

Born From Above

John 2:23-3:15

17 March 2019 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

Big Question: How can we change?

Big Idea: Jesus came from heaven to change us so that we can get into heaven.

Introduction

This has been one of those weeks that make you stop and think.

The working week began with Roman Catholic Cardinal George Pell being sentenced for child abuse.

Then Friday saw a horrifying massacre of Muslims during Friday prayers at mosques in Christchurch.

Many people are reeling from these events.

How do we start to make sense of it all?

Even people who usually have not trouble voicing an opinion are struggling to find appropriate words to express themselves.

But at the very least, these events must show us that there's something wrong with the world.

There's a deep brokenness in people that can't just be covered up.

It's equally clear that something needs to change.

What can we do? How can we respond?

We need solutions because no one wants these things – or anything like them – to happen ever again.

What will bring about the kind of change that events like this make us yearn for?

Many want to lock up all the bad people and throw away the key.

Should we introduce more laws that outlaw particular groups or beliefs or behaviours or things?

What can be done with education?

If we teach people how their behaviour affects others and the right way of behaving, will that help?

The last thing I want to do is trivialise either the events or these responses to them.

It's easy, but dangerous, to reduce complex situations down into one neat solution.

But if we've got a Biblical world-view (and even if we haven't), then we need to realise that many of these suggestions are all only partial solutions.

They'll help, but they'll never fix the heart of the problem because our hearts are the problem.

And that means that true change only ever comes from being changed from the inside.

Outline

We're continuing our journey through John's account of Jesus' life.

Last week was quite confrontational as we saw a different side of Jesus to the meek and mild picture we usually get.

Jesus caused quite a stir in the temple as he used a whip to drive out the animals being sold in the temple courts.

He did this because true worship of God was being disrupted.

Jesus explained something that his disciples didn't understand until after he rose from the dead – he came to enable us to worship God truly.

The whole temple system would be fulfilled in him.

You might've noticed that Scott pulled up just short of the end of the chapter though.

And the reason for that is that the last few verses in chapter 2 actually set up things for chapter three where Jesus has another confrontation.

This time though, it's with one of the most powerful leaders in Israel.

These are tricky verses, so I hope you've got your thinking caps on.

What do they show us about Jesus?

They show us that **Jesus came from heaven to change us so that we can get into heaven.**

- The Need for Change (2:23-3:3)
- The Means of Change (3:4-8)
- The Power to Change (3:9-15)

The Need for Change (2:23-3:3)

Firstly, we'll begin by seeing our need for change.

According to verse 23 of chapter two, Jesus is still at the Passover festival in Jerusalem.

While he was in town, he was performing a number of what John calls signs.

We'd call them miracles.

Exactly what these signs were is a mystery because John doesn't tell us.

We've only seen one miracle in John's gospel so far – Jesus turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana – but there were certainly more.

John only records a small selection of Jesus' miracles for us.

He wasn't trying to write a detailed biography of everything that happened in Jesus' life.

He only records what we need to know to believe in Jesus.¹

These signs/miracles had a big impact on many people though.

Which isn't that surprising; what Jesus was doing made clear that he was extraordinary.

And people believed in his name because of it.

Jesus' ministry seems to be welcomed as a raging success.

Which is why it's so surprising when we read in verse 24 that Jesus wouldn't entrust himself to them.

There's a bit of a word play going on here in Greek.

The same word is used of both Jesus and these people.

They believed in Jesus and yet Jesus wouldn't believe in them.

Why would Jesus respond like that?

Well, it shows us that he certainly wasn't in it for the fame that comes from a big crowd.

These people believe in Jesus the miracle worker, but they don't yet have faith in Jesus the one who can forgive their sins.

In chapter 4, Jesus calls the crowd out for only believing because of the signs he's doing.²

That might sound quite judgemental, which it is.

But it isn't unfair because Jesus knows exactly what they're thinking.

A number of times in the gospel, John makes it clear that Jesus knows all of our thoughts, feelings dreams and desires.³

How can he know that without us telling him, without testimony?

He doesn't need us to tell him, he knows our hearts and minds.

Don't be too down on these people though.

Don't write them off yet because this isn't the end of the story.

And don't strike Jesus off as meanie too quickly either.

It's not that he doesn't care about people.

In chapter 10, we clearly see that he will lay down his life for the sheep who put their trust in him.

But these people – at this point in time – don't have true faith in him.

It's a good time to pause and ask, "What attracts you to Jesus?"

Perhaps it's actually nothing at all.

You might be quite indifferent towards Jesus, thinking that he has no bearing on your life whatsoever.

Some people are attracted to his teaching and especially his example of morality.

Others are attracted to him by the belief that he'll give them money and power.

As we'll see though, none of those things are motivations for genuine faith in Jesus.

The original Greek manuscripts of the Bible aren't broken up into chapters – that only came about much later on.

John describes the response of a general group of people at the end of chapter two.

At the beginning of chapter three, he starts to get specific.

When this man Nicodemus is introduced in verse one, we're meant to see him as a representative of these people that Jesus can't put his trust in.

Not that Nicodemus would've seemed untrustworthy from the outside.

Quite the opposite, he would've appeared to be the kind of bloke that you could put your trust in.

Despite the fact that he had a Greek name, he was a Jew.

He was an impressive man.

In all the records we still have, the name 'Nicodemus' is only ever connected with one very powerful family.

So, it's quite likely that he part of this wealthy family at the top of the food chain.

Not only was he wealthy, he also had political connections.

As a member of the Jewish ruling council – the Sanhedrin – a group of 70 or 72 political leaders, he was responsible for ruling Jews all around the world.

He was part of the political elite.

And on top of that, he was clearly deeply religious.

He was a Pharisee.

Pharisees were fanatical about following everything in the Law and Prophets, as well as all the oral traditions that were passed down.

It's hard to see in the NIV, but in verse 10, Jesus calls him "THE teacher of Israel", so it's quite possible that he was some kind of leading religious teacher to boot.

He had the trifecta – money, political power and religious power.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus with the purpose of checking him out.

As a member of the Sanhedrin, I think it's likely that he was interested in Jesus' ministry.

I couldn't find anyone else who said this, but do you remember how in chapter one, the leaders in Jerusalem sent a delegation of priests and Levites to check out John the Witness?

If they were interested in baptisms in the wilderness, how much more interested are they going to want to investigate the signs Jesus is doing in the middle of Jerusalem?

John drops in this little detail that he came at night.

It's easy to miss and it could just be that John's setting the scene.

John normally doesn't just include extra details for the sake of it though, so it should make us ask, "Why did he include that?"

Well, obviously, it's because that's when Nicodemus came to Jesus – at night.

It could be that he was embarrassed to be seen coming to find out about Jesus or he wanted to talk late into the night.

I think there's more to it than that though.

We meet Nicodemus two more times in the gospel of John.

In chapter seven, the chief priests send temple guards to arrest Jesus.⁴

The guards come back empty handed because they're astounded by Jesus' teaching.

The Pharisees get upset with them, saying that none of the rulers have been deceived by this man's teaching.

Nicodemus seems to be softer to Jesus when he points out that their laws say that a man should be heard before he's judged.

The last reference is the most interesting though.

In chapter 19, Jesus is betrayed and abandoned by his friends before being crucified on a Roman cross.

Except for two men: Joseph of Arimathea who goes to Pilate, asks for Jesus' body and takes it away to be buried.

Listen to how the other bloke is described:

John 19:39–40 (NIV11) ³⁹ He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰ Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

John doesn't describe him as Nick the big cheese – wealthy religious and political leader.

He refers to Nicodemus as the guy who came in the dark.

The only other person who's described like that in John's gospel is Judas – the disciple who betrayed him.⁵

Light and dark are used as symbols in John's gospel.⁶

Dark describes evil and badness, and light describes goodness.

There's a battle between light and darkness, good and evil, and good wins.

We've already been introduced to this in chapter 1:

John 1:5 (NIV11) ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John's subtly saying in chapter three that Nicodemus was a man in moral and spiritual darkness.

He's a man who needs to be changed.

And by chapter 19, we're meant to see that he's moved from darkness to light.

At this point though, he's still in darkness.

That's not how Nicodemus would've seen himself.

He was a Pharisee.

The Pharisees were meticulous in their efforts to try and follow everything that God had commanded and a whole lot more beside as well.

After God's people came back to the land after being booted out into exile, there were many who were determined that exile would never happen again.

So they tried to do their utmost best to keep all the laws and commandments.

And this was one of their leaders.

I wonder how you see yourself?

We've already seen that Jesus knows us.

In fact, he knows us better than we know ourselves.

If you were to give yourself a morality exam, how do you think you'd do?

Most of us probably think we'd do alright.

Sure, we mightn't think that we deserve to be at the top of the class, but we'd definitely give ourselves a pass mark.

I bet that Nicodemus felt the same.

But Jesus knows the deep rebellion that's in all of us.

Our desire to make ourselves the rulers of this world and do things our own way.

He knows that we're determined to please ourselves, even when we tell ourselves that we're trying to please others.

This is the root cause of all the troubled and strife we cause for ourselves and others.

This is the problem that Bible calls sin.

Sin affects us all. Sin is at the heart of the human condition.

Nicodemus was looking for change, in fact, I suspect that's the reason he came up to Jesus in the first place.

Along with the rest of Israel, he was looking for God's Messiah – God's chosen servant – who would come and fix all the problems in the world.

The prophets told God's people to be on the lookout for a king who'd bring peace.

A leader who'd rule with justice and righteousness.

Someone who'd boot out the oppressive leaders of the nations around and rule from within.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus to find out if he's that man.

He's very polite, honouring Jesus by calling him "Rabbi".

Unlike some of the other leaders, he certainly doesn't accuse him of working for the devil.⁷

He doesn't actually ask a question, but he makes a statement in verse two:

John 3:2 (NIV11) ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

It drives me absolutely bananas when people don't ask a question when it'd be a lot easier if they did.

My kids do it all the time.

They'll make a statement like, "I'm thirsty."

While that information is fine, the problem is that it's not solution driven and it's too difficult for a simple man like me.

I just want them to ask, "Can I please have a drink of water?"

Not asking a question is called "high context".

You're meant to know what's being asked without them actually asking.

Although Nicodemus doesn't ask a question, it's clear that he wants to know whether what he's heard – and possibly seen – about Jesus is true.

And probably even more importantly than that, what does this mean?

Nicodemus is probing or challenging Jesus.

He's saying that Jesus must've come from God, otherwise he couldn't do the signs that he's been doing.

Which is true enough.

But Nicodemus seem full of his own self-importance, convinced that he's been able to work Jesus out.

He comes saying, "we know" who you are.

Jesus says, "Amen, Amen."

Christians usually say, "Amen" at the end of a prayer because it just means truly.

It's a sign of agreement.

Jesus is saying, "Really, truly, I tell you.

To even see heaven, we need to be changed."

As we've looked at this passage in small groups this week, a number of people pointed out that Jesus replies, even though Nicodemus wasn't even asking a question.

And yet Jesus seems to go in a completely different direction to what Nicodemus does in verse 3.

What's going on?

If you look carefully at verse 3, you'll see that there's a footnote in your Bibles.

In the NIV, it says, "The Greek for *again* also means *from above*; also in verse 7."

Basically you can also translate verse three like this:

John 3:3 (NIV11) ³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born from above."

That's what the word means in all the other places it's used in John, as well as elsewhere in the New Testament.⁸

The only reason it's translated as "again" is because that's the way Nicodemus understands it in verse 4.

Jesus is agreeing with Nicodemus.

He's basically saying to Nicodemus that he's right.

The signs show that Jesus has been born from above.

So he can see the kingdom of God.

Jesus can see the reality that the signs have been pointing to.

John doesn't talk about the kingdom of God very often – in fact, it only comes up in one other place in John's gospel.

In the synoptic gospels, it's a term that's used all the time.

In the Old Testament, it's used to describe God's rule over the whole world.

It's anywhere that that Jesus' reign and rule exists.

Nicodemus, on the other hand, cannot.

Nicodemus can't enter the kingdom of God.

Not only can't he enter the kingdom, he can't even see it.

He can see the signs, but he can't understand what they point to because – unlike Jesus – he hasn't been born from above.

This must've been a shock to Nicodemus.

Most likely, his expectation would've been that he'd see God's kingdom when he was resurrected on the last day.

That hope came from passages like Ezekiel 37, where God's Spirit blows in and brings the dry bones of Israel back to life.

The typical expectation was that every Jew would enter the kingdom unless they'd explicitly denied God or done something really bad.

Jews were waiting for the kingdom to come, expecting it would arrive on the last day.

And Nicodemus probably thought that his place in it was assured because of his ethnicity and his good works.

He was a good Jew who thought he did all the right things.

But good works and being moral isn't enough.

Jesus said that you have to be born again.

Nicodemus would've thought that the world around him needed to change.

It would be a better place if only those people were nicer.

If only she was easier to get along with, everything would be okay.

If only there wasn't so much hate in other people.

Nicodemus was looking for someone who would fix the world out there.

Jesus was saying that what he needed was someone who fixed the world in here.

Jesus is saying that he needs to be changed from the inside.

Even Nicodemus needs to be transformed.

We're all like Nicodemus.

We want a mighty king to come and establish his kingdom and fix all our problems.

And our spiritual blindness is so great that we can't even see that we're the ones who need to be changed to.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus thinking he knows what's going on, but he doesn't at all.

Although he comes to Jesus making all the right noises, he clearly doesn't have the knowledge that he needs.

He think he knows how religion works, but he's a long way from the mark.

Religion can blind us.

Nicodemus was religious, but unconverted and that's why he just doesn't get it.

He's come to find out for himself if Jesus really is the one who'll bring in God's kingdom.

When actually, his spiritual blindness is so severe that he see the kingdom the signs point to.

Unless he's born from above.

What we need is rebirth.

Nicodemus – like us all – had a need to be changed.

The Means of Change (3:4-8)

Not surprisingly, that blows Nicodemus' mind.

As a learned man of Israel, he thought that he was looking for the right person.

Jesus is saying that he needs to be changed into the right kind of person.

How can that change happen then? How does this work?

What is the means of change?

Nicodemus is clearly confused, because he asks the question he does in verse four:

John 3:4 (NIV11) ⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Nicodemus hears what Jesus says and takes it quite literally.

He thought Jesus was saying that he actually had to be born again.

Apart from the physical impossibility of climbing back into his mother's womb, the whole idea that his whole life could be undone seemed far-fetched.

How could all the bad things he'd done be unwound other than by erasing them all and starting again?

If I was summarising what Jesus says, it'd be: “It's not physical rebirth, you nong.

“This isn't a physical thing. It's spiritual.”

Jesus does the “truly, truly” thing again in verse 5:

John 3:5 (NIV11) ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

What exactly does that mean?

This is where it gets tricky.

The Spirit is the relatively easy bit here.

Water is much harder to get our heads around though.

Water could be a symbol for human birth.

The water might mean amniotic fluid.

The problem with that is that there's no evidence from the first century (or the few centuries before or after) that water was ever used to mean physical birth.

Besides, the similarities between verses 3 and 5 are clear.

Notice how they're almost the same, except for "enter" instead of "see" and the last phrase.

Being born of "water and the Spirit" is the same as being "born from above".

The water could mean the water of baptism.

Jesus and his disciples did baptise people.⁹

It's unlikely that it's a symbol of Christian baptism because that didn't come until later and so it wouldn't have made much sense to Nicodemus.

When John explains something that people only got later, he makes that clear, just like he did with Jesus being raised from the dead after three days in chapter two.

It could also be John's baptism – the baptism of repentance.

After all, John the Witness says that he baptises with water and the one after him will baptise with the spirit.

However, John the gospel writer doesn't focus much on that aspect of John the Witness' ministry, so it seems unlike to be what's on his mind here.

I think it's an allusion to something in the Old Testament.

The strongest reason for thinking this is that Jesus expects that Nicodemus should know what he's talking about.

In verse seven, Jesus says that Nicodemus shouldn't be surprised by this.

And then again, in verse 10, there's the expectation that as a teacher, he should know this already.

Nicodemus may or may not have known about John's ministry in detail, but he definitely should've known the Law and the prophets.

The prophet Ezekiel looked forward to a day when God would gather his people back from exile.

Here is part of God's promise:

Ezekiel 36:25–27 (NIV11) ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

There's two parts to this.

Firstly, water – God will wash us clean as he cleanses us from the inside.

Secondly, a new heart and a new spirit.

Spirit doesn't just refer to the Holy Spirit.

Your spirit was thought of as a like your life force.

What we need is fresh start, a new beginning, in short, to be reborn.

We need a complete overhaul before we can enter the kingdom of God.

Can you imagine what it'd be like if we went into heaven like we are?

If he just picked us up and placed us there, it'd be a complete disaster.

If the kingdom was perfect before we went in, I'd be ruined as soon as you or I or anyone else went into the place.

First, we need to be changed.

We have a spiritual problem and it needs a spiritual solution.

Spiritual rebirth can only come about by the work of the Spirit.

Jesus is saying that human birth isn't enough.

Flesh gives birth to flesh.

Humans give birth to other humans, not dogs.

Spirit gives birth to spirit.

That means that it's not enough just to be born into the right family.

Just because your parents might enter the kingdom doesn't automatically mean that you get to as well.

If you're going to have eternal life, you personally need to trust in Jesus.

Every birth is a miracle, but human birth doesn't produce children of God.

We need to be born of God by believing in his name.

John touched on this in his introduction:

John 1:12–13 (NIV11) ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

How does the Spirit make this happen?

What's the formula.

Well, the mechanics don't really matter, or at least they're not for us to know.

And we don't really need to know because birth is something that happens to us, it's not something we can do or make happen for ourselves.

We obviously know more about the predicting the weather than the ancients did.

Even still, the wind is beyond our ability to predict, far less control.

A few weeks ago, we were watching Tropical Cyclone Uma.

The BoM tried to predict where they thought it'd go, but they didn't know for sure.

In the end, it went a different direction.

Wind isn't a random example that's being used here.

The Hebrew word for wind and Spirit are the same.

We can't control the Spirit any more than we can control the wind, but it's no less real.

And the effects are just as real too.

We see the effects in people's lives.

Jesus says that we'll be known by our fruit.

Perhaps you're like Nicodemus.

You don't think there's anything wrong with you.

You think all the problems of the world lie outside of you.

Are you stuck, wondering how you can change?

We try our best to change.

There's a joke that goes like this: Why is a man like the weather?

Nothing can be done to change either one of them.

When we try to change ourselves, the wins are small.

At the most profound level though, we are limited in how much we can do.

We can try self-help books.

Psychological techniques might move us forward a little.

Sometimes, we feel like all we can do is just try a little harder.

And we conclude that's the best we can do.

In the immortal words of ABBA, "Knowing me, know you, that's the best I can do."

Jesus is saying that change possible, but only if we undergo spiritual rebirth.

And you can't do this by yourself.

This is a different approach to most religions which say that you just have to try harder to get there.

The means of real change is God's Spirit being at work in your life to change you.

The Power to Change (3:9-15)

Where does this power to change come from?

Nicodemus is clearly perplexed by what Jesus has said.

We can see that from the fact that he asks, "How can this be?" in verse 9.

I think he's saying more than just, "Huh?" though.

He wants to understand how this works but he doesn't even have the categories to know what Jesus is saying.

In verse 10, Jesus basically says, "Come on, Nicodemus. This is very basic stuff - Knowing God 101."

Jesus clearly expects that someone in his position should know this stuff.

Especially if he's THE teacher in Israel.

And yet there's more to be said.

The "we" language jumps out at us in verse 11.

I think that Jesus is paying Nicodemus out here.

Remember how Nicodemus came to Jesus in verse 2, saying that "We know that you are a teacher come from God."

He thought that he had the whole thing worked out.

Jesus is picking up on that: "e speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen."

Nicodemus came to Jesus speaking of what he "knew".

He testified to what he'd seen.

Jesus' evidence and Nicodemus' was the same.

And yet Nicodemus didn't actually believe it.

He's seen the evidence that Jesus knows what he's talking about because he's from God, and yet Nicodemus won't believe the very thing he's said.

If he won't believe what Jesus says about his kingdom on earth, how's he going to understand what happens in heaven?

That information is clearly too great for him.

Jesus isn't going to reveal what Nicodemus won't believe.

In the words of my own father, Jesus is basically saying, "That's for me to know and you to find out."

Only Jesus is qualified to speak of heavenly things.

Only the Son of Man has been into heaven and is therefore able to explain what goes on.

We saw back in chapter one that this is his role:

John 1:51 (NIV11) ⁵¹ He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

But then Jesus finishes by saying something more about earthly things.

How can this rebirth actually take place?

Where does the power for us to change, for us to be washed clean come from?

The greatest miracle is that our sins can be forgiven because of the power of the cross.

To explain this, Jesus compares what he will do to what's already happened.

The snake in the wilderness here isn't a reference to John the Baptist!

He's referring back to a very obscure event in the history of Israel.

God's people were disgruntled and rebelling against him in the wilderness.

As a form of punishment, God sent snakes that bit them and caused them to die.

That would've been a terrible situation.

But God also provided a solution.

He made a way for those who turned to him to be saved.

You can read about it in Numbers 21:8-9:

Numbers 21:8-9 (NIV11) ⁸ The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

What's that got to do with what Jesus is saying here?

God's people were still disgruntled and rebellious.

Our sin condition is deep, it runs so deep that we can't deal with it ourselves.

We needed a solution provided for us.

And just like he did in the wilderness, God has provided the ultimate solution for us.

Jesus is the grace that comes instead of grace already given.¹⁰

God lifted the Son of Man up onto the cross.

And there he died for the sins of his people, so that our debt could be forgiven and we could be washed clean.

On the cross, Jesus died to pay the penalty for sin.

Not only did he die, but on the third day God lifted him up again.

Why?

Not just so that our sins can be forgiven, but so that we can have new life in him.

John tells us in verse 15:

John 3:15 (NIV11) ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

Scott will unpack all that more next week.

You need to believe in Jesus.

But you might ask, "What's the difference between this belief and the people at the end of chapter two?"

The difference is that this belief isn't just in a miracle worker, but in the one who saves us from our sin.

Saving belief comes from trusting in the one who washes our sins away and gives us a new heart.

So, there is one crucial question to ask you today.

Do you want change?

Do you wish that things would be different?

Do you want your moral failings to be cleaned up, dealt with?

Have you been born again from above?

Believing in Jesus is the only way that you can have true change.

It's the only way you can have a fresh start.

Trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection is the only way to have eternal life.

Have you experienced the new life that can be had in Jesus?

If not, you need to repent of your sin and you need to do it today.

Ask God that he would forgive your rebellion against him.

His promise in this passage is that he will forgive you and wash your sins away.

And it's critical that we don't just ask this question of people who don't call themselves Christians.

There are a lots of people in lots of churches – quite possibly some of you – who think that they've been reborn and haven't at all.

I've heard true stories about people who've been converted from their own ministry in the pulpit.

Men and women who've done years of theological training only to realise much later that they didn't know Jesus at all.

What makes you a Christian?

Is it as simple as the fact that you've been born into a Christian family and you can't ever remember a time when you weren't a Christian? No.

Is it the fact that you've been serving and maybe even teaching in the church for as long as you've remembered? No.

Is being a Christian trying to follow the 10 commandments to the best of your ability? No.

It's believing in the saving death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ to wash you clean that makes you a Christian.

You become a Christian when you're spiritually reborn by God.

I don't want to make you question your salvation.

But this is such an important matter that the question just has to be asked.

It's dangerous to presume.

Are you seeing the change in your life that indicates that you've been born from above?

It would be quite embarrassing, I would imagine, to find out one day that your whole life you actually haven't placed your trust in Jesus.

I don't think it'd be easy to come to home group this week and say, "I think I was born again on Sunday".

But don't let any fear stop you!

The greatest fear would be to meet Jesus on the last day and think say to him that you didn't want to trust in his son.

Do you want your life to be different?

You need the lasting, radical change that comes from being born again from above.

Have you been washed clean by Jesus?

Do you trust him alone to be saved?

That's what needs to happen for you to enter the kingdom of heaven.

¹ John 20:31

² John 4:48

³ See John 1:47-48; 4:17-19, 29; 6:15, 64.

⁴ John 7:32

⁵ John 13:30

⁶ John 9:4; 11:10; 13:30; 21:3.

⁷ John 8:48, 50.

⁸ Uses in 3:3, 3:7 and 3:31; 19:11, 23. Mat 27:51; Mark 15:38; Jas 1:17; 3:15, 17.

⁹ John 3:22; 4:2.

¹⁰ John 1:13

Born From Above

John 2:23-3:15

17 March 2019 | Grace Bible Church Corinda | Ben Shannon

Big Question: How can we change?

Big Idea: Jesus came from heaven to change us so that we can get into heaven.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways that people try to achieve change?
2. Why didn't Jesus believe the crowds in chapter two?
3. Why Nicodemus need to be changed?
4. What does it mean for religious people if we can't even see (let alone enter) the kingdom of God without being born from above?
5. What does Jesus mean when he says that you need to be born of water and spirit to enter the kingdom of God?
6. Where does the power to change come from?
7. Is there any value in trying to change ourselves? Is there any difference between what Christians try compared to those who don't know Jesus?
8. How is the change that comes from being born from above different to the change we can achieve on our own?
9. How do you know if you've been born from above?
10. If someone you respected in the church came to you one day and said, "I think I've been born again this week!" how would you respond? What would you feel? What would you say?