

“Marvel Not That Ye Must Be Born Again”

By Brother Parrish Lee

Sunday, January 3rd, 2016

Amen, amen. You may be seated everyone. Happy two thousand and sixteen. May this year blow two thousand and fifteen out of the water. I just want to make sure that we are careful not to set our expectations too low. Because I heard, the Lord says, “In My Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would not have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2-3) Amen, amen. And, what a wonderful morning to come and serve the Lord, come to bless the Lord, come to worship the Lord. What a wonderful time it is. I don’t know who Brother Malcolm was talking about up here, but Brother George preached half the message. Thank you very much, bro, that means we don’t have to be here so long.

Giving honor to God, who is the head of our lives, and thank You, Lord, for bringing us through another year. And, God, for proving that You never fail. And, thank You, God, for showing time and time and time and time and time and time and time again that there is only but one true, wise, and living God who makes a way out of no way, who does what no one else could do, and who makes sure that all who believe know that his Word is sure and never fails. Thank You, Lord, this morning, for all that You’ve done for us. Giving honor to that same God who has proven Himself both Lord and Savior, both a Comforter and a Counsellor, and both a way in the dark places, and Lord that does things that you didn’t think, didn’t know how He was going to make it happen, but He made it happen. Giving honor to that God, this morning. And, giving honor to those who have come, and have gone on before us, from our founding pastor, and his family, and the work that they put forth, to our pastor, he and his family, and the work that they put forth. You come to have an understanding after being in the faith, and working with leadership for a little while, that the burden that they handle, it’s not the easiest way around. To labor, and to pray, and to call out to God. Thank You, Lord, for all those that You have sent before us. And, for all those who have come to stand in the gap and make up the hedge. And, giving honor to all of you, who come and present yourselves before the Lord, and ask, “God, I need Your guidance, I need Your blessing, I need Your anointing, Your power, I need things from You, God. Please provide my provision and protection for me this day and for my life. Amen.” Amen.

Brother Andy and I, as we talked, we saw that there is a need to spend this first part of the year talking about being born again, and, of course, our Scripture theme for the month is from the Book of John:

John 3:7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

And, to set the tone, we’re going to read, and, as Pastor Ulysse taught us, we’d like to stand for this part of the message. Who, incidentally texted us, and said he’s planning on making it back up here soon. Yeah. He said, “Happy New year. Hope to see you before three months has passed.” So, if we could read together:

John 3:1-10 *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the*

Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

If we could just bow our heads for just a moment. Lord, we do come before You, and we're bold about saying, "Thank You." Thank You for waking us up this morning, Lord. Thank You for putting us on our feet! Thank You for giving us our right mind, this morning, Lord! Thank You for the things that we can't even grasp or wrap our mind around that You do for us, every single day but, this morning, to bring us this far! Thank You for letting us know Your name, this morning, and to worship You in the beauty of holiness, God! Thank You for a time to sing praises to You, and let it meditate in our heart. And, God, as we worship You, as we cling to You, God, we say that You are all and our everything! We present ourselves to You, this morning, and we say, "Have Your way, Almighty God! Have Your way in our lives, God!" Bless us with the blessing that You desire for us this morning, God! God, whatever spirit tries to say, "No," God, we stand up and say, "Yes!" Bless us this morning, God, may Your Word permeate our lives! God, fill us, let us blow ourselves apart, God! God, may our eyes be refreshed, and our hearts renewed, and our minds re-awakened, this morning, God, as every day we say You are our provider, our protector. You are everything to us, God! And, so, we say thank You, as we submit ourselves to You, this morning, in Jesus' name, and everyone said, amen! Amen, amen, and amen.

You may be seated, Saints.

John 3:7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Before I got saved I had heard this term, "Born Again". I didn't really know what it was. And, every now and then, you know, I would run into somebody, and I remember somebody told me, "Oh, born again? That's a Christian thing, but it's the top of the line Christians; those are the ones that are 'Born Again' Christians. It takes a lot to get up there, and you really don't have to worry about it, you know, because you have to give up a *lot* to be born again. When I was in high school, there actually was a song that was put out, and it was called, 'Born Again.' It was really a melodic song, and it was okay, up until it got to that term, 'Born again.' I wasn't a Christian, in fact, I was Muslim at the time. I worshipped a whole different God; a whole different religion. But, there was something about whenever I heard that term, "Born again!" I was like, "I don't know what's wrong with it, but I know it's not right, it doesn't belong there." I didn't know what it was, I just knew that that didn't belong there. Well, today's message isn't about a song. It's not about somebody's opinion. Today's message is simply about what the Word of God says about being born again.

So, we see here, in John chapter three, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. And, to provide a little background on the setting of the time, we'd have to say that, and we've talked about this before, how there was many religious sects at the time. There were many religious divisions, at the time, you could say. Kind of akin to so many churches going on now, believing something a little bit different from the next one, and a little bit different from the next one. But, the spirit was the same, and everybody thought that they were right, and everybody else was wrong! Kind of similar. But, I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the sets that were around at the time:

Sect number one that we'd like to mention about, there was a sect called the Zealots. And, really, they were a militant branch, and they held to a few things in the Torah, the Torah being the Old Testament, that they had looked and read into, but they really were concerned with takin Israel back from Rome. And that was a group of people that were really concerned about that, and they were called the Zealots.

There's another religious group called the Sadducees, and, of course, we've heard of the Sadducees. Well, they Sadducees were kind of an affluent people, kind of wealthy type of people, and they didn't really ascribe to the miracles, and the great wondrous things in the Bible, and, of course, they didn't believe in the resurrection; they were affluent, and they didn't really have any interest in losing their wealth for any reason whatsoever. That would take care of the Sadducees.

There was another group called the Essenes. The Essenes. I learned about this when we went down to the Field Museum where they had the Dead Sea Scrolls. They had the Dead Sea Scrolls, and you learned about the Essenes. They were really an isolationist type of group, and they tried their best to hold onto the letter of the Law and the spirit of the Law, and they weren't really a wealthy people, because they were trying to follow God as best they could. And, being isolationist and that type of thing, they kind of died off around the time of the Romans' squash of Israel in 70 A.D.

There was another group of people called the Herodians, and they believed in some of the things in the Torah, but they were really concerned about being with the in-groups, with the politicians, with the societal groups. They didn't want to make any waves. They really wanted to have some leadership roles in society, as it were. They believed in some things in the Torah, but that wasn't the main thing; the main thing was that they could have some sort of position. The Herodians.

There was another group, and they weren't really a religious faction, but they were still a group, and they were called the scribes. Scribes back then would have been exactly what it sounds like. They were people who could read, and write, and record, and they were intellectual, too. You could say they were the intellectual people of the day. They were very affluent, and, usually, they had positions of authority, or they had positions of power, because they were affluent; they could communicate real well. You always wanted to have a scribe around, if you wanted whatever dealings you were doing to be remembered. And, you wanted to have a scribe around, you could have some information come to you that might be hidden in books, because these were the people. If you wanted to be remembered for posterity, you didn't have to have a selfie-stick back then, along with your phone, and take pictures, and have little captions underneath of it, and post on Facebook, and say, "This is us, and this is what we did," you had to have a scribe. You had to have a scribe, and he had to write it down for you.

And, there was another religious group, and they were called the Pharisees. Now, the Pharisees were a conservative, fundamentalist group of the day. They tried to keep themselves separate. They were very diligent about holding to the letter of the law, very diligent about it, but, from time to time, and throughout their workings, they would have some sort of self-serving maneuvering with the Word. You ever see somebody, they might know some Scriptures, and every now and then, they'll throw one in to justify what they got going on. "Hey, you now what? Hey, hey, hey, I know I'm wrong, but I'm better than that wrong, because the Scripture says," and they just whip it out when it's convenient for them. You ever now people like that? I know some people like that, in fact, a time or two, I've been a people like that. Thank God that brings conviction, and says, "Knock it off! Repent; get that thing right." Thank God for Him.

Well, Nicodemus was a Pharisee—one of these Pharisees, conservative, fundamentalist type of people. He was one of those, but, he wasn't just one of those fundamentalist type of people. He actually was—in there, he was one of their rulers, and a ruler, at that time, would have been a teacher. He was over the people who were the educated religious people who were trying to do their best with it. He had achieved some stature, and this is Nicodemus. And this Nicodemus, it says, a ruler of the Jews in verse one, the same—according to verse two—the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." So, if he had position, and he was among the Pharisees group, it would have been of some consequence for this teacher, this ruler, to say that this new kid on the block had some sort of a measure that was comparable with all of the things that this Pharisee, who had been raised and taught,

was putting some sort of stamp of approval on. So, he had to check this thing out. And, so, what he said to Jesus actually put validity on Him. It put validity on the Lord Jesus: "No man can do these miracles except God be with him", which is not just to say, no man can do these miracles, but that God be with him, but it is also to say, "I need to provide audience to You, because God is with You. Not only do I see it, I also must come and present myself to listen." In other words, "You are greater than me." So, Nicodemus came to say this; it is something for someone who has studied the Torah! It is something for a person who has given his life over to the ways of Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah, and King David—it is something for this person to come and say, "Now, I have to give credence to someone who is somewhat on that level. I am over all these people, and I am Your student." This Nicodemus is the one that went to the Lord Jesus. And, in going to the Lord, it's amazing how the Lord Jesus says to him right there in verse three:

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

In other words, "Nicodemus, you won't be able to even see it if you are not born again. So, that quells the difference between the born-again Christians and the non-born again Christians. According to this, the *only* Christians are the born-again Christians. According to the Lord Jesus, there's not no great big different sects here and there, there's only one! "The born again Christians. The ones who come to Me." Well, what news this had to be for Nicodemus. What news this had to be for one of the top flight religious people of the day to learn, "I'm doing all I can do. I'm doing my very best. And You're telling me I don't have a chance unless I'm born again.

So, Nicodemus says, in verse number four:

John 3:4 *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

Now, what Nicodemus said here was more than a description or term, or layout of procedure. It was more than that. What he actually is saying is, "I've studied the Law. I've known the ways of the Torah. And I don't know about this! I haven't found it, so You tell me! Because it's not matching up with anything else that I have learned to this point!"

John 3:5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Now, the Lord tells him so plainly. I love this; I love this! The Lord tells him so plainly. When the Lord was born, there was a star up in the sky for all to see. Only the ones that were really looking, found it, but all could see, if they knew how to look. And, when he was born, the angels ministered to the shepherds, and they went in to see the birth. When he was born, prophecies were fulfilled, when the Lord was born. What a wonderful time that was, on that day, when Christ was born. But, here, the Lord tells him, except you're born of the water and of the Spirit, you cannot see, enter into the Kingdom of God. Where are the fireworks? Where are the angels? Where was the earthquake shaking up to let people know that the Lord told him plainly? Where is everything? Well, to mention that, we have to go to something that Apostle Paul said:

Hebrews 6:13-14 *For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.*

Because He could swear by no greater God Almighty swore by Himself. That's enough to make us want to go to Genesis and see where this thing happened.

Genesis 22:16-17 *And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;*

And there it is. Greater than fireworks. Greater than an earthquake. Greater than a tsunami. Greater than a solar flare that could reach to the end of the solar system. What's greater than all those things? A promise from Almighty God. Angels would have lessened this thing. Stars in the Heaven don't compare to a promise of Almighty God. And Almighty God promised him. Promised him; told him, "I swear, I'm going to bless you, Abraham. I swear it!"

If we were to go right back to that, when it came out of the Lord's mouth, that is firework enough. In other words, the Lord said it, we believe it, that settles it.

But this born again thing had been in wait for a very long time.

Romans 8:19 *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

So, since the very beginning, since the very beginning, the manifestation to be a Son has been on hold, waiting for this moment. The manifestation, the revelation, the clarity, the appearing of the sons of God, when is it going to happen? Right here, right now. So, since the beginning, they have been waiting, we have been waiting, everybody, all creation has been waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

John 3:7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

So, the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus not to marvel at this. Not to marvel. It's not one of those things where you wonder, kind of go back and forth in your mind, and think maybe or kind of, what's the big picture of the whole thing? No, no, no, don't marvel at it; this is what it is, the entrance to Heaven itself. So, He tells him something else in verse number ten:

John 3:10 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

Are you not a master, a ruler, a teacher of Israel and you don't know this? In other words, the entire, the *entire* Torah pointed to this. All those things of God have been pointing to this. Are you not one well educated in the ways of God? And this you don't know! Nicodemus, Nicodemus. This is the clarity that we have been waiting for. And, you know, if you go outside the Word, you get a thousand different definitions. If you take your Bible, put it away, and say, "What's it mean to be born again?" You can get everything from, "Oh, that's when you have a certain kind of ice cream." "That's when you have a surgery." "That's when you lose a lot of weight." "That's when you get a new job." All that stuff is being born again, but, when you open the Word, you see being born again is being born of the water and of the Spirit in accordance with what the Lord Jesus said.

Point 2: Babes Have to Be Taught.

A couple of things about babies: One is, babes have to be taught. When you're born again, you have to be taught, like any other babe. When you're born, you have to be taught; when you're born again, you have to be taught. So, one thing about babies is everything is new to them. Everything is new to them. They have to learn how to eat, they have to learn what to eat, they have to learn how to walk, how to talk... And, babies, yes, they make mistakes. And true to form, true to form, they also have learn to be potty-trained. Babes have to learn to be potty-trained. Why do you bring that up? Because, when Christian babes start out, yes, we have to learn how to walk and talk. We have to learn how to eat; we have to learn what to eat, and, yes, spiritually speaking, we have to learn how to be potty-trained. Amen. Thank God for His perfect example. For His perfect example.

John 13:15 *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

The perfect example. Babes have to be taught.

Point 3: We Are Commissioned to Grow and Not Stay Babes.

We are commissioned to grow, and not to stay babes. A Scripture for this one is:

Colossians 2:7 *Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

Rooted means you are centered and grounded in Christ. And built up in Christ, and built up in Christ; adding things into our lives. We are commissioned to grow, and not to stay babes; commissioned to grow, and not to stay babes.

Mark 16:16-17 *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;*

Somebody might say, "Oh, Brother Parrish, I haven't gotten to that place yet. I don't cast devils out; I don't speak with new tongues, I don't have that stuff going on in my life, and I would have to say, "I beg your pardon! All of us that I know of that are living for the Lord, cast the devil out every morning. 'Get out, devil! You come into my mind; get out! You don't have any place here!' And, throughout the day, we cast him out. 'Get out, devil! Shut up! Get thee behind me! I savor the things of God, and you do not.'" And, as far as speaking with new tongues, thank you so much, Sister Zena, you already preached that one for me. Yes, He changes how you talk. He changes what you say. When you come up with something, and it's about to come to your mouth, that you know ain't right, it stops, right in your mouth. You say, "Mmmblmmm. I can't say that. I can't say that. I might want to say that, but I can't say that. I'm born again; sometimes I've got to be reminded I'm born again." Sometimes I've got to be reminded I'm born again, that I'm not of the world. God is my Father. Sometimes I've got to shake myself and say, "Yeah, that's the spirit that I am of." Yeah, they shall speak with new tongues. Before you got saved, how much did you bless God? How much did you read, and say, "I can't wait to talk a little more about it," before you got saved. And after you got saved, "Hey, anybody having a Bible study? I have a couple of questions." You find that coming in your speech.

Mark 16:18 *They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

They shall take up serpents. No, we're not talking about one of those churches in West Virginia where you get excited and a box comes from underneath the pew. We're not talking about lifting up a cobra and lifting up a diamondback—no, no, not those kind of snakes. If you want to pick up one of those kind of snakes, you're on your own! But, some of us know that, yeah, I take up serpents, and I didn't know it was a serpent at the time, but, sometimes a serpent walks right over to our table when we're trying to have lunch. Walks right into a conversation, whether it's wearing pants or a dress, it'll walk right up there, and, yeah, sometimes you have to say, "Mmmph, no, uh-huh, we're not talking about that. We're not going there. If you're going to continue that, you're going to have to continue that without me because, I am not that, I am born again."

And, if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. You ever want to try to unhear something? Every now and then, sometimes I'll watch a religious program, or watch even a goofy sitcom—I can't even watch those things no more, they turn my flesh, it starts to peel. But, sometimes you hear something said, and you want to unhear it. But, thank God that we have a Spirit of Christ in us, and we could say, "Yeah, you know what? My ears might have drunk of that, but it's not going to hurt me any, because I'm casting it out. I'm casting it out; it's not settling here. It's not going down into my heart; I'm casting it out."

They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. I've actually been praying more, and more, and more, and more, and more about this particular Scripture right here. I asked the Lord—we had some sick people in our church, and all souls belong to God. Sometimes it's time for God to take them. Sometimes he'll take them like he took Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), sometimes He'll take them like He took Enoch (Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5), and sometimes he'll take them like He took Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5-6), and sometimes He'll take them like He took David (1 Chronicles 29:26-28). God takes them. But, when somebody is sick, we should be able to lay hands on them, and see them recover. I asked the Lord, "Lord, sometimes we've seen people healed, and sometimes we have not. And I can't point the finger at anybody. That Scripture belongs to me. We need to be able to know why? What's the difference?" The Lord gave me a Scripture; I was talking with Brother Jesse and Brother Chris last night, the Lord gave me a Scripture from the Book of Isaiah chapter fifty-nine:

Isaiah 59:1-2 *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.*

Our iniquities get in the way, so God can't hear my prayers when my sins and iniquities are in the way, and His arm can't reach to save when I have my sins and iniquities in the way. Amen. Amen. I actually want to see more souls saved for the glory of the Lord God, and see more souls touched and healed, yes, many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Bible says that God delivers them out of every one, every one.

Mark 16:19-20 *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.*

With signs following. If you're born again, the signs must follow. The signs of the Lord saving, must follow.

Point 4: Born Again Lets Us Know the Level of Change That Was Coming.

In other words, we're going to be something we weren't before.

Romans 8:15-18 *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Whereby, whereby, the scripture says, we cry Abba Father, or, accurately, Father Father. And the fact that we cry, or we exclaim, or we entreat, and even shriek, sometimes, "Father" is even to say "Lord help me. God be merciful to me. Oh, Rock of my salvation, to you do I turn. Savior, guide me, lead me, Lord Jesus, You are everything to me, and without You I'd be nothing at all. Lord, my Comfort, be with me, and I with Thee." These are the cries that we cry out as heirs of the promise.

And, this is the Spirit that we have received. Not the Spirit of Samson to slay a thousand with a jawbone. Not even the spirit of James and John, who said, "Lord, shall we call down fire, and wipe them all out this town?" and the Lord turned to them, and said, "You know not what Spirit ye are of." God might use us to fulfill anything in God. He might use you to witness to millions. He might use you to just walk into a hospital room when just one person is there, and you and the other person are the only to that see the healing of God. God will use us to do many things, but the things that is going to permeate, the thing that is going to be paramount over everything in that is God alone gets the glory. And, our spirit has to agree with His Spirit. Our spirit has to agree with His Spirit. Praise God.

Point 5: Children of the Father Alone Are Heirs

The only heirs there are, are the ones who are children of the Father.

Romans 8:17 *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

Amen. Give God a praise.