

What do you think?

Does a good-living person like Nicodemus really need to be “born again”? Why do you think that? Is that a bit discouraging, or does it bring hope to everybody?

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

3 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? ¹¹ I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3.1-16 N.I.V.

Life after Birth

Peter J Blackburn

No, it’s not a misprint! The topic really is “Life after Birth,” just as it says!

Many folk have shown great interest in “life after death”. We’ve even heard the stories of people who had been declared to be clinically dead and then revived. They have told what they experienced – either peace and well-being or fear and horror.

But, fascinating though it may be, I don’t see life after death as the first and basic topic. The important question, I believe, is whether there is life after birth.

A Better Life



I suppose lots of people spend a great deal of time, energy and money looking for a better life. Yet I’ve had folk say to me, “If eternal life is just this life going on and on, I don’t want it!”

So we’ve projected the better life beyond the grave. That’s where life will be ideal – without all the problems, weaknesses and trials of this present life.

We try to cram a lot into this present life, but it can’t hold everything! It does have its limitations. The realisation that it has an end at some future time unknown to us is certainly one of these, and the fear of death can hang as a cloud over all that we do.

But the major limitation is personal. Like – “I love life. It’s people I can’t stand!” Or to bring it right home – “If you could kick your worst enemy in the pants every time he did you a bad turn, you’d be so sore you’d never be able to sit down!”

Some seek the better life in shops and industry. Others are always looking to “get away from it all” in some favourite holiday spot or an alternative lifestyle.

But we can’t escape from ourselves and even away from it all things can never be just quite right. Perhaps that’s why some people seem unsure that they would like their present life to go on and on! We wouldn’t like our present problems extended into eternity!

What do you think?

“The important question, I believe, is whether there is life after birth...” Is this the real issue for people in the Burdekin in the twenty-first century? What “drives” people these days? Why do you think some people are more afraid of life than they are of death?

What’s the Matter?

The farmer doesn’t go around pulling up the cane plants to see how they are growing! Fertile soil, water and sunshine are essential to their survival and growth – minus the cane grubs! To disturb the relation of the plants to the element which is crucial to their life will doom them to death.



And just as surely, we were designed to live in relation to our Creator, God, and separation from him means death. I don’t mean instant physical death. That obviously hasn’t happened! But, without God, something in us has died and life cannot fully be what it was intended to be.

Paul puts it this way, “In the past you were spiritually dead because of your disobedience and sin” (Eph. 2.1). Sometimes people say, “But I’m just not interested in religion” – as if it’s merely a matter of personal preferences. But this is a matter of life and death!

Or, as Paul put it in another letter, “What did you gain from doing the things that you are now ashamed of? The result of those things is death!” (Rom. 6.21).

What do you think?

“We were designed to live in relation to our Creator, God, and separation from him means death... Without God, something in us has died and life cannot fully be what it was intended to be.” Do you agree? How does this relate to the experience of folk outside the church?

Life after Birth?

It’s no use postponing the whole question of God and eternal life until after we die. That’s too late! The better life is meant to begin now! We can know life after birth – in fact, it is the guarantee of life after death!

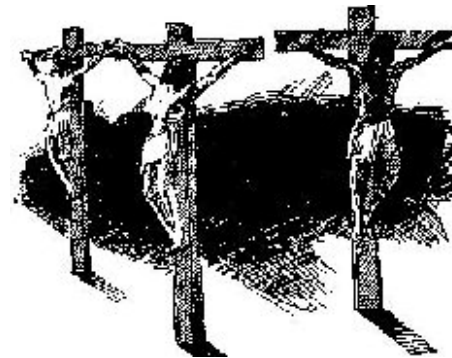
Nicodemus was a very religious Jewish man who really wanted to find out about Jesus. Something about Jesus must have impressed him.

We aren’t really sure what Nicodemus’ question was, for Jesus cut across it with this stunning statement, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again (from above)” (John 3.3). This was evidently a new and revolutionary concept for Nicodemus, so Jesus stated it again – “No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (v. 5). It is not enough to be born physically or “born of water” – we need a spiritual birth too!



To suggest that he might need such a thing might well have offended the good-living Nicodemus, but he was a genuine seeker after the truth and asked, “How can this be?” (v. 9).

The answer of Jesus centres on his own life and work. Nicodemus knew how the Israelites had been dying of snakebite in Moses’ time. The bronze snake on the pole symbolised the punishment of their disobedience. When they looked at it, they were admitting the wrong they had done and were healed.



And that, Jesus explained, is like the way this spiritual birth becomes possible for us, for he himself would be lifted up (on a cross) so that everyone who looks to him in faith will have eternal life.

That’s where that key verse fits in – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3.16).

And that’s life now, not just in the future! John put it this way, “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5.11,12).

You are alive – heart and lungs functioning! But do you know the reality of life after birth? It is God’s free gift in Jesus Christ (Rom. 6.23).