nicodemus thought he could. Seeing God at work. He's been doing this, doing that, and doing the other.

This man must be authentic. He's looking upon Jesus as being the Nazarene carpenter whilst he held the chair in the university. I mean, Nicodemus held the chair.

Why does this young man keep going after absenting himself? Is it because he doesn't understand what I say or is there no rule about attending the lecture? He has bad heads. Pardon? I think he said he has bad heads. He has bad heads.

I'll have a word with Brough about this. Nicodemus gives the answer. How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? I wonder whether he was being sarcastic or genuine when he asked that question.

Superior knowledge can damage your approach to Christ. You know that, don't you? God purposely had his son born in a manger just to bring all high things and people down to nothing. You should read the Magnificat, what Mary said about it, when she knew that she was going to give birth to Jesus.

He puts down the mighty from their seats and so on. Everything has to be brought to nothing, you know, before you can be a real child of God. God has to start from nothingness really, except what he is in himself.

What you are in yourself he dealt with at the cross. It only requires you to humble yourself to be crucified with Christ, not just gain the benefits from that, but to be identified with it. And of course that's what the epistles were all about.

Here we are then brought into a new area, a new cosmos of truth. You know what cosmos is, don't you? We've come up from the Greek and you know, if I speak about the cosmos, you start looking up into the air and see if there are any planets up there or something. But there's a cosmos of the human soul.

There's a cosmos of the Spirit of God. It's a new world. Not new age, but let's move on into truth.

How can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Perfect statement. Cannot.

It's a big thing. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, you must be born again.

Wonderful, isn't it? You know, I would like to spend at least a month preaching on this chapter. You're into mystery, at least I hope you are. I hope you don't gloss over it and think, well, born again.

God is letting you by the Lord Jesus Christ and of course by the Spirit who came afterwards to see that the Bible was written in the New Testament. Anyway, you wouldn't know anything about it at all. But you must know.

You realise that when you were born, in verse 6, and this may upset some of your thinking, but I've upset a lot of people's thinking on this chapter. I propose to do it, as long as the Lord enables me to. I think the capital S should not be in verse 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh.

And you were born of Spirit when you were born in your flesh as well. Which makes you see that your parents passed on to you a spirit too. And you can see it in babies.

You can see it in people just like our mother. Talks just like his father. It's not just looking to see if they're pretty and saying they take after me, a good lady, and so on and so on.

You did have a spirit passed on to you, friend. Big thing, what you did not have was a soul passed on to you. You had a body passed on to you, but not a soul.

You had a spirit passed on to you. I don't know a combination, I don't know how these things happen, or whether it be practically the spirit of the father, and you grew up as being as ugly spirited as your dad, or nice spirited as your mother, or I don't know, or vice versa. What you have to do is form a soul.

For when God made man, he breathed into him the breath of life, and he said that Adam became a living soul. You are a soul. You don't have one.

It's yours in a sense. You have what you are, of course. But you think of yourself not as a body, think of yourself as a soul.

And your business, when you've been born again of God, the Holy Spirit comes into you, and you become a spiritual person. The dominant and predominant factor of your life must be the Holy Ghost, and he has come to reproduce in you the likeness of Jesus, his spirit, his soul. That's what he comes for.

He doesn't come to enable you to speak in tongues particularly, or prophecy, or any other of those precious gifts. But that is not his purpose. His purpose is to reproduce in you the soul of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's his purpose. To have the spirit of Christ. If you go into Ephesians, which says there's one God, one Father of all, one body, one spirit, well that's the spirit of Jesus.

That's the spirit of the Christ. And that's why we're called a Christ, or Christian church. There's only one spirit in the body of Christ, and it's got to be the dominant one.

Like your spirit in you is a dominant thing inside you, reproducing the soul of Jesus Christ. That could be expressed in one or two short verses in Galatians 5. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control, faith. That is Christ.

So another way of Christ. Christ is the fruit of the spirit in you. He has come for that reason.

If you do not have these, what we would call virtues, or fruit, you've not become a Christian. You've only become a copyist, or something that you understand in your mind. But it will break down.

You'll lose your temper, that's self-control for instance. You'll lose all of it. And if you're a proper person, as you should be, you will lose your peace.

And you won't have a lot of love about you at all. Knowledgeable, fountain of knowledge perhaps. It's a big thing for us to get hold of, beloved, and understand.

When you were born, most preachers will preach the capital S in that verse. I do not. Keep that very clear.

If you like, I can put my name beside that. Mr. North said this. Alright.

Here's... I've done it after years of meditation on it too. Observing people who claim to be filled with the spirit. Observing myself before God did actually fill me with his spirit.

You've got to keep a check on yourself. You don't go into a world of believe, I believe. You'd better put three letters after that.

I-S-M. Believe-ism. You don't get into God or into heaven by believe-ism.

You believe. In fact, that means you have in you that same glorious faith that was in Jesus Christ. And then we'll be able to observe it.

Those that know us. Those that hear us at all times of the day and night perhaps. Those that, if you like, have to put up with us or have the pleasure of our company, whatever way you want to talk about it.

That's it, beloved. This is the trouble. The pseudo-Christianity.

Where Christ is not living in that woman or in that man. Though they claim he is. You see, that's the big thing you want to get a hold of.

That is why you have breath and being on this earth now. And we're here to serve Christ. Forget that a moment.

You don't start serving Christ as soon as you're born. You grow. You see, beloved, remember something else too.

In the realm of human birth, now you put this in your notes. There is life before birth. In the womb.

Now you keep that clear. And if there was no life before birth, there won't be any life after birth. It is not independent life that a baby lives once it's parted from its mother's womb.

And the cord that has connected you with her life is cut. That's right. You've probably never heard anybody talk like this before, but there's only one me.

And you may be glad. The whole thing, beloved, is this. That is that when you are born.

That is when breath comes into your body. That's when life enters. Then that's the whole thing typified to us.

Because you will know that the Hebrew and Greek words, each in their setting, translated, say, spirit is the same word that means air or breath. Air, breath, spirit. Check it up all the way through.

All right. And are you surprised if you read Acts chapter 2 that they heard a sound of a rushing mighty wind or air or spirit. Same word in the Greek.

That's right. Now this is so tremendous thing. And you will remember, and I've said this before, that John has a very close affinity with Moses and his writings.

You will know that he starts in the beginning with the word. All right. Moses starts in the beginning God.

Created heaven and the earth, so on, so on, so on. Same rule over both areas. Heaven and earth.

The God of the universe. And the outer universe that you and I look at, beloved, is not so vast as the inner universe. Your inner universe could take in God and all that.

Or it could take in Satan and all hell and wickedness and lies, murder, cheating. There's a universe inside you. It's tremendous, isn't it? And then, all right, he said, let there be light.

We've looked at that in chapter 1. In him was life and the life was light. But in creation, the spirit of God was moving over the waters. God said, let there be light.

Again, moving was the word. Fluttering as a mother bird flutters over her young. That's the exact word in the Hebrew.

Going to bring forth wonderful things. That might help you a bit when you read in verse 5. You've got to be born of water and of the spirit, just as the earth was. Or, the earth emerged from under the water.

The word of God brought spirit as creator. You might have read the word, the spirit was breathing over the water to bring it all up. So when the earth came up from under the water, it came up into the spirit.

I hope I'm making you think. Or at least God intended us to think. You've got to see what it's about.

And we won't get into the light stuff that's being talked of today. It's being converted and all. One thing and only.

You wonder whatever's going on inside you. Or what you may see around you. Oh, he says he's a Christian.

She says she's a Christian. But does God say so? Because you see, you've got to be born of the water and of the spirit. Or you cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Plainly enough written there. You can have 10,000 conversions if you live long enough. But to be born.

To be born. Born out from God. And at the same time, come into knowledge of God in yourself.

This I covet for every one of you earnestly. That you should just not become a student in the sense of you taking lectures etc. etc.

And I told you at the beginning I'm interested in your soul. I don't care if you haven't got a pencil or a paper. But I mustn't say that to Derek, don't you tell him.

And let him listen to this tape. Here's the thing. I've said these things so many times, you'll laugh.

You and I must... Oh, beloved, this is the greatest thing that's ever happened in my life. To be born. After so many years thinking I was born and I wasn't.

When God gave birth to me. A new birth is an event in God. Like a human birth is an event in any family.

It's an event in God. Between the Father and the Son. By the Holy Ghost.

Do you understand? Something happened in God when you were born. In the true family of God. It wasn't just that you got your believing right.

Well, you did of course. But when you get born again you wonder whether you had your believing right before. Things take on new meanings.

You begin to see. How many times have you heard people, you might have said to yourself if you were honest, Oh, I see. If you haven't, you haven't learned anything yet.

That's what sight's about. Learn something. Not just observe.

If you just observe and don't learn, well, you're nearly an idiot. God wants us to move on in truth. And when you were born first time, beloved.

That was wonderful. You came from your mother's womb. Verse four.

You can't go the second time into your mother's womb. You can't do that. You didn't know anything about it.

I didn't know I was born 83 years ago. I didn't know I was. I mean, when I was born.

She never gave me a book to read. I didn't know. And you don't know.

About it. But when you're born the second time, boy, you'll know it. Well, I took the decision.

Yes, that brought you to conversion. Have you observed this? That all the time that Jesus was on earth, so far as we know from the whole of scriptures, he only mentioned new birth once. That's all.

He never said to a person, Go away, you're born again. He said, Oh, your sins are forgiven. That's different.

If you believe you were born again and going again, every time you had a sin forgiven, you must have been born a thousand times. You're getting what I'm saying, aren't you? I'm drawing the difference between having your sins forgiven and being born again. You may sin again after you were born again, but you won't be born again again.

That's what you've got to get into your mind. This is the event in God. When you were born again, it cost him pain like it cost your mother.

Now you're beginning to enter into the agonies of the cross, but it's only a beginning. All right. Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou hearest the sound thereof. Thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth.

So is every one that is born of the Spirit. Hmm. So when you're born again, you are likened to the wind that blows wherever it listeth.

The wind bloweth whether so. You're like that. Of course, we know, we're all scientifically taught a little bit anyway, if not a lot, that wind is only air in motion.

It is because nature can't hold a vacuum, and in some hot place, the air is risen, it's gone up, and there's no air about, so there's a cold wind comes in and takes its place. That's what, it's all circulation. That's right.

For us to grasp this, nature abhors a vacuum, it cannot take a vacuum. We'll not provide one. The wind blows the cold in where the hot was.

So then, here we are understood, marvel, this is the law in nature, I've been wrought it in nature, you say the north wind doth blow, we shall have snow, and what shall a robin do then, poor thing? At least that was one of the nursery rhymes my mother taught me. But, it's so, would be a north wind, wouldn't it? But, here's the greatness of the truth, beloved, you can't tell where it's come from, or where it's going, and everyone that's born of the spirit is like that, now have you become like that? You must check yourself out. You've got to read that and say, well, am I like that? Perhaps you went back amongst your old pals, with what you did with them, and you tell them you're born again, they say, well, where's he coming from? They try, it's quite new to them, they don't understand that.

There's a text in the Bible, a few of them might have read it, but God wants us to understand that you're like that. When the Holy Ghost came at Pentecost, that was the sound, as of a rushing, mighty womb, the sound of it. And, you know, if you weren't breathing when you came out of your mother's womb, the midwife or doctor at the hospital slapped you and made you cry, you should have come into the world crying, I don't mean miserable, but there's a little pain in a baby being born, a baby even feels it.

And if it doesn't just make that sound, it's got to be made, because that's the sound of the entry into the lungs, it's like there's a sound of the last breath going out. It's all on the spirit, and spirit and breath are one, in the Greek word. Just keep it clear, and you'll begin to get to what God is telling us about birth.

Wonderful. When it happened, on the day of Pentecost, I tell you a mighty sound happened, it woke up all the sinners in Jerusalem, so that they flocked to know what was happening. You say, did they get born again on the day of Pentecost? They did.

So far as you know, there were a few men on earth on whom Christ had breathed in the upper room. That's as far as you know. None of the other 120 had been there.

So when did they get born again? When did they receive the Spirit? Just ask yourself a question, a matter of simple calculation. It's a matter of reading the Bible, and not just sitting there and being spoon-fed by a preacher or a teacher. Search the Scriptures.

That was the Lord's command. We shall meet it if we get as far as chapter 5, which we won't do this morning. But it's so important for us to understand.

You see, and in verse 9, Nicodemus is answering the Lord, and he says unto him, How? How? Now listen. That's the word Mary used. And he said, The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee.

Same question. How can these things be? Mary, How? You said so. It's God's Word.

I believe it. But how? The Spirit. The very words in the mouth of the angel, shall come upon thee.

The Spirit of God, perhaps you'd better put this down, it's one of my sayings, is God's how. That's how he does it. Not by power, but by my Spirit.

How? That's how it's done. When did the Holy Ghost come upon you? Well, I've been a believer for 25 years. You may say, I don't know if you're old enough to talk like that.

Or older. But I've been a believer. I'd always believed.

Born in that kind of a home. I'd always believed. I'd been a naughty boy, of course, and all that kind of thing.

But all boys are naughty. Ladies are made of sugar and spice. But, you see, beloved, they're probably more wicked than the boys, but never doubt the fact they're sugar and spice.

And here's the fact, beloved, that is God's how. I was a good boy. I really was.

I'll pat myself on the back. I don't think I've ever sworn about five or six times in my life. How about that? I'm not boasting about it.

I'm just telling you. The mercy of God. I could have been the likeliest one to go to hell.

And when people played cards in the street, and the boys in the East End of London, I was born in the East End of London, I couldn't play with them. Who kept me from swearing? I tell you about God's hand being on a life. I hope it's been so you... I don't know the taste of alcohol you could give me anything.

You say, that's rum, that's whiskey. I wouldn't know. How about that? Good boy, aren't I? I needed to be born again, son.

And so do you. I'd always believed to argue with anybody. I argued against the Bible.

Even when I was twenty-odd, and working for my living. Best worker in the church I was. Well, I think so anyway.

Because I used to go down and dig the gardens. I didn't just want to be a man that looked important. I thought, yeah, gardens and digging, and I went down.

You never do that, do you? I wonder if you were in the running then. Here's the big thing, beloved. I was a good boy.

Never smoked. I mean, I had a friend who gave up smoking when other people started. That was at twelve.

He said, I gave up smoking when these blokes started. Yeah. I won't tell you the story of my life.

But I got born again when I discovered that for all my believing, I couldn't stop sinning. What a tremendous thing it is to understand the new birth is an achievement of God, not of my faith or something like that, or this, that, or the other, in His grace and His mercy. He gave me to share in His life, which is a holy life.

Oh, but you were a baby. You know, hardly born babies, but that's right. There aren't a lot of Christians, if I may be allowed to make an observation from much travelling in the world, that are above babyhood if they are born again.

You look at the Corinthian church. Let me just... Oh, I must stop. Not yet.

I'll tell you this bit. Look at the Corinthian church. He writes to them, Paul writes to the Corinthian church, and he says, Hitherto I fed you with milk.

Now listen, Paul the Apostle, he founded the church in Corinth. You're not able to take anything stronger than milk, and you're yet not able, so the rest of the epistle was not meat. Don't you think there's any strong meat in 1 Corinthians? In case you think you're on strong meat, because you have some gifts.

Just read it for yourself. That's all I've done. I read the Bible.

Don't read books about them. Well, not even the ones I write. Don't bother about that.

You read the scripture. The scripture is the truth. You say, 1 Corinthians? Boy, that's got some truth in it.

For the most part, most churches reject what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians. You say, yeah, what? Yeah, you read it and see. Make comparisons with what he says, and what you find in churches.

I invite you to do that. Keep your eyes open. Keep your ears open.

Here's the big thing to understand what God is saying. And now, listen to Jesus. He says, Art thou the teacher? That's your word, like you call your schoolmaster.

Art thou the teacher of Israel? And knowest? Not these things? Oh, allow me this, Nicodemus. You called me a teacher come from God. You are the teacher of Israel.

He was like the big, big dog at the top of the wall. The lecturer to the lecturers. The teacher of the teachers.

Allow me to teach you, Nicodemus.

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