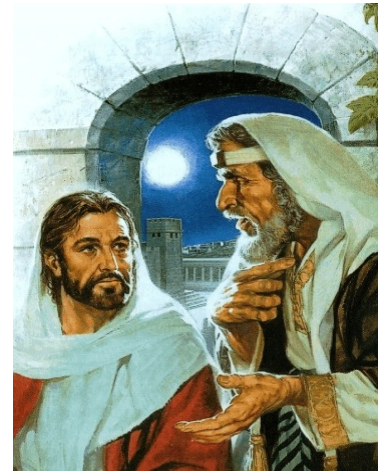


# Church of God

## Sunday School



### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN AGAIN?

#### DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Nicodemus asked Jesus an important question (John 3:1-8).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Being born again begins with a cleansing from sin by the Word (John 15:3; Psalm 119:9, 11).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Being born again brings a new heart and a new Spirit (Ezekiel 36:24-28; Ezekiel 11:17-20; Jeremiah 24:7).
- ❑ **Thursday:** There are two types of sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9-10; 1 Samuel 15:20-25; Luke 18:13-14).
- ❑ **Friday:** Being born again makes you a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17; Acts 9:1-22).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Being born again does not include returning to the old life (Matthew 6:24; John 5:14; John 8:11).

**MEMORY VERSE:** *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*  
—John 3:3

#### Nicodemus' Question

Throughout the world, many people celebrate their birthdays by having parties, receiving presents, and having a birthday cake. Although this occasion is called a *birthday*, it is actually a celebration of the day they were born. You are only physically born once. Can you imagine what Nicodemus must have thought when Jesus told him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"? Nicodemus asked Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" But Jesus was not speaking of being born physically. He told Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Jesus explained, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This new birth Jesus was talking about was a spiritual birth.

Jesus often used illustrations and parables to explain a spiritual lesson. When He told Nicodemus he must be born again, Jesus was using something physical (a birth) to explain something spiritual (being a part of the Kingdom of God). To be alive physically, Nicodemus had to be born of his earthly mother. Jesus called this being "born of the flesh." Likewise, to be alive spiritually (saved), Nicodemus needed to be born from above. (The words *born again* in the original Greek language actually mean "born from above.") Jesus called this being "born of the Spirit."

#### What Happens When You Are Born Again?

When you are born again, you begin a brand new life. All of your sins have been forgiven. The Bible calls this having our sins washed away. Ezekiel used the illustration of receiving a new heart and a new Spirit (God's Spirit). What brings about this cleansing, this spiritual heart transplant? It is God's Word that cleans you up. This new heart and new Spirit bring new desires into your life. You do not want to live as you did before (the life of a sinner), and God's Spirit within you makes you able to live differently (the life of a Christian).

When God brings conviction concerning one's sins, many people are sorry. Yet, there are two types of sorrow: worldly sorrow and Godly sorrow. Worldly sorrow is being sorry you got caught or sorry because of the consequences of sin; worldly sorrow is a selfish sorrow. However, Godly sorrow is being sorry you hurt God. Only Godly sorrow can lead to being born again. Being born again will bring about changes in one's behavior and language. Worldly sorrow does not bring about these changes; it only hopes for mercy concerning sin's consequences. It soon becomes apparent which type of sorrow the sinner is experiencing, because "godly sorrow worketh repentance to

salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

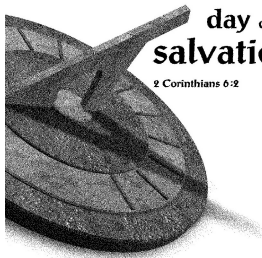
Nicodemus was an important religious leader; he was a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin (the supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Christ). He was believed to be very rich and had great influence. He had everything one might desire. Yet, Nicodemus was searching for something more. That is why he sought out Jesus. All his "righteousnesses" (or his accomplishments) were "as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Jesus let Nicodemus know that in spite of all his riches, position, and influence, he needed to be born again. He needed his nature (his desires and his actions) changed. Just as a leopard cannot change his spots (Jeremiah 13:23), neither could Nicodemus change his nature. He needed God's Spirit to come and live in his heart, making him a "new creature" in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). As a new creature, "old things are passed away" and "all things are become new." In other words, Nicodemus would not live the same way he had lived before. Once he was born again, he would live a Christian life by sinning "no more" (John 5:14).

**Now Is the Day of Salvation**

After speaking with Jesus, was Nicodemus born again? Although he came to Jesus at night (perhaps secretly for fear of being seen), later we read in the Bible that he spoke up for Jesus before the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-51) and of his bringing "myrrh and aloes" (perfumes and herbs) to prepare Jesus' body for burial (John 19:38-40). Christian tradition says Nicodemus was killed for his faith sometime in the first century. No doubt, none of that would have happened if Nicodemus had rejected the words of Jesus (as did the rich young ruler who "went away sorrowful"; Matthew 19:22). When Jesus spoke the words of eternal life to Nicodemus, that was his opportunity to be saved. He might not have had another chance to accept Jesus and be born again.

**Behold, now** is  
the **acceptable**  
**time;**  
behold, **now** is the  
day of  
**salvation.**

2 Corinthians 6:2



When you feel that Jesus is talking to you, knocking on your heart's door, wanting you to be born again (saved), do not put it off until another day. Do not say "I'm too young" or "I'll wait until later." You do not know if you will ever have another opportunity. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:2 that "now is the day of salvation." Right now (today) is all you can be sure about. Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." There is a possibility that later God will not be speaking to your heart, that you will not be able to hear His voice or find Him. In Genesis 6:3 God warned, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." Have you been born again? Have you asked God to forgive you of your sins, have you repented and also forsaken your sins? This is the most important decision you will ever make!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The more respected an individual was, the greater the quantity of spices used in preparing their body for burial. Nicodemus brought "about an hundred pound weight" to prepare Jesus' body for burial, the amount often used for a king.

**How to Know You Have Been Born Again**

Salvation is not based on people's opinions nor is it based on your feelings. These things can change. However, you can KNOW you have been born again. How? First, you must follow the plan of salvation: acknowledge you are a sinner, truly believe what Jesus said and did is true, and confess and forsake your sins. When you are saved, you become a Christian. You are born into the family of God. You are no longer a child of the devil. Your life, actions, and language will change. You will begin to act like your Father (God) because His Spirit is now living in you. In time it will become obvious to your family and friends that you are born again.

In Luke, Chapter 15, when the prodigal son returned to his father's house and asked forgiveness, he was restored to his father's family. After this, did he return to his previous way of living ("riotous" or immoral, sinful)? Did he leave his father's house again and return to the pigpen (a symbol of sin)? No! He could not be in his father's house and in the pigpen at the same time. Likewise, when you are born into God's family, you do not return to your previous life of sin. You are living a new life. The old sinful you is gone (Colossians 3:9), and now you are living a life of "righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Isaiah 35:8 calls it "The way of holiness." If you have been saved and are obeying everything God has showed you to do, you can KNOW that you are born again!



1. What did Nicodemus think Jesus meant when He said, "Ye must be born again"? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What does being "born of the flesh" mean? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What does being "born of the Spirit" mean? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What does the term "born again" mean in the original Greek language? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What illustration did Ezekiel use when describing the experience of being born again? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is the difference between worldly sorrow and Godly sorrow? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Who was Nicodemus? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Why did Nicodemus (who seemed to have everything) search out Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What does it mean when someone becomes "a new creature in Christ Jesus"? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Why is today the day of salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What did Isaiah call this new way of living? \_\_\_\_\_

12. How can you KNOW you have been born again? \_\_\_\_\_

**A Headline Reads:**

# **"10 Hollywood Actors You Did Not Know Were Born Again"**

**Look up the following Scriptures and discuss  
how they prove this headline to be contradictory.**

John 13:35

2 Corinthians 5:17

Matthew 7:18-20

