

A Clear Gospel Message - Part 1

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding repentance and sin, and being born again through a spiritual birth to see the kingdom of God.

Duration: 9:22

Scripture: John 3:6

Topics: "Spiritual Rebirth", "True Repentance"

Description

This sermon delves into the crucial concept of being born again as emphasized in the Bible, highlighting the necessity of true repentance and understanding of sin for genuine salvation. It addresses the misconception of salvation based solely on good deeds or religious practices, stressing the foundational importance of being spiritually reborn through the Holy Spirit. The message draws from the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, illustrating that even a morally upright and religious person like Nicodemus needed to experience a spiritual rebirth to enter God's kingdom.

Transcript

So, in this message I want to explain to you what it means to be born again. What do Christians mean or what does the Bible mean when it says we can be saved? Generally speaking in the church meetings we preach about holiness and growth mainly because most of the people who are here, I hope, are saved and born again. But there is always a need to explain the gospel of salvation because we are a growing church.

Every year new people are coming in. And I'll tell you something that I've heard from many people in our church in the last 32 years nearly. Many of them have told me, we thought we were saved before we came here.

When we came here we discovered we were not saved. And we got saved after coming here because we never knew what repentance was until we came here because we never knew what sin was. You cannot turn from sin until you know what sin is.

It's something like if I tell you stand up and face towards the north, how can you do it unless you know where the south is? If you know where the south is then you can turn towards the north. But if you don't know where south or east or west or anything is then you don't know where north is. And a lot of people are being told to turn to the north if they don't know where the south is.

In the same way a lot of people are being told to turn from sin but not being told what sin is. Or if sin is described in a general way like drinking, smoking, cinema going, gambling, a lot of people in the world say I don't need to be saved because I don't do those things in any case. So there's a lot of false understanding of repentance because of a false understanding of sin.

And I'm sure that there are many people who thought they were saved before they came here. It's only when they heard the message against sin and repentance that they really got converted. And also there's another reason and that is we live in a world where the standards in Christianity have come down tremendously.

Now if you were living 70-80 years ago or even when I was a young boy 50 years ago, it was much easier to hear a clear gospel in many, many churches. At least there were churches that just didn't preach the gospel and there were churches that preached the gospel. And in the ones that preached the gospel you could hear a clear message.

But it's not like that today. Today it's become a big hodgepodge of compromise in many churches and what you hear is not necessary. It's not necessarily the truth.

And also we have so many public meetings where people are told to believe in Jesus. But believing in Jesus doesn't bring salvation. There is no repentance.

There are a lot of television programs today where they are more interested in your money. They also don't help you to become saved. So it's not only newcomers who come here but we've got children growing up in our church who from the time they begin to understand if all they hear is about holiness and growth, what they are hearing is how to build the building but having laid no foundation.

Being born again is like the foundation of a building. If you don't lay the foundation and just try to live a good life it will be like following any other religion in the world which teaches live a good life. And many people find a satisfaction in that.

Yeah, I want to live a good life. Those are the walls, not the foundation. The foundation is you must be born again.

You must come to a new life. When Jesus used that expression in John's Gospel chapter 3, he used it to a man who was a bishop. Now think that many of you have seen what a bishop looks like.

He doesn't wear the white dress of priests because he's a little higher. He wears purple and he'll have a cross around his neck and a dog collar around his neck. It's as if he's sitting there and you tell him, you must be born again.

That's what Jesus said to the Bishop Nicodemus who was probably 60 or 70 years old. He said, you must be born again. Was Nicodemus an adulterer? John chapter 3 said, unless you're born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.

See Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews, it says in verse 1. A Pharisee, lived a very upright life. He wasn't fooling around with women. He wasn't cheating and things like that.

But he was not born again. It's not enough to be good. And also Nicodemus had the true religion.

He was not in some false religion. He had the true Bible, the Old Testament with him. He followed the only true religion there was on earth in those days.

Religion which Moses taught. Jesus said, you have to be born again. Otherwise you can't see the kingdom of God.

You can be an Israeli, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews without being born again. That's okay. You can get up and preach in the pulpit without being born again.

But to enter God's kingdom, you must be born again. You have to have a spiritual birth. And he said, how can I, verse 4, how can that be? Can I enter a second time into my mother's womb and be born? You see, his mind was only thinking of earth.

How can I go into my mother's womb and be born a second time? And Jesus said, no. Verse 6, that which is born of the flesh is flesh. If you get into your mother's womb a hundred times and come out, you'll still be flesh.

That doesn't help. Any number of that type of births doesn't help. I'm talking about a spiritual birth.

That which is born of the Holy Spirit is something spiritual. So born again is to be born of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said in verse 6. And he said in verse 7, you must be born again. It's interesting that Jesus didn't explain so many steps over there.

He just told him, simple thing, that Jesus, he himself would be lifted up on the cross to die, verse 14. And he also said that it was God in love who sent him to the world, verse 16, to die so that those who believe in him would have eternal life. And in verse 17, he said he had come to save the world.

And such a person will not be judged in the final day. But the judgment is this, verse 19, that when he came into the world, men loved darkness rather than light. Those who love darkness, that means they want to hide something.

Who's the man who likes to walk in the darkness or do things in the darkness? Always those who want to hide something. If you've got nothing to hide, you'll come out in the light. And so the one who practices the truth comes to the light, verse 21.

So the whole thing

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