

June 14, 2015
Born Again Christians

Read John 3:3 - Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

As you can imagine birth has been on my mind for the past several weeks. I've really been thinking about it a lot. But, perhaps in a different way than one might expect. As I've been pondering the experience, I've been trying to think about it from the perspective of the child being born. Think about that for a minute. What would that be like? You go from mom's warm safe secluded tummy to a bright, noisy scary world. It's cold, it's uncomfortable and what's worse is your completely stark naked. It really is a good thing that you don't remember it, because not only is it a physically traumatic experience for the child whose skull has to contort and shift on the way out, but it is the very making of many "high school nightmares" where you show up to a class or function naked.

But, while thinking about physical birth and being a pastor, I also began to think about spiritual birth, which lead me to John 3: 3. Here Jesus speaks to the *Pharisee* Nicodemus. Here was one of the "enemy" that believed Jesus was sent from God. Jesus then confuses the biblically trained leader of the Jews by stating that in order to see the "Kingdom of God" one would have to be born again. Nicodemus jumped straight to the traumatizing imagery of childbirth, wondering how someone could climb back into their mother's womb in their old age. Jesus then explains things to Nicodemus in his usual illusive manner.

Roots

As Christians, we understand a little better what Jesus was saying, at least in theory. But, the thing is we

miss just how close Nicodemus' thoughts on birth and rebirth are to our own Christian "rebirth."

Like birth, Christian rebirth is actually a traumatic experience, especially as we tie it directly to baptism. Being born again isn't necessarily the mountain top experience that some people try to make it be every time. When we are baptized we are killed; our death sentence is carried out. Of course very few people die physically right as they are baptized, but all of us are spiritually dead and buried right then and there that we might be raised again to new life in Christ Jesus. But, the similarities continue on from new life. Once born of the Spirit and water as Jesus tells Nicodemus, we are forced into a new world outside of our old comfort zones. It is a world that is often cold and scary for Christians, where others try to embarrass us into recanting or retreating back into our comfortable places. It can be physically and emotionally traumatic as old friends sometimes become new enemies, and old comforts become terrible temptations.

Even in the face of all of the traumatic experiences, birth and "rebirth" are wonderful experiences. They bring us out into the world and into new life. But, more importantly through our rebirth, we get to know Jesus' reign in our lives. Though at times uncomfortable, this is the most important thing we can ever know, because through

Jesus we can share this new life with others and live eternally with our great God.

Pastor *Carl J. H.*

