

Sermon on Breakthroughs Require Complete Rebirth

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2/18/2007

Text:

John 3:1-10 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³ In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ⁴ "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." ⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"

1 Introduction

Colleges have these societies called Greek societies where students live together and adhere to some codes of conduct and life. They carry names made out of the Greek alphabet such as Alpha Gamma Rho, Alpha Epsilon Pi, Delta Psi, or Zeta Beta Tau. In order to become a member of a Greek society you have to be initiated into it. The initiation consists of a series of events, some of them are humiliating called hazing (in Ghanaian secondary schools we called this homo-ing) and others are physically and/or mentally taxing. The idea is to break you down and reorient you to the thinking and ways of the society. In the context of this passage once you have gone through the initiation process we may say that you have born again as a fraternity brother/sister. You no longer belong to groups outside your society. As a result of this you are entitled to any benefits of the society throughout your life. These benefits can be significant as members pledge to help each other. It translates to job opportunities, political appointments, social connections, and so on.

New recruits to the army go through boot camp where they undergo indoctrination and military physical training to shake out the civilian mindset and attitudes and transform the physical body into military shape. When you successfully finish boot camp you become a real soldier. In the context of this passage we may say you have born again as a soldier. You are now entitled to the rights and privileges as a soldier.

In this passage Jesus teaches that in order for you to be part of the Kingdom of God you must be born into the kingdom. There are significant eternal and temporal benefits to being in the Kingdom of God. In order to receive these benefits you must be reborn into the Kingdom of God. You must be reborn by the Holy Spirit in all aspects of your life in order get your kingdom breakthroughs.

What does this mean? Let's explore our text to answer this question.

2 To learn about the requirements for rebirth you must have a positive curiosity

2.1 Nicodemus had a positive curiosity

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin who had followed Jesus' teachings and miracles. He reflected on the work of Jesus and concluded that this is not the work of Belzebug; it is the work of God. So, he approached Jesus in the night, when Jesus did not have crowds so he could get some one-on-one time with him. When he met Jesus he acknowledged the divinity of Jesus. So, unlike the other Pharisees who were looking to discredit or trap Jesus, Nicodemus saw something good in Jesus that he wanted to understand. Nicodemus had a positive curiosity when he told Jesus, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." (John 3:2) Even the fact that a member of the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin - who were antagonistic toward Jesus, will call him Rabbi was a sign of deference to Jesus' standing.

2.2 Jesus revealed a mystery of the Kingdom of God in response to his positive curiosity and his unstated needs

With this attitude of deference toward Jesus rather than the suspicious reaction of the other Pharisees and authorities, Jesus revealed a foundational mystery of the Kingdom of God to Nicodemus: “I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again.” (John 3:3) This response does not appear to be related to Nicodemus’ statement. In fact, this is the case; the response reveals the condition of the soul of Nicodemus – a soul searching for salvation. Jesus knew Nicodemus condition and needs even though Nicodemus had not expressed them. In the same way Jesus also knows your needs and condition and he will respond to them if you approach him with a genuine searching heart.

Jesus response to Nicodemus is the first time Jesus is making such a revelation as to the foundational requirements of the Kingdom of God. This revelation debunks the religious thinking of the day: good works, pious living, and temple offerings as the ticket to heaven. The ticket to heaven is to be born from heaven. The Greek words translated as “born again” may also be translated “born from above” or “born from heaven.” To be a natural born citizen of a country you have to be born in that country. Hence, to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven you have to be born from heaven.

3 To understand the requirements for rebirth you must have a sincere interest

3.1 Nicodemus showed a sincere interest to understand with a desire to do and not just to know

Nicodemus didn’t and couldn’t understand this revelation from Jesus about rebirth. It seems straightforward to Christians today because we have the benefit of the entire revelation of God in the Bible and centuries of theological study and thinking. Nicodemus didn’t have this advantage but Jesus expected that as a Pharisee who has risen to become one of the top 71 religious leaders in Israel, as a member of the Sanhedrin, surely he must be able to make the connection to Ezekiel 36:25-27, which says “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new

spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” So, Jesus chided him saying, “You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things?” (John 3:10)

Nicodemus didn't know and was not shy to ask the seemingly stupid question. I have always said I like people who ask stupid questions because stupid questions sometimes have the tendency to reveal deeper truths or facts about subject. Nicodemus' stupid question is one of these questions. It showed sincere interest by Nicodemus to do what Jesus was trying to tell him. He truly wanted to know the way and what he must do to enter heaven. This was no academic interest nor was it a journalistic interest nor was it an investigative interest. Nicodemus did not care about his position in Israel, his position in the Sanhedrin, his image among the religious elite, his stature among the wealthy but he cared most about his position in the Kingdom of Heaven and he wanted to assure his standing in this respect. O, that we will care less about the cares of this world and care more about our standing in the Kingdom of Heaven.

3.2 Jesus taught Nicodemus that he needs spiritual rebirth to see the kingdom of heaven

In response to Nicodemus' sincere interest in knowing how he can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus revealed another fundamental truth of life when he said, “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” (John 3:6) This statement is simple but establishes an important principle: to be part of a group, or place you have to be born from/by the place. If you want to be a soldier you cannot be “born” by the police but by the army. If you want to be part of Alpha Gamma Rho society you have to be “born” by Alpha Gamma Rho society. When it comes to spiritual things Jesus' statement means as an individual you may have different types of birth. There is the natural birth, which Jesus refers to as “flesh gives birth to flesh.” There is also spiritual birth, which he refers to as “spirit gives birth to spirit.” But even spiritual birth has two components. There is birth by the Holy Spirit and there is birth by the Satanic spirit. What group you want to be part of is the group you submit to for birth. Some have submitted to Satanic birth and have become part of Satan's kingdom and suffer the consequences. I hope you have submitted to Holy Spirit birth and have become part of God's kingdom.

4 Fulfilling the requirements for complete rebirth will give you breakthroughs

4.1 Rebirth is required in different aspects of your life

Paul speaks of this new rebirth in this way in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” But then writing to the Romans, who are in Christ, who are Christians, he says in Romans 12:2, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Also, in 1 Corinthians 8 Paul speaks of Christians who have a weak conscience and elsewhere Paul speaks of seared or unclear conscience. It seems then that some people don’t submit themselves completely to Holy Spirit rebirth. Their soul is reborn, but their minds are not, their hearts are not, or their consciences are not. They submit only parts of themselves to the Holy Spirit rebirth and hence become a contorted incomplete reborn. This concept of incomplete rebirth applies to other areas of your life.

4.2 For Financial Breakthrough you must be reborn into God’s financial plan

Consider the concept of giving. If you are a Christian you are commanded to tithe and urged to give offerings. But there are people who call themselves Christians who do not tithe and give negligible offerings. If you are completely reborn you will be moved to follow God’s commands according to Ezekiel 36:27 which says, “I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees.” But if you don’t obey the tithing command then you are not reborn in the area of giving. In other words, you have not been reborn as part of God’s financial plan. As a result you don’t give to God and you don’t receive from God. Your financial situation is bad because you are not part of God’s financial plan. No amount of prayers can remedy it until you submit to rebirth into God’s financial plan.

4.3 For Marital Bliss you must be reborn into God’s marital plan

Consider the institution of marriage. Jesus said in Matthew 19:5, “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a spiritual rebirth. Two people submit themselves to this marital rebirth and hence become one. To become one means the woman would feel any pinch on the man and vice versa. If that is the case why do we have a woman insult her husband miserably and a man beat up his wife

mercilessly. Statistically, this is becoming a common occurrence among Ghanaians in Worcester; not just Apostolic people. This is because the couple have not been reborn into marital unity – the two have not become one. Marital bliss cannot occur until you have been reborn into the marital plan of God.

4.4 Doing the same old things will yield the same old results; do something new

Profound statements are usually simple. They state the obvious that no one has stated. Their profoundness is found in their ability to capture some deep truth simply. A man called W.L. Bateman made such a profound statement when he said, “If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got.” If you keep on paying no tithes you'll keep on getting no financial breakthrough. If you want financial breakthrough then you have to do something different from what you have been doing. What should you do different? You must submit yourself to complete rebirth into God's financial plan.

5 Conclusion

Getting reborn into God's plans has significant eternal benefits and has significant temporal benefits. Consider what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” In the context of this verse, “these things” refer to food, drink, clothing, shelter, and peace of mind (don't worry). Aren't those the fundamental things that man strives for in this world: house, car, clothing, and nutritious meals. A billionaire cannot use his money for any other things other than these basic things; his things may be more expensive but they are still the basic things. He may even have less peace!

If you want to get the benefits of the Kingdom of Heaven then you have to be reborn completely in your soul, mind, heart, conscience, and all other situations of our life. It is then and only then “all these things will be given to you as well.”

If you want peace of mind even in the face of troubles you have to be completely reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you want marital bliss you have to be completely reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you want protection you have to be completely reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you want provision you have to be completely reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you want prosperity you have to be completely reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you want success you have to be completely reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you want breakthroughs in your situations in life you have to be completely reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven.