

Speaking to the soul



Born again Christians

Jesus replied [to Nicodemus], “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” John 3:3

Nicodemus was an unlikely visitor to Jesus. He was a Pharisee, and Jesus was locked in a constant struggle with this group of Jewish leaders throughout his ministry. Perhaps that's why he came to Jesus at night. He wanted to ask his questions without being spotted by his fellow Pharisees. Jesus had no formal accreditation as a Jewish teacher, so it was generous of Nicodemus to address him as “Rabbi”. Clearly, he was impressed by Jesus’ teaching and miraculous signs and acknowledged that there was clear evidence that he had been sent by God. Jesus didn’t engage with this but responded to Nicodemus with words which would have rocked his world. He needed to be born again.

Nicodemus seemed confused by Jesus’ words. He was baffled by the thought of entering his mother’s womb a second time, so Jesus spelt out exactly what he meant: just as human life starts with a birth, so too does spiritual life. Nicodemus needed to allow the Holy Spirit to breathe new life into him if he was to enter the kingdom of God.

Nothing has changed. Two thousand years later, if we are to experience spiritual life, we need to be born again. I sometimes hear people talk about ‘born again Christians’ as if they are something different from normal Christians! That is not the case – the only way to become a Christian is by being born again. Being born into a Christian home, attending church and living in a supposedly Christian country is irrelevant. Without new birth, you cannot start out

on the Christian life. The apostle Paul was in complete agreement with this. He wrote: “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). No amount of human effort can ever make us into Christians. It is only as we allow the Holy Spirit to take over our lives that we can experience new birth.

QUESTION

How do you respond when people refer to born again Christians?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you that through the power of your Holy Spirit it is possible for people to be born again. Amen

Photograph - Flowers. In St Colman's Parish Church, Dunmurry

