

A Journey with Christ the Messiah

You Must Be Born Again

John 3:1-8, 16-21

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing a series that I have entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. We are currently looking at what Jesus taught during His ministry about the **Kingdom of Heaven**.

Four years ago I read the verse found in Matthew and Luke.

Matthew 6:33 (NASB)

³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

If the very FIRST thing that we should seek during our life on earth is "His kingdom and His righteousness", then we should know a whole lot more about it.

Thus far we've looked at

- What is the kingdom of heaven?
- Where is the kingdom of heaven?
- Who are the people who live in the kingdom?

Remember the parable of the "Treasure Hidden in the Field"?

Matthew 13:44 (NASB)

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a **treasure hidden in the field**, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Once this man found this treasure of unfathomable value, everything that he owned and all of his old plans went by the wayside. The **only** thing that he could think about was the treasure and what he needed to do to acquire it!

This is the passion by which we are to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Today we'll look at the **most important question of them all:**

"How do I enter into the kingdom of heaven?"

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 3:1-8, 16-21 (NASB)

3 Now 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 have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”
³ Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, 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? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into 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 be amazed 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 do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”...

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

As we prepare to continue on this journey, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Let's continue the journey!

BODY:

I. THE FLESH VERSUS THE SPIRIT.

In this scripture Jesus told Nicodemus that unless one is **born again** he cannot **see or enter into** the kingdom of God. Then He describes what it means to be born again.

There is a tendency in our world today to classify everyone that is not a Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, etc... as a Christian.

But Jesus Christ said that only those who have been "**Born Again**" will become Christians and enter into the kingdom of God.

This means that there must be a CONVERSION in our life. So, if we must be converted in order to be saved, then we must first understand "**What is conversion**"???

ILLUSTRATION:

One of the best ways I know to explain it is something you learned back in grade school... adding fractions.

What is the sum of $1/3 + 1/4$? How do you add them together???

You have to first find the least common denominator (LCD). In this case, the LCD is 12.

So $1/3$ is converted to $4/12$ and $1/4$ is converted to $3/12$.

Then you can add $4/12 + 3/12 = 7/12$.

What I want to talk to you about is conversion...becoming a Christian, having your sins forgiven.

In math, you could not add two different fractions until you converted them into the lowest common denominator.

So, How about Spiritual Conversion?

We are flesh...we are a carnal being, ruled by the flesh, living for pleasure, and seeking only to please our natural, worldly lusts and desires. We are temporal, we will pass away.

God is Spirit... God is not controlled by the flesh and lusts and sin. He is love and purity, and holiness, and righteousness.

These two are totally, completely, diametrically opposite. You cannot go to heaven because flesh cannot inherit heaven.

That is exactly what Jesus told Nicodemus in our scripture today...

John 3:3b-8 (NASB)

³...“Truly, truly, 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? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into 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 be amazed 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 do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”...

Romans 8 tells us more...

Romans 8:5-8 (NASB)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

So... you see the flesh and the Spirit are like life and death, light and dark, or ice and fire. They are contrary to one another.

So... if we want to be in the Kingdom of Heaven and be saved, **we have a problem!...**

WE ARE FLESH and **HE IS SPIRIT** AND THE TWO DO NOT MIX!

So...what do we have to do????? Find the least common denominator????? OK. But how do we do that? We have nothing in common (no LCD).

We are flesh; He is not! He is spirit; we are not! A common denominator would be a God-Man kind of "mutation" or something. But we are not a God-Man mutation. Flesh and blood cannot go to heaven or please God and WE are flesh and blood. And because we are flesh, we have all sinned and the wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23.

So the question becomes "How can we become a righteous spirit so we can be saved?" Jesus says we must be "**Born of the Spirit**".

At one time that was impossible. Spirit and flesh were completely separate and no connection was possible. That is what the veil in the temple taught... separation between God and man, between holy and unholy, between Spirit and flesh. The two were eternally separated because there was no common denominator.

But there is good news! GOD SENT A COMMON DENOMINATOR. The veil was separated when Jesus died on the cross indicating that each of us now have access to God.

John 3:16-17 (NASB)

16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

God sent His Son, Jesus, to save us. Jesus came as GOD IN THE FLESH!!!! He is our common denominator. Now, there is a way for man to come to God, for flesh to be united with Spirit. And Jesus says that we can be united with God if we are **born again**.

II. YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.

HOW??????

The very first occasion after the resurrection of Christ, in which the Jews asked what to do to be saved is found in Acts 2.

Acts 2:36-41 (NASB)

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" **38** Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." **40** And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" **41** So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

He shows that baptism was part of the plan of salvation and that those who were baptized understood that it was **for** the remission of sins and the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately many denominations in today's world claim that baptism is not necessary for salvation. They claim that you need only to recite the "Sinners Prayer".

One example of the "sinners prayer" from a tract goes as follows:

Oh God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus was my substitute when he died on the cross. I believe His shed blood, death, burial and resurrection were for me. I now receive Him as my Savior. I thank you for the forgiveness of my sins, and the gift of salvation and everlasting life, because of your merciful grace.

Another shorter version reads like this:

Oh God, I am a sinner lost and hell bound. I repent. Have mercy upon me and save me for Christ's sake. Amen.

Now the first question someone might ask is, "Why are there two sinner's prayers"? Why do they vary? They are quite similar in that they both acknowledge one's personal sinfulness, but there are differences, also. The first one never mentions repentance, but the latter one does. So, which is it? Do sinners need to repent of sin, or is it "faith only"? The first prayer includes "receiving Christ"; the second omits it.

These discrepancies would not exist **IF** the writers of these two tracts had presented the truth from the Scriptures. What many people may not realize is that the Bible does not contain "the sinner's prayer" anywhere. If it did, the reader would see book, chapter, and verse following a citation of it. The fact is, however, that neither tract is quoting a verse from the Bible. Both writers have made up what they consider in their own minds to be a version of a nonexistent prayer. That is the reason for the variation.

It is amazing how trusting so many people are--especially with something so important as their salvation. If one has been taught "the sinner's prayer," he should wonder why it is never used in situations in which it would be totally appropriate in the scriptures.

When the Jews on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 learned that they had crucified the Messiah they were pierced to the heart and asked Peter what they must do to be saved, why didn't Peter say, "Just pray the sinner's prayer" and write it out for us to share with others?

The New Testament clearly teaches that salvation does include baptism as part of the process.

Consider Saul's conversion in the book of Acts. Saul was persecuting and executing Christians because he thought that Jesus was a false Messiah.

Acts 9:1-6 (NASB)

9 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ² and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He *said*, "**I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, ⁶ but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.**"

Saul was blinded by the light and led into Damascus. He spent three days there before he met Ananias. Now I want you to notice what Ananias told Saul what he must do **AFTER he believed, had repented, and prayed for three days.**

Acts 22:12-16 (NASB)

¹² “A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. ¹⁴ And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’

Although Saul had believed that Jesus was the Messiah and had repented of his sins, and fasted and prayed for three days, he was still told to be baptized so that his sins could be washed away.

III. SET YOUR MIND ON THE SPIRIT.

BUT THERE IS MORE.

CONVERSION INVOLVES CHANGE.

Conversion has to do with changing our minds from being set on what the sinful nature desires to having our minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Our old will to please the self and flesh is converted to the new desire to please the Spirit.

Romans 8:5-11 (NASB)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus taught us that we must be born again in order to be saved and enter into the kingdom of heaven. When we are born of the spirit through baptism, we are promised forgiveness of our sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:3-7 (NASB)

³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Become part of His kingdom. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

He is Lord!