

I CHOOSE JESUS

DANIEL SHIRLEY



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You Must Be Born Again

In **John chapter 1** we read of a conversation between a religious leader (Pharisee) named Nicodemus, and Jesus, in which Jesus introduces us to a new term, "born again".

1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Notice that seeing the kingdom of God is contingent upon being born again. The word “see” is translated from the Greek word “oida” which means to perceive with any of the senses, to experience, or to get knowledge of. In other words, unless one is born again he/she cannot in any way experience the kingdom of God. I want you to first understand what the term “born again” means, and secondly why it is a necessity.

What is the New Birth?

In order to explain the meaning of the term let's look at it backward, "again born". In order to do or experience anything "again" you must have already done or experienced it at least once. I know this sounds overly simple, but every man, woman and child on planet earth has already met the first requirement for the new birth, because they have all experienced the first birth.

Think for a moment, if you will; though you certainly don't remember the first birth, you know what happened. You had been alive in your mother's womb for some time (nine months if you were born on time). Though you were alive in the womb you had never experienced things that pertain to the outside world, such as light, wind blowing in your face, heat and cold, the taste of food, etc. When the time came you passed through the birth canal into a realm that was all around you, but you had never been in vital contact with. So we could define birth as the passing from one realm, which in this case was the womb, into another, which was the outside world.

To do or experience something "again" means that you are repeating something. So to be "born" again means that you are repeating the birth experience. In **John 3:6**, Jesus says, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born*

of the Spirit is spirit.” thus answering Nicodemus’ question about entering a second time into his mother’s womb. He makes it very clear that the first birth was a flesh birth, but the second is a spirit birth.

In **verse 5** Jesus also confirms this by saying, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”* Some have said that being born of the water refers to water baptism, however Jesus explained twice, in two different ways, so we would not misunderstand. Being born of the water is being born of the flesh. Prior to natural physical birth, you were in a sack of “water” in the womb. At the time of birth the “water” broke and you were born shortly thereafter. Being born again is being born of the Spirit. Your flesh is what was born of the water, or of the flesh, but your spirit is born of the Spirit of God.

Peter wrote (**1 Peter 1:23**), *“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,”* Just as there was a seed planted by your earthly father in your mother’s womb which later resulted in your birth, the seed of the Word of God was planted in your heart that resulted in the new, or spirit birth.

As we stated earlier, when you were in your mother’s womb, the outside world existed around

you, but you did not have vital contact with it. Before a person is born again, the spirit world exists around them but they have no vital contact with it. Physical birth, or the first birth, was that moment of passage from your mother's womb into vital contact with the light of day, so to speak. The new birth or spirit birth is that moment of passage from one realm, the kingdom of darkness or death, to another, the kingdom of light or life, or God. All three of the following verses are talking about the new birth.

John 5:24 *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.*

Colossians 1:13 *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,*

We could say that "birth", whether the first birth or the second; whether physical or spiritual, is a passage from one realm to another.

Why Do We Need A New Birth?

Man was created in the image and likeness of God; created to live in the kingdom of God. In **Genesis chapter 1** we read,

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

In **Genesis 2:16** God said, *"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* **Genesis 5:3** and **5** tell us Adam lived 930 years. We don't know how old Adam was when the fall occurred but we do know he lived physically for many years after the fall. That is to say Adam did not die physically the day he ate of the forbidden fruit. Did God lie, or is there something else we need to understand here?

God certainly did not lie! Just as we said there is a physical birth and a spiritual birth, there is also a physical and a spiritual death. Adam did die that day, but it was a spiritual death that eventually manifested itself in physical death.

Just as birth is a passage from one realm to another, death is also a passage from one realm to another. Death could be defined as a separation, and birth could be defined as a uniting, or coming into contact with. Adam had contact with the life of God but became separated from it – “death”. We were separated from the life of God, but when we are born again we are joined to, or come into contact with the life of God. Adam passed from life to death, but when we are born again we pass from death to life.

New Birth is the Door

When Jesus said in **John 3:3**, *“unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”*, He was not trying to keep some people out of heaven, but rather was telling everyone how to get in. Sometimes when I’m doing something in the back of our church building I will lock the front door because no one is in that part of the building and we wouldn’t know if someone were to come in. On such a day, if you called and said, “I’m coming by to see you”, I would tell you to come in the back door. Would you interpret that as me trying to keep you out? That would be ridiculous. I’m not trying to keep you out; I’m telling you how to get in. When Jesus said *“You must be born again”* (**John 3:7**), He was telling you where the door is. In **John 14:6** Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* He was not trying to keep out those who want to come in some other way; He was telling everyone which door will actually get them in.



The Key That Opens the Door

Romans 10:6-11 says...

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Paul tells us here that we don't need Jesus to come do something. He already did everything necessary. Jesus already came down from heaven; there is no need for Him to do that again. Jesus already died on the cross and rose again. That never needs to happen again. What must happen now is for us to believe and accept it as sufficient. *"If you confess with your mouth..."* Everything necessary to save you, from God's side of things, has already been done. If you believe

that, your verbal agreement will activate it in your life.

Totally by God's Grace

Ephesians 2:8, 9 says, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* It was the grace, or favor, of God that caused God to give His Son to die on the cross for us. Through faith—faith is the key that opens the door. God then said, “I’ll give you the key”. The faith necessary to believe this message is a gift of God. You can’t buy (earn) the key, you can’t make your own, but God will give you the key.

Grace is sometimes defined as “unmerited favor”. Actually that term is redundant. “Unmerited” means you didn’t deserve it, and “favor” cannot be earned or deserved or it is not favor. It would be payment or compensation. God showed favor toward you for no other reason except that He loves you. He loves you, not because of what you did or did not do, but because of who He is... He is love. **(1 John 4:8)**

God’s unwillingness to be separated from you accompanied by your inability to help yourself, your inability to meet the righteous standard of God, prompted Him to go outside of you and do something that would take your ability to perform completely out of the equation.

Romans 5:17-19 *For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore, as through one man's offense [judgment came] to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act [the free gift came] to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*

You see, one man, Adam stood as a representative of the entire human race. Why? Was God punishing us all because of what Adam did? Actually we were all in Adam. There is an old saying, "you can count the seeds in an apple, but you can't count the apples in a seed." The number of offspring in Adam could not be numbered. We were there in Him, thus his choice effected us all. However the same is true of Jesus and His obedient action.

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). We could say, death was Adam's unmerited gift to us. The wages had to be paid. God in His foreknowledge made provision for a substitute to pay. Jesus willingly became the substitute and paid the wages of sin, though He had never Himself sinned. The consequences of sin passed

to you simply because you were in Adam. You didn't have a choice about being in Adam, you were born of him. But now you have a choice to get out of Adam and into Christ. To be born again, born of God.

When you make that decision to accept Jesus as your Savior, just like Adam's sin was counted to you as though you had done it, now Jesus' perfect righteous act is counted to you as though you had done it. It was a work of substitution, He traded places with you. He became sin, Adam's sin, our sin, and was fully punished, and we, by accepting His substitutionary work are counted as righteous. Righteousness is God's unmerited gift to us.

Now because you accepted the gift of righteousness there is no more punishment for you. The sentence of eternal death has been lifted off of your head, once and for all time, and replaced by what the Bible call eternal life.

So What Now?

Since you did nothing to earn this righteousness, there is nothing you must do to keep it. It is a gift. Your only part in this was to believe and accept it. **Romans 10:10** says you believe unto righteousness. Now believe you are righteous, just like God's Word said you would be.

Read these verses from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Christians at Galatia.

(Galatians 3:1-6) *1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? 4 Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed [it was] in vain? 5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, [does He do it] by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?-- 6 just as Abraham ["believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."]*

The Galatians made a mistake. They began listening to some false teachers who told them, it's

great that you believed on Jesus for your salvation like Paul told you to, but now that you have been saved you must start keeping all the commandments found in the law of Moses in order to be perfected in your new Christian life. Paul wrote this letter to correct the error. He tells them , if you were saved by believing the good news of Jesus' substitutionary work on your behalf, you are also perfected by believing and trusting in the same work of Jesus. The fact is, everything you will ever receive from God comes the same way, by believing Jesus did the work on the cross and God now offers it to you as a free gift.

Now notice what the same Apostle Paul wrote in a letter to the Christians in Rome. He is writing to them on the same subject.

Romans 5:1-2 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Notice what he said and what he did not say "having been justified". Past tense. He did not say in order to be justified (justified means you were declared to be righteous, or in right standing with God). He also tells how you were justified, by faith. Faith in what? Faith in what Jesus did at the

cross. He then says we have peace with God. Notice once again, he did not say, this is what you must do to have peace with God. No, he says you who have believed on Jesus currently, at this very moment HAVE peace with God. And you currently have access to everything Jesus went to the cross to provide for you. Access the same way as you accessed your salvation.

What About Good Works?

But what about going to church and giving up all the things I used to do?

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Notice it says you were created in Christ Jesus FOR good works, not by good works. If you were to tour a factory where big trucks are manufactured they may show you a line of trucks that have just rolled off the assembly line. They may tell you these trucks were designed for a client who needs to move heavy equipment. They have special features that will enable them to load and unload this equipment more easily. We could say they were created “FOR” moving this equipment, although they have never moved any equipment at all. The only role the heavy equipment had in the truck’s creation is that it dictated the design.

Let me also note, if the company were to pull one of these trucks off the line and put it in a museum, never actually using it for its intended purpose, it’s still a truck, it is still equipped to do the job though it may never actually carry the load.

You were created in Christ Jesus for the purpose of doing good works, not by good works. The only role your good works played in your creation in Christ was they dictated the design. The term, "in Christ Jesus" indicates how you are specially equipped for the purpose of good works. If you never actually do the good works, you have still been created in Christ Jesus and have the potential for the good works. Actually, Christ Jesus is the power for good works. The term "Christ" refers to the anointing of Holy Spirit, and **Acts 10:38** tells us Jesus did good works because He was anointed, and you are created in that anointing.

Acts 10:38 *"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

Let me emphasize, no amount of good works were enough to bring you into right standing with God, and no amount of good works will be enough to keep you in right standing with God. It was your belief in the work of Jesus that saved you, you were sealed by Holy Spirit, and now you are a new creation in Christ, specially equipped for good works.

Ephesians 1:13 *In Him you also [trusted], after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

What about going to church? Understand the purpose of going to church. This topic could be an entire book in itself, but I will summarize.

Pastors are instructed to feed the flock of God (**1 Peter 5:2, King James Version**). That being said, Jesus gave Pastors (**Ephesians 4:11**), so that means it is a good gift from Jesus and furthermore you need one.

1 Peter 5:2 (KJV) *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight [thereof], not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;*

Ephesians 4:11 *And He Himself gave some [to be] apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,*

Going to church was never intended to appease God. He has already been appeased by

Jesus' work on the cross. Church attendance is about you receiving pastoral teaching and care, and about coming into a partnership with other believers around the common purpose of propagating the gospel. Yes, you absolutely should go to church, but don't go for the wrong reasons and with wrong expectations. If you do you will be disappointed.

Read Your Bible

Read the Bible. The primary purpose for reading your Bible is to know God. He has revealed Himself in written form and this is the number one way He will speak to you. I often tell people, I don't read my Bible to get God to love me. I read it to know He does. When you read your Bible look for Jesus, or we could say, anything that reveals Jesus to you. Each time you start to read ask Holy Spirit to show you Jesus in what you read.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

The thing that will change us is looking at Jesus, because you are in Him you are seeing what God made you to be. You're seeing what God sees. As you read about Jesus, realizing He is in you and you are in Him you will begin to see and believe this is who you are. Your actions will begin to reflect what you believe about yourself. It's not about, "I don't do that anymore", it's about, "That's not who I am anymore."

1 Corinthians 6:17 *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit [with Him].*

Don't read the Bible as an indictment against you. Don't read it as a rule book. Read it as a revelation of Jesus and of who you are in Him. In the Old Testament we can see what trying to please God by our self effort. It shows us we will always fail to perfectly keep the rules, which is why we needed a Savior, Jesus. Throughout the Old Testament God is saying, you can't do this on your own, so I'm going to send you some help. I'll send My Son Jesus. He will perfectly meet all of My demands and if you accept Him, it will be credited to you.

Ezekiel 11:19 *"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,*

God says through the Prophet Ezekiel, I will take the very essence, the very core, the hard heart out of you and replace it with the very core of who I am, a brand new heart or spirit in you.

Shouldn't I Pray?

The short answer is yes. Your next question may be, how? Once again, prayer is a huge subject, but I can give you some simple things to remember that will help you get started, and you can begin to learn from here.

Remember God is your Father. Have a Father-child conversation with Him. He is not going to refuse to hear you just because you aren't really proficient at this prayer thing yet. He loves you and loves conversing with you. As a Father He's not trying to keep things from you, He's trying to give things to you. He's not looking for an excuse to withhold any good thing from you.

Luke 12:32 *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*

Take time to listen, and expect Him to talk back to you. Think of this, a good parent talks to their children, even when they newborn and don't understand what their parent is telling them. Even though they don't understand the words, they understand the parental love and respond to it. Parental conversation with a newborn is not about the deep secrets of life. Father's conversation with you in the beginning will be truth that He loves

you and thinks you are beautiful. But as you learn the conversation will deepen.

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

You don't have to be sorry for something, be thankful for something. Because of Jesus you can come boldly to Father. Notice it is called the throne of GRACE. This tells us we don't have to prove we deserve anything. You don't need to convince Him you are worthy to be there. Furthermore it says you will obtain mercy. The only people who need mercy are those who have done wrong. Father already knows that and not only does He still invite you to come in, but tells you to come boldly, not timidly. Also notice that even though you have done wrong, you will still find His grace to help you.

Live Jesus

Plug in to a local church where you can be taught the Word of God and participate in things that contribute to your spiritual growth. There you can also receive encouragement and help when you find yourself struggling.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as [is] the manner of some, but exhorting [one another,] and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

It has been well said there is strength in numbers. You are a part now of the family of God, so take advantage of the strength family provides.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 *Two [are] better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him [who is] alone when he falls, For [he has] no one to help him up.*

Tell Somebody

Now that you have received Jesus as your Savior you are assured that when your life on earth comes to an end you will spend eternity with Jesus. That is such an amazing peace to know you will not go to hell. However Jesus died for every person on earth and has asked you to help reach them with the same good news you heard.

You don't have to go to Bible school or seminary to do this. You don't have to wait another minute in fact. Just start telling other people what happened to you, and that they can have the same thing you now have. The next section of this book contains a prayer you can lead them in to receive Jesus as their Savior.

The more you learn of the Bible the more skilled you will become, but you already have the basic tools you need to lead someone else to Jesus because you know how it happened for you. What worked for you will work for them too.

Telling others the good news of Jesus will help solidify your new relationship with Him in your mind, making you stronger in your belief. I must also say that introducing someone else to Jesus is the most exciting thing you will ever do. Once you do it, you'll want to do it again and again.

Final Thoughts/Salvation Prayer

This little book is intended to give you some basic foundational things to begin your life with Jesus. If you have not yet received Jesus as your Savior, please pray this right now.

PRAYER: God in Heaven, I believe You sent Your Son, Jesus into this world to make a way for me have relationship with You. He took my place and paid for all of my sins by dying on a cross. You raised Him from the dead so I could have new life. I choose to trust what Jesus did as sufficient for my salvation. According to Your own word, I am now saved. Thank you for saving me.

You have made the most important decision of your life. A decision that effects where you will spend eternity. You will never be punished for your sins because you accepted that Jesus was punished in your place. You will never see the awful place called hell. Now tell others what Jesus has done for you, that He has saved you.

Daniel Shirley is Lead Pastor of Word of Life
Carlsbad, Carlsbad, New Mexico. You may contact
Word of Life at:

1102 West Mermod
Carlsbad, NM, USA 88220
E-mail: church@wolcarlsbad.com
Website: www.wolcarlsbad.com

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